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**GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL
Visit to
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
BSc Optometry Programme
18 NOVEMBER 2008**

1 Acknowledgements

The Visitors wish to express their grateful thanks to the Pro-Vice Chancellor; Professor Ken Woodhouse, Professor Tim Wess, Head of School, Dr Paul Murphy, Professor Rachel North, Deputy Head of the School and Dr Fergal Ennis, Deputy Director of Teaching plus the University staff and of course the students for giving generously of their time and knowledge and for the hospitality afforded to the Visitors during the course of the Visit.

The Visitors also wish to express their appreciation to Dr Paul Murphy, Director of Teaching for the comprehensive documentation provided in advance and during the Visit. The Visitors recognise the considerable work involved in preparing this information which was of great assistance to the Visitors in preparing for and during the Visit.

2 INTRODUCTION

The earliest forerunner of Cardiff University was founded in 1883 as the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. The University now has an annual turnover of £315 million and a total of 25,000 students and 5,500 staff with some 7000 graduates per year.

Cardiff is consistently ranked as the best university in Wales (Sunday Times Newspaper) and is considered a high-performing research university, rated as the 7th highest in the last UK-wide Research Assessment Exercise.

The School of Optometry and Vision Sciences was founded in 1936 and is the only optometric training University in Wales, and one of the largest in the UK, with 28 academics, 4 clinicians, 17 post-doctoral fellows, 42 post-graduate students, and 12 School staff. In addition, they have a large number of visiting lecturers who support the clinical supervision of undergraduate students.

In 2008 the BSc Optometry programme received 535 applicants for an intake of 70 UK/EU students, plus 16 overseas students from many countries around the world. This means that there are around 240 undergraduates enrolled, spread over the three years of the course.

In the final optometric Professional Qualifying Examinations their overall pass rates have been consistently in the top two amongst all eight participating UK Universities during the past four years. As a pass in these examinations is compulsory before becoming a registered optometrist, most students consider it to be the most important examination of all.

The School achieved the designation 'excellent' in the last HEFC assessment of undergraduate teaching quality. Our top quality teaching relies on the academic and clinical expertise of our lecturers and visiting supervisors, and is inspired by the excellent staff-student relations and friendly atmosphere that exists within the School.

In May 2007 the school moved to a new purpose built building. At a cost of £21 million the school has made a very substantial investment in the provision of new facilities for the teaching of optometry and for vision sciences research.

3 BACKGROUND TO THE VISIT

The last GOC Panel Visit to Cardiff University's Optometry Programme was in November 2006.

As a result of the 2006 visit a written report was required in January 2008 followed by a further visit in November 2008.

The GOC is required to undertake 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 programme can continue to be approved as recognised by the GOC for entry of successful students, following their pre-registration year, into the GOC's register of Ophthalmic Opticians.

The GOC Visitors to Cardiff's BSc programme were:

- Professor Bernard Gilmartin – Educationalist (Chair)
- Mr Chris Burton - Dispensing Optician
- Mr Robert Harper – Optometrist
- Mr Soupramanien Sandramouli – Ophthalmologist
- Miss Linda Kennaugh – GOC Officer

Prior to the Visit, the GOC received pre-Visit information from the University, in line with the GOC Handbook, '*Guidelines for the Approval of Training Institutions*' (the Handbook) updating the GOC on changes implemented since the last visit in 2006 and progress against the Conditions and Recommendations in the 2006 Visit Report. The Visitors considered the programme using the Visit Handbook, a copy of which is available on the GOC website.

During the Visit the Visitors met with the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Ken Woodhouse, the Head of School, Professor Tim Wess, Professor Rachel North, Deputy Head of School, Dr Paul Murphy, Director of Teaching and Dr Fergal Ennis, Deputy Director of Teaching. The Visitors also met with academic teaching staff and a number of undergraduate students from each year.

In addition to the above meetings, the Visitors observed the teaching and visited the new building and clinic facilities.

The BSc Optometry Programme is a full-time programme, 3 year modular course leading to a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree with honours. The standard 'A' level entry requirements for the programme are currently AAB. Each student must achieve 120 credits each year in order to progress to the next year.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this two year visit was to review progress against the Conditions and Recommendations arising from the previous visit in 2006.

As a result of the visit in November 2008 the Panel were impressed with the efforts and improvements made by the University since the last Visit and on the substantial progress that has been made in satisfying the Conditions and Recommendations.

The Panel congratulate the School on the management of the move to the new building, facilitating a smooth transition for students with no significant disruption to the programme.

The Visitors consider the programme to be of a very high standard both in terms of the quality of the provision and facilities and also the commitment and enthusiasm of the management, staff and students.

The Panel were satisfied that Conditions 1 and 2 were fully met. In respect of Condition 3 the Panel were satisfied that the mechanisms and improvements the University has put in place are adequate to ensure that in 2008/09 all students will meet the required minimum patient numbers in accordance with Condition 3 of the 2006 Visit. Significant improvements have ensured that almost all students in the academic year 2007/8 met the required patient numbers; however due to patients failing to attend at the end of term a small number (6 students) missed the target by 1 patient. On this basis it is recommended that this condition remain a condition of this approval and the patient experience spreadsheet be provided as part of the University's annual monitoring submission.

In terms of the recommendations the Panel were satisfied that the University had implemented sufficient processes to meet the recommendations of the 2006 Visit Report with the exception of Recommendations 2 (Grand Rounds) and 6 (Governance structure) which are still ongoing and will therefore remain recommendations of this report.

5 CONDITIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Visitors recommend to the General Optical Council that it continue to approve Cardiff University as a training institution, under Section 12(1) of the Opticians Act 1989 for a further 5 years until November 2013, subject to submission of satisfactory Annual Monitoring Reports and the following Condition and Recommendations:

Condition:

That the University:

- i. Ensure sufficient mechanisms are in place to enable every student to meet the required patient numbers under all the categories listed in Section 2.3.3 of the GOC Handbook.

Recommendations:

That the University:

- i. Continues with its plans to introduce the use of Grand rounds as soon as possible to ensure that all students have observed all common conditions
- ii. Continues with its review of the governance structure with a view to implementing the new structure as soon as it is agreed by the University.

In 2009 the GOC will be introducing a system of annual reporting and this will be the vehicle through which the University must report progress against the Condition and Recommendations of this Visit Report.

The Visitors would like to emphasise that given the excellent environment that has been generated within the School and University – there was clear evidence of a robust, enthusiastic and vibrant approach to the School's work – they anticipate that the University will be able to fully satisfy the Condition and Recommendations identified.