

University of Hertfordshire
GOC FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
Independent Prescribing for Optometrists
11 & 12 October 2022

Report confirmed by GOC	06 January 2023
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PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title	Independent Prescribing for Optometrists
Programme description	<p>The Independent Prescribing for Optometrists programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a short course designed to provide the theoretical background required for the Diploma in Therapeutics (DipTp) for the Independent Prescribing qualification delivered and managed by the College of Optometrists (CoO). University of Hertfordshire delivers the theoretical element of the route to registration, and the CoO delivers the practice-based learning and The Therapeutics Common Final Assessment (TCFA). • is predominantly distance-learning and online-based. Teaching is delivered using the virtual learning environment, Canvas. Two days of practical and theoretical face-to-face sessions occur towards the start of the programme. • comprises two 30 credit, level 7 modules: IP1 – Core Knowledge for Independent Prescribing & IP2 – Management and Prescribing for Independent Prescribing. The modules are taken sequentially where IP1 is a pre-requisite to IP2. • is expected to be completed in 12-18 months.
Current approval status	Fully approved (FA)
Approved student numbers	25 (increased to 35 in November 2022)

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (EVP)	
Chair	Vincent McKay- Lay Chair
Visitors	Katie Carter- Lay Member Pam McClean- Independent Prescribing Optometrist Graeme Kennedy- Independent Prescribing Optometrist
GOC representative	Georgina Carter- Approval and Quality Assurance Officer
Observers	N/A

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"> 1. review the University of Hertfordshire's Independent Prescribing for Optometrist programme (programme) to ensure it meets the requirements as listed in the GOC's <i>Handbook for Optometry Specialist Registration in Therapeutic Prescribing 2008</i> (Handbook) and the <i>GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Documents-List of Requirements</i> (list of requirements). <p>The visit took place remotely.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event type	Overview
31 March 2017	Administration	University of Hertfordshire applied for provisional approval of an Independent Prescribing course.
21 May 2019	Visit	An approval visit is conducted. The EVP recommends that provisional approval is granted, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student numbers set at 15 students for the first cohort and 25 students from the second cohort onwards. • five requirements were unmet. • four actions were set.
10 July 2019	Decision	GOC Council grants the programme provisional approval.
18 November 2019	Event	The provider notified the GOC that University wide restructuring was taking place.
January 2020	Event	The initial cohort starts the programme.
2 April 2020	Change	The University submits a request to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • admit an additional, one-off cohort in May 2020. • increase student numbers in this cohort to 40 students.
19 May 2020	Change	The GOC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agrees to increase the size of the additional cohort to 40 students. • decides a quality assurance visit must be carried out to review the programme in relation to the request for an additional cohort. • declines the request for an additional cohort starting in May 2020.
11-12 August 2020	Visit (remote)	A provisional approval quality assurance visit is conducted. The EVP recommends that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two requirements be deemed unmet. • five actions are set. Two of these actions are linked to unmet requirements and three are linked to the request to start an additional cohort in September 2020. • two recommendations are offered.
18 August 2020	Change	The GOC approved a one-off increase on the cohort cap to 40 students for the 2020/21 academic year.
4 November 2020	Change	The University submits a request to deliver module two's final assessment online due to the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 emergency. This request is approved by the GOC.
27-28 April 2021	Visit (remote)	A Provisional Approval Quality Assurance Visit took place where full approval was recommended by the panel.

24 May 2021	Change	Following a condition set at the April 2021 visit, the GOC noted that APCL and APEL will no longer be used on the Independent Prescribing for Optometrists programme.
14 July 2021	Decision	The GOC grants full approval to the Independent Prescribing for Optometrists programme at the University of Hertfordshire.
18 May 2022	Administration	A Full Approval Quality Assurance Visit to the programme is scheduled for October 2022.

PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes	
<p>The panel was satisfied that the Programme meets the regulator's standards. The panel was pleased with the progress made to enhance student experience using the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The panel recognise that the team are working towards adapting the qualification to the GOC's new Education and Training Requirements (ETRs) and encourage them to continue doing so. The panel set no new conditions and deemed all relevant requirements to be met. The panel made four recommendations to enhance the programme.</p> <p>The panel are satisfied that the programme should continue to be fully approved.</p>	
Summary of recommendations to the GOC	
Previous conditions – met/unmet	<p>All previous conditions are MET.</p> <p>Details regarding the previous conditions are set out in section 2.2.</p>
New conditions	<p>All requirements were MET and therefore no conditions are set.</p>
New recommendations	<p>Four recommendations are offered.</p> <p>Details regarding the recommendations are set out in Part 3.</p>
Commendations	<p>One commendation is offered.</p> <p>Details regarding the commendation is set out in Part 3.</p>
Actual student numbers	<p>Cohort three – 15 students (including one who retook assessment in April 2022).</p> <p>Cohort four – 28 students (including 2 students who retook IP2).</p> <p><i>Please note that this course starts in January of each academic year.</i></p>
Next QA visit	<p>The next visit will be scheduled within the next five years in line with the GOC's AQA process.</p>
Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g. when students are in, hospital, audit etc.	<p>The visit should be scheduled to factor in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suitable time to speak to students from previous and current cohorts • suitable time to speak to visiting lecturers • the implementation of the GOC's new Education and Training Requirement's (ETRs).

2.2 Previous conditions		
The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of 27 April 2021		
Requirement number	Condition number and description	Status
A6.4	1. The University must use the GOC's notification of events and changes process to inform the GOC of the decision not to accept RPL/APL applications to the programme. Evidence must be submitted that identifies what the programme's two days of face-to-face learning activities consist of, and how these activities will be delivered.	This action was deemed MET by the Executive in May 2021.
A6.2	2. The University must submit the external examiner's final report submitted to the 2021 Examinations Board and the 2021 Examinations Board minutes.	Based on evidence submitted prior to the visit, this action was deemed MET by the Executive in October 2022 and agreed by the visiting panel.

2.3 Previous recommendations		
The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of 27 April 2021		
Recommendation	Description	Comments
Recommendation 1	The programme leadership team to consider the allocation of workload amongst the team.	<p>The panel welcomes and notes the team's progress to consider workload allocation within the programme team.</p> <p>The panel continues to encourage that workload allocation be addressed within the team, as expressed in recommendation 1 from this visit.</p>
Recommendation 2	The programme team to continue its work to increase multi-disciplinary learning opportunities and formalise these within the programme.	<p>The panel notes some progress made to increase multi-disciplinary learning opportunities within the programme.</p> <p>The panel continues to encourage that these opportunities be increased and further integrated into the programme, as expressed in recommendation 1 from this visit.</p>
Recommendation 3	Assessors should be provided with the appropriate training and guidance to ensure consistency.	From both pre-visit documentation and discussions with assessors during the visit, the panel was assured that this recommendation had been taken on board.
Recommendation 4	The programme team to explore a mechanism that facilitates the attendance of the programme lead at, and the submission of	During the visit, the panel was assured that appropriate mechanisms were being utilised to feedback information to the programme committee, with both the programme lead and student

	information about the programme to, the Programme Committee.	representatives in attendance to meetings. The panel was satisfied that this recommendation had been taken on board.
Recommendation 5	The programme team to create a formal process that provides assurance that visiting lecturers are able to contribute to the governance, evaluation and monitoring of the programme.	During the visit, the panel was assured that there were opportunities for visiting lecturers to contribute to the monitoring and development of the programme and were satisfied that the programme team are continuing to consider this recommendation.
Recommendation 6	The programme team should create a formal process of auditing and updating the virtual learning environment (VLE) to ensure the information it contains is relevant and up to date.	During the visit, the panel was impressed with the progress made to maximise the use of the VLE, which is commended. Overall, the panel was pleased to see that this recommendation had been taken on board. Though a recommendation (4) is made to develop its functionality further.

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 University of Hertfordshire and College of Optometrists (CoO) for example:

- the programme is set at postgraduate level.
- the University only provides the theory aspect of the route to registration.
- the CoO is responsible for the clinical placement and ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision.
- the administration of the Therapeutic Common Assessment Framework (TCAF) is the responsibility of the CoO.

Additionally, the EVP recommends that some requirements be deemed non-applicable to the programme as:

- the programme has full GOC approval
- the programme is an Independent Prescribing qualification.
- the provider does not have any commercial sponsorship for the training programme.
- the provider does not offer APL for this qualification.

A1.3	Provisional approval must be in place prior to advertising the qualification and recruiting the first cohort of students.
A3.1	Providers must have a robust RPL/APL policy and associated procedures in place, which are quality assured and align with GOC policy.
A5.1	Student optometrists or dispensing opticians must always make sure a patient knows their student status.
A5.2	The award of qualifications using the protected title of optometrist and dispensing optician is limited to qualifications approved by the GOC as meeting the professional standards required.
A5.3	Students who gain sufficient academic credits to receive an award but do not meet the professional requirements must receive an alternative award to that

	approved by the GOC. The alternative award must not use the protected title of optometry/dispensing optician.
IP2.1	Providers inform the GOC of any commercial sponsorship of the training programme.
IP3.2	Students must receive comprehensive clinical practice.
IP3.3	It will normally be for the student to arrange the clinical practice placement and the appropriate mentorship during the placement, and to inform the College of Optometrists (the College) (and the provider, as appropriate) of the details.
IP3.4	The clinical practice placement must normally be undertaken in the UK.
IP3.5	The clinical practice placement should be spent in a hospital eye service or specialist general practice under the supervision of a designated ophthalmologist, and provide the experience stated in the patient experience requirements.
IP3.6	Where there is an issue requiring resolution concerning the suitability of a practice placement, the issue and supporting evidence must be referred to the GOC for arbitration.
IP3.7	The student must make suitable arrangements for their mentorship
IP3.8	The choice of mentor and the environment in which the mentorship will be delivered must be recorded by the College (and the provider, as appropriate).
IP3.9	The student must register with the College in advance of commencing their practice placement, providing details of the mentorship.
IP3.10	The designated mentor must provide supervision, support and appropriate clinical exposure so that the student can develop links between theory and practice.
IP3.11	The provider must ensure that the mentor is sufficiently familiar with the requirements of the training programme and the need to achieve the stated learning outcomes and competencies.
IP3.12	The PBL must ensure that the student is competent in the assessment, diagnosis and management of the ophthalmic conditions for which the optometrist intends to prescribe.
IP3.13	The PBL must ensure that the student is able to recognise those sight threatening conditions that should be referred.
IP3.14	The PBL must ensure that the student is able to consult effectively with patients.
IP3.15	The PBL must ensure that the student is able to monitor the response to treatment to review both the working and differential diagnosis, and to modify treatment or refer/consult/ seek guidance as appropriate.
IP3.16	The PBL must ensure that the student makes clinical decisions based on and with reference to the needs of the patient.
IP3.17	The PBL must ensure that the student critically analyses and evaluates his or her ongoing performance in relation to prescribing practice.
IP3.19	Clinical training must be structured to ensure that each student is exposed to sufficient numbers of patients presenting with the conditions that he or she will manage therapeutically. In addition, the student must be exposed to a range of ophthalmic conditions so as to develop differential diagnostic skills.
IP3.20	Each student must maintain a log book of practice evidence to verify that learning outcomes and core competencies have been achieved.
IP3.21	The log book must contain details of all patients seen, signed off by the mentor, and an indication of the actual involvement of the student in each patient episode.
IP3.22	Full information regarding each patient's clinical presentation, management and follow-up must be provided.
IP3.23	A reading log of the literature that has been used by the student to inform his or her understanding of prescribing practice must be provided.
IP3.24	The log book must evidence that the student has critically reflected on his or her own performance and show evidence of personal and professional development.

IP3.25	A summary sheet showing where in the log book the evidence for the achievement of learning outcomes can be found must be provided.
IP3.26	The student's involvement in the X patient care episodes described in the log book must be signed off by the supervising medical practitioner.
IP3.27	The log book must be submitted to the examiners prior to the final assessment.
IP4.3	There must be a formal assessment, carried out by the College or other GOC approved provider, in the form of the Therapeutic Common Final Assessment (TCFA) at the conclusion of the clinical placement.
IP6.1	Optometrists must successfully complete the Common Final Assessment of Competence.
IP7.6	In order to maintain currency of knowledge, no more than two years may elapse between the student's completion of the theoretical element of the programme and the commencement of their clinical placement.
IP7.7	No more than two years may elapse between the student's completion of the clinical placement and their taking the College's Therapeutic Final Common Assessment [TCFA] (or suitable and approved alternative).

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.

No conditions were set at this visit.

3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit

The EVP offers the following recommendations to the provider.

IP2.2	A selection of teachers from relevant different disciplines is involved in the delivery of the programme.
Recommendation 1	The programme team should continue to consider workload allocation.
Rationale	As part of discussions regarding recommendation 1 from the April 2021 visit, the panel was encouraged to hear about plans to enhance this in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appointment of new Visiting Lecturers ○ Introduction of regular team meetings. ○ Introduction of a formal Personal Academic Tutor System. However, the panel notes that these plans are a work in progress and would encourage implementation as soon as possible.
Recommendation 2	The programme team should continue to develop the integration of multi-disciplinary learning opportunities into the programme.
Rationale	As part of discussions regarding recommendation 2 from the April 2021 visit, the programme team informed the panel of some developments in the integration, into the programme, of multi-disciplinary learning opportunities. The panel encourages the team to progress with these.
IP3.18	Students must have an understanding of their role as an independent prescriber, an awareness of the limitations of their clinical experience and demonstrate an ability to work within the limits of their professional competence.
Recommendation 3	With consideration of the team's plans for the direction of the course in the future, the development of students' experience of community optometry is recommended.
Rationale	The panel welcomes and notes the progress made to develop the qualification. Enhancing student experience of community optometry, including high street practice, would help to give

	students a better breadth of experience and a better understanding of the full range of settings that qualified IPs work in.
IP4.4	Assessment strategies must be made explicit, in particular the criteria for pass/fail and the details of the marking scheme.
Recommendation 4	The team should upload the marking rubric for assessments onto the VLE to enhance the guidance available to students.
Rationale	<p>As highlighted in the commendation, the panel was impressed by the improved functionality of the VLE.</p> <p>However, assessment marking rubrics are not currently held on the VLE and would be a useful addition for students to access prior to completing assessments.</p>

3.3 Commendations made at this visit

The panel wishes to commend the progress made to maximise the use and functionality of the VLE to enhance student experience.