

Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | February 2011 | Issue 6

Broadening the professional pathway

A profile on Stuart Tanner and the new degree course option for FBDOs

Bridge to a bright new future

How ABDO College Access Courses transform lives

Employer liaison event

ABDO College obtains valuable feedback from key figures

Worthy of his/her salt

I had always thought this saying was derived from some nautical background and considered it appropriate as one of my passions is sailing!

However, I was surprised to learn it was originally used by the Romans, as Roman soldiers were paid an amount to buy salt; salt being essential to life and considered expensive in those times. If a Roman soldier did not 'pull his weight' he was thought 'not worthy of his salt' (hence the word salary); so it came into normal usage for a person who was not putting the most into his work.

This issue of Re:View is all about **CPD or Continuing Professional** Development. Working with Canterbury Christ Church University, ABDO College has now made available a degree course in Optical Dispensing Studies (ODS). This new BSc (Hons) course has been specifically designed for existing FBDO qualified opticians who want to go on to obtain a degree. Much of the work on this has been undertaken by Stuart Tanner, a DO who has worked his way up from a workshop position. We all want to better ourselves and improve our professional standing. It is endemic in dispensing optics to 'prove' ourselves, to show all in the world of optics how well we can justify our position and how much we can contribute to the satisfaction of our patients and the ultimate success of our practices.

It seems though that there are some amongst us who, unfortunately, want all the accolades, want a large salary, but do not want to put the work into their day to day responsibilities! During my career, I have unfortunately met with a number of people with this attitude. I have to say it has rarely been any of the dispensing colleagues I have personally worked with, though sadly I have encountered a number of DOs as well as optometric colleagues who, frankly, could be termed 'not worthy of their salt'. So I am saddened to frequently hear from my peers that they too are also conscious of quite a number of dispensing opticians who fall short of the mark.

I find it very odd that anyone in any occupation or profession could want to just sit back, let it happen, and go home without any conscience or consideration that they have not put the most into their job. I have always considered that the most job satisfaction and enjoyment comes from putting the maximum effort into one's daily work. We spend more of our waking hours at work than anywhere else and if you do not enjoy your job and get the most out of it, thereby giving you the maximum satisfaction, then you should get out of the profession. You are not only giving yourself, but also our profession a bad name, we do not want that attitude in dispensing optics, nor, I would add, would any other profession! The quicker you get rid of your destructive and damaging attitude to your work, the happier you will be, the more satisfaction you will get from your career and in the end the more successful you will be.

As you can see from my comments I am extremely passionate about our profession, it is therefore with great pride and pleasure that I introduce this issue which features the development of the ODS programme - a great move forward for all existing DOs who want to earn a degree and show they are 'worthy of their salt'! It has taken a lot of work and effort from all our College staff, but especially Stuart. I commend to you this addition to our opportunities and to the fantastic strides we are making to ensure our qualifications are more universally recognised for what they are.

Colin Lee FBDO, Chairman, ABDO College Board of Trustees

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Contents

- **3–4** Broadening the professional pathway
- **5** Official ABDO College sponsors
- 5 Employer liaison event
- 6-7 Bridge to a bright new future
- 7 2009/10 1st year student prize

Broadening the professional pathway Investing in the long term future

The introduction of the new 'top-up' Optical Dispensing Studies (ODS) degree course offers existing FBDO qualified opticians an opportunity to broaden their professional pathway through a BSc (Hons) qualification. Stuart Tanner BSc (Hons) FBDO CL SMC(Tech) has completed the course and this, together with his background and experience, ideally places him to project manage this exciting new venture.



Stuart Tanner has been a visiting lecturer at ABDO College since 2001 when he began teaching dispensing and then the practical elements of the Contact Lens Certificate. Stuart, who has been in optics for 18 years, lives in a Kent village with partner Alison and young son Dexter. The couple are expecting twins in May. Apart from spending time with his family, he is a keen golfer and used to play semi-professional football – one of those invaluable 'life' experiences that come in so handy when it comes to working in an optical team!

Still in his mid-thirties, his experience in optics is not only extensive, it exemplifies how training opportunities such as those offered by ABDO College can immeasurably help dispensing opticians open up and develop their career pathways.

After completing his A-levels, Stuart worked for five years as an optical technician with a small independent group in Canterbury. In 1994 he completed a two-year day release SMC Tech course which was followed by work in independent practices in Canterbury and London. He qualified as a DO in 1999 before embarking on the Contact Lens Certificate course, qualifying in 2001. These studies were completed through day-release at City & Islington College.

Since then Stuart has practised as a self-employed contact lens optician and today he works for Vision Express, Specsavers and Rayners as well as part-time at ABDO College. He says, "I am also a Progress Support Team Visitor for ABDO, visiting ABDO College students, to help ensure their work-place learning is satisfactory."

Stuart cites this background as the main reason why he was considered for the job of project managing the Optical Dispensing Studies BSc (Hons) course. He explains: "Having just completed the ODS pilot course with a group of fellow tutors and lecturers assembled from ABDO College and Canterbury Christ Church University, I also had direct first hand experience of the course as it was delivered together with its strong and weak points.

Refined and improved

"Once we had submitted our final work, many of us thought about how the course could be refined and improved for the next academic year; as with most pilot programmes, it needed fine tuning. ABDO College principal Jo Underwood and head of DLI Michelle Derbyshire wanted someone to review the feedback from the pilot students, assess the content and delivery, research the need for the course and fuse these elements in order to focus the course for future DO students."

Stuart is used to dealing with lots of people including students, tutors, supervisors, staff and patients. When reviewing feedback for the ODS course, one of his tasks was to gain an understanding of its aims and objectives. This required speaking to everybody involved and to listen to opinions. He explains how "... a certain amount of diplomacy was needed to try to include everybody's ideas and requirements. My part-time role at ABDO College also enabled me to be more objective than someone who is more involved.

"A retail background is not ideal when having to figure out the educational processes a programme needs to go through to progress from beginning to end. This was a steep learning curve – and still is. I'm used to nine-to-five and being in a retail environment so the new work requirement was completely different to anything I had previously experienced. Lots of phone calls, meetings and producing reports required good time management and organisational skills which was not dissimilar to the skills I had developed in the ODS degree."

The ODS course content

The initial Academic Development module is designed to re-introduce students to learning and graduate skills. Stuart explains: "It involves virtual learning skills via an introduction to the University's virtual learning environment 'Blackboard' and academic skills such as referencing and reflection and how to compromise arguments within essays. It will deliver these skills via interactive, weekly units and exercises so that students are fully prepared for the work ahead."

The Optical Dispensing Studies section of the course blends graduate skills with optical knowledge. Since most students will be in full-time employment, the course is delivered through a part-time format in order to make it "... more manageable and digestible, helping avoid a situation where students have to rush to squeeze it in between their everyday lives."

Students must complete six modules: three profession-orientated modules, such as contact lenses or low vision, and three inter-professional modules. These are available to other professions such as nurses and midwives who are undergoing similar changes to their profession.

Stuart elaborates: "The interprofessional modules look at the reasons behind why we practice as we do and ask students to examine the evidence on which these reasons are based, gaining a greater understanding of individual areas of chosen interests. Students will undertake a critical analysis of the research within an optical subject of interest for Inquiry-Based Approaches. The Individual Study content is similar but students choose another subject on a broader scale to encompass opinions and arguments within the field in order to develop from the arguments an objective perspective. The Preparation for Learning Facilitators module teaches the theory and practical knowledge that may be required for mentoring staff/pre-registration students in a workplace environment. This uses the process of becoming a student again and how to apply theories to get the best results."

General gains from the course are varied. It is anticipated that both the profession as a whole and overall patient care will benefit. "Students should feel greater confidence either within a competitive industry, or if they decide to leave the industry. Students will already have their FBDO diploma and will have the further satisfaction of getting a degree. Although employers may not see the immediate 'value' of the course, as their students gain no direct additional optical qualifications, they will nonetheless benefit long-term through investing in the further education of their employees."

Adapted to any role

In addition, the course will create practitioners with specialist areas of interest from the topic areas chosen in the inter-professional modules. It provides practitioners with graduate skills if they are not involved in actual dispensing, such as those in positions of management, which can be adapted to any role within the optical industry. Stuart says that: "... by reviewing the evidence base of our practice, it is hoped some will go on to continue in research and further develop the industry."

Stuart explains how his experience from working in various types of practices has provided him with insight as to how quickly the optical industry develops and role of the dispensing optician changes. "The value of the dispensing optician varies from practice to practice and it is sad to see some DOs under used and under valued, especially where they are no longer the main link between the patient and optometrist. This is one reason why I think roles are now more diversified in retail. An allgraduate profession would mean graduate skills could be adapted to various roles, which can only benefit the retail business, DOs and, of course, patients.

"I should like to see DOs forge a fresh and more valued position in the work environment through an in-depth knowledge of new and individual dispensing subjects and through being pro-active in the role they have chosen. There is scope for us to branch into areas such as sports vision, perimetry and paediatric eye care which go beyond conventional teaching, but remain within the limits of our practice. We need to continually ask questions about the reasons behind the knowledge we are given. As well as being skilled in a range of areas, we may also need to become specialists in some of these in order to earn greater recognition."

ABDO College will continue to review and develop the content and delivery of its professional education programmes in order for them to remain relevant to the ever-changing work environment.



A basic guide to low vision dispensing

by Sally Bates BSc (Hons) FBDO Cert Ed, ABDO College Lecturer

With the new local commissioning of low vision services the dispensing optician will be at the forefront of patient care and their needs. The GOC guidelines state that low vision patients can only be dispensed by qualified dispensing opticians, optometrists and pre-registration students under full supervision.

Although opticians already have an extensive knowledge of low vision appliances, it is imperative that skills are updated to ensure the patient's needs are fully met. This article is designed to be a low vision taster.

ABDO College is the only provider of a low vision honours diploma course; further information can be obtained from DLI at ABDO College on 01227 733 921 or email info@abdocollege.org.uk.

Low vision appliances

Optical magnifying devices can possibly be considered in two distinct categories, simple magnifiers and telescopic/complex lens systems which are normally Galilean units. Magnifiers are probably the easiest to acquire and use. Telescopic devices tend to be a more specialised unit, normally available through the Hospital Eye Service and Low Vision clinics, and dispensed by dispensing opticians or optometrists. They require more skill in their use.

Magnifying devices are available in a large range of powers and forms and are a very effective aid to vision.

As a general rule of thumb, when considering any magnifier, it should be remembered that larger magnifiers produce lower magnification. Lens aberrations may cause effects such as distortion and colour fringing.

Simple magnifiers

Magnifiers are usually a high powered positive lens, available in magnifications from 1.5x through to 20x. They are available in nonilluminated, illuminated, stand, hand held, spectacle mounted and hands free mountings.



Providing up to 4x magnification the simple magnifier is relatively easy to use, with a flexible working distance and usually a relatively large area. They may also be used for eccentric viewing.

Once the magnification begins to exceed 4x the use of the magnifier becomes more precise.

The main problems experienced when trying to adapt to using a stronger powered magnifier are generally related to poor understanding of the technique and limitations of the unit. When using magnifiers of 4x power or above, it is important to forget the 'Sherlock Holmes' approach to using a magnifier.

Strong magnifiers need to be held quite close to the subject matter, the actual distance is dependent upon the lens power. This distance is typically in the range of 15mm to 45 mm. Similarly the distance from the magnifier to the patient's eye is critical to ensure optimum magnification and field of view.

Stand magnifiers

Stand magnifiers are ideal for high power magnification such as 15x and 20x, and for patients with hand tremors who find it difficult to hold a high powered magnifier steady. This allows the patient to keep the correct object to magnifier distance.

Typical examples are an eye to lens distance of 150mm for a 4x unit reducing to 40mm for a 10x unit. It must also be emphasised that the magnifier will magnify spaces as well as text so the actual reading process through a magnifier will be slower than previously experienced with 'normal' vision.



Турозсоре

Often patients have difficulty following lines of text due to the reduced unit area. It is advisable to use a line guide, such as a typoscope.



These are simple bar magnifiers with engraved red line guides, dome magnifiers with part frosted bases (so called Visual Tracking Magnifiers), magnifiers with additional bar magnifiers built into the handles and carefully designed lighting systems that produce a bright line of light within the magnifier's field of view.

Magnifiers will also magnify any slight

hand tremor or movement and it is important that the units are supported firmly when being used. The use of a rigid table or clipboard is essential as both the magnification and unit weight increases.

Fresnel magnifiers

Fresnel magnifiers enable magnification of areas as large as A4 sheets; however, they are a relatively low power and there is some image degradation caused by the design. A similar theory is used for the TV screen magnifier.



EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT



Telescopic magnifying devices (LVA) Spectacle mounted Galilean telescopic reading devices are designed to provide hands-free usage, a reasonably good field of view and excellent optical performance. LVAs are usually for monocular use due to their high power, generally over 5x. For lower powers under 5x magnification, spectacles such as a Hyperocular are

dispensed. Using $\mathbf{F} = \mathbf{SM} \times \mathbf{4}$ to determine the power of the hyperocular required. The telescopic unit is dispensed to the eye with the best vision.

The distance from the LVA to the reading matter needs to be quite short, typically 150mm or less (depending on power/type) and as a result the patient must learn to hold print close. The demands upon the muscles around the eyes are increased with the extra concentration required when using any high power device. It is advisable to use the units for short periods of time only and to have frequent rests.



Reading assessment

When selecting any magnifying device it is important that the patient has a near vision assessment. The best way to assess the required magnification is by using a near vision reading chart. The chart assumes the requirement to read standard newsprint, i.e. 8 point Times New Roman print (N8). Using the chart decide which is the smallest size print that can be comfortably read. The figure next to that size of print on the chart is the optimum magnification required.

This figure is arrived at by a simple rule of thumb:

Magnification required = $\frac{\text{Smallest comfortable test type size}}{\text{Required test type size}}$

e.g. if a visually impaired person can just read the N24 line on the chart, and they would like to read newsprint which is N8, the magnification required = N24 = 3x

N8

However it should be noted that some patients may require more or less magnification depending on their visual impairment, field loss, duration of task or expectations. Once the optimum magnification has been determined it is necessary to decide upon the form of magnifier that will best suit the patient's individual needs.

Type of magnifier	Advantages	Disadvantages
Hand held device	 Inexpensive Easily acquired Convenient Tolerant of poor technique Internal illumination (if required) 	 Difficult to hold Reduced field of view at longer ranges Unusable if hand tremor present
Stand mounted device	Hands free useTolerant of tremors, etc.Internal illumination (if required)	Require flat surfaceStand may obstruct lightStand may obstruct use
Spectacle mounted	 Hands free use Wide field of view More acceptable to spectacle wearers Easily upgraded Modular designs 	 Very short working distances Very blurred distance vision Illumination difficult Binocular units Initially expensive

Sally Bates BSc (Hons) FBDO Cert Ed

Sally is a self employed dispensing optician and part-time lecturer at the ABDO College in Godmersham, Canterbury. She is the proprietor of 'Identity Optical Training' and frequently organises dispensing courses for professional and support staff, including NVQ courses, revision days, mock exams and CET evenings.



Common ocular conditions

Cataracts

This is clouding of the crystalline lens



The patient experiences:

- Reduced vision
- Progressive myopia
- Difficulty when reading
- Poor spacial awareness
- 'Dirty window' effect on vision
- Complains of no general improvement with new spectacles

Cause:

- Excessive UV and/ or infrared light
- Old age
- Trauma
- Medication
- Congenital

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is caused by raised pressure of the fluid inside the eye, due to the inhibition of the drainage system. When the pressure increases against the retina, this may cause loss of peripheral vision, and can cause blindness if not treated in time.



In practice, the intra-ocular pressure is generally measured using the Non-Contact Tonometer (NCT). Normal fluid pressure is below 21mm of mercury. NICE guidelines recommend clinical referral if the pressures are over 21.

Glaucoma is generally heredity; therefore close relatives (aged over 40) of patients with glaucoma are entitled to a free NHS eye examination every 12 months.

Acute glaucoma is sudden onset. The patient experiences:

- Painful frontal headaches over the eyes
- Haloes around lights
- Loss of peripheral vision
- Vomiting due to the pain

Macula Degeneration

Macula Degeneration is a progressive disease of the eye that affects the macula, which is the central and most sensitive part of the retina. The patient progressively loses central field of view.



Early referral is recommended for Wet AMD as patients can benefit from lucentis injections.



Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic Retinopathy is common in patients suffering from diabetes; approximately 30% of diabetics have some type of retinopathy.



- Retinal blood vessels bleed into the eye
- Retinal laser treatment is required
- Advise frequent eye examinations at least every 12 months
- Patients are entitled to an NHS eye examination as and when required
- Diabetes should be 'stable' at the time of the eye examination



References

Practical Optical Dispensing by David Wilson A guide to Low Vision available from RNIB (£5.00) www.colloptics.com

EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

Low Vision unit	Unit type	Optical system	Working distance	Possible condition and patient impact	Advice on use
S.	Hand held magnifier	Simple loupe magnifier	Depends upon magnification 3 x 12.5cm 6x 4cm	AMD, diabetes, early cataracts, old age	Start with the magnifier on the page, move away until best focus is achieved May be used for eccentric viewing
	Illuminated stand magnifier	Simple loupe magnifier Available 2.8x from Coil and Eschenbach, to 15x from Schweizer	Cuff size is the optimum point	Approx 6x for AMD, depending upon near VA Lower magnification for cataracts	Place flat on the print Near vision specs are required if the stand is less than the focal length and insufficient accommodation Distance vision specs required when the stand is at the focal length
53	Low Vision Aid	Galilean telescopic unit Positive lens is the objective Negative lens is the eyepiece	Bring print close from further away	AMD Distance vision or near vision	Good illumination, approximately 1000 lux. Close working distance
	Magnification Unit	1 high plus lens Usually available in: 3x, 5x & 7x	Bring print closer	AMD Cataracts	Good illumination, approx 1000 lux. Close working distance
(J. C.	Distance LVA	Galilean telescopic unit	Specific tasks e.g. TV viewing	AMD	Good illumination Only use for specific tasks – not for constant wear Ensure secure frame fitting
Notest and the second s	Coil distance unit or Max TV specs	Galilean Telescopic Unit Positive lens is the objective Negative lens is the eyepiece	Distance, intermediate and near vision Distance up 4m Intermediate 40cm Near 20cm	AMD Diabetes	Require a firm fitting to reduce slipping, as they are bulky and heavy Trial and error to focus correctly
	Fresnel stick on prism	Temporary prism Available up to 30∆ 1mm thick	May be used for distance and/or near vision	Relieves diplopia, possibly caused by trauma May be applied vertically to relieve hemianopia	Stick on in water – reduces air bubbles between Fresnel and lens
$\bigcirc \bigcirc$	Hyperocular	1 positive lens, usually a lenticular Other lens generally opaque	Very close working distance	Usually monocular due to patient's reduced convergence	Close working distance Good illumination

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Employer liaison event ABDO College obtains valuable feedback from key figures



Michelle Derbyshire

ABDO College recently held its second annual employer liaison event which attracted key figures, responsible for training and development, from major optical retail chains and independent groups.

Following a welcome address Michelle Derbyshire, ABDO College's head of distance learning, outlined the range of courses offered by the College and how Access Courses can provide those without the required GCSE qualifications with an opportunity to work towards a career as a dispensing optician.

College principal, Jo Underwood, then presented changes to the BSc (Hons) degree course in Ophthalmic Dispensing and Prof Kate Springett from Canterbury Christ Church University provided details of the individual study modules and benefits of a degree for both students and their employers.

Project manager for the course, Stuart Tanner, announced the introduction of the new BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies course which has been specifically designed for registered FBDO qualified opticians to acquire a career related degree. The meeting concluded with an open and valuable discussion which clearly, thanks to the feedback from those attending, highlighted educational priorities from the employers' point of view.

Bridge to a bright new future

ABDO College Access Courses transform lives and for this reason they are proving highly popular. Here, two people who changed their careers through the Access Courses describe their experiences.

ABDO College Access Courses provide a doorway through to a professional qualification. They are designed to assist prospective dispensing opticians without the necessary grades to meet entry requirements. In addition to this, they serve as refresher courses to learning for those who have been out of the education system for some while. Entry requirements for the ABDO College Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing and Foundation Degree/ BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing courses, leading to FBDO qualification, are five GCEs at grade c or above, These must include English, mathematics and a science. Each access course is considered the equivalent of one GCSE. Access Courses run once each year via distance learning, commencing in February. Courses are available in English, Mathematics, Optics and Dispensing, Human Biology and General Science.

Here, two people describe how Access Courses helped place them on formal, academic career pathways in optics.

Geradine Dynan

Geradine Dynan started off professional life as an insurance clerk working through various departments. After five years she took a career break to raise her new family. She started the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing course in 2005 and qualified as a dispensing optician in 2008. She is now undertaking the Contact Lens Certificate course, which she commenced in September 2010. Geradine works as a dispensing optician and practice manager in the same independent opticians where she has been for 13 years.

Geradine says, "In 1997 I began work as a receptionist in a new independent optician. During my two years as receptionist, I became increasingly interested in the optics field and eventually decided to take the Access course to broaden

"The course has unquestionably helped me. It has boosted my confidence in both my academic ability and, thanks to having to attend block release, my self-confidence in dealing with circumstances outside my 'comfort zone'.

my knowledge. I found it so enjoyable that I was encouraged to undertake the dispensing diploma course a few years later. My professional aims now are to qualify as a contact lens optician and to promote the role of the dispensing optician in practice."

Geradine says she found the distance learning experience both rewarding and challenging. "It required a lot of self discipline, particularly in time management and commitment. I thought it was very well structured with the right amount of help and support from ABDO College lecturers, staff and tutors.

"The course has unquestionably helped me. It has boosted my confidence in both my academic ability and, thanks to having to attend block release, my self-confidence in dealing with circumstances outside my 'comfort zone'.

Geradine says her experiences with ABDO have been entirely positive and her aim is to be an ambassador for the Association. She has now joined her Area committee in order to become more involved and has registered to become a distance learning tutor. "Also, I'm delighted to say that after a successful interview, I have been accepted as a Probationary Practical Examiner. That should keep me busy for a number of years!"

Callum Stewart

Callum Stewart worked in electronic engineering and the motor industry, before deciding on a change of profession. It was a long-held interest in the human eye and how it works that led him to choose a career in optics. On completion of the Access Courses he enrolled on the inaugural BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing course in September 2008 and is now in his final year.

Callum selected the Mathematics and Dispensing courses and explains how he found them: "They were both quite taxing – "...tricky, at times. It is easy (mistakenly, as it turned out) to think you are all alone when carrying out the course work."

considering my absence from the classroom of twenty-odd years! But they proved very appropriate and worthwhile and I have found both courses to be enormously relevant and beneficial to my career advancement. I initially thought of proceeding to qualify as an ophthalmic optician, but I do so enjoy dispensing – and there are a range of possibilities for me to explore, once qualified."

Callum admits he found the distance learning academic experience "...tricky, at times. It is easy (mistakenly, as it turned out) to think you are all alone when carrying out the course work. Also, at first it can be difficult to motivate yourself to do the work when you're not with other students. But this course also helped me gain more self-discipline and improve my time management skills."

2009/10 1st year student prize

A presentation was held in December to award Bill Lowry with the 2009/10 prize for Best 1st year student on the Foundation Degree course. Bill, who works alongside his wife Judith at their J S Lowry practice in Jarrow, attained the highest average module mark for the year.

Bill is a mature student having had a varied career in the past, which for many years saw him working for local government in environment health. To add to other qualifications he already holds he attained an MBA about seven years ago and then took the opportunity to take early retirement in 2009. Finding himself with same spare time his optometrist wife soon asked him to help out within the practice, he rapidly become more involved in all aspects of running the business and the next logical step was to embark on the degree course in ophthalmic dispensing.



Jo Underwood, Bill Lowry and Vinni Virdi

"It's great" says Bill, "The only thing I don't like is the academic style essays", but judging from his successful first year of study it would appear that he has firmly got to grips with this task.

A keen cyclist Bill often brings his bike with him during his block release stays at Godmersham and thoroughly enjoys discovering routes around the surrounding Kentish countryside.

The Foundation Degree prize is generously sponsored by Transitions Optical and Bill received a cheque for £500 from their product consultant Vinni Virdi, as well as a commemorative certificate from ABDO College Principal Jo Underwood.



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