

**Association of British Dispensing Opticians**

**GOC FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT**

**Certificate in Contact Lens Practice (FBDO CL)**

**Final head office visit - 16 and 17 February 2022.**

**Exam Board attendance – 9 February 2022.**

**Practical exam observations – 18 January 2022.**

**Report confirmed by GOC**

**09 September 2022**

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## PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
<b>Programme title</b>	Contact Lens Certificate.
<b>Programme description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Certificate in Contact Lens Practice requires students to be FBDO qualified, GOC registered and ABDO members for the duration of study. Students must be working at least one day per week in a Trainee Contact Lens Optician capacity under the supervision of a GOC registered Contact Lens Optician or Optometrist.</li> <li>• ABDO College delivers the teaching and learning of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice as a blended programme. Bradford College delivers the teaching and learning of the Certificate in Contact Lens practice as a day release course, with formative assessment embedded into the programme.</li> </ul>
<b>Current approval status</b>	Fully approved (FA)
<b>Approved student numbers</b>	N/A (ABDO Exams is an awarding body).

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (EVP)	
<b>Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alan Kershaw, Lay Chair.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gail Fleming, Lay Member.</li> <li>• Pam McClean, Optometrist, and Independent Prescriber.</li> <li>• Alexander Gorman, Dispensing Optician and Contact Lens Optician.</li> <li>• Mark Chatham, Dispensing Optician and Contact Lens Optician.</li> </ul>
<b>GOC representative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaun de Riggs, Approval and Quality Assurance Officer.</li> </ul>

1.4 Purpose of the visit	
Visit type	FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
<p>The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit was to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review ABDO Exams' Contact Lens (programme) to ensure it meets the requirements as listed in the GOC's <i>Contact Lens Handbook 2007</i> and the <i>GOC Education A&amp;QA-Supplementary Documents-List of Requirements</i> (Contact Lens Requirements).</li> <li>2. Consider whether the programme sufficiently meets the GOC's requirements. Review whether the evidence submitted in support of conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 (set at the last visit meeting on 12 and 13 January 2017), is sufficient for these actions to be deemed met.</li> </ol> <p>Due to the ongoing COVID-19 emergency this visit took place remotely.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event type	Overview
12/01/2017	Visit	Two-day visit to observe Contact Lens examinations at Aston University's Department of Vision Sciences. <b>Six conditions</b> were set at this visit (see section 2.2 of this report).
02/02/2017	Event	Visit to observe the ABDO Examinations Exam Board meeting.
14/02/2017	Visit	Visit to ABDO Examinations Head Office to review past exam papers and conduct an audit trail of practice visits.
01/03/2017	Administration	A series of telephone interviews (between 1 and 30 March 2017) with supervisors and candidates sampled by the Visitors from lists supplied by ABDO Examinations.
18/01/2022	Visit	Sub Panel visit to observe Contact Lens examinations at ABDO's National Resource Centre in Birmingham.
09/02/2022	Event	Sub Panel observation of the ABDO Examinations Exam Board meeting.

## PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

<b>2.1 Visit outcomes</b>	
The Panel recommended that the full approval of ABDO Exams can be continued. The EVP set two conditions, provided six recommendations, and offered three commendations to the programme.	
<b>Summary of recommendations to the GOC</b>	
<b>Previous conditions – met</b>	<p>The EVP deemed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• six previous conditions <b>MET</b>.</li> </ul> <p>Details regarding the previous conditions are set out in section <b>2.2</b>.</p>
<b>New conditions</b>	<p>The EVP recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>two</b> requirements are deemed as unmet.</li> <li>• <b>two</b> conditions are set</li> </ul> <p>Details regarding the conditions are set out in <b>Part 3</b>.</p>
<b>New recommendations</b>	<p>The EVP recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>six</b> recommendations are provided.</li> </ul> <p>Details regarding the recommendations are set out in <b>Part 3</b>.</p>
<b>Commendations</b>	<p>The EVP offers <b>three</b> commendations.</p> <p>Details regarding the commendations set out in <b>Part 3</b>.</p>
<b>Actual student numbers</b>	83 candidates (includes intake figures from ABDO College and Bradford College combined).
<b>Next visit</b>	In accordance with the Education Team's quality assurance processes and procedures, the next visit will be assessed according to the evidence submitted for the conditions outlined in Part 3 of this report and annual monitoring reports submitted to the GOC (or any other arising factors which indicate that a visit should take place).
<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 Panel request meeting with a sufficient range of ABDO Contact Lens Exams candidates and Supervisors.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Previous conditions

The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of **12 and 13 January 2017**.

Condition number and description	Status
1. To conduct a review of the current Certificate in Contact Lens Practice programme that addresses the following:	As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b> .
2. Further development of clear mapping to all GOC Core Competencies, thus making explicit to candidates and other stakeholders the structure of the Contact Lens programme as a route to registration. The mapping should include reference to competencies for professional conduct and communication in the context of Contact Lens practice.	As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b> .
3. The overall strategy for assessment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reflection of contemporary practice in examinable content.</li><li>• the structure and content of theory and practical examinations, to avoid unnecessary duplication of competence assessment.</li><li>• indicators of incremental achievement during placement learning/supervised practice.</li></ul> the need for more engagement with candidates to prepare for practical examinations.	As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b> .
4. To give a more significant and defined role to supervisors, including signing-off hours and case records completed by candidates, thus providing assurance of appropriate preparation for practical examinations.	As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b> .

<p>5. Establishment of formal agreements with training providers regarding placements with supervisors for the purposes of strengthening candidates' practice-based learning. Through these agreements or otherwise, to provide more support and practical training for supervisors.</p>	<p>As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b>.</p>
<p>6. The facilitation of an audit trail clearly showing how each candidate has developed and is fit to be assessed as competent at the time of entry to an examination, thus quality assuring the sign-off of competence.</p>	<p>As a result of discussions held, and evidence submitted (including the pre-visit documentation) prior to this visit, the EVP recommends this condition is deemed <b>MET</b>.</p>

## 2.3 Previous recommendations

The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of **12 and 13 January 2017**.

Description	Comments
<p>1. To conduct a review of the current Certificate in Contact Lens Practice programme that addresses the following:</p>	<p>The Panel deemed that this recommendation had been addressed by ABDO Exams.</p>
<p>2. Establish greater engagement and communication with Contact Lens training institutions, to ensure a 'joined-up' programme delivery for candidates.</p>	<p>See recommendation 6 at Part 3 of this report.</p>
<p>3. To minimise organisational risk to the programme by widening staff involvement in and responsibility for the management, operation, and administration of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice.</p>	<p>The Panel deemed that this recommendation had been addressed by ABDO Contact Lens Exams.</p>
<p>4. To take steps to improve equity for candidates attending Practical Examinations, by ensuring consistent and accurate timetabling and providing clear, comprehensive, and consistent preparatory information.</p>	<p>The Panel deemed that this recommendation had been addressed by ABDO Contact Lens Exams.</p>
<p>5. To further develop analysis of trends in examination results, formally reporting and discussing these with all stakeholders, and ensuring</p>	<p>See condition 2 at Part 3 of this report.</p>

accurate and consistent appraisal of results.	
6. To clarify the rationale for the criterion of 224 minimum contact lens practice hours required of candidates, to ensure that this adequately meets programme needs.	The Panel deemed that this recommendation had been addressed by ABDO Contact Lens Exams.

## 2.4 Non-applicable requirements

The EVP recommends that some requirements be deemed non-applicable to the programme at this stage due to its structure and level and the differing, but overlapping, roles and responsibilities of ABDO Examinations:

- ABDO Examinations is responsible for the supervised practice (i.e., not the delivery of teaching) and ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision.

C1.2	Each taught element, regardless of delivery mode, must integrate theory and practice.
C1.8	Teaching and learning must incorporate a range of contemporary practices relevant to the needs of the discipline and the needs of students (incorporating new developments in educational technology).
C1.9	Teaching and learning must incorporate practical and non-practical elements.
C1.10	A variety of teaching and learning methods must be used to deliver the programme.



## 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>A3.1</b>	Providers must have a robust recognition of prior learning/accreditation of prior learning (RPL/ALP) policy and associated procedures in place, which are quality assured and align with GOC policy.
<b>Condition 1</b>	ABDO Contact Lens Exams must devise and implement a RPL policy.
<b>Date due</b>	Friday 2 September 2022.
<b>Rationale</b>	Having reviewed the pre-visit documentation submitted to the GOC and discussions during the meetings at the visit, the EVP did not have sight of any evidence that ABDO has a RPL policy in operation for the programme. The EVP advised ABDO of this at the closing meeting of the visit and explained that this condition is required to ensure that there is a robust RPL policy in place that is quality assured and aligns with GOC policy.

<b>C4.1</b>	Assessments must measure achievement appropriately.
<b>Condition 2</b>	ABDO Contact Lens Exams must review standard setting for the programme and the reasons for the failure rates, including differential attainment.
<b>Date due</b>	Friday 2 September 2022.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>During discussions with the Exams team at the visit, the EVP heard that (with the current model/system being used) it was possible for a candidate to pass one of the station assessments in the practical examinations whilst potentially risking harm to a patient at the same time. Consequently, the EVP advised ABDO at the closing meeting of the visit that this did not provide the Panel with full assurance that the appropriate level of standard setting for assessments was being applied.</p> <p>Having reviewed the pre-visit documentation submitted to the GOC, the EVP also discussed the failure rates for the ABDO Contact Lens Exams at the meeting as it was observed that there did not appear to be any definitive factors to indicate the reasons for this. Without a rationale for this, the EVP were concerned that this issue, and any contributory factors for it, could not be adequately addressed by ABDO.</p> <p>In the closing meeting, the EVP advised ABDO that this condition is required to ensure that the review of standard setting and failure rates for the ABDO Contact Lens examinations is investigated to facilitate any necessary changes being implemented to ensure that assessments measure achievement robustly and appropriately.</p>

<b>3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit</b>	
The EVP offers the following recommendations to the provider.	
<b>A2.1</b>	Providers must demonstrate a commitment to widening participation and make appropriate arrangements for students with different needs, including the arrangements for assisting the induction of outcomes for overseas students and for students with disabilities.
<b>Recommendation 1</b>	ABDO Exams should collate and review robust diversity and inclusion data to demonstrate a commitment to widening participation and making appropriate arrangements for students with different needs.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Having reviewed the pre-visit documentation and discussions during the meetings at the visit, the Panel did not have sight of any cumulative data or trends with regards to the monitoring of differential attainment and the diversity of the Examiners of the Contact Lens Certificate Examinations.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that in order to provide assurance regarding the monitoring of differential attainment and the diversity of Examiners for the Contact Lens Certificate Examinations, ABDO Exams collates and reviews meaningful diversity and inclusion data to demonstrate a commitment to widening participation and making appropriate arrangements for students with different needs.</p> <p>The Panel decided to provide this recommendation as it did not deem a requirement unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>
<b>A4.1</b>	Providers must ensure students undertaking education, training (including practical experience), assessment for the purposes of becoming an optometrist or dispensing optician or gaining a GOC-registrable specialty are registered with the GOC for the duration of their training.
<b>A4.2</b>	Providers must ensure that no students whose registration has lapsed are allowed to undergo education, training, take any examinations or assessments towards an optical qualification, carry out any restricted functions, or work with the public until they have been restored to the GOC register.
<b>A4.3</b>	Providers must take reasonable steps to support students with their GOC registration and assure the GOC of their due diligence in confirming that all of their students are registered.
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	ABDO Exams undertakes an additional check on students' registration status before they undertake examinations.
<b>Rationale</b>	At the meeting with administrative and technical support staff during the visit, the Panel heard that checks were undertaken to review the ABDO membership and GOC registration status of Contact Lens Certificate exam candidates when they applied to sit the exams.

	<p>The Panel recommends that in order to provide assurance regarding the GOC registration status of these candidates throughout the duration of their training, ABDO Exams also undertakes an additional check on students' registration status before they undertake examinations.</p> <p>The Panel decided to provide this recommendation as it was not deemed that a requirement was unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>
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<b>C1.13</b>	There must be sufficient feedback provided to students to enable maximum learning and achievement.
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	ABDO should operationalise Contact Lens specific revision sessions for students undertaking the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>During the visit, the Panel heard that whilst there were revision sessions for Dispensing Examinations candidates, there was not similar provision for candidates undertaking the Contact Lens Examinations at present. However, the Panel were advised by ABDO Exams that it is a current objective to run a Contact Lens specific revision course.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that Contact Lens specific revision sessions are provided to students so that sufficient feedback is provided to them at formative assessment stages, and to facilitate maximum learning and achievement for candidates.</p> <p>The Panel decided to make this recommendation as it was not deemed that a requirement was unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>

<b>C2.1</b>	Staffing provision must be appropriate and sufficient for the proper delivery of the course.
<b>Recommendation 4</b>	ABDO should devise and implement appropriate and robust contingency and succession planning for the selection of examiners.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Having reviewed the pre-visit documentation and discussions during the visit, the Panel were not provided with evidence that adequate contingency and succession planning was in place for the selection of examiners for the ABDO Contact Lens Exams.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that ABDO Exams devises and implements appropriate and robust contingency and succession</p>

	<p>planning for the selection of examiners so that staffing provision is effectively monitored and sufficient for the Contact Lens Exams.</p> <p>The Panel decided to provide this recommendation as it was not deemed that a requirement was unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>
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<b>C2.4</b>	Supervisors must be familiar with current assessment requirements, guidelines, and regulations.
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	ABDO Exams should devise and provide adequate and appropriate training for prospective Supervisors.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>During the Introduction meeting at the visit, the Chief Examiner for the Contact Lens Exams advised the Panel that there were peer discussions and meetings for Supervisors and that it is a current objective to provide Supervisors with training in the future. However, the Panel were not provided with any evidence that this had been formalised.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that ABDO Exams devises and provides adequate and appropriate training for prospective Supervisors to ensure that they are familiar with current assessment requirements, guidelines, and regulations.</p> <p>The Panel decided to provide this recommendation as it was not deemed that a requirement was unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>

<b>C3.1</b>	The provider(s) must work in close collaboration with each other to provide an integrated and progressive learning experience to the student, to enable the staged achievement of the core competencies required for registration.
<b>Recommendation 6</b>	ABDO Exams devises and formalises joined up working agreements with education providers and other relevant external stakeholders.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The Panel heard that there were good working relationships (and communication) between ABDO Exams, the respective Contact Lens Certificate education providers, and other external stakeholders. However, the Panel did not have sight of any joined up working agreements that formalised this engagement.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that ABDO Exams formalises joined up working agreements with education providers and other relevant external stakeholders to facilitate an integrated and progressive</p>

	<p>learning experience to the student, and to enable the staged achievement of the core competencies required for registration.</p> <p>The Panel decided to provide this recommendation as it was not deemed that a requirement was unmet but considered that it would support the enhancement and development of the programme overall.</p>
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### **3.3 Commendations made at this visit**

The EVP wishes to commend the following areas:

- The COVID-19 measures that were well implemented by ABDO Contact Lens Exams and kept the practical exams running during a very challenging time.
- The enthusiasm and industriousness of the leadership of the ABDO Contact Lens Exams.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative and technical support for ABDO Contact Lens Exams.