

# GOC Approved Qualifications Annual Sector Report

October 2023



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# Summary

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## Progress implementing the GOC's Education and Training Requirements

- 1.1** At the time of publication, most submitted adaptations or new qualifications relate to Optometry (9) and Dispensing Optics (3), with the vast majority of these intending to pursue a September 2023 start date. The sector has moved to implement the ETR in a manner that demonstrates a significant co-ordination effort across the entire sector, which is especially impressive given the challenges of responding to the pandemic in the previous two years. In moving to implement the ETR, providers have spoken about challenges and risks, but also the opportunities and benefits of implementation.
- 1.2** The benefits cited by providers include a greater emphasis on clinical skills and multi-disciplinary learning introduced early in the programme as part of a spiral curriculum. Optometry will be at a Master's degree level enhancing the attractiveness of many qualifications, and placements will take place throughout the duration of the programme rather than at the end.
- 1.3** The opportunities cited by providers include reappraising optical qualifications to ensure graduates have the required knowledge, skills and behaviours in line with the ETR, to enter professional optical practice. Qualifications may be tailored to meet certain needs such as the nature of demand for optical care in an area, such as a city, region or remote area. Specialist clinics may be set up by providers or in collaboration with local stakeholder organisations to address particular optical needs in the community such as myopia control and glaucoma clinics.
- 1.4** The challenges and risks include the requirement of the ETR to increase clinical placements in different settings and for higher education providers to assume responsibility for theoretical and practical education and training. Concerns have been raised by several providers about increased cost, placement availability, sufficient patients during a placement (particularly in the student clinics), and the logistics of organising placements. It has been noted that the fees received by providers may not necessarily move with the increased costs to run the qualification. The limited time to implement the ETR is also a concern, although as noted above, the sector has broadly chosen to implement earlier rather than later.

## Progress against metrics

- 1.5** This year, approved qualifications (including provisionally approved) demonstrated progress across most metrics.
- 1.6** Optometry (OP) qualifications reported a high ratio of applications to admissions (including through clearing), strong academic qualifications (average offer) amongst prospective students, and high levels of student progression and attainment. Dispensing Optics (DO) qualifications reported a lower ratio of applications to admissions, but good levels of student progression and attainment. National Student Survey (NSS) scores for OP qualifications

were lower than the national average for all categories, but higher than the 'Subjects Allied to Medicine' (SATM) for all categories bar one. NSS scores for DO qualifications outperform both the national average and the SATM for all categories.

- 1.7 Independent prescribing (IP) qualifications showed decreasing numbers of students admitted, but a very high level of student attainment in exams. Qualifications run online experienced minimal disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to increase admissions by accepting students from across the UK. Contact Lens (CLO) qualifications showed increasing numbers, and admitted over 90% of their applicants.
- 1.8 A high proportion of OP and IP students passed the GOC approved qualification within the permitted timescale. Pass rates for the DO approved qualification declined compared to the previous year and pass rates for the CLO approved qualification improved compared to the previous year.

## The sector at a glance

### GOC approved and provisionally approved qualifications

Qualification type	Number of qualifications
Optometry (OP)	15
Independent prescribing (IP)	6
Dispensing Optics (DO)	9
Contact Lens Optician (CLO)	3
Approved qualifications offered by professional associations	4

### Student numbers

Total students	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Optometry*	2,826	3,154	3,270	3,233
Independent prescribing	382	530	435	N/A
Dispensing Optics	1,054	748	763	740
Contact lens Optician	101	58	66	60

\* excludes those on College of Optometrist's Scheme for Registration due to different term period

#N/A due to differences in the reporting cycle of when data becomes available

Total student numbers in Optometry, Dispensing Optics, and contact lens remained stable in 2022/23. Independent prescribing numbers fell between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Approximately 88% of eligible graduates joined the College of Optometrists' Scheme for Registration.

## First year admissions

Admissions to Dispensing Optics qualifications increased and are above pre-pandemic levels. Admissions to Optometry qualifications fell slightly.

Total students in Year 1	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Optometry	996	1,089	1,169	1,111
Dispensing Optics	314	127	303	330

## National Student Survey (NSS): Top average provider score\*

\* Top average (mean) percentage score by provider across 27 questions asked in the NSS 2021-22

### Optometry

Position	Provider	Qualification	Average Score
1	University of Plymouth	Optometry	87.4%
2	Ulster University	Optometry	86.0%
3	Anglia Ruskin University	Optometry	79.1%

### Dispensing Optics

Position	Provider	Qualification	Average Score
1	Bradford College	FdSc Ophthalmic Dispensing (P/T)	89.8%
2	Bradford College	Ophthalmic Dispensing	84.0%
3	Anglia Ruskin University	Ophthalmic Dispensing	79.1%

## Submissions received for adaptations or new programmes to meet the GOC's new education and training requirements (ETR)

Education and training providers are currently submitting applications to adapt their existing qualifications or design new qualifications to meet the ETR. Those qualifications that have been noted by the GOC, may proceed to adapt/launch their qualification.

All except one of the qualifications below will commence in 2023.

Qualification type and application status	Number
Optometry (noted)	8
Optometry (in progress)	1
Dispensing Optics (noted)	3
Dispensing Optics (in progress)	0
Independent Prescribing (in progress)	1

# Background

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- 2.1** The GOC (also referred to as “we” in this document) are required to “keep informed of the nature of the instruction given by any approved training establishment to persons training as optometrists or dispensing opticians and of the assessments on the results of which approved qualifications are granted”, under s.13(1) Opticians Act 1989. Qualifications leading to a registrable therapeutic / independent prescribing (IP) or contact lens optician (CLO) specialism are also included within the GOC’s regulatory scope.
- 2.2** In executing this duty, we approve and quality assure qualifications leading to GOC registration or speciality registration, which includes all elements of training, learning and assessment that a provider must deliver for its students to be awarded a GOC approved qualification that meets the GOC’s requirements and to enable students to be eligible to register with the GOC as an optometrist (OP) or dispensing optician (DO), or with an IP or CLO specialty, upon successful completion of their training and assessment.
- 2.3** As part of our approval and quality assurance (A&QA) of qualifications, all providers are required to demonstrate how their approved qualification(s) meet our requirements, as currently listed in our handbooks. We seek assurance from these providers in several ways, including quality assurance visits, notification of reportable events and changes, conditions management, and the annual compulsory AMR submission. We also scrutinise and note proposed adaptations to qualifications to ensure they meet the ETR requirements.



# Annual Monitoring and Reporting Process

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- 3.1** Providers were required to report information for the period 1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022.
- 3.2** All providers of GOC approved qualifications(s) were required to submit information relating to qualification changes, changes to qualification delivery and/or assessment (including risks to delivery), lessons learned, and good practice.
- 3.3** We issued the AMR forms to providers on 17 October 2022. Providers were required to submit a completed form by 13 January 2023.
- 3.4** Every AMR return must be signed by a 'Responsible Officer'. The Responsible Officer is a staff member with sufficient authority to represent and bind the provider and bears ultimate responsibility for the information submitted in the return. The Responsible Officer must only sign off the form when they are satisfied that the information gives a true and fair account of the qualification.
- 3.5** We analysed the information to identify:
  - updates regarding key events and changes at qualification level;
  - current risks and issues relating to individual approved qualifications(s);
  - themes, strengths, and risks within the optical education sector;
  - the diversity of students within the optical sector;
  - examples of good practice and lessons learnt; and
  - ways the GOC's quality assurance activities could be developed.
- 3.6** This sector report provides a high-level summary of the outcomes of the 2021/22 AMR process. In addition to this report, we produce a short report for each qualification(s) (referred to as a 'qualification report') to provide specific feedback regarding the qualification's submission.
- 3.7** The analysis and outcomes are based upon the information and data as calculated and submitted by providers of GOC approved qualifications(s). We have not sought to externally verify the information submitted. Although this report includes information relating to providers' plans adapting to the ETR, all qualifications during 2021/22 were delivered to the current handbook requirements.
- 3.8** We consider all feedback from stakeholders regarding the 2021/22 AMR process and use this to help refine the AMR process.
- 3.9** The publication of this report closes the 2021/22 AMR process.

# Themes

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- 4.1** Compliance with this year's AMR process was very good, with all returns submitted by the 13 January 2023 deadline. Responses to additional queries were generally prompt. No compliance breaches occurred.

## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector

- 4.2** Education and training have to a large extent returned to face-to-face delivery and various providers reported exams returning to a closed-book and in-person format. Many innovations introduced in response to the pandemic are likely to remain in the medium to long term. For many providers, online complements face-to-face delivery with the recording of lectures and seminars for those unable to attend in person. The use of virtual clinics and smaller tutorial sessions will also remain in place for some providers. Interactive applications such as MS Teams and Zoom have become essential communication tools in the work environment and appear to be here to stay.
- 4.3** However, feedback from this year's AMR process suggests that COVID-19 is still affecting the sector. Providers have reported a number of issues including: high street opticians still experiencing ongoing effects of the pandemic affecting the supply of placements; a higher than normal number of non-progressing students due to mitigation measures imposed such as teacher assessed grades; failure to provide required placements resulting from the post-COVID recovery plans of devolved administrations; and the ongoing physical and mental impact on students and staff.

## Student applications, recruitment, progression, and attainment

- 4.4** On average OP qualifications continued to report strong application figures with an average Year 1 cohort similar to the previous year. Meanwhile, applications for DO qualifications have sustained the significant increase seen for the 2021/22 Year 1 cohort when numbers more than doubled compared to the previous year. The data suggests that recruitment figures have returned to pre-pandemic levels, which is a significant welcome development.
- 4.5** There was a dip in trainees on IP qualifications from 530 in 2020/21 to 435 in 2021/22; the average size of cohorts fell from 82 to 54 over the same period. The introduction of online only IP courses impacted positively on accessibility and in previous years allowed providers to increase numbers of trainees. Despite this dip in overall trainee numbers, the GOC's latest registrant survey shows strong continued demand for IP qualifications.
- 4.6** Trainees on CLO qualifications has remained stable over the last three years (60 in 2022/23, 66 in 2021/22 and 58 in 2020/21). Likewise, average cohort size for CLO qualifications for 2021/22 has remained similar to the past year – 22 (19 in 2020/21; 34 in 2019/20).
- 4.7** Year 1 progression rates have fallen for both OP and DO qualifications in each of the last two years (OP was 96.4% in 2019/20 and 84.5% in 2021/22, DO was 87.7% in 2019/20 and 73.7% in 2021/22). Completion rates for OP and DO final year students are both in excess of 90% and average attainment rates (equivalent of a 2:2 degree) are around 95% for both OP and DO qualifications.

- 4.8** Attainment data related to the qualifications offered by the professional associations show that pass rates for OP and DO have decreased (-1.3% and -23% respectively), and for IP and CLO have increased (+2.3% and 10% respectively) since the past year. For Dispensing Optics, the significant decline in the pass rate includes a high percentage of students who failed their portfolio submission. However, a majority of these re-submitted their case records outside of the reporting period and were able to graduate in 2022. For Contact Lens Optics, the professional association offers a potential explanation relating to a significant improvement in attainment as being the return to face-to-face education following the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
- 4.9** National Student Survey (NSS) scores for OP qualifications were lower than the national average for all categories, but higher than the 'Subjects Allied to Medicine' (SATM) for all categories bar one. However, the average overall score for OP is up slightly on last year. NSS scores for DO qualifications outperform both the national average and the SATM for all categories.

#### Resourcing, investment, and good practice

- 4.10** Several providers have invested in new equipment and facilities which range from new purpose-built teaching facilities to on-campus eye clinics and ophthalmic simulation suites, enabling students to enhance their patient-facing skills in clinical practice. Many providers told us about their qualified and experienced teams of academics and practitioners; many with specialist backgrounds in optical practice, backed up with technical support staff.
- 4.11** Many examples of good practice were submitted, and we thank providers who did so. They include:

establishing a good working relationship with students, with high contact time and regular feedback

good stakeholder relationships with the eye care community, such as local hospitals, employers, and charities

use of new technology such as simulated patients and virtual clinics

events and training to support supervisors, mentors, and students

addressing gaps in attainment

## Risk and Information Management

- 4.12** All qualifications submitted risk analyses. The key risk providers identified relates to implementation of the ETR (see “1.4” – Challenges and risks of implementing the ETR).
- 4.13** Many providers have increased the online delivery of their programmes and some have converted to hybrid or entirely online models of delivery as is the case with some IP qualifications. Whilst this brings significant benefits in terms of access, particularly if it is difficult to attend in person, it does increase reliance on digital infrastructure systems which could be vulnerable to a systems failure affecting delivery of the qualification.
- 4.14** Some providers reported difficulties retaining staff as a result of competition from other universities and it was noted that the process for registering teaching staff with the GOC from outside the UK was lengthy. Difficulties in recruiting home and international students was also reported with a Dispensing Optics provider reporting that student numbers are influenced by employers’ decisions and their requirements for Dispensing Opticians.

## Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) data

- 4.15** Providers were asked to submit EDI data and widening participation information used to inform the development of access and participation plans and initiatives in operation. Many providers provided information about supporting students with a declared disability and promoting an inclusive learning environment.
- 4.16** Like the previous year (2020/21), most OP students were Asian females aged 20 and under. And, as with the previous year, most DO students were white females aged 21-24, with many DO qualifications recruiting more mature students than OP qualifications.
- 4.17** IP and CL qualifications recruit students who are already qualified practitioners. Although most IP and CL students were over the age of 30, over 30% were within the 25-29 age bracket which shows an increasing interest in achieving an IP or CL qualification among more recently qualified optical professionals.

# Qualification Findings

5.1 Set out below is a summary of our findings for each qualification type, as follows:

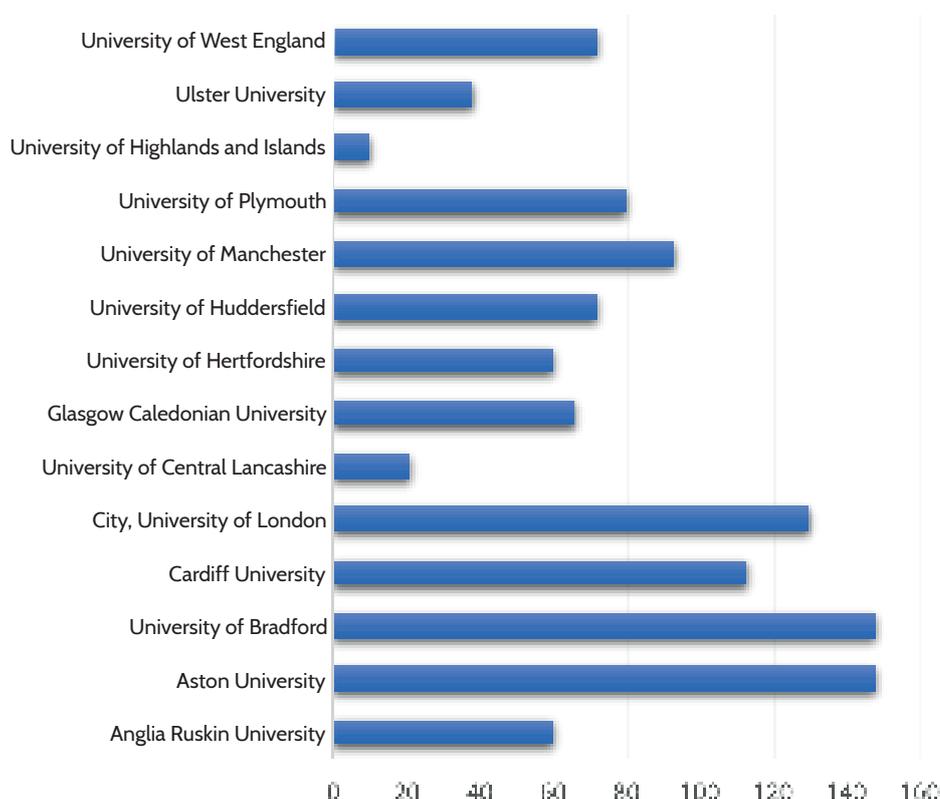
- Optometry (OP)
- Independent prescribing (IP)
- Dispensing optics (DO)
- Contact lens opticians (CLO)
- Professional association offering qualifications in OP and IP
- Professional association offering qualifications in DO and CLO

5.2 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) data is included at the end of the report across all qualification types.

## Optometry

### Total Year 1 cohort data for Optometry students in 2022-23 by provider

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to all Optometry (OP) qualifications, excluding the Optometry approved qualification offered by the College of Optometrists.



## Themes

5.3 Overall, the information submitted indicates strong performance amongst OP qualifications in several academic metrics. However, many providers raised concerns about having to arrange clinical placements in different settings as part of the ETR and of their availability and cost. The inability to retain staff was also identified as a risk for some qualifications.

5.4 Applications for OP qualifications remain strong and there remains a considerable range of small, medium, and large cohort sizes.

**5.5** In general, student progression through OP qualifications remains high. Student attainment is very high, with an average of 95.8% of students obtaining a 2.2 or higher (96.8% in 2020/21; 98.1% in 2019/20).

### Key data

Total students	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total Optometry students	3,154	3,270	3,233
Year 1 cohort	1,089	1,169	1,111

Optometry qualifications: key metrics	Lowest	Average	Highest
Proportion of applicants admitted	11.8%	21.5%	69.6%
Average UCAS points offer	118.6	134.0	147.0
First year progression	69.0%	84.5%	95.5%
Progression to following year	73.0%	84.1%	100.0%
Successful completion	88.0%	91.5%	100.0%
Degree – 2:2 or higher	83.0%	95.8%	100.0%

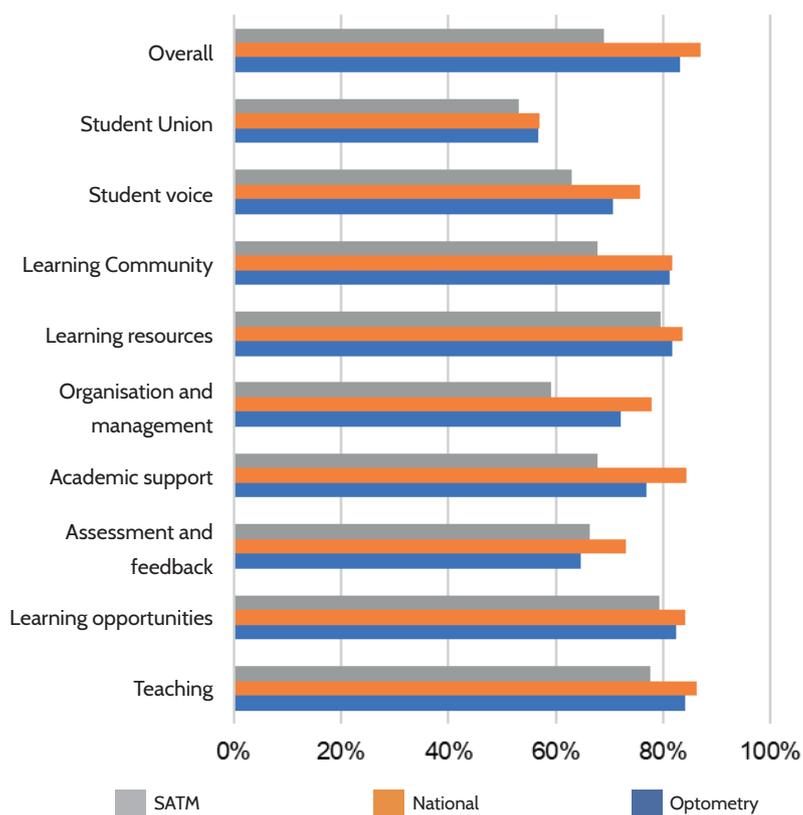
### Observations

- 5.6** With one exception, all OP qualifications admitted between 11% and 25% of applicants to their qualification indicating good competition for places. OP qualifications admitted an average of 21.5% of applicants (21.6% in 2020/21; 22.9% in 2019/20).
- 5.7** The average academic offer made by OP qualifications to prospective students was 134.0 UCAS tariff points which approximately equates to AAB grades at A-Level. This is in comparison to an average of 136.3 (approximately equivalent to AAB) in 2020/21, and 134.5 (approximately equivalent to AAB) in 2019/20. The average UCAS points offer ranged from 118.6 UCAS points (approximately equivalent to BBB) to 147 UCAS points (approximately equivalent to AAA).
- 5.8** The size of individual Optometry qualification cohorts varies significantly. For example, the 2021/22 Year 1 cohort size varied from 8 to 177 students (10 to 153 in 2020/21; 20 to 138 in 2019/20).

- 5.9** The size of individual Optometry qualification cohorts varies significantly. For example, the 2021/22 Year 1 cohort size varied from 8 to 177 students (10 to 153 in 2020/21; 20 to 138 in 2019/20).
- 5.10** An average of 84.5% (88.5% in 2020/21; 96.4% in 2019/20) of students progressed to the second year, an average of 84.1% (93.3% in 2020/21; 95.9% in 2019/20) of students progressed to the following year of the qualification overall, and an average of 91.5% (95.6% in 2020/21; 96.2% in 2019/20) of final year students successfully completed the qualification.
- 5.11** With regards to EDI, the data showed that 64% of students were female (66% in 2020/21; 67% in 2019/20), and 60% of students were Asian (64% in 2020/21; 59% in 2019/20). There is evidence of local variation, probably reflecting the demography of the local population, with one provider reporting that almost 81% of its students were white, and another that over 91% of students were Asian. 57% (56% in 2020/21; 54% in 2019/20) of students were aged 20 years or under, with 84% (83% in 2020/21; 87% in 2019/20) aged 24 or under, indicating that most are recent school leavers. Like the previous year (2020/21), most OP students were Asian females aged 20 and under.
- 5.12** An average of 95.8% (96.8% in 2020/21; 98.1% in 2019/20) of students obtained a 2.2 degree or higher. Few students failed the qualification: an average of 2.9% (2.3% in 2020/21; 1.4% in 2019/20) of students failed, and like last year, all but one OP provider had fewer than 3% of students failing. As in 2020/21, three OP qualification providers awarded a high percentage of first-class degree awards – this year they ranged from 35% to 69%). One provided a robust explanation to support their award distribution on submission, another had reduced its award of first-class degrees by 14% to 35% and the remaining provider had by far the smallest final-year cohort for Optometry programmes.

**5.13** By category<sup>1</sup>, the mean average provider scores for student satisfaction by category are illustrated in the chart below. The average Optometry NSS scores were lower than the national average for all categories, and higher than for Subjects Allied to Medicine (SATM), whereas in the previous year scores were higher than the national average for nine out of ten categories. Even so, the overall score improved slightly to 83.3% (82.5% in 2020/21), perhaps indicating a small shift in the scores for other subjects rather than changes in OP

**National Student Survey by category**



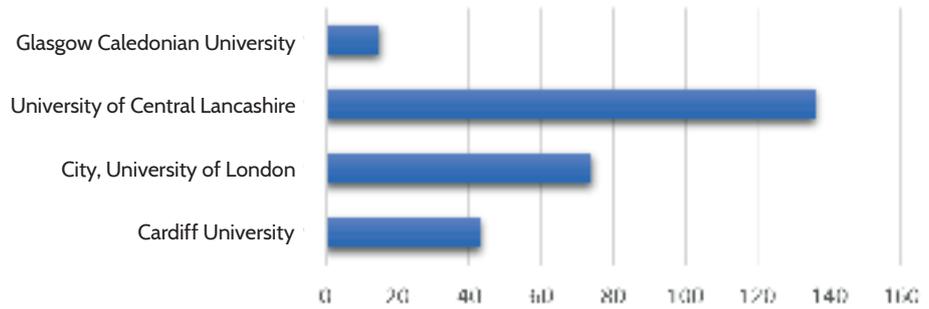
<sup>1</sup> The figures refer to the proportion (%) of students expressing satisfaction in each category of their university experience. An explanation of the category groupings is provided at Appendix 2. The method of reporting student feedback will be reviewed for future AMRs

# Independent Prescribing

## Total Year 1 cohort data for Independent Prescribing trainees in 2022-23 by provider\*

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to all independent prescribing and therapeutic prescribing (IP) qualifications, excluding the IP approved qualification offered by the College of Optometrists.

### Themes



\* Cohort data for City, University of London is not collected as the programme as run as CPD modules, and the University of Hertfordshire admitted its cohort outside of the reporting period.

**5.14** A number of IP qualification providers noted that the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to pose a risk to the availability of clinical placements, although mitigation measures were in place including online delivery.

**5.15** IP qualifications are not covered by the National Student Survey, but most qualifications reported the results of internal processes capturing student views which showed positive student feedback.

### Key data

#### Total students

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total Independent Prescribing students	530	435	To be reported in next year's AMR Sector Report
Year 1 cohort*	412	272	268

\*IP cohort data excludes a provider that runs its IP qualification as CPD modules and therefore does not admit a cohort. For this specific case we have substituted cohort data with admissions data which we consider to be reliable since cohort data for all remaining IP providers is the same as the admissions data.

#### Independent Prescribing qualifications: key metrics

	Lowest	Average	Highest
Applicants admitted	69.6%	84.2%	100.0%
Attainment – pass or higher	81.0%	92.9%	100.0%

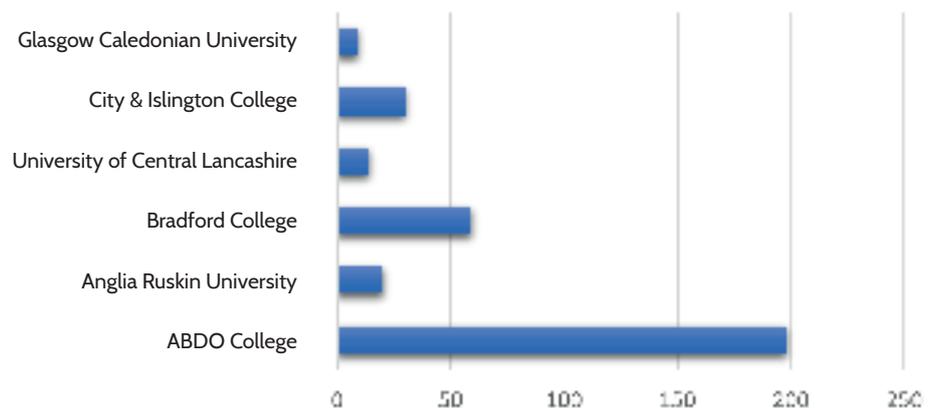
## Observations

- 5.16** IP qualifications in 2022/23 admitted about the same number of trainees as in 2021/22, although this is significantly lower number of trainees than in 2020/21. Providers continue to admit a high proportion of applicants: an average of 84.2% applicants (78.6% in 2020/21; 87.3% in 2019/20) were admitted. As noted above, the introduction of online only IP courses impacted in a positive way on accessibility and allowed providers to increase the number of trainees admitted to the qualification in large numbers, although not consistently year-on-year.
- 5.17** The size of IP qualification cohorts varies significantly: the average Year 1 cohort size was 54 (82 in 2020/21; 61 in 2019/20) but varied from 16 to 93 (16 to 224 in 2020/21; 5 to 139 in 2019/20) students.
- 5.18** An average of 92.9% (94.2% in 2020/21; 98.0% in 2019/20) of students passed the IP qualification, with two of the six qualifications having a pass rate of 100%.
- 5.19** EDI data showed that most IP students were Asian females aged 40 years or above. 66.6% of students are aged over 30, and 31.2% are between the ages of 25 and 29.

## Dispensing Optics

### Total Year 1 cohort data for Dispensing Optics students in 2022-23 by provider

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to all Dispensing Optics (DO) qualifications, excluding the DO approved qualification offered by the ABDO.



## Themes

- 5.20** DO qualifications maintained good student progression for most qualifications. Student attainment is also good.
- 5.21** Participation in the National Student Survey (NSS) was limited, as per usual, for reasons including qualification ineligibility. However, qualifications that did participate performed well.
- 5.22** Total student numbers for DO qualifications fell slightly in 2022/23. However, the key indicator is the continued increase in the size of the Year 1 cohort following a big jump between 2020/21 and 2021/22. This suggests that the effects of the pandemic in deterring

employers from funding students' studies or students being furloughed from their work, have significantly eased.

**5.23** Implementation of the ETR is cited as a risk by providers, particularly regarding the cost of increasing clinical placements in different settings. One provider noted that the new Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) Level 6 requirement for Dispensing Optics presented a very high risk to a foundation dispensing degree accredited by the GOC.

**5.24** We note progress in developing a degree apprenticeship for Dispensing Optics, which should further boost careers in this profession and widen participation.

### Key data

Total students	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total Dispensing Optics students	748	763	740
Year 1 cohort	127	303	330

Dispensing Optics qualifications: key metrics	Lowest	Average	Highest
Proportion of applicants admitted	6.3%	73.7%	97.0%
Average UCAS points offer	24.0	46.8	75.0
First year progression	0.0%	73.7%	100.0%
Progression to following year	86.0%	87.3%	100.0%
Successful completion	86.7%	93.9%	100.0%
Degree – 2:2 or higher	82.0%	94.1%	100.0%

### Observations

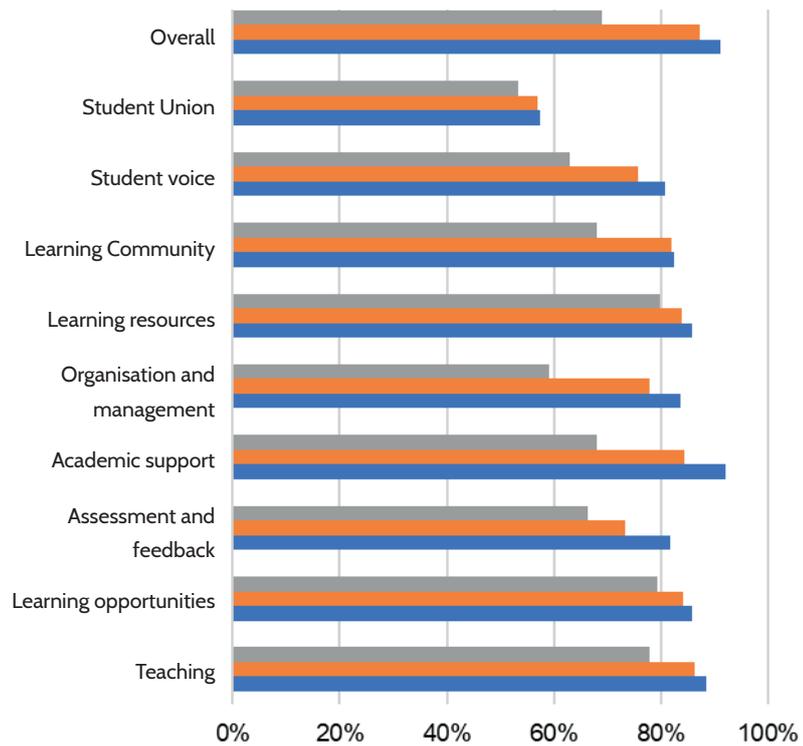
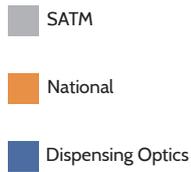
**5.25** DO qualifications admitted an average of 73.7% (74.2% in 2020/21; 73.7% in 2019/20) applicants. There is significant variance across DO qualifications, with one qualification admitting 97% of its applicants, four over 85%, one at 60%, two between 20% and 30%, and one at 6%. Two courses, however, are not statistically significant due to the very small number of students on the qualification – the 6% provider being one of them.

**5.26** Four Dispensing Optics qualifications required A Levels for entry. The average UCAS points offer data quoted includes only these qualifications. The other four qualifications require other qualifications, typically at GCSE level with practical experience also required.

- 5.27** There is some variance in the average UCAS tariff points offer made to students entering DO qualifications. The average UCAS offer was 46.8 points (approximately equivalent to EEE at A-Level); this compares to an average of 66.8 points (DDE) in 2020/21, and 36 points (DE/EE) in 2019/20.
- 5.28** The average cohort sizes across the qualifications were 34 students (18 in 2020/21; 45 in 2019/20) in year 1, 21 students (46 in 2020/21; 55 in 2019/20) in year 2, and 39 students (60 in 2020/21; 58 in 2019/20) in year 3. The size of individual DO qualification cohorts varies quite significantly: 0 to 191 (4 to 50 in 2020/21; 10 to 152 in 2019/20) in year 1, 5 to 74 (10 to 171 in 2020/21; 21 to 176 in 2019/20) in year 2, and 4 to 151 (38 to 174 in 2020/21; 7 to 213 in 2019/20) in year 3.
- 5.29** EDI data showed that 66% (63 in 2020/21; 65% in 2019/20) of DO students were female and 49% (48% in 2020/21; 53% in 2019/20) were white. There is evidence of local variation, probably reflecting the demography of the local population, with one provider reporting that almost 87% of its students were white, and another that over 53% of students were Asian. Most students are white females aged 21 to 24.
- 5.30** An average of 73.7% (79.7% in 2020/21; 87.7% in 2019/20) of students on DO qualifications progressed to the second year of the qualification. An average of 87.3% (87.4% in 2020/21; 91.4% in 2019/20) of all DO students progressed to the following year of DO qualifications, and an average of 93.9% (90.4% in 2020/21; 84.1% in 2019/20) of students successfully completed their qualifications.
- 5.31** The progression rates for DO qualifications is similar to OP qualifications.
- 5.32** Analysis of student attainment is difficult for DO qualifications because not all awards are classified in the same way (some use 'pass', 'merit', and 'distinction' grades) and some are not classified at all. An average of 94.1% (97.5% in 2020/21; 96.9% in 2019/20) of students obtained either a 2:2 or higher (for honours degrees), or a pass or higher (for non-honours qualifications).
- 5.33** By category<sup>2</sup>, the average score for DO qualifications in the National Student Survey (NSS) is above both the national average and the average for 'Subjects Allied to Medicine' (SATM) for all categories. The averages by category are illustrated in the chart below.

<sup>2</sup> The figures refer to the proportion (%) of students expressing satisfaction in each category of their university experience. An explanation of the category groupings is provided at Appendix 2.

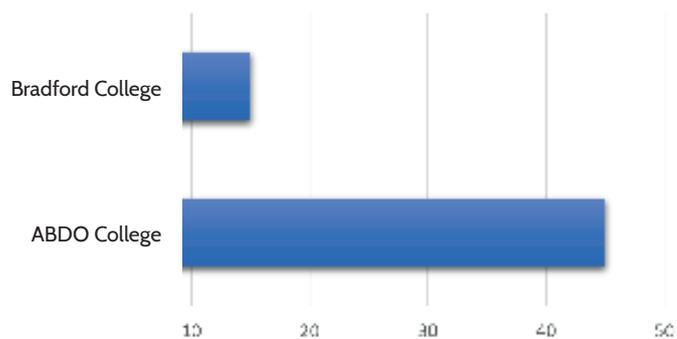
### National Student Survey by category



## Contact Lens Opticians

### Total Year 1 cohort data for Contact Lens Optics trainees in 2022-23 by provider

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to all contact lens optician (CLO) qualifications, excluding the CLO approved qualification offered by the ABDO.



### Themes

**5.34** One provider had by a comfortable distance most of all CLO trainees with 51 admitted in 2021/22, an 83% share. The combined cohort of trainees for 2021/22 (66) is slightly higher than the previous year (+8).

**5.35** The ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have affected the extent to which training and support is offered by optical businesses for staff and trainees.

### Key Data

Total students	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total students/Year 1 cohort	58	66	60

**Contact Lens Optics qualifications: key metrics**

	<b>Lowest</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Highest</b>
Applicants admitted	90.9%	91.0%	91.1%
Attainment – pass or higher	40.0%	46.3%	52.6%

**Observations**

- 5.36** All CLO qualifications admitted over 90% of their applicants. Recruitment to programmes increased in 2021/22 although one provider has not admitted students to its course since the previous year. Regarding cohort sizes, one provider recruited a cohort of 51 students, the other providers recruited 5 and 10 students.
- 5.37** CLO qualifications do not participate in the National Student Survey (NSS). Most qualifications indicated that they use alternative methods to obtain feedback and monitor student satisfaction with the qualification. These include internal surveys and face-to-face or online meetings allowing trainees to raise concerns or give feedback.
- 5.38** EDI data showed that most CLO students were white females aged 30-39. 60.7% of CLO students were aged 30 years or above, which is unsurprising for a qualification taken after initial qualification.
- 5.39** One CLO qualification is an approved qualification which leads directly to speciality registration. Most students, however, gain two GOC approved CLO qualifications either sequentially or simultaneously, staggering their theoretical and practical examinations, and taking different parts of the examination at different times, making it difficult to compare achievement.



## GOC Approved Qualifications offered by the College of Optometrists (Optometry and Independent Prescribing)

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to approved qualifications offered by the College of Optometrists in Optometry (the Scheme for Registration) and Independent Prescribing (Therapeutic Final Common Assessment).

### Themes

- 5.40** The pass rates submitted by the College of Optometrists were calculated for the 2021/22 academic year by its new customer relationship management system. The cohort-based numbers supplied in previous years were calculated on a different basis and are therefore not directly comparable.

### Key Data

Attainment data	Qualification	Pass rate
	Optometry (Scheme for Registration) (27-month)	95.5%
	Independent Prescribing (Therapeutic Final Common Assessment)	89.0%

### Observations

- 5.41** The Optometry Scheme for Registration is based on the GOC's current competencies contained in the 2015 handbook which utilises an assessment regime in which a number of competencies are assessed under direct observation, rather than focussing on broad capabilities. The provider has noted that some trainees had a negative experience of the Scheme and that more trainees are progressing through the Scheme too slowly.
- 5.42** The ETR has been cited as creating uncertainty as to how long the Scheme will remain in place. The provider noted that, once qualifications are adapted to meet the ETR, there will come a point where the Scheme is unviable to administer in its existing form. The provider considers there is currently a lack of clarity as to how a transition to the new ETR environment can be achieved whilst at the same time continuing to run the Scheme for those qualifications using the current competencies. The Sector Strategic Implementation Steering Group (SSISG), which was set up to address issues relating to implementation of the new requirements, is addressing issues relating to concurrency, funding, and the availability of learning and experience in practice.
- 5.43** In addition, the provider notes that employers have reported to them that international applicant trainees, who do not have identified trailing competencies, who are recommended by the GOC to the Scheme have capabilities which exceed what is required by the Scheme.
- 5.44** In terms of GOC future activity, we are reviewing our process for managing applications from optical professionals who have qualified outside of the UK or Switzerland following the approval by Council of the ETR in February 2021
- 5.45** The GOC is also keeping a close eye on whether any interim arrangements are required to support adaptation to the new ETR.

## GOC Approved Qualifications offered by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (Dispensing and Contact Lens Opticians)

Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to the approved qualifications delivered by Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) in Dispensing Optics and Contact Lens Optician. Data is inclusive of ABDO College, Bradford College, City & Islington College, Glasgow Caledonian University, and the University of Central Lancashire

### Themes

- 5.46** The pass rates submitted by ABDO were calculated on differing bases from academic qualification pass rates. A high percentage of Dispensing Optics trainees failed an element of the programme relating to submission of a portfolio. Most of these trainees re-submitted their portfolio outside of the 2021/22 AMR reporting year and were able to graduate in 2022.

### Key Data

Attainment data	Qualification	Pass rate
	Dispensing – Practical	30.0%
	Contact Lens – Practical	59.0%

- 5.47** As noted above, the ABDO's DO qualification reported a pass rate of 30.0% (53.0% in 2020/21; 43.8% in 2019/20) for the sittings of its examination
- 5.48** The CLO qualification reported a pass rate of 59.0% (49.0% in 2020/21; 49.0% in 2019/20).

### Observations

- 5.49** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced with intake figures returning to pre-pandemic figures. Admissions for Dispensing Optics have increased significantly by 160 to 289 students in 2021/22 and the Year 1 cohort figure for 2022/23 has risen to 329 students..
- 5.50** Meanwhile, the implementation of the ETR is cited as a risk leading to structural change in the sector. The provider notes that it will work closely with its education and training centres to provide support in developing new models of delivery and to ensure that its new syllabus for Dispensing Optics aligns with the ETR requirements, thereby ensuring that the qualification remains fit for purpose and parity of education experience ensues. The provider noted various concerns including lack of specificity within the high-level GOC education outcomes, which the sector sought to address through the development of indicative guidance, and potential for a wide variation in clinical experience.
- 5.51** These qualifications do not participate in the National Student Survey (NSS) but instead use alternative methods to capture and monitor student feedback on the qualifications such as issuing surveys to students following their exams.

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data

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Unless otherwise indicated, the comments in this section relate to all qualifications (OP, DO, IP, and CLO).

## Themes

- 6.1** This year we have enhanced and developed the EDI information we ask providers to submit in the annual return to include the use of EDI data and widening participation metrics. We will continue to develop our approach to EDI and the information that we seek as part of implementing the ETR.

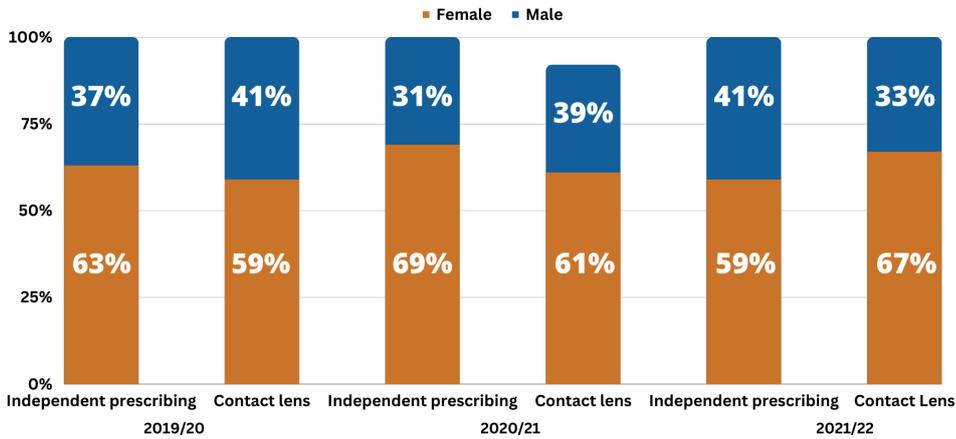
## Widening Participation

- 6.2** Many providers collect widening participation (WP) information pertaining to a student's ethnicity, gender, age group, academic and socio-economic background, religion, sexual orientation, first generation university student (or not), and refugee status.
- 6.3** On the whole WP information is made available to faculty, school and programme teams and is used to inform the development and enhancement of access and participation plans, and to inform policies relating to student support and wellbeing which may include supporting students who declare having a disability, promoting an inclusive learning environment and continuously improving WP activities..
- 6.4** Specific examples of WP activities include: analysing and addressing identified attainment gaps within the programme, providing access to bursary schemes (for example, for students with a low income, disability, having spent time in care etc), and the provision of alternative routes of entry to a qualification such as a foundation year or the acceptance of alternative qualifications such as the BTEC qualification.
- 6.5** Reasonable adjustments used by providers for specific individuals include time extensions to coursework and examinations (where appropriate), separate rooms for examinations, access to appropriate technology in examinations (such as a PC or laptop) and 1:1 support during teaching sessions. Generalised adjustments include the provision of transport around a campus (or between campuses), access to buildings, and avoiding placing assessments on days of religious festivals.

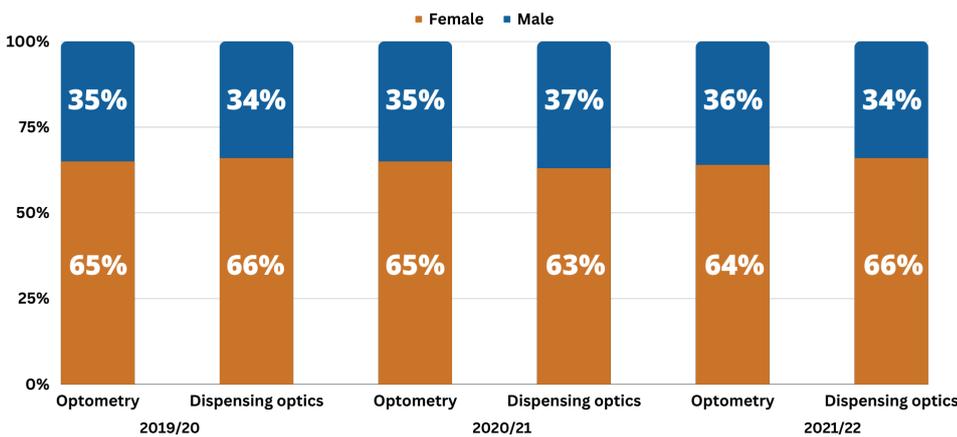
## Key Data

- 6.6** Data tables can be found in Appendix 1.
- 6.7 Gender:** All qualifications have more female than male students, similar to the figures reported in past years.

**Gender distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22**

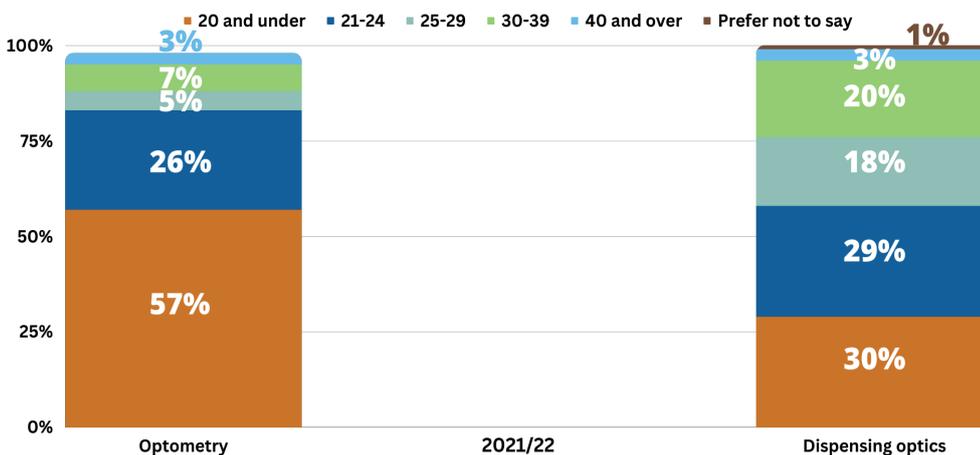


**Gender distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22**



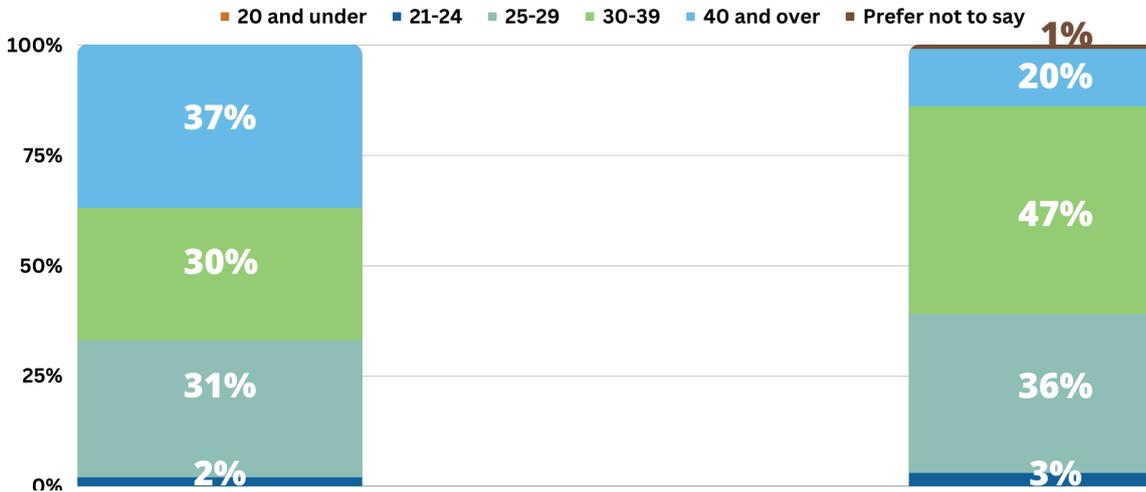
**6.8** Age: 57% of students (56% in 2020/21; 54% in 2019/20) on OP qualifications are aged 20 and under. Like past years, compared to OP qualifications, DO qualifications have a wider distribution of ages and a higher proportion of students aged 30 years and over; this reflects the larger proportion of mature students enrolling on part-time DO qualifications.

**Age distribution of students by programme type in 2021/22**



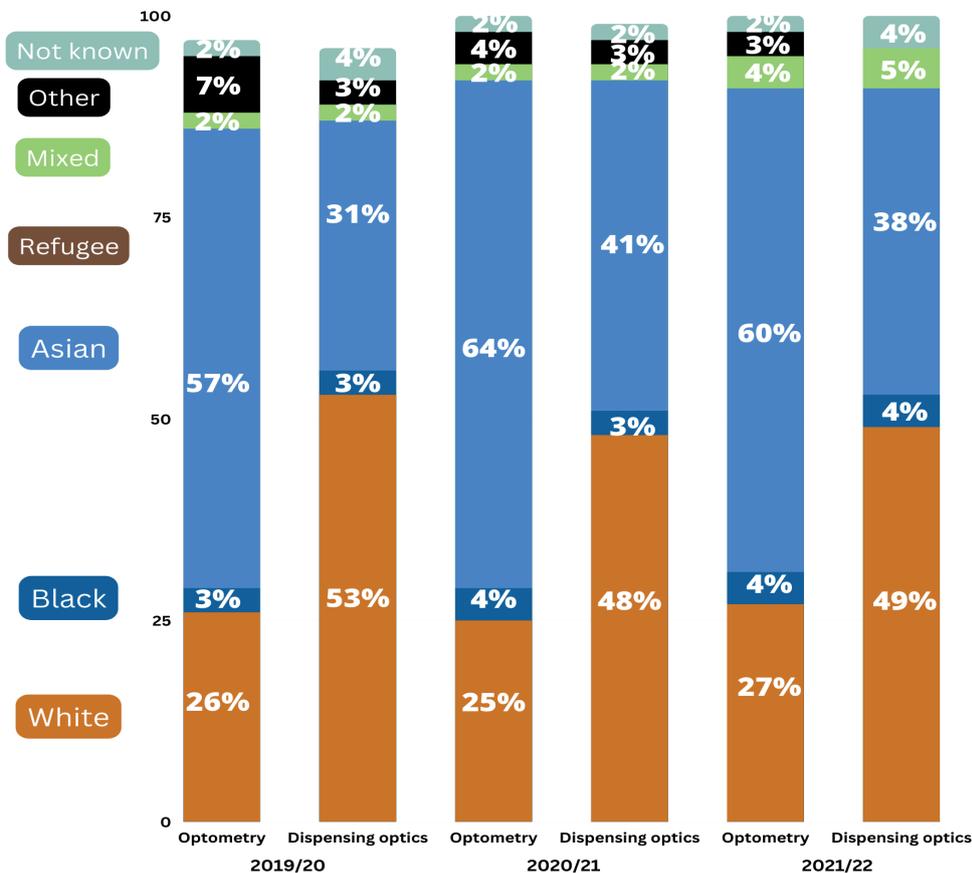
6.9 IP and CLO qualifications are currently open only to qualified practitioners and their age ranges are therefore dominated by students aged 30 and over. It is encouraging that, like in past years, over 30% of IP and CLO students are aged under 30; this shows these qualifications are attractive to newly-qualified practitioners.

Age distribution of students by programme type in 2021/22

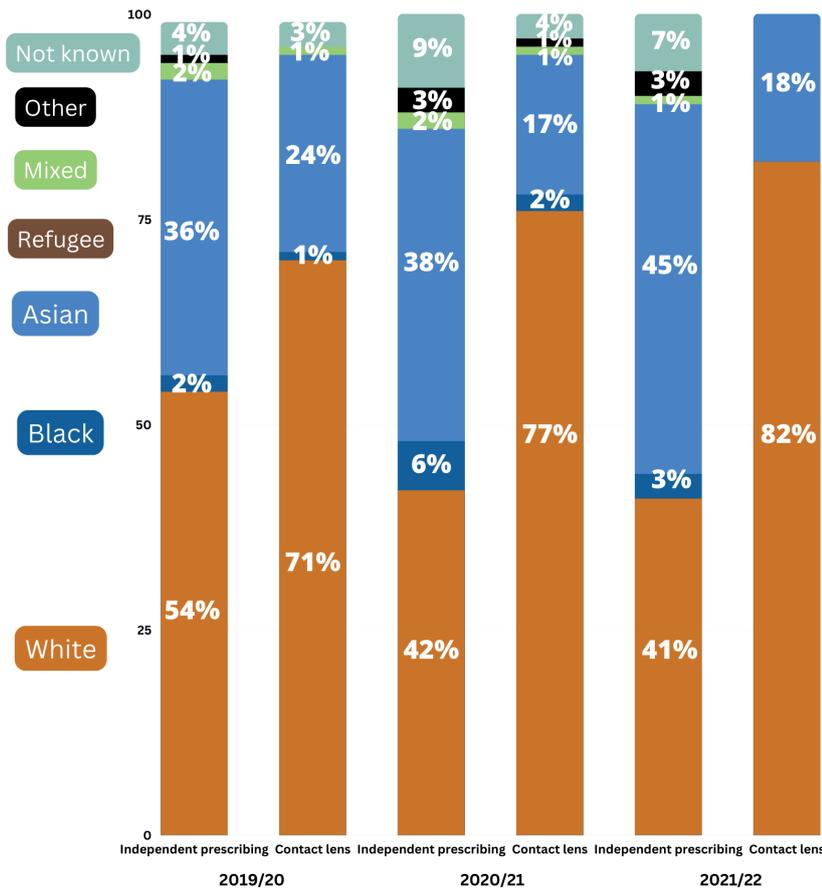


6.10 Ethnicity data is very similar to that of past years across all qualification types. Notably, while one-quarter of students on OP qualifications are of white ethnicity, this is the case for almost half of students on DO qualifications.

Ethnicity distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22

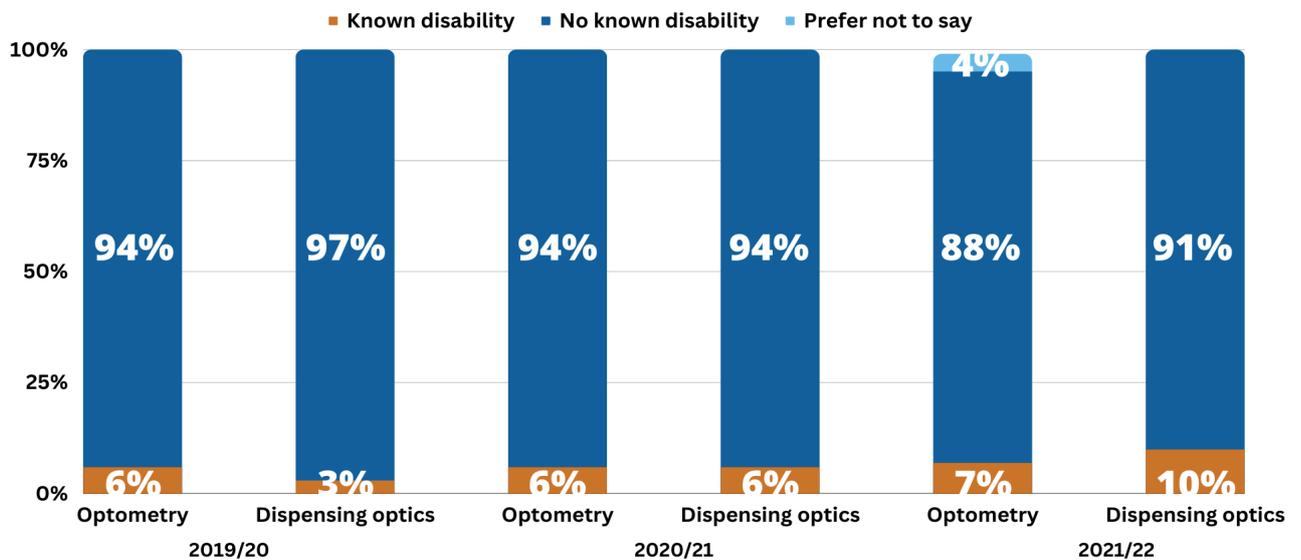


Ethnicity distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22

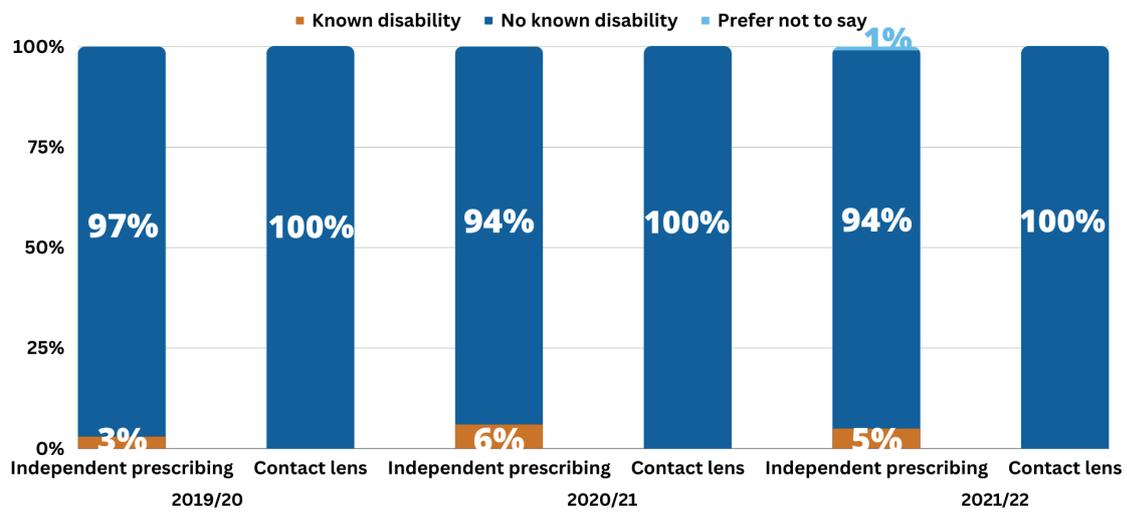


**6.11 Disabilities:** Optometry, Dispensing Optics, and Independent Prescribing qualifications have an average of 5-10% disabled students.

Disability distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22



### Disability distribution of students by programme type from 2019/20 to 2021/22



# Appendices

## Appendix One: Data Tables

Unless otherwise specified, the data reported below relates to the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022..Unless otherwise specified, the data reported below relates to 'academic' (non-professional association) qualifications.

### A.. Application Data

\*The admissions ratio does not infer the overall volume of individual applicants

	Admissions Ratio (Applications:Admissions)		UCAS Points Offer (equivalent)	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
All Qualifications	67.6%	25.8%	99.9	132.6
Optometry	21.5%	17.2%	134.0	136.0
Dispensing Optics	73.7%	73.8%	46.8	44.0
Independent Prescribing	84.2%	81.6%	N/A	N/A
Contact Lens Opticians	91.0%	91.0%	N/A	N/A

### B. Average Cohort Data

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Optometry	83	72	69	20
Dispensing Optics	34	21	39	N/A
Independent Prescribing	54	N/A	N/A	N/A
Contact Lens Opticians	22	N/A	N/A	N/A

### C. Student Average Progression

	Progression from 1st year	Progression to the following year	Students completing the qualification
Optometry	84.5%	84.1%	91.5%
Dispensing Optics	73.7%	87.3%	100%

**D. Student average attainment:  
Optometry,  
Dispensing Optics, and  
all qualifications**

	<b>Good Pass</b>	<b>Fail</b>
All qualifications	87.4%	2.4%
Optometry	95.8%	2.9%
Dispensing Optics	94.1%	1.9%

**E. Student average attainment:  
Independent Prescribing and  
Contact Lens Opticians**

	<b>Good Pass</b>	<b>Fail</b>
Independent Prescribing	92.9%	7.0%
Contact Lens Opticians	46.3%	43.7%

**F. Student average attainment:  
Professional Associations**

	<b>Good Pass</b>	<b>Fail</b>
Professional Association (Dispensing & Contact Lens Opticians)	44.5%	55.5%
Professional Association (Independent Prescribing & Optometry)	92.3%	6.9%

**G. National Student Survey – average satisfaction score by category**

	All Qualification	Optometry	Dispensing Optics	Subjects Allied to Medicine
Teaching	86.2%	84.1%	88.3%	77.8%
Learning Opportunities	84.1%	82.4%	85.8%	79.2%
Assessment & Feedback	73.2%	64.6%	81.8%	66.3%
Academic Support	84.4%	76.9%	91.9%	67.9%
Organisation & Management	77.8%	72.1%	83.6%	59.1%
Learning Resources	83.7%	81.2%	85.7%	79.6%
Learning Community	81.8%	81.3%	82.3%	67.9%
Student Voice	75.7%	70.7%	80.8%	63.0%
Student Union	57.0%	56.7%	57.3%	53.2%
Overall	89.1%	83.3%	91.0%	68.9%

**H. EDI – Average gender data**

	Female	Male
All qualifications	63.9%	36.2%
Optometry	64.5%	35.5%
Dispensing Optics	65.6%	34.4%
Independent Prescribing	58.6%	41.4%
Contact Lens Opticians	66.7%	33.3%

**I. EDI – Average age data**

	20 & under	21-24	25-29	30-39	40	Prefer not to say
All qualifications	34.7%	20.8%	16.1%	18.3%	9.7%	0.4%
Optometry	57.3%	26.4%	5.5%	7.1%	3.4%	0.4%
Dispensing Optics	29.9%	29.2%	18.0%	19.5%	2.7%	0.7%
Independent Prescribing	0.0%	2.2%	31.2%	30.1%	36.6%	0.0%
Contact Lens Opticians	0.0%	3.2%	36.0%	47.3%	13.3%	0.0%

**J. EDI – average disability data**

	Known Disability	No known Disability	Prefer not to say
All qualifications	6.8%	91.1%	2.0%
Optometry	7.5%	88.4%	3.4%
Dispensing Optics	9.5%	90.5%	0.0%
Independent Prescribing	4.9%	94.1%	1.0%
Contact Lens Opticians	0.0%	100%	0.0%

**K. EDI – Average ethnicity data**

	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Refugee	Other	Not known
All qualifications	40.6%	3.3%	47.3%	3.1%	0.0%	2.1%	3.4%
Optometry	27.0%	3.9%	59.9%	3.6%	0.2%	3.2%	21.1%
Dispensing Optics	48.9%	4.1%	37.9%	5.3%	0.0%	0.2%	3.8%
Independent Prescribing	40.6%	2.5%	45.2%	0.8%	0.0%	3.0%	7.5%
Contact Lens Opticians	87.1%	0.0%	18.3%	47.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

## Appendix Two: National Student Survey Categories

Question		Category
1	Staff are good at explaining things	Teaching
2	Staff have made the subject interesting	
3	The course is intellectually stimulating	
4	My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	
5	My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth	Learning Opportunities
6	My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics	
7	My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt	
8	The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	Assessment & Feedback
9	Marking and assessment has been fair	
10	Feedback on my work has been timely	
11	I have received helpful comments on my work	
12	I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	
13	I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course	Organisation & Management
14	Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	
15	The course is well organised and running smoothly	
16	The timetable works efficiently for me	
17	Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	Learning Resources
18	The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well	
19	The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well	
20	I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to	Learning Community
21	I feel part of a community of staff and students	
22	I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course	
23	I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course	Student Voice
24	Staff value students' views and opinions about the course	
25	It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on	
26	The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests	Overall
27	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course	

## Appendix Three: Caveats

- 1) The AMR process is in continuous development and we will make refinements and improvements for each year of the process. Significant changes will be required from the 2023/24 reporting year where qualifications will be delivered against both the existing handbooks and ETR.
- 2) The findings, analysis, and outcomes of this year's AMR process will be fed into the GOC Education Operations team's approval and quality assurance activities and used by the GOC Education Development team to develop policy and to inform implementation processes.
- 3) Please note that the findings outlined in this report are indicative and do not represent a formal position or policy of the GOC. The findings in this report should not be relied upon for advice or used for any other purpose and may not be representative.
- 4) The analysis and outcomes contained within this report are based solely upon the information and data as calculated and submitted by the qualifications. The GOC has not sought to externally verify the information and data submitted. The responsible officer for each qualification has attested that the information submitted in the AMR return gives a true and fair view of that qualification.
- 5) The information provided by each professional association qualification in relation to student attainment (assessment pass rates) has been calculated on different bases (i.e., the basis for each calculation has been different) from the other professional association qualifications and the academic qualifications.

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