



The European Council of Optometry and Optics

**Guidelines for the accreditation of
European Optometric/Optics
qualifications for exemption from all or
part of the examinations of the
European Diploma in Optometry**

**Part I:
The ECOO Accreditation
Scheme**

June 2012

Part I: The Accreditation System

1. Introduction

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) has a vision of Europe where there is easy access to affordable eye care provided by opticians and optometrists who practise autonomously to conserve and improve human vision

The legal scope of practice within the countries of ECOO varies from assembling spectacles to the autonomous management of eye disease. In the spirit of the Bologna declaration ECOO established the European Diploma in Optometry as a stimulus to the harmonization of European optometric education and clinical practice. The European Diploma is set at the Bachelor level in European Higher Education and provides a qualification appropriate for Optometric practice at Category 3 of the World Council of Optometry's four categories model. The countries of ECOO have adopted the Diploma as the "Gold Standard" for European Optometry.

As harmonization progresses an increasing number of schools and universities now base their curriculum on the Diploma. To foster this harmonization ECOO has established an **accreditation agency** to invite training institutions to benchmark their programmes against the European Diploma. The intention is to exempt graduates of approved programmes from part or all of the examinations of the European Diploma.

2. What will be the benefits of the accreditation process?

- All European Optometry/Optics programmes can be compared against an agreed international standard, the European Diploma.
- It will form the basis of a system for offering exemptions from parts, or all, of the European Diploma examinations to graduates of accredited programmes.
- Training Institutions will be encouraged to match their programmes to all or part of the competency-based European Diploma - this will help to harmonize Optometry within Europe.
- It may help training institutions, in the course of their national academic accreditation, if they can demonstrate that all or part of their programme meets the European standard.

- National “competent authorities” will find it easier to evaluate the training of applicants from another EU country – this will help to facilitate free movement of professionals.

3. What will actually be accredited?

- Because of the diversity of Optometry/Optics training within Europe the system will be Competency-based. The emphasis will be on the quality of the graduate rather than on details of the training process.
- The European Diploma is competency-based:
 - **Competency** is the ability to perform the activities within an occupation to the standard expected in employment.
 - **Competencies** are the **skills, attitudes and knowledge** needed to be able to practice.

In the context of this document “**Competency**” refers to the performance of the optometric/optical practitioner: the integration of skills, attitudes and knowledge that informs the practitioner in his/her professional activities. “**Competencies**” are the individual components of the skills, attitudes and knowledge that must be mastered to achieve “**Competency**”.

In training programmes the skills, attitudes and knowledge gained on successful completion of a module or course are referred to as the “**learning outcomes**” of that module or course. The student demonstrates the achievement of these “**learning outcomes**” by passing the corresponding module assessments (examinations) that are designed to test specifically for the acquisition of these “**learning outcomes**”.

“**Learning outcomes**” are typically defined in the format: “*On successful completion of the module the student will be able to*”. Hence “**Learning Outcomes**” can be conveniently matched against the European Diploma “**Competencies**”.

- The accreditation system will consider the skills, attitudes and knowledge achieved by graduates of the programme. The approach will be to benchmark the learning outcomes of the training programme being considered against the competencies of the European Diploma.
- Exemption will be given from any or all of the three Parts of the European Diploma whose competencies can be shown to have been taught and assessed to the European Diploma standard within the training programme. It may be possible to give exemption from subsections of each of the three Parts. The subsection is the smallest unit that will be given exemption.

4. The Accreditation questionnaire.

- A questionnaire has been prepared that lists all the Competencies/Learning outcomes of the European Diploma. (**See Part II**).
- An Institution applying for accreditation completes the questionnaire as a self-assessment document indicating where these European Diploma outcomes are being taught and assessed within the programme being considered.
- The location of each competency/learning outcome within the programme is defined with respect to the Institution's formal Optometry/Optics **programme specification**.
- The relative importance of each competency/learning outcomes within the programme is given by the associated credit weighting.
- The method of assessment of each competency/learning outcome and its contribution to the final examination mark is indicated by reference to the programme's **examination document** or equivalent.

The questionnaire is long, but it is simple. It does not ask for details of the teaching process over many years. It asks for evidence of the quality of the graduate - the learning outcomes and the clinical/practical competencies achieved by graduates after successful completion of the programme.

5. Additional documentation in support of the questionnaire.

In addition to completing the questionnaire, please supply the following:

- Programme specification (or equivalent).
- Examination document (or equivalent).
- Student timetable, didactic and clinical.
- Records of students' clinical experience.

6. Analysis and verification of the Completed Questionnaire.

- The completed questionnaire is considered by ECOO and a provisional opinion is given as to possible exemptions.

- If the training institution wishes to continue with Accreditation a group of four ECOO nominated Opticians, Optometrists and Educationalists are invited to visit the Institution to verify the contents of the Questionnaire.
- The procedure to be followed on the visit by both the Visitors and the Institution is defined in the **Part III** of this document.

7. Guidance in Completing the Questionnaire.

- Guidance in the completion of the questionnaire is given in the examples from the questionnaire reproduced below in Tables 1 and 2.
*The Self-Assessment Questionnaire itself is **Part II** of this document.*
- In the questionnaire (and Tables 1 and 2 below) the first column lists all of the European Diploma Competencies in the twenty-four Subjects that cover the curriculum.
- **Knowledge base of Competencies**
Some of the twenty-four Subjects in the Competency-based European Diploma relate to the knowledge base that supports the competency and clinical skills.
- The requirement is to **“have an understanding of”** or **“a knowledge of”**.
- The achievement of **“understanding”** or **“knowledge”** can be acceptably demonstrated by indicating the formal written examination(s) in which the graduate demonstrated satisfactory understanding and knowledge of all aspects of the specific competency. An example of how this part of the questionnaire could be completed is given in Table 1.

Note: If the Learning Outcomes of a Subject are achieved across several different modules it may be more convenient when completing the questionnaire to subdivide the list of Learning Outcomes amongst the relevant modules.

Table 1. Knowledge base for the European Diploma competencies

Subject 1: Geometrical Optics		
Learning outcomes: The candidates should demonstrate fundamental knowledge and insight into geometrical optics in order for the candidate to be able to understand and solve problems related to the eye and optical instruments/lenses, their function and correction. Knowledge and understanding should be demonstrated in the areas of: (1) refraction at single spherical or plane surfaces, (2) thin lenses, (3) thick lenses, (4) aberrations, (5) apertures, (6) spherocylindrical lenses, (7) thin prisms, (8) mirrors, and (9) ophthalmic and optical instruments. The aim is to achieve knowledge of the fundamentals of geometrical optics and how they apply to the human eye.		
Where in the programme.	Credit weighting.	Method of assessment.

	Geometrical Optics Course First Year See Programme Specification pXX	Geometrical Optics First Year Course XX Credits See Programme Specification pXX	Closed book written MCQ Examination. See Examination Document pXX
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Practical/Clinical Competencies.

The remaining competencies relate to the clinical skills of the graduate.

The clinical requirement is to **“have an ability to do”**.

The achievement of **“an ability to do”** can be acceptably demonstrated by indicating the clinical examination(s) in which the graduate demonstrated competence in the specific skill required. An example of how this part of the questionnaire could be completed is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Clinical/practical European Diploma Competencies

Subject 5: Optical Appliances					
<i>Clinical/practical competencies:</i>		Competency assessment		Clinical experience	
		How assessed.	Where in the programme.	Number of patients examined.	Record kept.
1	The ability to advise on and to dispense the most suitable form of optical correction taking into account durability, comfort, cosmetic appearance and lifestyle.				
2	The ability to measure and verify optical appliances, taking into account relevant standards.	Ophthalmic Dispensing Clinic Assessment See Examination Doc p xx	Ophthalmic Dispensing Third Year See Programme Specification p xx	12 patients	Student Clinic Logbook

8. Programme details.

- Duration of programme
 Number of years: _____
 Full-time or part-time: _____
- Number of students each year: _____
- Is the programme competency-based? _____
- Is there a period of supervised clinical practice?
 How many weeks does it last? _____
 Is this organised by the training institution? _____
- Qualification awarded on graduation: _____
- National scope-of-practice (WCO 1-4): _____
- Legislation pending to change scope of practice?
 If so what changes? _____