

Visit/Approval Process Policy & Procedure	
FOI Publication Scheme Y/N	Y
Version	1
Summary	This policy with its associated procedure sets out the processes for the General Optical Council Educational Visits.
Department	Education
Date created	September 2009
Review date	September 2010

Visit/Approval Process Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The General Optical Council (GOC) (the organisation) operates a visit process to quality assure optics training in the U.K to ensure safe standards of eye care practice. The GOC have a duty to protect the public by setting standards for the education and training of registrants and approving programmes which professionals must complete so they can register with us.
- 1.2 The GOC Visitor Panel will comply with all aspects of the Opticians Act 1989 in conjunction with the requirements contained within GOC Visitors' Handbook.

2. Introduction

2.1 The GOC periodically makes visits to training institutions and providers of Schemes for Registration.

2.2 The role of the GOC Visitor is:

To advise the Council whether a particular training institution or scheme provider should continue to be approved under the Opticians Act 1989; and
To make recommendations for improvements, where appropriate, to the programme or scheme.

2.3 The visit process is split into 3 separate parts. These are:

Pre-visit – which gives details of what needs to happen before a visit takes place;
The visit – which outlines what you can expect at a visit; and
Post visit – which gives details of what happens after a visit has been completed.

2.4 There are specific tasks that need to be carried out in order for the visit process to run smoothly. The Training Establishment is responsible for:

- Providing the GOC with a list of dates they would like us to visit;
- Give the GOC the appropriate documents before the visit;
- The Training Establishment needs to agree the agenda and the meetings with us;
- The Training Establishment needs to provide the GOC visitor panel with an independent chair;
- Ensuring appropriate individuals are available to meet the 'Education Visitor Panel';
- Providing Observations on the visitors' report, if this is appropriate to do so;
- Providing a response to the GOC to any conditions; and
- Giving feedback on the GOC visit process.

2.5 The GOC are responsible for:

- Keeping the provider informed about the role of the GOC, timelines and deadlines;
- Appointing appropriate visitors;
- Arranging accommodation and travel for the GOC visitor panel;
- Formalising the agenda and meetings with the provider;
- Producing the visitors' report; and
- Managing the post visit process.

Once the visit has taken place, the visiting panel, will make one of the following recommended outcomes to the GOC Education Committee.

- Approve or re-confirm ongoing approval of the programme for 5 years with no conditions;
- Approve or re-confirm ongoing approval of the programme for up to 5 years with conditions and / or recommendations;
- Withdraw approval.

3. Application

3.1 The policy takes immediate effect and applies to all staff at the GOC involved in the visit process, including the members on the Education Visitor Panel.

4. Purpose

4.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that all personnel involved in the GOC accreditation process have a clear, defined process that they can adhere to. This policy sets out a framework to assist and support achievement of the standards set in place by the Visitors' Handbook.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 This policy is owned by the Director of Education. The policy was developed and will be maintained by the Education Department.

6. Associated documents/legislation

Opticians Act 1989
GOC Accreditation Handbooks

Visit/Approval Procedure

Stages of the Approval Process

1. Pre-visit

- 1.1 The GOC will send a letter to existing providers one year before the process is due to commence. It is the duty the GOC will negotiate with the provider to determine the broad time frame for the visit.
- 1.2 The provider will receive a letter from the GOC 8 weeks after the initial letter informing them of the visit indicating the start process and issuance of the Guidelines for the Approval of Training Institutions/Providers of Schemes Handbook, a statement of required documentation (**Appendix 1/2**) and the visitors chosen.
- 1.3 The GOC will then request all documentation to be received from the provider (**Appendix 3**). If the GOC have not received the documentation by the 8 week deadline the provider will receive a further letter from us with an extended deadline of 2 weeks maximum.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of the GOC to formulate a 'visit agenda' (**Appendix 4**). This will be sent to the provider on week 11 of the approval process (3 weeks after the documentation has been received from the provider), following closely the contents of the handbook and will request any further documentation required. The GOC will also inform the provider if further documentation is requested by the visitor panel.

2. The Visit

- 2.1 The Visit will take place on week 15 of the approval process (4 weeks from the agenda being sent to the provider). The GOC will assess the programme against a large number of standards set out in the Visitor Handbook. In order to do this the GOC must gather information by asking questions from various groups, viewing the facilities and listening to presentations.
- 2.2 At the end of the visit the GOC will provide informal feedback if it is felt appropriate. There may be times when providing feedback is not appropriate, this could be:
 - When there has not been enough time for the visitors to conclude their discussions;
 - If important individuals were not present;
 - If the visitor panel feels that further clarification is required on particular areas.
- 2.3 If the GOC Visitor Panel provides any type of feedback at the end of the visit, this must be considered to be informal and not binding.
- 2.4 The conditions/recommendations of the visit will not be discussed with the training establishment on the day of the visit. A formal letter will be sent after the visit stating the conditions/recommendations.

3. Post-Visit

- 3.1 The first draft of the visit report will be sent to the visitors' panel for consultation on week 20 of the process.
- 3.2 On week 24 (4 weeks after the date of the first draft of the report being sent to the panel) the amended draft will be sent to the training establishment for factual correction.

- 3.3 On week 26, following receipt and consideration of any request for factual corrections the Final report will be sent to the Training Establishment. The training establishment has an obligation to respond within one month of receiving the final report. In the event of any Conditions they will be required to submit an action plan to the GOC for formal consideration by the Education Committee.
- 3.4 A copy of the Final Report and any response received from the training establishment will be submitted to Education Committee for a final decision as to the recommended period of approval or withdrawal.
- 3.5 Detail of the Visit outcome accompanied by the Report and response from the training establishment will be published on the GOC intranet for the information of Council members.
- 3.5 A list of approved training establishments and Scheme Providers will be published on the GOC Website, along with the period of approval given and the date of the next Visit.

4. Follow up action

- 4.1 If the outcome of the education committee is to approve or reconfirm ongoing approval of the provider/programme, the GOC will publish a copy of the visitors' report for public consumption and send to the provider a formal letter of approval.
- 4.2 The Education Committee can at this stage request changes to the report as a result of observations by the provider or if they feel an element of the visit report is inappropriate. The GOC must let the provider know if this is the case
- 4.3 If the Education Committee decides to withdraw approval from an already approved programme the GOC must let the provider know in writing and the website will be updated accordingly. This would include removing the programme from the list of GOC approved programmes. If this happens the GOC will agree a plan to manage the completion of training for those students who are already on the programme. The institution will not be permitted any further intake to the programme from the date of withdrawal.
- 4.4 This will not take effect until the expiration of one month from the date of the giving of the notice unless representation is made to the Privy Council.

5. Appeals in event of withdrawal

- 5.1 If an establishment is not satisfied with the reasons for withdrawal of approval the provider may make representation to the Privy Council.
- 5.2 The Privy Council, on representation being given to them within one month, may if they feel appropriate to do so, after considering the representations and after communicating with the committee, order the committee to annul withdrawal of approval or in the case of an establishment approved as suitable for more than one purpose, to withdraw approval in relation to one or some of the purposes only.

6. Annual Monitoring Scheme

- 6.1 The provider will be required to submit to the GOC an annual monitoring form in line with the GOC Annual Monitoring Scheme. This scheme has been put in place to ensure approved programmes continue to meet the GOC standards. The GOC will make contact with the training establishment when they are due to submit annual monitoring.

Appendix 1

Address

Date

Dear _____,

GOC DISPENSING PANEL VISIT TO

ON

Following on from our earlier discussions, I am writing to confirm the details of the forthcoming GOC Panel Visit to.....Foundation Degree programme on _____.

The Panel for this Visit will consist of:

Optometrist x1

Dispensing Optician x2

Educationalist x1

GOC Officer

It is anticipated that the Visit will lastand the Visitors will be anxious to avoid causing any inconvenience. The Visit will need to take place when most of the students concerned, especially the final year students, are present and under tuition.

I would be grateful if you would provide a private room for the Visitors use throughout the Visit.

I enclose a copy of a draft agenda for the Visit for your consideration, a document outlining the pre-visit information required and also a template for completion with the relevant course data. I would be grateful if you would send six copies of the relevant documentation to me, no later than.....

I look forward to seeing you on..... In the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Education

Appendix 2

Address

Date

Dear _____,

GOC OPTOMETRY PANEL VISIT TO

ON

Following on from our earlier discussions, I am writing to confirm the details of the forthcoming GOC Panel Visit to.....Foundation Degree programme on _____.

The Panel for this Visit will consist of:

Optometrist x2

Ophthalmologist x1

Dispensing Optician x1

Educationalist x1

GOC Officer

It is anticipated that the Visit will lastand the Visitors will be anxious to avoid causing any inconvenience. The Visit will need to take place when most of the students concerned, especially the final year students, are present and under tuition.

I would be grateful if you would provide a private room for the Visitors use throughout the Visit.

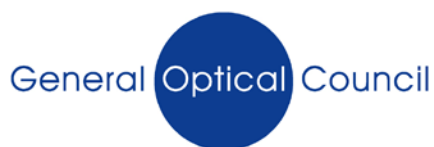
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I look forward to seeing you on..... In the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Education

Appendix 3



Information for Training Institutes to be sent to the Visitors 8 weeks prior to the Visit

Please note, prior to each Visit each training institution will be expected to nominate one person to coordinate the Visit with the General Optical Council. If the training institution fails to nominate a person, the GOC will correspond directly with the Head of Department (or equivalent).

1. Student timetable for all modes of study for the week of the visit, so that the Visitors can see what teaching is available to observe
2. Information on changes to the programme since the last visit. Please ensure this is clearly outlined so that the Visitors can see the changes from the previous visit.
3. Recent staff changes, if any
4. A brief report on recruitment and progression statistics.
5. A draft timetable of the Visit, taking into account that the Visitors will wish to meet with:
 - a. The Head of Department (or equivalent)
 - b. Course leaders (or equivalent)
 - c. Students (from each mode of study)

Information for Training Institutes to be made available during the Visit

1. A single copy of course documents for all programmes / modes of study.
2. Copies of portfolios and logbooks and tracking sheets – partially completed by students (students to have available)
3. Selection of students work from each year of the programme and mode of study [projects / essays and laboratory worksheets]
4. Course committee minutes, examiners reports and any QA information

Appendix 4

Draft Agenda for Visit



Draft Timetable for the Visit to

Visitors:

Time	Activity	Room
08.30	Visitors arrival & Coffee	
08.30 - 09.30	Private meeting to review course documentation	
10.00 - 10.30	Meeting with Head of Department & Course Programme Manager	
10.30 -11.00	Meeting with Vice Chancellor / Principal	
11.00 - 12.30	Classroom observations	
12.30 - 13.00	Lunch & Private Meeting	
13.00 - 13.30	Meet Course Team	
13.30 - 14.00	Meet Students	
14.00 - 16.00	Classroom/ Clinic Observations / meeting with recent graduates and employers (if available)	
16.00 - 16.30	Private Meeting with Coffee	
16.30 - 17.00	Meeting with Principal	
17.00	Visitors depart	