

Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | April 2013 | Issue 13

Foundation Degree
awards event – in pictures



Forward together –
an interview with CCCUs Professor Kate Springett

Never too old to study



It was John Mortimer, creator of Rumpole of the Bailey, who in a book on growing old described the realisation

that he had reached a great age as feeling like breakfast was coming round every couple of hours. I am getting the same feeling with the editor seemingly asking for my *Re:View* introduction articles at the same rate!

As I write the College is busy preparing for Optrafair, which will run 13–15th April at the NEC, Birmingham. ABDO College and ABDO College Bookshop will be exhibiting in the main hall on stand P14 for the duration of the show. So please come along and visit the stand to find out about the extensive range of courses and opportunities the College has to offer; these include the Foundation Degree/BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing and BSc (Hons)

in Optical Dispensing Studies courses run in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

Indeed in this issue of *Re:View* we feature an in-depth interview with Professor Kate Springett which outlines some of the successful partnership work that the College conducts with CCCU.

Canterbury Christ Church University is renowned for academic excellence, a warm welcoming atmosphere and community spirit. It is a modern university, immersed in culture, and with a strong reputation for delivering high quality professional public service education. ABDO College is therefore delighted to have established a strong partnership with CCCU, which continues to grow.

On the last day of Optrafair, on Monday 15th April, ABDO College and CCCU will host a special '*Supporting Academic Learning*' event at the NEC, from 9.30am–4.00pm in Concourse Suites 31–33. The event will feature separate sessions for practice-based supervisors, personal distance learning tutors and practice support team visitors. The '*Supporting Academic Learning*'

event is one of five projects currently undertaken by the partnership funded by a grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Funding from this grant has also been employed to cushion the impact of raised tuition fees for employers and students on our degree programmes.

Although she has already been with us for several months, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to Jill McAdams to the College reception team. The position she now occupies was made available as former receptionist Emma Pynn now works part-time as a membership assistant in ABDO Membership Services, while the rest of her working week is spent in her other role as the College's junior technician. I would like to congratulate Emma on recently passing the first year examinations of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers Level 4 Diploma for Optical Technicians.

Emma is still in the early years of her career in optics, but you are never too old to study and acquire additional qualifications – a point that's highlighted

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in the 'Further qualifications: what's stopping you?' feature opposite. Over the past few years we have noted that there's a steady trend of an increasing number of mature students and those who already hold higher qualifications undertaking ophthalmic dispensing courses.

Having recently looked at the profile of a 'typical' DO for the ODS course, taken from the last cohort who undertook this 'top-up' degree course for FBDOs, we find that their average age is 40, that they qualified just over 14 years ago and are more than likely to be involved with their LOC. So if that's you, why not contact us with a view to discussing your participation on the next ODS course, as we are currently looking to enrol our next intake during the autumn. As some of the last cohort are actually of my vintage maybe there's still hope for me to obtain a degree. Although this is doubtful as my time will be taken up writing introductions for *Re:View* and having breakfast every couple of hours!

**Huntly Taylor FBDO, Chairman,
ABDO College Board of Trustees**

Further qualifications: what's stopping you?

Have you looked at taking a further qualification and hesitated? Getting an additional qualification can help your career. Whether you left school without a GCSE in maths or English, you are an optical assistant looking for the next step, or you are already qualified as a DO and want to get a BSc, getting back into study makes sense.

Don't worry about your age: you are never too old to study. The average age of students who completed the most recent ABDO College ODS degree course was 40 when they completed the course. And as retirement age rises, you have more time to make the most of your qualifications.

If you never got to grips with one particular subject, be it maths, English, science or human biology, there are Access Courses to help. These distance learning courses will help you work through a topic over around 20 weeks. The courses are based on continuous assessment: you need to return at least 80% of the course work. The Optics and Dispensing Access Course is a great way to ensure you know the basics about optics.

Some people don't consider further study because they think they know enough, but in fact many students say that they didn't know just how much more they would learn on the DO degree course until they started studying. Download the ABDO College prospectus from www.abdocollege.co.uk to discover all the topics covered in each course, or simply take time to have a chat with a qualified dispensing optician who has completed the course that interests you.

If you want to know more, call the ABDO College Courses Team on 01227 733 911. The deadline for applying for the 2014 ODS course is Autumn 2013, and August 2013 for the Foundation Degree.

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The ABDO College Board of Trustees and staff would like to thank its official sponsors for their generous and continued support.

For further information on ABDO College sponsorship opportunities contact Michael R Potter FBDO on 01227 733 913 or email at mpotter@abdo.org.uk.

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Younger Optics

Forward together – an interview with CCCUs Professor

ABDO College works in conjunction with Canterbury Christ Church University to provide the Foundation Degree/BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing as well as the 'top up' BSc in Optical Dispensing Studies (ODS) for qualified dispensing opticians.

Professor Kate Springett is the Head of Department of Allied Health Professions at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). She has academic lead responsibility for a number of the health professions including both the dispensing optics degree courses run in collaboration with ABDO College. We interviewed Professor Springett to get an insight into how ABDO College and CCCU work together to provide degree courses and development for the profession. Professor Springett says, "As the academic lead for the department I have a strategic as well as an operational role, doing the horizon viewing, looking at what needs to be developed at strategic level. I also have ultimate responsibility for quality of any accredited programmes. I work through my senior team to do that and through ABDO College to make sure that everything is kept on track, meets GOC, professional body and university requirements: as with all universities we are regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency."

The relatively recent option of a degree level qualification for dispensing opticians obviously comes with challenges for the profession. Professor Springett says, "There is a role for higher education in taking the profession forward. In the current financial climate



this is a challenge to individuals and employers as time and money are tight. It is very important for dispensing opticians to function as equals with other health professionals. Clinical commissioning groups will be looking at eye health and at their local services. It is absolutely crucial that DO's don't get left behind and can talk the same language as other degree level professionals. When the clinical commissioning groups start looking in detail at local services it may be the

case that rather than going to the dispensing optician, they may assume that they have to speak to the optometrist. In a worst case scenario the DO could end up without a voice in shaping the future: this is conjecture, but dispensing professionals need to be able to develop the same level of clinical language, refer to the literature, access the evidence and choose the right sort of evidence to maintain credibility."

The degree level courses have been carefully designed by the profession and the university to increase capacity in the profession at the highest level, creating a generation of practitioners who are fully versed in critical analysis to the benefit of patients. Professor Springett continues, "Both the pre-qualifying and the top-up degree have much the same aims in this area, to take the profession forward and help dispensing opticians use the research literature for safe and effective care of their patients. It means using research, business and management literature as well as looking at information provided by companies albeit that which can be focussed on the company's own products. The DO reading company literature needs to be aware of what is trustworthy and what should be discarded. It is difficult to develop this skill alone: most of us need to be taught how to do this. Working in the Department of Allied Health Professions I can see that this applies across all professions."

Professor Springett supervises third year ophthalmic dispensing BSc students in their final project, which ties in with her interest in research. She is Chair of

Kate Springett

the national strategic organisation the Research Forum for Allied Health Professions and is involved in the National Institute for Health Research initiative in the Clinical Academic Careers Training Programme that promotes research and researchers in NHS

and be a business opportunity, by applying evidence-based practice.” One critical element of the undergraduate programme is to teach practitioners to be patient-centred. Professor Springett says, “Our students learn to work with their patients, to ask whether it is also

who is interested in and committed to taking their studies forward will find the course a real eye opener. It will change the way in which you work, how you help your patients. Realistically, some students may complain that the work is hard and time consuming but I’ve never heard an ABDO College student say they wish they hadn’t done the course. Each and every student is immensely proud of what they have completed. If you are thinking about doing a degree the best thing is to talk to ABDO College and find out more or seek out another practitioner who has already done the degree.”

One of the benefits in the link between ABDO College and CCCU is the increased perspective and input on inter-professional activity. Professor Springett says, “Our Faculty of Health and Social Care is committed to inter-professional working. This means respecting other professions, working

‘It is absolutely crucial that DO’s don’t get left behind and can talk the same language as other degree level professionals.’

practice settings. Much of her working life has been committed to enhancing research capacity within the Health Professions, and she acts as reviewer for journals, medical charities and national funding bodies, so she is well placed to assess the progress made by the time dispensing students reach their final year. She explains, “Some of the newly qualified cohort of students gave presentations to a recent ABDO College employer liaison event. They were adamant about benefits they had gained as individuals and the thinking skills that they can apply to their work with patients. They have something very specific to offer employers. Students each choose a different area for their final year dissertation. Recent students have looked at issues of sports eye wear, low vision aids, or the different appliances used to help patients with macular dystrophy. In doing this they each develop an area that could allow their practice to have a particular specialism, which can both help people

the right thing for them as an individual patient. Students learn to listen, to find out what is relevant to that person and their circumstances, and though those skills can find the optimum outcome.”

ABDO College courses are all delivered with maximum flexibility in mind, recognising the challenges of

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combining study, work and personal commitments. Professor Springett explains, “There is a certain amount of self-awareness that people need to have before starting a degree. If people know that they cannot commit the time, they should defer thinking about a degree. On the other hand, someone

together flexibly and adaptably as that is how most things happen in social and health care and business nowadays. The ABDO College students learn from to staff who work with other professions. Through the university’s learning resources DO students have access to a far greater of resources and can

Bryony Hamilton is awarded FD student prize

access research on health, social care, criminology, education, and the humanities. This learning really culminates in students leaving with a well-founded ability to solution-find. This means that they have to call on all their knowledge about dispensing, numeracy, person-centred care and evidence-based practice. They can analyse and synthesise information and to do so with confidence and the ability show rigour so that their judgement can be trusted and they are credible. They have the breadth of understanding to put it into context.”

Looking at the way forward for dispensing optics, Professor Springett says, “The vision needs to come from the profession for a way to grow in the future. I believe that research needs to be prioritised, and the collaboration between CCCU and ABDO College creates the climate to allow this. There is a lot of capacity building that has happened and a lot more still to go. Having degree level entrants to the profession is critical to this. Once students have learned how to think they can take this skill anywhere, from business management to preventing avoidable loss of sight. Whether graduates do that by getting involved in service design and delivery or at the practice coalface both are equally important.”

With dispensing opticians now having profession-specific degrees, this is an exciting time for the profession to consider the vision for the future. More investment in research and high standards for training can only be a good thing, and the collaboration between ABDO College and CCCU will ensure that this continues.



Left to right: Vinni Virdee, Bryony Hamilton and Jo Underwood

The 2011/12 prize for Best 2nd year student on the Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing course was awarded to Bryony Hamilton, who works at Specsavers in Poole, Dorset. Upon receiving the prize, Bryony was clearly delighted, but also very modest.

Bryony has a physics background having previously attained a BSc (Hons) degree in the subject, she is now looking to acquire her degree in ophthalmic dispensing and to qualify as a dispensing optician by gaining an FBDO diploma later this year.

The Foundation Degree prize is generously sponsored by Transitions Optical and Bryony received a cheque from their product consultant Vinni Virdee, as well as a commemorative certificate from ABDO College Principal, Jo Underwood.

Jill McAdams – a new face at reception

‘I have been made extremely welcome at ABDO College and witnessed the dedication that the staff has to the students and the world of optics.’

ABDO College recently recruited Jill McAdams to join its reception team. Jill was previously employed, for almost 10 years, in the Learning Resource Centre at K College (formally South Kent College) in Ashford. Other previous jobs include a brief spell working as a receptionist at Batemans Opticians and as an olfactory tester (‘smeller’) for Quest International.

Married for almost 25 years, Jill has three children and enjoys all kinds of crafts including cross stitch, beaded jewellery and crochet. Regarding her hobbies Jill said “I am truly a ‘Jack of all

trades and master of none’, as proved by my attempts at basketry! My all-time passion is history, especially social and domestic, this ties-in with my crafts and I’ve even had a go at stick weaving and lucet work, I’m hoping to try card weaving next, all of these are historical textile techniques. Unfortunately, my historical cooking attempts have been met with a mixed reception!”

Commenting on her first impressions as part of the College team Jill said “I have been made extremely welcome at ABDO College and witnessed the dedication that the staff has to the



students and the world of optics. The students who attend the College are very good natured and appreciative of the friendly atmosphere. My working life started with the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food in nearby Wye, so returning to work in the Kent countryside again is lovely.”

Students from Lycée Fresnel visit Godmersham



ABDO College recently welcomed 14 optics students and two members of staff from the Lycée Fresnel in Paris. The second year students were on a visit to the UK to improve their English (as part of their course) and compare the UK curriculum and working environment with those in France.

Their trip to the UK, which included a visit to Essilor’s manufacturing facility in Thornbury, was organised for the French school by Elaine Grisdale, ABDO’s head of professional services and international development.

The students arrived at the stunning surroundings in Godmersham in bright sunshine and enjoyed a tour of the College and its grounds. They were given presentations by Elaine on the UK optical career ladder, the UK optical market and players therein, and the role of ABDO both in the UK and worldwide. Jo Underwood, ABDO College Principal, also talked to the students about the range of courses offered by ABDO College and the qualifications awarded by ABDO, which prompted a lively question and answer session.

Foundation Degree awards event is a great success



For the third year in succession ABDO College held its Foundation Degree awards event for students attending Godmersham on their final 3rd year block release session. Hosted by College Principal, Jo Underwood, the successful students were awarded their Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) foundation degree certificates by Jan Jensen, Principal Lecturer at CCCU's Allied Health Professions department. The students were also individually congratulated by ABDO President, Jennifer Brower.







Following the certificate presentations students enthusiastically celebrated their success with College staff and once again this enjoyable annual event proved to be a great success.



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2013 SUMMER PRE-EXAMINATION REVISION COURSES

ABDO College is now taking applications for its popular dispensing and contact lens revision courses, to be held at the College in Godmersham. The following courses are available:

Monday 3 June

Year 1: PQE Optics Theory	9am to 12noon
Year 1: PQE OL Theory	1pm to 4pm
Year 3: Contact Lens Dispensing Theory	3pm to 5pm
Contact Lenses: CL Anatomy Theory	2pm to 5pm
Contact Lenses: Practical	10am to 5pm

Tuesday 4 June

Year 1: PQE Practical	9am to 4pm
Year 3: Refractive Management Theory	9am to 12noon
Year 3: Low Vision Theory	1pm to 4pm
Contact Lenses: CL Visual Optics Theory	9am to 12noon
Contact Lenses: Practice Theory	1pm to 4pm

Wednesday 5 June

Year 3: FQE Practical Section B	9am to 12noon
Year 3: FQE Practical Section C/F	1pm to 4pm

Thursday 6 June

Year 2: Advanced OL & Dispensing Theory	9am to 12noon
Year 2: Professional Conduct Theory	1pm to 4pm
Year 2: Communications Theory	4pm to 6pm
Year 3: FQE Practical Section A	1pm to 4pm
Year 3: FQE Practical Section D/E	9am to 12noon

Application deadline:

Friday 17 May 2013

For course fees and an application pack for these and other courses, or to request a copy of the ABDO College Prospectus, please contact the Courses Team on

01227 733 921

or email info@abdocollege.org.uk

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- On-site accommodation available – if required please contact Joan Griffin by telephone on 01277 733 911 or by email at jgriffin@abdocollege.org.uk for further details
- Lunch – is provided with full day courses and when two half day courses are taken on the same day