

Diploma in Contact Lens Practice (2024 Syllabus)



Guidance for Supervisors

Introduction

The Diploma in Contact Lens Practice is awarded by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians and has received the approval of the General Optical Council. It is the qualification which permits entry to the GOC's Specialty Register: a registered Dispensing Optician holding this qualification may practise as a Contact Lens Optician.

The qualification is also approved by

Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation, and they have graded it as a Level 6 qualification.

Background Information

The Association has been awarding a contact lens qualification for more than 50 years, initially as the Association of

Dispensing Opticians – when there was no requirement to hold a qualification involving contact lens training – and since 1986 as ABDO. When regulation of contact lens practice was introduced by the GOC, the Association's qualification was immediately acknowledged – and when the GOC Specialty register was introduced in 2005, it became the entry requirement to that register for Dispensing Opticians.

The contact lens qualification is elective so trainees may not choose to embark on the training immediately follow their achievement of the Association's Fellowship Diploma. Practice experience is essential but is not always readily available. As trainees are usually studying the theory of contact lens practice and developing their clinical skills whilst maintaining their professional role as a Dispensing Optician, a different level of support is required to that given to a pre-registration Optometrist or a trainee Dispensing Optician.

The trainees are assessed in the basic principles of contact lens practice and are required to have experience in a range of lenses with a range of patients as well as be aware of current developments in practice, design and clinical management.

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The Diploma in Contact Lens Practice

The Association's Diploma in Contact Lens Practice is awarded to candidates who demonstrate they are able to achieve the GOC Outcomes for Registration (OfR) in the Specialty of Contact Lens Practice. There are 6 Units in total which assess both background knowledge and outcomes for registration.

The Outcomes are detailed in the Syllabus and are also available from the General Optical Council website – where the performance indicators are included.

Syllabus

The Syllabus of the Diploma in Contact Lens Practice is available via the examinations section of the ABDO website. This details the range of subjects to be studied, the GOC OfR and the format of their assessments as well as the Supervision requirements and other information.

Supervision of a Trainee Contact Lens Optician

The Association requires that the supervisor must be able to provide **close personal supervision** – that means they are on the premises during the practical experience sessions, aware that lenses are being fitted and so placed that they are able to intervene in the procedure, as applicable.

As soon as the trainee has commenced a recognised contact lens course (currently Block-Release Contact Lens Course at ABDO College or the day release Contact Lens Course at Bradford College) and so long as they are a qualified registered Dispensing Optician, they may complete an application form to register the Practice Education Lead (PEL) and main practice with the Association – and then begin fitting and aftercare of contact lenses under supervision.

If appropriate then supporting supervisors named Practice Task Supervisors (PTS) (suitably qualified professionals who are willing and available) and a second practice may be registered with the Association and may be involved in the trainee's supervision for up to 33% of the trainee's clinical time.

Trainees may not practice under supervision for an indefinite period. They are advised to attempt the theory examinations within two years of course completion and the practical examination within two years of the theory examination. If delayed beyond those times, the Association will require the trainee to undertake a formal revision process. The PEL and practice must be on the current register of ABDO contact lens supervisors and practices throughout attempts of the practical examination and remain registered with ABDO and the GOC until the TCLO is admitted to the GOC Contact Lens Specialty register.

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The Role of the Supervisor An important part of your role is the guidance you will give on contact lens practice and the assistance you will give with the trainee's patient base – to develop their personal clinical experience and to provide case records for the practical examination.

The level of support you will need to apply will depend on the type of the training course and the level of experience the trainee has gained prior to your involvement. If they do not have any practical experience you will need to develop their practical skills gradually. However, it would be useful for the trainee to have some basic slit-lamp skills at an early stage so that you can demonstrate interesting clinical situations to them as and when they occur [which is usually when they have just begun to work with you!].

The role of a supervisor whose responsibilities begin when the TCLO begins their theory course has several stages – Initially providing an example in the consulting-room and then closely supporting the trainee through their first steps as a clinician. The middle stage involves mentoring, encouraging confidence and developing expertise and experience in the decision- making process. Finally, in the last 6 months prior to their practical examination the role changes to guiding and assisting in preparation for the examination.

Training Support

In addition to a copy of the Syllabus, the trainee will be given access to–

Contact Lens Training Diary

The diary contains a **practical experience schedule** to guide your trainee during their training period. Please plan with them the way in which you will together develop their practical skills and their patient base. It contains **case records notes** indicating the mix of the case records they are required to present to the Association in advance of the examination (see the general supervision notes regarding timetabling).

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Dependant on the demographics of your practice, it can be challenging to find that mix for them so it is recommended that you begin as soon as possible. Included in the Diary are **patient tracking charts** which are intended to help the trainee record the details of patients they have managed, categorising the records in preparation for the case record section of the examination. They need to ensure they themselves carry out all the aftercare consultations for the patients they plan to present in the examination. The records must be traceable to the TCLO in the practical experience practice.

Personal Clinical Experience Hours Chart to list the total of hours for each day they are carrying out contact lens consultations with patients. The PEL or PTS – will be required to sign each entry. A copy of the form will be required to be included when submitting case records prior to the practical examination.

Development of skills and experience in contact lens practice

To achieve success in the OfR, the trainee needs to be personally involved with patients, in all stages of contact lens wear from fitting contact lenses to neophytes to carrying out refitting and aftercare on established wearers. Initially they require maximum support from their PEL and they should have extended appointment times so that they develop best practice procedures from the very beginning. As their skills and confidence grow with experience, they will be able to perform those tasks within a shorter timeframe. They should develop a routine for the appropriate stages of a new fit or refit, and of an aftercare consultation – including all the information gathering and all the checks which should be made in an ideal appointment – and they should carry them out with every patient.

The case record requirements for the practical examination are detailed in the Syllabus and in the CL Training Diary. Ideally the trainee begins to carry out appointments themselves at an early stage, albeit with considerable support from the supervisor initially. They are encouraged to take personal responsibility for the follow-up appointment arrangements as they are required to have been responsible for all of the appointments recorded on the case records presented for the examination – and for those records to demonstrate that the patient has had the opportunity of a minimum of six months wear.

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The process of approval for Contact Lens Training

Registration of Supervisor and practice

The Association requires a contact lens trainee to gain practical experience under the supervisor and at a practice approved by and registered with the Association – for the equivalent of a minimum of 1 day per week from when they commence contact lens practice experience, once their PEL is registered with the Association, until they are accepted onto the GOC Contact Lens Specialty Register. The TCLO must have completed 225 hours of personal clinical experience before they may attempt the practical examinations. All PEL/PTS **MUST** be on the current appropriate **GOC** register throughout the process. A PEL may be a Dispensing Optician with an approved CL qualification or GOC certification, or an Optometrist – with a minimum of two years' experience. It is also possible for an Ophthalmologist with a minimum of 2 years' experience in contact lens practice, to supervise a student (please be aware that a PTS does not require the minimum of two years' experience).

(It should be noted that lapse of GOC registration of Supervisor or Trainee would mean that contact lens practical experience would cease until appropriate supervision could be arranged – and case records for the examination could not be developed during that period.)

To commence the registration process, the supervisor must complete the appropriate application for registration form [see the timelines and documents chart] -

Practice Education Lead (PEL)– immediately once practical experience begins.

Practice Task Supervisor (PTS) – if applicable, can be applied for after acknowledgement of the PEL by ABDO. The PEL must submit a list of PTS and alternative practice if required once they have been registered.

Practice Visit and in-practice Assessment – between 12 and 6 months prior to practical examination and to meet the Association's deadlines of – 31 January - for the Summer sitting or 31 July - for the Winter sitting

Preparation for the Practical Examinations

The supervisor will be asked to sign a confirmation that the trainee has achieved 225 hours of personal clinical experience in readiness for the examination as part of the Final Declaration (which is uploaded with the case records prior to the practical examination). A copy of the Personal Clinical Experience Hours Chart will be required to accompany the case records prior to the practical examinations taking place.

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Specific areas of Supervisory guidance

There are several important areas for your trainee, within the practical elements of their preparation for assessment of the contact lens OfR and their career afterwards as a Contact Lens Optician, where your experience and guidance would be very beneficial –

- Developing a full routine for the initial assessment of a patient including a full patient history**
- Developing a full routine for their slit-lamp examination of a patient including tears assessment and lid eversion
- Increasing product knowledge of lenses and solutions – not only of the products used in your practice but also a general knowledge of other products available in the marketplace
- Developing a full routine for an aftercare assessment of a contact lens wearer**
- Creating and maintaining a varied and expanding patient base – not only to enable them to draw the best 15 for their case records for the examination but also to ensure they gain as much experience as possible to extend their knowledge and their confidence
- Creating well-documented case records – both for the examination and in practice.
- Having regular discussions of patients progress and a diverse view of ways in which a contact lens wearing problem may be resolved.

** see ABDO Advice & Guidance

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Calendar/Timetable information

Summer Session

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|--------------------------|--|
| 31 st January | Final date for applications for Practice Visit and in-practice Competency 5.2 assessment to be with ABDO Examinations & Registrations Department. |
| 1 st March | Final date for completed Examination application forms to be with ABDO Examinations Department. |
| 31 st March | Final date for Practical Examination Case Records to be with ABDO Examinations Department. |
| May/June | Theory Examinations held over 2 days |
| June/July | Case Record Discussion Assessment (Online VIVA) |
| July | Practical Examinations held |

Winter Session

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|---------------------------|--|
| 31 st July | Final date for applications for Practice Visit and in-practice Competency 5.2 assessment to be with ABDO Examinations & Registrations Department. |
| 1 st September | Final date for completed Examination application forms to be with ABDO Examinations Department. |
| 30 th November | Final date for Practical Examination Case Records to be with ABDO Examinations Department. |
| May/June | Theory Examinations held over 2 days |
| June/July | Case Record Discussion Assessment (Online VIVA) |
| July | Practical Examinations held |

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