

<b>ABDO College</b>
<b>GOC FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT</b>
<b>Fellowship Dispensing Diploma, Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing &amp; BSc (Hons) Ophthalmic Dispensing</b>
<b>20 &amp; 21 February 2024</b>

<b>Report confirmed by GOC</b>	<b>30 October 2024</b>
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## PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title(s)	Fellowship Dispensing Diploma, Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing & BSc (Hons) Ophthalmic Dispensing
Programme descriptions	<p><b>Fellowship Dispensing Diploma, Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing &amp; BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are required to be working in practice for a minimum of 30 hours per week under a General Optical Council (GOC) registered supervisor.</li> <li>• Teaching is delivered using a blended learning format that involves:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 32 course units studied by distance learning. Students are expected to study for a minimum of 15 hours per week.</li> <li>○ Four weeks block release each academic year for which students are required to attend ABDO College (the college) for face-to-face learning in a classroom setting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Students must remain members of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) and the GOC for the duration of their studies.</li> <li>• Students who have successfully completed their qualification with ABDO College, and then their qualifying exams with ABDO Examinations, (ABDOEx) receive an award from ABDOEx.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing &amp; BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing only:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These programmes are delivered in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). Students receive an award from the CCCU on successful completion of the BSc (Hons) degree.</li> <li>• Completion of the BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing is dependent on completing the two-year Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing.</li> <li>• The programmes on their own do not confer a licence to practice as a dispensing optician. Students must successfully complete most of the theory and all the practical examinations delivered by ABDOEx.</li> <li>• There are six, 20 credit, modules in each year of this course.</li> </ul>
Current approval status	Fully approved (FA)
Approved student numbers	360 across all DO programmes

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (EVP)	
Chair	Jane Andrews – Lay Chair member
Visitors	Gail Fleming – Lay member

	Brian McCotter – Optometrist member Mark Chatham – Contact Lens/Dispensing Optician member
<b>GOC representative</b>	Georgina Carter – Operations Manager (Education & CPD)
<b>Observers</b>	Steve Brooker – Director of Regulatory Strategy

## 1.4 Purpose of the visit

**Visit type** FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT

The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit was to:

1. Review ABDO College's Fellowship Dispensing Diploma, Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing & BSc (Hons) Ophthalmic Dispensing programmes (programmes) to ensure they meet the requirements as listed in the *GOC's Guidelines for the Approval & Quality Assurance of: Routes to GOC Registration for Dispensing Opticians (2011)* (handbook) and the *GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Document-List of Requirements* (list of requirements).

Please note:

- In cases where there is a discrepancy between the handbook and the list of requirements, the handbook takes precedence.
- The programme was reviewed against all requirements, even those that had been deemed met during previous visits.

This visit took place in-person.

## 1.5 Programme history

Date	Event type	Overview
10/02/2021	Visit	A full approval quality assurance visit took place.
09/09/2021	Change	The GOC noted that students who are self-isolating during block teaching weeks will be taught online.
06/10/2023	Administration	A full approval quality assurance visit was scheduled to take place on 20 & 21 February 2024.
12/10/2023	Event	The provider notified the GOC of Canterbury Christ Church University's withdrawal of the FD/BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programmes for new students.
12/10/2023	Event	The GOC was notified of the resignation of the College's Principal.

## PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes	
<p>The panel recommended two new conditions, with three requirements deemed unmet, and offered two recommendations. They also offered one commendation. The Executive escalated one recommendation to a condition. As a result, three new conditions were set, with four requirements deemed unmet, one recommendation is set, and one commendation is offered.</p>	
Summary of recommendations to the GOC	
<b>Previous conditions – met/unmet</b>	<p>All previous conditions are <b>MET</b>.</p> <p>Details regarding the previous conditions are set out in section 2.2.</p>
<b>New conditions</b>	<p>Four requirements are deemed <b>UNMET</b> and <b>three</b> conditions are set.</p> <p>Details regarding the conditions are set out in <b>Part 3</b>.</p>
<b>New recommendations</b>	<p><b>One</b> recommendation is offered.</p> <p>Details regarding the recommendation are set out in Part 3.</p>
<b>Commendations</b>	<p><b>One</b> commendation is offered.</p> <p>See part 3 for more information.</p>
<b>Actual student numbers</b>	<p>2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 1: 156</li> <li>• Year 2: 190</li> <li>• Year 3: 176</li> </ul>
<b>Approval/next visit</b>	<p>The programme, in its current form, is no longer admitting any new cohorts of students because ABDO College became a centre of ABDO Exams as part of their adapted qualification (in line with the new GOC's new Education and Training requirements – 'ETR') in September 2023. During this transition period between the two sets of GOC standards, another visit may be scheduled in line with our current and/or future quality assurance policies, as deemed appropriate.</p>
<b>Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g. when students are in, hospital, audit etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching out of the current programme, with the last cohort of students entering the programme in the 2022/23 academic year.</li> <li>• The last cohort of students is due to complete year 3 in July 2025.</li> </ul>

2.2 Previous conditions		
The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of Click or tap to enter a date.		
Requirement number	Condition number and description	Status

<b>A6.2</b>	<p>1. The provider must submit a revised risk register/assessment that provides a realistic appraisal of all the material risks currently facing the GOC approved programmes delivered by the College including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the financial sustainability of the programmes from now until the end of academic year 2021-22.</li> <li>• present and projected student numbers.</li> <li>• the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 emergency including the postponement of student assessments and furloughing of staff.</li> </ul> <p>This risk register/assessment should include evidence of how the risks will be mitigated and any contingency plans that have been put in place.</p>	This condition was deemed <b>MET</b> by the executive prior to this visit taking place and was not reviewed by the EVP at this visit.
<b>D4.3</b>	The provider must review, and strengthen, its existing tutor selection and tutor training & mentoring procedures and implement a process that minimises the variation in marking standards and support between tutors.	This condition was deemed <b>MET</b> by the executive prior to this visit taking place and was not reviewed by the EVP at this visit.

## 2.3 Previous recommendations

The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of Click or tap to enter a date.

Description	Comments
The panel suggests the implementation of a student committee & student representative system as ways of strengthening current feedback and evaluation processes.	The panel identified that further consideration can be given to this recommendation and link it to condition 2 set at this 2024 visit.
The College is asked to consider formalising its feedback processes to create a feedback structure for its tutors, supervisors, and academic staff	The panel identified that further consideration can be given to this recommendation and link it to condition 2 set at this 2024 visit.
The panel suggests that the College continues with the revalidation process for the BSc (Hons) and foundation degree programmes.	The panel acknowledged that this recommendation is no longer applicable with the programme being taught out in its current form, in line with the implementation of the new ETR.

## 2.4 Non-applicable requirements

The EVP recommends that some requirements be deemed fully or partially non-applicable to the programme at this stage due to its structure and level and the differing, but

overlapping, roles and responsibilities of ABDO College and ABDO Examinations (ABDO Ex) for example:

- ABDOEx awards the Fellowship of British Dispensing Opticians (FBDO).
- ABDOEx is responsible for the supervised practice and ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision.
- ABDO College provides the theory aspect of the route to registration.

Additionally, the panel recommends that some requirements be deemed non-applicable as the programme is not under provisional approval.

A1.3	Provisional approval must be in place prior to advertising the qualification and recruiting the first cohort of students.
D3.9	Appropriate contractual arrangements for student placements must be in place.
D3.10	Students, regardless of mode of training, must complete a period of supervised pre-qualification experience amounting to no fewer than 1600 hours, in order to register as a qualified dispensing optician.
D3.11	A set of defined tasks must be successfully undertaken and evidenced with detailed case records presented in the portfolio (see relevant competencies and patient experience requirements).
D3.12	A record must be kept of the full evidence of the dispensing experience gained so as to demonstrate that the required total numbers of frame fittings, adjustments and verification of spectacles have been completed at the appropriate stage in the training programme.
D3.13	The students' practical experience and PBL must include access to unselected patients with a wide range of ages, ocular conditions and refractive status.
D3.14	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain instruction, demonstration and supervision by experienced registered practitioners in general and specialist practice settings.
D3.15	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain small group practical instruction which incorporates student observation, practitioner demonstration and direct student participation.
D3.16	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain specific experience relating to low vision and paediatric dispensing.

## PART 3 – CONDITIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

**Conditions** are applied to training and assessment providers if there is evidence that the GOC requirements are not met.

**Recommendations** indicate enhancements that can be made to a programme, these may not be directly linked to compliance with GOC requirements.

### 3.1 Conditions set at this visit

The unmet requirements for this visit are set out below along with the conditions that are required to meet the requirements.

<b>D2.1</b>	The education and training facilities, infrastructure and staffing must be sufficient to deliver and maintain the route to registration.
<b>Condition 1</b>	The provider is required to submit evidence to show that processes are in place to ensure that issues and concerns raised by students completing the bachelor's degree are sufficiently processed and responded to by CCCU until the teach out process is complete.
<b>Date due</b>	<b>Wednesday 20 November 2024</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Throughout the visit the panel heard that the relationship between CCCU and ABDO College was not being sufficiently maintained to ensure that the remaining students competing the bachelor's degree had the support required to support successful progress to the next stage of their route to registration.</p> <p>As such, the provider is required to submit evidence to demonstrate that there are processes in place at CCCU, as well as between CCCU and ABDO College, to ensure that concerns and issues raised by current degree students are responded to in a timely manner. This evidence should demonstrate that these processes will be in place, and adhered to, until the teach out of the bachelor's degree is complete.</p>

<b>D5.1</b>	A robust quality assurance framework (e.g. a programme committee, staff/student committee, formal board of examiners, quinquennial review process etc) must be in place.
<b>D5.2</b>	The provider must have effective feedback procedures.
<b>Condition 2</b>	The provider is required to submit evidence that they have developed mechanisms for stakeholders to feedback on the course design; introduced systematic methods to collate, analyse, and action feedback received; and developed mechanisms to inform stakeholders on how feedback has been reviewed and actioned.
<b>Date due</b>	<b>Wednesday 4 December 2024</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>As part of the pre-visit documentation, and through conversations at the visit, the panel were informed that feedback from some stakeholders is being collected, but not systematically collected from all stakeholders. The panel heard that when it is collected, there are not sufficient formal processes in place to review and assess the feedback, nor to convey to stakeholders how their feedback is actioned.</p> <p>As such, the provider is required to submit evidence to demonstrate that a formal feedback process has been developed. This should ensure that feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, supervisors, and</p>



	tutors) is routinely collected, appropriately reviewed, its value considered in line with course design and the teaching out of the current programmes, and actions taken are relayed back to stakeholders.
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<b>D1.2</b>	The programme must include a period of supervised practice-based learning (PBL), evidenced by a reflective portfolio.
<b>Condition 3</b>	The provider is required to submit evidence to demonstrate that student reflection is a taught element of the Diploma programme, and that reflective learning is documented.
<b>Date due</b>	<b>Wednesday 4 December 2024</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>As part of the pre-visit documentation, and throughout the visit, the panel were informed that reflective learning was not an integral part of the 2015 syllabus and was only formally taught to students on the BSc route, as it is part of their academic requirements to obtain a BSc degree. The panel were disappointed to hear that reflective learning was therefore not an integral part of learning for Diploma and Foundation Degree students. The panel recognise that the programmes in their current format are being taught out, in line with the new ETR.</p> <p>This was escalated to a condition by the Executive as a handbook requirement must be met by providers. The executive notes that the programmes, in their current format, are being taught out, however the provider is still required to demonstrate how meeting this requirement has been considered and reviewed for the handbook qualifications.</p>

### 3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit

The EVP offers the following recommendations to the provider.

<b>D2.1</b>	The education and training facilities, infrastructure and staffing must be sufficient to deliver and maintain the route to registration
<b>Recommendation 1</b>	The panel recommends that the individuals in course leadership positions have clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Conversations throughout visit highlighted that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the responsibilities and accountabilities of senior members of the programme team. It was also evident that these accountabilities and responsibilities were not formalised and, therefore, that the governance structure was not entirely clear.</p> <p>As such, the panel recommend that the quality assurance framework is formalised and implemented, that named individuals for each element of the programmes are clearly named, and that accountabilities and responsibilities of senior programme team are documented and socialised. This is to ensure clarity with all stakeholders (including staff, students, tutors, supervisors and CCCU).</p>

### 3.3 Commendations made at this visit

The panel commends the enthusiasm and resilience demonstrated by the programme team.