



November 2007

VISIT HANDBOOK

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

[A] TRAINING INSTITUTIONS;

AND

[B] PROVIDERS OF SCHEMES FOR REGISTRATION

FOR

UNITED KINGDOM TRAINED CONTACT LENS OPTICIANS

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1. Introduction

1.1 The General Optical Council (GOC)

1.1.1 In the interests of the public and for their protection, Contact Lens Opticians are regulated by the GOC to promote and enforce:

- a. high standards of education, training and conduct, so as to ensure an adequate and safe standard of eye care, and
- b. a system of registration of those suitably qualified as Contact Lens Opticians.

1.2 GOC Visits

1.2.1 The GOC periodically makes visits to training institutions and providers of schemes for registration. This is to ascertain whether the instruction given to persons training and the assessment of competence to practise as Contact Lens Opticians appears to be such as to secure to them adequate knowledge and skill for the safe practice of their profession. The Visits take place under powers given by Sections 12 and 13 of the Opticians Act 1989. (**Appendix 1**); *'Timescale and stages of the approval process'* (**Appendix 2**); *'The Written Report'* (**Appendix 3**); and *'Procedures for approving 'new' training institutions/providers and 'new' taught elements/schemes'* (**Appendix 4**).

1.2.2 ALL in-practice supervised training AND its assessment (in whichever route of training the trainee is enrolled) is the responsibility of the Provider of the Scheme for Registration, with the expectation that the Provider and Training Institution will work in close collaboration with each other so as to provide an integrated and progressive learning experience to the trainee, to enable the staged achievement of the core competencies required for registration.

1.2.3 Because of the nature of training in the UK, which the training institutions and scheme provider carry out, Contact Lens Opticians' education, practical training and assessment often take place concurrently, both parties working in close partnership with each other. For this reason, this Handbook is written in two parts.

1.2.4 Part [A] deals specifically with training institutions, which provide education and training towards entry to the PBL/final assessment for eventual entry to the Opticians Contact Lens Specialty Register.

1.2.5 Part [B] deals with the approval of providers of Schemes for Registration for UK trained Contact Lens Opticians.

1.2.7. The role of the GOC Visitor is:

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

1.3 This Handbook in context

- 1.3.1 The Handbook is not intended to be prescriptive. The Handbook seeks to encourage innovation within the context of the GOC's remit of ensuring the safety of the UK public through fair and appropriate regulation. It is intended that the training institutions/providers should use the sections of the Handbook as the blocks upon which to build the details of their taught elements. The GOC Visitors will use the Handbook to audit the education, training and assessment which the institution/provider is providing.
- 1.3.2 The Handbook is written so that it can be used as a guide to Visits of existing provisions and of new provisions. The Handbook gives guidelines for contact lens taught elements, irrespective of the mode of delivery.
- 1.3.3 Throughout this document reference is made to PBL. This includes any interaction that a trainee may have with patients (or trainees acting as patients) in all settings, most of which will be of a clinical nature.

PART A

GUIDANCE FOR THE APPROVAL OF
INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM GIVING TRAINING (OR PART OF THE
TRAINING) TO
PERSONS WISHING TO REGISTER AS CONTACT LENS OPTICIANS

2. The Taught Element of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice

2.0.1. This part (PART [A]) of this Handbook will guide:

- (i) training institutions in the design and delivery of the taught element of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice by listing the expectations of the GOC in defined areas of education and training;
- (ii) GOC Visitors in their audit of taught elements, will evaluate education and training and make a judgement against these guidelines;
- (iii) Officers of Council in their preparation for Visits and for the writing and presentation of formal written reports.

2.0.2 For each item, the institution is asked to demonstrate how the expected requirement is achieved or how the Handbook has been utilised in the design and delivery of the proposed taught elements. Where the requirements are not achieved then the GOC will wish the training institution to explain the reasons for this and where appropriate to indicate what alternatives have been put in place so as to secure an adequate level of training and education.

2.0.3 The GOC has placed particular emphasis on the sections below in order to discharge its legal responsibilities to ensure patient safety. To reach an adequate level of competency progression, trainees should receive appropriate professional support, by suitably GOC registered staff.

2.1 Design & Structure

- 2.1.1 The GOC Visitors will assess the taught elements, to evaluate whether they reach these guidelines on the basis of the information provided by the training institution.
- a. theoretical and practical curricula should be related in both structure and function, and provide information regarding flexible teaching and learning methods, learning objectives, assessment methods and requirements, and staff responsible for delivery;
 - b. each taught element, regardless of mode, should be concerned to integrate theory and practice and a recognised way of achieving this is through elements of clinical work. It is expected that the appropriate proportions of clinical work are built effectively into the taught elements

2.2 GOC Contact Lens Practice Competencies

The institution should demonstrate:

- a. how the taught elements deliver the competencies appropriate for each stage of training. (see **Appendix 8**).
- b. precisely where the Competencies are covered in their proposed taught elements (see **Appendix 9** for a proforma to provide this information).

2.3 Governance

- 2.4.2. Visitors would expect to meet with the member of staff responsible for governance issues in contact lens clinical work and safety of the clinical environment.

3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

3.1 Teaching and Learning Techniques

- 3.1.1 It is expected that teaching and learning should incorporate, for both practical and non-practical elements:
- a. a range of contemporary practices that are relevant to the needs of the discipline of Contact Lens Practice and needs of trainees (incorporating new developments in educational technology);
 - b. a variety of approaches to achieving and assessing learning which must be appropriate to its stated objectives, including:
 - lectures,
 - clinical work
 - seminars
 - workshops
 - tutorials

- computer-aided learning
- c. the development of the trainee's ability to independently manage patient situations and problems evolving from gradual acquisition and application of skills;
- d. ways to develop trainees' skills of independent self-learning, self-management, team working and peer assessment;
- e. provide sufficient feedback to trainees to enable maximum learning and achievement.

4. Trainee Progression and Achievement

- 4.1 The institution should provide the following information for the past three cohorts of trainees:
- a. Entry requirements
 - b. Numbers applying and accepted for each of the last three years.
Number and percentage of trainees who passed examinations in all subjects including drop out rates.

5 Teaching Institution Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1 The GOC expects the Institution to indicate that it has a commitment to continuing quality enhancement and should describe its quality enhancement procedures. The Institution should demonstrate that the following procedures are in place and that they are effective:
- a. Evidence of the response to previously relevant GOC reports;
 - b. Appropriate arrangements for taught elements management and consultation;
 - c. An annual monitoring process documenting appropriate meetings of staff and trainees with due discussion of appropriate taught elements data;
 - d. Quinquennial review and evaluation, with appropriate external expert representation;
 - e. Mechanisms for receiving feedback on taught elements quality from trainees and staff.

6 Training Institution - Staffing of Taught Elements

The Visitors will determine whether the staffing provision is appropriate and sufficient for the proper delivery of the taught elements. The training institution is asked to provide all relevant staffing information to enable a decision to be made.

7. Accommodation

- 7.1 The Institution should provide equipment that is suitable for clinical training. The equipment should be fit for purpose and of an adequate quantity for the number of trainees. The following information should be provided:

- a. a detailed list of all of the physical space occupied by the taught elements showing the area in square metres for all dedicated space (assigned to the taught elements) including laboratories, and clinical facilities;
- b. a detailed description of any clinical facility.
- c. a full list of equipment provided for the taught elements.

PART B

GUIDANCE FOR THE APPROVAL OF
SCHEMES FOR THE REGISTRATION OF
UNITED KINGDOM TRAINED
CONTACT LENS OPTICIANS

Approval of Schemes for the Registration of Contact Lens Opticians

1. **Introduction.** This section of the handbook will guide scheme providers, visitors, and officers in the design and delivery of Schemes for Registration of Contact Lens Opticians. It is not intended to be overly prescriptive and it is hoped will encourage innovation.
2. **Scheme design and construction.** There should be a taught course element (delivered by approved training institutions) and in addition a period of Contact Lens Practice Based Learning (PBL). Competency based assessments should be carried out at suitable junctures during the taught course elements. The GOC contact lens practice competencies should be documented as achieved in the written and practical examinations . The Scheme Provider should ensure that:
 - Planning for PBL should be carried out in conjunction with the practice supervisor;
 - trainees are safe to practise under supervision within the practice environment with reference to the competencies
 - when applicable, each individual trainee maintains an accredited record of his or her PBL. This record should provide an opportunity for trainees to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses with comment from practice supervisors;
 - Learning outcomes are stated and that they equate with GOC competencies
 - A coherent assessment strategy is provided
 - Employers create a suitable environment for PBL
 - Supervisors/mentors create a suitable environment for PBL and are competent
 - Trainees know their rights and responsibilities
 - Trainees get appropriate guidance and support
 - A complaints procedure is in place

3. Role of GOC Audit.

The GOC will seek to establish, via a Visit and a written report, that:

- learning outcomes are clearly expressed and equate closely with GOC competencies
- PBL content reflects closely the stated learning outcomes and assessments measure appropriately their achievement
- Communication to ALL interested parties is effective
- Quality Assurance measures are in place

Sections 4-8 describe the requirements which the scheme provider should meet, and the information to be provided to DEMONSTRATE how the requirements are met.

4. Training outcome standards.

- The stated learning outcomes should equate closely with the GOC competencies for Contact Lens Opticians
- The knowledge from the taught theory courses should be utilised effectively in the PBL
- The planned learning opportunities should lead to the stated learning outcomes of the PBL
- The PBL structure should provide for some learning progression and increase the professional demands on trainees.

Evidence of PBL

2.3.4 At all stages every effort should be made to ensure that the GOC Competencies are known by trainees and that appropriate tracking mechanisms are in place to log the achievement of the competencies in their course work and PBL, documented in a Portfolio.

2.3.7 A feedback mechanism on patient experience (anonymous) encountered during the PBL is required, through the use of the portfolio of records of patients seen, with a reflective commentary. Visitors will expect to see a regular monitoring process in place at the institution to ensure that EACH trainee accumulates appropriate patient records for that stage of their training.

2.3.8 Visitors will wish to sample the recording arrangements to check on the mechanisms for logging practical patient contact and to check that the methods of providing trainee feedback are satisfactory (within the limitations of the Data Protection Legislation).

Visitors will observe and scrutinise documentary evidence in coming to judgements on:

- Appropriateness of learning opportunities
- Effectiveness of learning environment and assessment arrangements
- Intended learning outcomes and actual trainee achievement

5. Assessment methods

The Scheme Provider should indicate how the chosen methods of assessment are appropriate for the measurement of each learning outcome. This should involve:

- A managed process with clear criteria for each assessment point with evidence presented to the GOC to indicate how this criterion has been met
- The involvement of an external reporting dimension (e.g. External Examiner or Assessor)
- GOC Visitors in observing the assessment process and examining samples of PBL work
- Evidence of appropriate review of assessments throughout the PBL and unequivocal demonstration of achievement of GOC competencies

6. Quality of Learning Opportunities

The Provider should indicate how the best possible opportunities to enable trainees to meet the stated standards are ensured.

Visitors will assess:

- The effectiveness of supervisor arrangements, including their expertise/experience and the opportunities for their staff development
- The practice environment and support made available to trainees
- The learning opportunities and minimum resource necessary for trainee success (including accommodation and equipment strategies)
- Evaluate trainee performance and effectiveness of support/non-completion rates

N.B. The detail of the required learning opportunities is in section 2.3 of part A of this handbook

7. Quality Assurance Measures

The Scheme Provider should indicate how the management of standards and quality is implemented. Visitors will assess:

- The setting of quality and standards, and measures to maintain/enhance quality
- Systems regarding the approval/review of supervisors and the suitability of the practice.
- Robustness/security of decision making processes (e.g. Monitoring and evaluation of PBL, external inputs, overall scheme management)

Feedback procedures to inform reviews. Information will be required on:

- the use of quantitative data/qualitative feedback
- the methods adopted in obtaining views of all stakeholders
- external examiner reports

Trainee achievement and progression. Information will be required on:

- the Board of Examiners and assessment regulations
- statistics on summative achievement
- analysis of performance across all sections
- evaluation of progression and achievement rates
- judgement on “fitness to practise”.

Personal development opportunities. Information will be required on:

- the opportunities and take up rates for supervisors
- the opportunities for examiners/other assessment personnel and how these are reviewed
- data on provider’s own internal review of the effectiveness of the scheme and future plans

8. Responsibilities of Supervisors

The Provider should indicate how Supervisors meet the following requirements and responsibilities:

Supervisors must:

- Meet the GOC Code of Conduct
- Be GOC registered and approved for contact lens practice and meet the GOC's CET requirements
- Meet the stated criteria of the Scheme Provider,
- Be familiar with current assessment requirements, guidelines and regulations
- Provide a sufficient learning environment
- Provide appropriate personal supervision, and be physically present when the trainee is in professional contact with patients and is able to intervene
- Observe, teach and appraise as appropriate and offer other appropriate support.

A. The Visit format for Established Taught Elements to Training Institutions

The Panel Visiting team will always comprise of at least the following:

- Chair - Lay member of Council and member of the Education Committee*
- One Optometrist
- One Educationist
- One Qualified (FBDO CL) Contact Lens Optician
- One Dispensing Optician

* The Chair will be independent to the visiting professional team, and will ensure that the procedures and criteria laid down in this handbook are appropriately followed, that the Education Committee has fully discharged its responsibilities in relation to taught elements approval, and that Visitors conduct themselves properly and with due courtesy.

In the case of training institutions, the Visitors will wish to meet the following persons during the Visit:

- Appropriate senior Institution managers;
- the Head of Taught elements or the equivalent person;
- the Clinic Manager (if appropriate);
- staff teaching on the taught elements;
- support staff;
- staff from relevant Institution services (e.g. library);
- trainees.

A record will be kept of these meetings

The Visitors will wish to observe the following:

- Teaching sessions
- Clinic sessions
- All equipment and facilities

NB: Under certain circumstances the Education Committee may deem it necessary to send Education Committee Panel Visitors.

B. The Visit format for Established Taught elements For Scheme Providers

The Panel Visiting team will always comprise of at least the following:

- Chair - Lay member of Council and member of the Education Committee*
- One Optometrist
- One Educationist
- One Qualified (FBDO CL) Contact Lens Optician
- One Dispensing Optician

The Chair will be independent to the visiting professional team, and will ensure that the procedures and criteria laid down in this handbook are appropriately followed, that the Education Committee has fully discharged its responsibilities in relation to taught elements approval, and that Visitors conduct themselves properly and with due courtesy.

The Visitors will wish to meet the following persons during the Visit.

- Head of Examinations and appropriate staff members (senior staff and administrators)
- Director of specific examination or examiners
- Examining team
- Examinees
- Personnel involved in supporting trainees during the PBL, e.g. Supervisors, local employers, as appropriate
- Recent Diplomates
- External Examiner(s) (where appropriate)
- The Chair of the Assessment Board

A record will be kept of these meetings

The Visitors will wish to observe the following:

- The practical assessments and vivas
- Portfolios and any other written assessments/records
- A sample of the theory examination papers and scripts

NB: Under certain circumstances the Education Committee may deem it necessary to send Education Committee Panel Visitors.

Timescale and stages of the approval process

A Letter will be sent to existing providers one year before the process is due to commence, which will trigger the requirements as stated in this handbook, for example a statement of required documentation, briefing of Visitors etc

Approximately four weeks of the dispatch of the letter an Officer of the GOC will make contact with the Head of Department to negotiate the broad timeframe for the Visit including appropriate milestones over the coming months culminating in the actual Visit.

Following the Visit:

A first draft of the written report to Visitors will be sent to Visitors (see **Appendix 3**) and the second draft of the Visit Report will be sent to the Training Institution/provider for factual correction. Once the factual corrections have been received, a final Report will be sent to the training institution/provider for their official response.

Once the official response is received from the training institution, it is circulated to the Visitors for comment. The responses from the Visitors are then submitted, along with a copy of the training institutions response and the Visit Report to the next Education Committee Meeting.

Following Education Committee's review of these documents, its recommendations will be submitted to Council. Council's decision will then be communicated to the Training Institute/provider.

The Written Report

The written report will take the following format:

- Brief introduction to the Institution/provider.
- Visit Recommendations and Conclusion under the following sections:
 - Taught elements construction – taught elements design, match with core competencies and syllabus
 - Staffing –leadership, staff-trainee ratios, other staff, staff development
 - Resources and facilities – financial, accommodation, equipment, library
 - Teaching, learning and assessment
 - Trainee progression and achievement
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Period of approval and associated conditions
- Appendices

Procedure for approving 'new' training institutions/providers and 'new' taught elements/schemes:

Training institutions/providers should be aware that the GOC considers that in order to form an effective proposal for a new taught elements about 2 years preparation time is required. Training institutions/providers considering new taught elements/schemes should therefore contact the GOC at the earliest opportunity to agree a suitable timescale for the appropriate development and consideration of the proposal.

- a. The training institution/provider should make a written submission to the Education Committee outlining its intentions for the new provision, giving the same details as required by this Handbook for established taught elements/schemes.
- b. Education Committee meets three times a year, in February, May and September. Papers for the Committee go out (usually) two weeks before a meeting.
- c. Once it has received outline details and considers these the Committee will ask a Group from within it's own membership to visit the training institution/provider offering to new provision so as to take the matter further. This is not a Panel Visit. The role of the Education Committee Visitors to a new taught elements (or new examination etc) is:
 - i) To offer any assistance and advice to the training institution/provider in the establishment of the taught elements;
 - ii) advise the Education Committee on whether provisional approval should be granted to the taught elements; and
 - iii) ensure that matters of public safety are addressed.
- d. The Committee would receive a report of that preliminary meeting, which will enable the Committee to advise Council whether provisional approval should be granted so that the institution/provider can start recruiting trainees.
- e. Once the taught elements has started the Committee Visitors will visit in each year of its development.
- f. A report to the Education Committee will be produced after each Committee Visit and provisional approval can be withdrawn at any stage.
- g. When the Committee is satisfied it will advise Council to visit formally and it will then be a matter for the Council to decide on full approval, which initially may be for a shorter period than the usual five years.

At its meeting of 6 March 2003, the General Optical Council agreed the following policy statement:

'Training Institutions/providers wishing to provide training courses for entry to pre-registration arrangements for Optometry or Dispensing Optics, should obtain provisional approval for their proposals BEFORE trainees are enrolled to the training course. If trainees are enrolled before provisional approval is secured, the GOC will NOT give provisional approval to that part of the course which has run prior to provisional approval being granted.'

Staffing Table for Training Institutions

Suggested matrix to present the staffing information as outlined in section #. Information should clearly state whether a person is permanent or contractual, full time or part time, etc.

Teaching staff details

Name of staff member teaching on the programme	-FT -PT -Hourly paid -Teacher-practitioner, -Visiting lecturer -Other	Role and qualifications	Total annual teaching hours	Total annual teaching hours allocated to the programme	Indicate any impending changes
Staff member 1					
Staff member 2					
Etc					

The Institution is asked to provide its formula for calculating full time equivalence.

Information required from the Training Institution/Scheme Provider

1. Particulars of the Institution/Scheme Provider (as appropriate)

- Name of Institution/Scheme Provider
- Address
- Details, which the Visitors might find helpful of the nature, size and organisation of the institution/provider.
- Number of 'departments' (or equivalent unit)
- Total number of trainees (approx.)
- Name of Department (or equivalent unit) teaching the contact lens certificate
- Name and qualifications of the Head of the Department (or equivalent unit) teaching the contact lens certificate
- Number of weeks in academic year (including exams)
- Name(s) of taught elements(s)
- Trainee Handbook
- Taught elements Information
- Other recent external body reports (e.g. QCA)

The Institution is asked to demonstrate how the statements in Sections 2 – 7 of Part [A] and Sections 4-8 of Part [B] are satisfied. This is best achieved by the Institution writing an evaluation of the issues raised in each Section in the same sequence as presented in the Handbook. The Institution should then provide separately written evidence to support each Section or indicate where the evidence is located in existing Institution documents, which should be made available to the GOC.

Standing Conditions

These are conditions, which will apply in all circumstances of accreditation.

1. The Institution and Scheme Provider should inform the Council of any amendments to the approved taught elements/assessments which would lead to significant changes in the trainee experience, and any planned or real changes in the trainee intake numbers of more than 10% of the previous annual first year intake, or resources for their teaching, learning support and assessment.

2. The Institution and Scheme Provider should, by 31 January in each year, produce and submit to the General Optical Council annually data on trainee numbers and progression.