

University of the West of England
GOC Full Approval Quality Assurance Visit
BSc (Hons) Optometry
19 and 20 June 2024

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PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title	BSc (Hons) Optometry
Programme description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BSc (Hons) Optometry programme (the programme) is a three-year, full-time programme that adheres to the standard academic year. University of the West of England (the University) delivers the theory element of the route to registration including all stage one competencies. Upon successful completion of the programme students can progress onto the Scheme for Registration delivered by the College of Optometrists (CoO). The CoO is responsible for the clinical placement, all stage two competencies and the qualifying examinations. This programme has been noted for adaptation in accordance with the new education and training requirements. The adapted MSci programme is scheduled to begin in September 2024.
Current approval status	Fully approved (FA)
Approved student numbers	60 per cohort

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (EVP)	
Chair	Gail Fleming – Lay Chair
Visitors	Pam McClean – Independent Prescribing Optometrist Maryna Hura – Dispensing Optician Graeme Stevenson – Dispensing Optician/Contact Lens Optician John Dean – Lay member
GOC representative	Lamine Kherroubi – Education Officer (Operations)

1.4 Purpose of the visit	
Visit type	FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
Visit format	PHYSICAL
<p>The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit was to review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> University of West of England’s BSc (Hons) Optometry programme against the requirements, as listed in <i>the GOC’s Temporary Accreditation and Quality Assurance Handbook: Routes to Registration in Optometry 2020</i> (handbook) and <i>the GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Document-List of Requirements</i> (list of requirements). <p>This visit took place physically.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event type	Overview
10/06/2021	Visit	GOC visit – recommendation to Council that the programme should be granted full approval, with seven

		recommendations and one commendation provided by the EVP.
18/03/22	Change request	<p>COVID-19 Temporary Changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teaching delivery and Written examinations for both level 1 and 2 2. Patient episodes and Placements for level 1 and 2 <p>This was addressed and closed by the GOC.</p>
06/06/2022	Event	<p>GOC requested an explanation for rate of first-class degrees awarded / distinctions with regard to the BSc (Hons) Optometry course at UWE which was reported as 43.5% for the reporting year.</p> <p>This was addressed and closed by the GOC.</p>
22/07/2022	Change request	<p>The provider requested that the use of the temporary handbook was allowed to continue for academic year 2022-23 due to the increased absence of patients and students due to illness, leading to reduced clinical episodes.</p> <p>This was addressed and closed by the GOC.</p>

PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes	
The panel recognises that, at the time of the visit, the programme team was in the process of finalising the MSci qualification in line with the GOC's new Education and Training Requirements (ETRs). The panel set no new conditions and made three recommendations. The panel is satisfied that the programme should continue to be fully approved.	
Summary of recommendations to the GOC	
Previous conditions	No previous conditions.
New conditions	No new conditions are set.
New recommendations	Three recommendations are offered. Details regarding the recommendations are set out in Section 3 .
Commendations	One commendation is offered. Details regarding the commendations are set out in section 3 .
Actual student numbers	For 23/24 academic year Year 1 – 58 of which 4 are repeating students Year 2 – 76 of which 15 are repeating students Year 3 – 60 of which 5 are repeating students
Next visit	The programme, in its current form, is no longer admitting any new cohorts of students because the adapted qualification (in line with the new GOC's new Education and Training requirements – 'ETR') will commence in September 2024. 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.
Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g., when students are in, hospital, audit etc.	Should a further visit be scheduled, it should factor in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time to speak to students from all cohorts. • time to speak to external examiners. • the implementation of the GOC's new ETRs.

2.2 Previous conditions	
The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of 11 October 2018	
No previous conditions.	

2.3 Previous recommendations		
The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of 11 October 2018		
Ref.	Description	Comments
1	To consider reviewing the Accredited Prior Learning (APL) policy for the Optometry programme to ensure proportionate access/opportunity for dispensing opticians or contact lens opticians to have their prior learning taken into account when being admitted on the programme.	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.
2	The Optometry programme would benefit from the exploration and development of opportunities for	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were

	enhanced multi-disciplinary learning, with greater participation and involvement for programme students, e.g., shared care schemes, in line with the expansion of primary care within optometry, including safeguarding issues, etc.	satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.
3	The Programme team are encouraged to reflect on assessment methods that needed to be implemented during the pandemic to ensure that a diverse, robust, and sustainable range of assessment methods is adopted.	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.
4	To give due consideration to resuming the bi-annual Stakeholder Forum to ensure the continuation of stakeholder engagement and to inform the future development of the Optometry programme.	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.
5	To ensure that External Examiners have ample opportunity to review all assessments, including clinical portfolios for the Optometry programme.	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.
6	The EVP considered that the Optometry programme would benefit from the External Examiners achieving improved access, participation, and contribution to oversight within the strategic management structure.	This recommendation is addressed through the new recommendations made at the visit on 19 and 20 June 2024. Please see Section 3.2.
7	In the context of the GOC's Education Strategic Review, the EVP considered that the Programme team would benefit from additional acknowledgment and continuing support from strategic management, particularly regarding workload and protected time for the Optometry programme to continue to meet the GOC requirements in the new landscape of optical education.	During this visit on 19 and 20 June 2024, the EVP noted and were satisfied with the progress that had been made following this previous recommendation being offered.

2.4 Non-applicable requirements

The panel recommends that some requirements be deemed fully or partially non-applicable to the current programme due to the structure and division of roles between The University of the West of England and the College of Optometrists (CoO), for example:

- The University only provides evidence of competency in relation to GOC Stage 1 competencies of the route to registration.
- The CoO is responsible for the GOC Stage 2 competencies during the long clinical placement and ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision.

Thus, the panel recommends that the following requirements be deemed non-applicable to the programme:

A1.3	Provisional approval must be in place prior to advertising the qualification and recruiting the first cohort of students.
OP6.14	Upon completion of the pre-registration placement, the provider must inform the GOC that the student has achieved professional competence at Stage 2 so as to allow them to apply for entry to the GOC Register of Optometrists.
OP6.15	Students must be assessed as competent against each of the Stage 2 GOC Core Competencies.

OP6.16	Students must acquire the minimum amount of patient experience within each patient category (attached in Appendix F).
OP6.17	Students must hold certified portfolios containing a record of both their patient experience and achievement of all core competency elements.
OP6.18	The portfolio must include evidence of how and when each individual element of competence was achieved by the individual student.
OP6.19	The portfolio must contain a case record for each individual patient episode contributing to the minimum requirements.
OP6.20	The portfolio must include evidence of the development of the student's professional judgement through critical thinking and reflection.

PART 3 – CONDITIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

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

Commendations identify areas of good practice where the programme exceeds GOC requirements for approval.

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.

No conditions were set at this visit.

3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit

The EVP offers the following recommendations to the provider.

OP2.2	The programme team must consist of a sufficient number and an appropriate range of staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the programme effectively and support the student capacity.
Recommendation 1	The panel recommends that the institution considers providing additional mentorship for the programme leads from post holders in similar positions with more extensive experience.
Rationale	<p>The panel observed clear evidence of the hard work and dedication invested in the development and administration of the program. However, discussions with the programme team during the visit, highlighted that many staff members are relatively new to their positions.</p> <p>The panel believes that these staff members would benefit greatly from the guidance of colleagues with extensive experience in similar roles. Such mentorship would support with a workload management and help to enhance the planning and overall management of the programme.</p>
OP2.6	The role and contribution of individual members of staff to programme delivery must be determined on the basis of their expertise and experience.
Recommendation 2	The panel recommends that the provider closely monitors and mitigates the staffing risks associated with the teach-out of the existing programme and the introduction of the new programme.
Rationale	<p>During the visit, the panel observed that the provider has experienced a significant number of staffing changes over the past year. Although this has not had a substantial impact on the current teach-out and development of the MSci qualification, the panel expressed concerns that this issue warrants appropriate mitigation.</p> <p>Consequently, the panel recommended that the provider develops comprehensive mitigation plans, potentially documented in their risk register, to address the possibility of additional staff taking leave or resigning. These plans should ensure that the ongoing teach-out and MSci development are not adversely affected by any future absences.</p>

OP5.1	The provider must have a clear framework for obtaining feedback on programme quality from a variety of sources including patients, students, staff, supervisors and employers.
Recommendation 3	The panel recommends that the provider formalises the feedback process from hospital placement providers.
Rationale	<p>Through discussions during the visit, regarding hospital placements and the feedback obtained from placement providers, the panel observed that the current method for gathering feedback relies predominantly on informal conversations and communication mechanisms with hospitals and hospital staff. This includes listening events in which placement providers offer feedback, with meetings occurring for providers that are worked with on a larger basis.</p> <p>Although this approach is functional for acquiring feedback, the panel believes that implementing a more structured and formalised process would significantly enhance the programme and improve the placement experience.</p>

OP5.6	The provider must have an effective mechanism to enable the monitoring and evaluation of assessments to ensure appropriate standards are maintained.
Recommendation 4	The panel noted that the provider may want to review the induction process for external examiners to have access to the relevant resources and information regarding the role.
Rationale	<p>The panel noted that in-person visits from external examiners (EEs) were highly beneficial, as they provided opportunities for questions and allowed the examiners to observe the program's processes firsthand.</p> <p>During the visit the panel observed that the induction process for the programme's external examiners was found to be challenging, due to unclear processes, variable communication channels, and limited support for remote working. However, it was stated that once this induction period was processed and the EEs had their questions about the role fielded, they were able to confidently meet their objective of monitoring and evaluating assessments. The panel would recommend that the induction process for external examiners is enhanced. The panel believes that this would enable new external examiners to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively, thereby contributing to the overall quality and integrity of the programme.</p>

3.3 Commendations made at this visit

The panel would like to commend the provider for the range and diversity of assessment methods and the extensive feedback provided to students.