

College of Optometrists Consultation: Learning Outcomes for the Professional Diploma in Low Vision

Thank you for inviting the Optical Confederation to comment on the learning outcomes for the College's Professional Diploma in Low Vision.

Why Three Separate Levels?

It is clear that successfully completing all three parts – professional certificate, higher certificate and diploma - will enable an individual to manage most aspects of low vision practice in both primary and secondary care settings. However, although we understand the arguments for flexibility for individuals we are also mindful of cost and confusion for commissioners and, given the overlap, are unpersuaded as to why three separate courses are necessary for most practitioners (instead of having one course covering all relevant areas of low vision, similar to the ABDO Diploma).

Content

Whilst not entirely reflecting hands on activities relating to the management of low vision, the Diploma does appear to cover many aspects of health care management that are not specific to low vision.

There are some elements where further clarity would be welcome by the Optical Confederation. These are:

- As the diploma is designed for optometrists leading multi-disciplinary teams, should there not be something specific about the role of the professional in the commissioning process eg iro quality assurance?
- There is no specific mention of hand or stand magnifiers in the equipment. Is this an oversight?
- There is an expectation that the candidates will be able to diagnose and manage depression and sleep deprivation in patients. Surely these would be better undertaken by medical practitioners? These are both specialist fields and require careful handling.

Reassurances about Participation in Locally Commissioned Pathways

We hope that it is not envisaged that only those who possess these further qualifications (or comparable qualifications such as the ABDO Diploma In low vision) will be considered suitably qualified to take part in any local or national pathways and would welcome confirmation that this is not the College's intention. The introduction of three additional courses in low vision may lead to a reduction in the participation of those with core low vision skills and, if that were to be the case, the number of suitably qualified low vision practitioners would certainly not meet the national demand for low vision services.

We would also be concerned if either optometrists and dispensing opticians who have demonstrated high levels of competency in low vision management, but have no further qualifications in low vision, were to be excluded in the future by dint of that from , participating in locally commissioned services and the delivery of community pathways. Again we would welcome clarification that that is not the College's intention.

NB It is the Optical Confederation's (not the AOP's) *Quality in Optometry*.

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