

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Visit to
Bradford College
BSc (Hons) Ophthalmic Dispensing with
Management
and
Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing Programmes**

1-2 APRIL 2009

1a Acknowledgements

The Visitors wish to record their thanks for the kind hospitality shown by Pat Donovan, Programme Manager, Julie Lees, Lead Lecturer and their staff.

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

1b Background Information

Bradford College is one of the largest mixed economy colleges in the country and operates on two main sites in central Bradford, with large adult education centres in the city. The College serves a large and diverse population within the Metropolitan District where the younger than average population profile includes substantial communities of people whose origins are in South Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. The College also recruits regionally and nationally to its advanced further education provision and its extensive higher education provision, especially in Education, Applied Social Science amongst others.

The College provides further education courses in fourteen of the fifteen sector subject categories funded by the Learning and Skills Council and is approved as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in three sector categories including a pathfinder CoVE in Applied Sciences. The College has strong links with local schools, commerce and industry.

The College underwent a major restructure in 2005. At this time, validation of Bradford College's Higher Education degrees moved from the University of Bradford to Leeds Metropolitan University.

The Science Programme Area was formed from the Department of Pure and Applied Science following the restructure, and offers courses in Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Applied Sciences, Access to Higher Education, Pharmacy Sciences and Ophthalmic Dispensing, across the full range of educational levels from FE Level 1 to BSc Honours degree programmes. The Science Programme Area is managed by the Science Programme Manager who has overall responsibility for all Science staff, students and courses.

The Science Programme Manager is assisted by two Curriculum Team Leaders (CTLs). The Ophthalmic Dispensing provision falls into the Physical Science curriculum area. Day to day administration of the dispensing courses is the responsibility of the Lead Lecturer for Ophthalmic Dispensing.

Currently there are 1000 students enrolled on to courses offered in the Science programme area.

2 Introduction

1. This Report is of the Visit by the General Optical Council to the Bradford College Diploma and BSc (Hons) programmes in Ophthalmic Dispensing.
2. The Visit took place on two days, 1st & 2nd April 2009.
3. The Visitors were:
 - Professor Bernard Gilmartin, Educationalist and Chair
 - Mrs Lisa Gerson, Optometrist
 - Mrs Christine Harm, Dispensing Optician & Contact Lens Practitioner
 - Mrs Annette Latham-Jackson, Dispensing Optician & Contact Lens Practitioner
 - Professor David Whitaker, Educationalist
4. The Visitors were accompanied by a GOC Officer, Miss Kelly Parker.
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 competencies 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. In order to enter the Degree programme candidates should have passes in five GCSE subjects (A*-C) including English, Mathematics and Science and two A Levels, or the equivalent, including one Science, (from Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Mathematics) at Grade D or above.
8. Applicants may be required to produce evidence of completion of an accredited access course or of their ability to study at HE level. Short courses and relevant work experience may be taken into account. Mature applicants may be required to complete a piece of written work as part of their application.
9. Some credit points may be accrued through the accreditation of prior experience and learning.
10. Prior to the visit, the GOC received comprehensive pre-visit information from the College based on the GOC's Handbook.
11. 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 Visitors were satisfied with the documentation provided and when appropriate the College supplied any additional information the Visitors requested for which the Panel would like to thank the College.

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 and facilities to be excellent.
14. Having met with students and graduates, the Panel would like to commend the College for its excellent rapport with staff and students. The Visitors regard highly the quality of pastoral care evident on numerous occasions during the Visit. The well-being of the Student Experience/Student Community is clearly high on the agenda of the College and the Visitors commend the College for their approach.
15. The Visitors would like to highlight that although overall the quality of the teaching was impressive there were inconsistencies apparent in both the quality and mode of teaching delivery across modules. The Panel were made aware of policy and procedures in place to monitor and evaluate teaching quality at Bradford College and suggest that the department promotes fully the provisions currently available.
16. The Panel did have concerns regarding the process for signing off the GOC Core Competencies. The Competencies must be signed off at the time of the assessment and not at the end of the term as is the current arrangement for the BSc programme.
17. Whereas the Panel directed its attention principally to the BSc Hons Programme it also evaluated the delivery of the final stages of the Diploma programme and is satisfied that the programme continues to meet the standards required by the GOC Handbook.
18. During the Visit the Panel were unable to observe the third year of the BSc Hons programme or meet with 3rd year students as this had been a fallow year. The teaching programmes and assessments for the third year of the programme had not yet been produced at the time of the Visit due to the demands on staff time for course development for this current academic year. The College confirmed these will be produced during the summer break from teaching. The Visitors felt it was important that this information is reviewed by the GOC once it is available in order to ensure they have seen the whole package.
19. The College currently appoints two external examiners to cover all its programmes which the Visitors considered fell short of the recommended external moderation. The Visitors stressed the need for the College to appoint two external examiners per programme 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. The Panel were concerned that a senior staff member who undertook a leadership role for the programme was not GOC registered as required in the Handbook Section 7.1.1 and consider that this deficiency will need to be resolved immediately. In addition, the Panel also recommend that all professionally qualified staff should register with the GOC as this is expected to become a future GOC requirement.
21. In general it was apparent that external supervisors were happy with the student provision at the College. They indicated however that they would like more information on the role and responsibilities of a supervisor particularly in connection with ABDO. The Panel would like to see relationships improve between the College and the Supervisors, but they are aware that the College are working to make this possible.
22. Reference was made during the Visit to the possibility of a future new build that might incorporate the Dispensing programmes and the Panel would like to reiterate that any changes to the programme or resources will need to be formally proposed to the GOC Education Committee at the earliest opportunity.

The Visitors recommend to the GOC that the Bradford College BSc Hons Ophthalmic Dispensing Programme be granted 3 years approval subject to the following conditions and recommendations, with the next visit taking place in April 2012.

The Visitors recommend in addition that the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing be allowed to continue in its current form until the programme ceases to exist in 2011.

In addition, from Spring 2010 Bradford College 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 should be reported in the first annual monitoring submission in 2010 and subsequent submissions as appropriate.

3a Conditions

1. Provision of further detail regarding the 3rd year of the programme to be included in the Annual Monitoring Submission in Spring 2010.
2. As required in Section 7.1.1 of the GOC Handbook each Dispensing Optics programme should have a registered senior Dispensing Optician or Optometrist who is UK registered, in a leadership position for the programme, with immediate effect.
3. In accordance with the requirement outlined in Section 6.1a of the GOC Handbook, the appointment of a second external examiner, in order that each programme has two External Examiners in place before the start of the next Academic Year.
4. To ensure the sign off and recording of Core Competencies is done at the time the competence assessed and demonstrated.

3b Recommendations

1. That all professionally qualified staff become GOC registered as soon possible.