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GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

Visit to

Anglia Ruskin University

**BSc (HONS) in Ophthalmic Dispensing / BSc (HONS) in Optical Management / Diploma in
Ophthalmic Dispensing & Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing**

28th & 29th April 2009

1a Acknowledgements

The Visitors wish to record their thanks for the kind hospitality shown by Dr John Siderov, Head of Department, and for the time given to the Visitors by the Pathway Leaders; Mr Andrew Cripps, Mr Liam Kite and Mr David Austin. The Visitors would also wish to extend their thanks to the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Paul Smith.

The Visitors would also like to extend their thanks to the staff, employers, supervisors, students and graduates who gave up their time to the Visitors during the Visit.

1b Background Information

The Department of Optometry and Ophthalmic Dispensing resides in the Faculty of Science and Technology at Anglia Ruskin University. Academic activities are organised into five discipline-based Faculties, each headed by a Dean. Each has a Faculty Board, responsible for (inter alia) quality assurance and curriculum development across the regional university partnership.

The Department of Optometry and Ophthalmic Dispensing is responsible for pathways (all Anglia courses are referred to as pathways) in optometry (BOptom), ophthalmic dispensing (BSc Optical Management, BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing, FDSO Ophthalmic Dispensing, University Diploma Ophthalmic Dispensing) and courses for optical assistants (University Certificate in Optical Clinical Assistants and Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistants) as well as a Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology.

The University has undergone a number of changes in its internal workings since the last full GOC Visit to the ophthalmic dispensing pathways, but the GOC is aware of the effect of the changes to the department due to ESDO visits. These changes have included a change to the name of the University from Anglia Polytechnic to Anglia Ruskin University; a review of student and academic services; a University wide change in the module credit system from a 10 credit base to a 15 credit base per module; the introduction of new student regulations from effect September 2006 and a re-distribution of the academic activities from schools into

2 Introduction

1. This Report is of the Visit by the General Optical Council to the BSc (HONS) in Ophthalmic Dispensing / BSc (HONS) in Optical Management / Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing & Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing at Anglia Ruskin University.
2. The Visit took place on two days, 28th & 29th April 2009.
3. The Visitors were:
 - Professor David Whitaker, Educationalist and Chair
 - Dr Martin Rubenstein, Optometrist
 - Mrs Christine Harm, Dispensing Optician & Contact Lens Practitioner
 - Mr Christopher Burton, Dispensing Optician
4. The Visitors were accompanied by GOC Officers.
5. The GOC is required to undertake such Visits in order to obtain assurance that the standards of teaching and clinical practice within the programme are compliant with the GOC's competences and standards, and that the course can continue to be recognised by the GOC for the entry of successful students on to the Register of Dispensing Opticians.
6. During the Visit the GOC Handbook, 'Guidelines for the approval of Training Institutions' ('the Handbook') was used by the Visitors. The Visitors conducted their assessments during the Visit applying the criteria and requirements as set out in the Handbook.
7. The entry requirements for the Foundation Degree programme are GCSE in mathematics at grade C or above and 1 A level pass or equivalent. It is also possible to enter the course without formal qualifications if a student has worked in an ophthalmic practice for at least two years and successfully completes an admissions portfolio, consisting of short maths test and a piece of reflective writing.
8. There are various entry routes for the degree programmes including ABDO access courses and 200 UCAS points from three A2 levels, to include one subject from applied sciences, plus 5 GCSE's at C or above with Mathematics, English Language and a Science as compulsory.
9. Prior to the visit, the GOC received comprehensive pre-visit information from the University based on the GOC's Handbook.
10. As well as the pre-visit information received in advance, during the visit the visitors reviewed examples of the following documentation for the programme
 - Course Modules.
 - Course Handbook.
 - Copies of student portfolios, logbooks and tracking sheets.
 - Selection of students' work.
12. The Panel were very satisfied with the documentation provided.

3 Conclusions

13. Overall the panel were encouraged by the professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm of the course team and considered the quality of the teaching to be of high standard.
14. Having met with students and graduates, the Panel would like to commend the course team for their excellent rapport with staff and students.
15. The Panel would like to commend the Department for their overall relationship with the students however they would like to see an improvement in how action taken on student feedback is communicated to students.
16. Although there are communication systems in place such as questionnaires and the Programme Committee, the Panel would like to see efforts made to ensure input from student representatives for all programmes and the circulation of the Minutes of these meetings to all students.
17. The Panel commended the Supervisors Handbook used for the Foundation Degree programme and would encourage that a similar handbook is developed for issue to supervisors of all students (full and part time) who are also working in practice.
18. The Panel were satisfied that the GOC Competencies were being appropriately taught and assessed but would suggest that the recording process could be improved by the addition of the date of sign off as well as a full signature to ensure a sufficient audit trail. The Panel were however concerned that the electronic master copy of the competency tracking sheet for the degree students was apparently kept off site on a memory stick and was not therefore accessible to them during the Visit, or available to other members of staff in the absence of the pathway leader. The department should ensure consistency across all of the programmes in the approach to maintaining an overview spreadsheet to track students' achievement or partial achievement of each competency. In particular the Panel would stress the importance of the spreadsheet being maintained within the department and available to more than one member of staff.
19. The Department currently appoints four external examiners to support the Department however the Visitors considered that as only one of these examiners was specifically responsible for the dispensing programmes this fell short of the recommended external moderation. The Visitors stressed the need for the Department to have two external examiners with specific responsibility for the dispensing programmes as this is a specific requirement as outlined in Section 6.1a of the GOC Handbook. This requirement must be met before the start of the next academic year.
20. During the Visit the Panel learnt of the introduction of devolved budgets giving more responsibility and accountability at faculty and department level. From what the Visitors observed this appears to have been a positive step for the Department and the Visitors were encouraged by this.
21. The Panel were also encouraged to learn that the university is investing in its IT systems and would support further innovation and development in this area. The Visitors welcomed the use of the current WEBCT system and would stress the importance of ensuring that the replacement system is at least as effective as the current system and that its implementation is managed to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum and that students' access to material is maintained.
22. The Panel acknowledge that the main challenge for the department in the forthcoming months and years will be the move to temporary accommodation this summer and the pursuit of suitable permanent accommodation in the longer term. The Panel were satisfied with the detailed plans they were provided with in respect of the temporary facilities and agreed a small team will need to return to observe these facilities once they have been established.
23. The Panel were aware of some staff concerns around the move, in particular in respect of open plan offices and access to administrative support and would encourage the open dialogue around these matters to continue.
24. The Panel would also encourage an increase in resource to the Foundation Degree programme going forward. In particular the Visitors felt that additional support in the 1st year practical sessions would be beneficial.
25. The Panel were pleased that the University had engaged with the GOC at an early opportunity in respect of the short and longer term accommodation plans and would encourage this communication to continue as the plans develop.

The Visitors recommend to the GOC that Anglia Ruskin University be granted **three years approval** subject to the following conditions and recommendations, with the next visit taking place in Spring 2012.

In addition, from Spring 2010 Anglia Ruskin University will be required to provide annual monitoring submissions in accordance with the GOC's new Annual Monitoring Scheme. Evidence of how the following conditions have been met along with an update of progress against the recommendations and further developments in respect of the new building should be reported in the first annual monitoring submission in 2010 and subsequent submissions as appropriate.

4a Conditions

- 1) In accordance with the requirement outlined in the Section 6 a of the GOC Handbook the University must ensure it has appointed 'at least 2 external examiners, which must be either a Dispensing Optician or an Optometrist and who should be involved in verifying the standard of work across all of the dispensing Programmes' before the start of the new term.
- 2) The provision of further details and plans of the temporary accommodation and the new building as soon as they are available, with a one day visit by a small GOC Panel to review the suitability of the temporary accommodation, equipment and facilities in September 2009.

4b Recommendations

- 1) To ensure the transfer from WEBCT to its replacement system is effectively implemented, with no detriment to student's access to its information, and that the replacement system offers, at least, the same facilities to students. Visitors would also encourage further innovation and development in use of the system.
- 2) The provision of a Supervisors Handbook to the supervisors of all students (FT or PT) who are working in practice.
- 3) To review the processes and mechanisms in place to obtain and respond to student feedback. In particular:
 - i) a suitable mechanism to enable input from part time Day Release and Distance Learning students into the Programme Committee;
 - ii) the provision of minutes or outcomes of Programme Committee meetings to all dispensing students.
- 4) The inclusion of the date of signing off of each competency as well as a full signature in the Competency Tracking document.
- 5) Consideration to be given to concerns raised by staff about the suitability of open plan offices in both the temporary and new accommodation plans.
- 6) Consideration to be given to the level and accessibility of administrative support available to the dispensing programmes.
- 7) The level of intake of students on to the Foundation Degree Programme in 2009 has resulted in increased pressure on staff and accommodation. The Panel would not support any increase in students beyond the intake level previously approved without additional resourcing. In particular, the Panel would also encourage additional staffing for 1st Year Practical Sessions.