

**Education: Approval and Quality Assurance (A&QA)**

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**Meeting:** 26 February 2020

**Status:** For decision

**Lead responsibility:** Leonie Milliner (Senior Education Advisor)

**Paper Author:** Richard Calver (A&QA Officer) / Lisa Venables (Education Manager)

**Council Lead(s):** there is no Council lead for this work.

**Purpose**

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1. To ask Council to grant full approval retrospectively to an ophthalmic dispensing exit award.

**Recommendations**

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2. Council is asked to approve to the following award:
  - BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management at Glasgow Caledonian University

**Strategic objective**

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3. This work contributes towards the achievement of the following strategic objective: learning and development of optical professionals. It is also included in our 2019/20 Business Plan as part of our core statutory education function.

**Background**

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4. This item has not been considered previously by Council.

**Analysis**

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5. Section 12(7) of the Opticians Act 1989 ("the Act") empowers Council to approve establishments and/or qualifications for training as an optometrist or dispensing optician (referred to as providers and programmes respectively).
6. Programmes are required to demonstrate how they meet GOC requirements as stipulated in our Approval and Quality Assurance Handbooks. Council retains authority to make the decision to grant and withdraw GOC approval to/from a programme.
7. Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) already holds full approval to deliver a BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme, on which the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme is based. The GOC conducted a routine full quality assurance visit to the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme in March 2015 and recommended continued approval of this programme for a period of five years.

8. In 2017, the University started running a BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme as a variant of its BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme and to date there have been a total of 10 graduates. There is no record that GOC approval was sought and/or granted for this new exit award. However, in the 2015 visit report details of two learning pathways resulting in a single exit award (not two exit awards) was discussed. It appears that the programme name was changed to include 'management' during this time – but this was not recorded.
9. The choice of exit award (BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing or BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management) depends only on the modules chosen in Year 3. After successful completion of either award, and then completion of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians pre-qualification period, the intention was for graduates to be eligible to enter the Register of Dispensing Opticians.
10. Students on both programmes undertake the same modules in Years 1 and 2. All GOC core competencies are taught and signed-off during Years 1 and 2. Students undertake an extended period in practice in Year 3 for both programmes. If they choose to take three management modules, they can graduate with a BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management award, otherwise they graduate with a BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing award.
11. The programme structure for Years 1 and 2 remains largely unchanged from the GOC's last visit to the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme and all modules contributing to core competencies for each programme have been previously approved as part of the existing BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme. Minor changes which were noted by the GOC) are not considered material to the programme. The modules for Year 3 of the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme are also unchanged.
12. The University has submitted comprehensive documentation which shows that the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme meets all the GOC's requirements of a training programme contributing to the route to registration for dispensing opticians, namely:
  - Each core competency is taught and assessed, and mapped to a module delivered in Years 1 or 2;
  - The requirement, stipulated in the Handbook, that students should receive at least 40 hours of practical work per year in the training institution is exceeded as the following Year 1 and Year 2 modules include the following clinical and practical instruction:
    - Year 1 'Optical Appliances': 31 hours;
    - Year 1 'Ophthalmic Materials': 42 hours;
    - Year 2 'Clinical Dispensing Practice and Communication': 98 hours;

- The BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme also includes a Year 3 'Dispensing Practice Portfolio' module which is a practical placement of 99 hours duration.
13. The University submitted documentation describing the governance and quality management procedures for the Year 3 modules 'Dispensing Practice 1 & 2' for the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme and 'Dispensing Practice Portfolio' for the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme. These include relevant practice education guidelines for supervisors, students and module tutors. This documentation largely remains unchanged from the one that the GOC Education Visitors Panel viewed during their last visit to the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme, except that the current version reflects student choice in Year 3 between 'Dispensing Practice 1 & 2' for the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme and 'Dispensing Practice Portfolio' for the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management programme.
14. The BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing Management award is therefore a variant of the existing BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing award, which is already fully approved. It is recommended that Council grant retrospective approval to this award, as there is no record that approval was sought in 2017.

### Finance

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15. All costs associated with the approval and quality assurance function are within the approved Education budget.

### Risks

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16. Awarding approval retrospectively carries certain risks, but these are mitigated.
- There is a risk that the GOC lacks sufficient assurance that the programme meets the GOC's requirements for programmes contributing to the route to registration for dispensing opticians. This risk is mitigated by the GOC already having approved the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme which is almost identical to the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme. In addition, the GOC has already verified that students completing Years 1 and 2 of the programme, which are identical to those of the BSc Ophthalmic Dispensing programme, have completed the required core competencies and practical experience to enter the Association of British Dispensing Opticians pre-qualification period. The programme therefore meets the requirements for programmes providing training as part of the route to registration for dispensing opticians
  - There is a risk that other programmes are running without having been formally approved by the GOC. The Education team has audited programmes run by each institution currently running approved programmes in optometry and ophthalmic dispensing, and is now comparing these with Registration records.

So far there have not been any similar approval concerns identified. Along with the re-launch of the Annual Monitoring process, the GOC issued guidance of reportable events and changes which providers should follow to avoid similar situations in future.

### **Equality Impacts**

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17. An impact assessment has not been completed for these specific recommendations, however the Education function's impact assessment is published on our website.

### **Devolved nations**

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18. There are no implications for the devolved nations.

### **Communications**

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19. The outcomes of all approval and quality assurance reviews are communicated to training providers within a reasonable period. In notifying the provider of Council's decision, we will also remind them of our 'notification of major changes and events' process, which was not in place at the time that the new course started and could have prevented such a scenario from occurring.
20. We publish all visit reports on our website as required by the Opticians Act.

### **Next steps**

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21. The programme, if approved, will be subject to our education quality assurance framework and reporting.

### **Attachments**

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None.