

The background of the top half of the page features a white model of a human eye on a stand, positioned in front of a grey wall with large black letters (D, P, T, U, Z, D, T, F) and circular patterns. Below the eye model is a piece of black optometric equipment with several dials and scales.

Subject Benchmark Statement: Optometry

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Optometry for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Optometry?

As a subject discipline, Optometry combines scientific knowledge and patient-facing clinical skills to provide the best possible vision and visual health outcomes. Optometrists are registered healthcare professionals who specialise in the detection, diagnosis, management and rehabilitation of conditions affecting the eye and visual system.

A degree in Optometry enables diverse employment opportunities in primary care community practice settings, NHS hospital eye services, private clinics, higher education institutions, charities and within industry. Optometrists may work independently or collaborate within large multidisciplinary teams alongside professionals such as dispensing opticians, ophthalmologists, orthoptists, and ophthalmic nurses. Many optometrists pursue portfolio careers, engaging in multiple roles across varied settings, offering a dynamic and challenging range of experiences.

Throughout the course, students will engage in patient-facing learning opportunities, both real and simulated, which will progressively intensify in volume and complexity. Graduates are required to undergo a comprehensive period of integrated practice-based learning to fulfil regulatory standards, enabling graduates to be fully registered with the General Optical Council as an Optometrist.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Optometry?

Optometry courses encompass a diverse range of subjects, including basic and clinical sciences, law, professional standards and ethics, and leadership and management. These programmes are designed to offer practical experiences and clinical placements, fostering the development of knowledge, behaviours and skills essential for optometry practice. The content and clinical experience within Optometry courses ensures that the outcomes specified by the General Optical Council for professional registration are met.

Courses focus on equipping graduates with key skills necessary for contemporary and future practice. These skills include working within the relevant scope of practice to ensure safe, and effective patient-centred care. Additionally, graduates are trained in critical thinking and evidence-based clinical decision-making, the critical appraisal of research literature, effective verbal and written communication, and reflective practice to support ongoing professional development.

The Subject Benchmark Statement serves as a foundation for reflection on the range of appropriate teaching and learning activities, utilising a range of delivery methods, such as synchronous, asynchronous or a blend of modes to integrate theory and practice. Clinically focused learning occurs across diverse settings, including community optometry practice, hospital eye departments, domiciliary eyecare providers and industry partners.

As students progress through the course, learning approaches evolve from supported and structured to more independent and self-directed activities, preparing them for careers as healthcare professionals. The strategies remain dynamic, responsive to advances in clinical practice, technology and research in teaching pedagogy.



How are students assessed?

The assessment of student achievement in Optometry aligns constructively with the required learning outcomes and is tailored to develop knowledge, abilities and professional skills. It adheres to General Optical Council (GOC) requirements and maps diversity in assessment across courses. Assessment should be balanced, rigorous and relevant to clinical practice, supporting the development of both optometry-specific and general employability skills.

Assessments should be authentic, to enhance employability skills and professional development; and should be designed to be inclusive without the need for reasonable adjustments.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded a degree in Optometry are outlined on **pages 18-19** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 22** of the full Statement.

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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