

Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | February 2018 | Issue 32

How to improve your
critical thinking skills

Profile feature
on Jane Frampton

We find out about Jane
and her research

How to move practice
mid-study



New year, new staff, and a new way of thinking?



If your New Year's resolution was to set some personal goals in your career progression journey, there will be much

to inspire you in this issue of *Re:View*.

We interview Steve Hertz, the newest member of our Operations Department, who originally qualified with a degree in media production, and who then combined his full-time job as an optical assistant with an early morning stint at the local radio station, before going on to study at ABDO College, and gain his FBDO qualification.

Our other new staff member is lecturer Simon Matthews, and you can read his profile on pages 10–11. Simon started out in optics on the reception desk, before going on to qualify first as a DO, then CLO, finally achieving his degree in optometry 18 months ago. He doesn't plan to stop there either, and now has his sights set on a doctorate!

Learning to critically appraise the information that you are given, rather than accepting it at face value, is one of the skills which can seem alien to those approaching a professional education course straight from school. Our article on pages 1–2 explains its importance. Former ABDO College student Jane Frampton certainly used those skills when preparing her dissertation.

A requirement for all degree students, Jane decided to write hers on bifocals for Down's syndrome children, and weighed up all of the available evidence before reaching her conclusion. You can read her story on pages 6–7, and her full research paper on pages 8–9.

Changing your base practice mid-course isn't ideal, but several students have done this and lived to tell the tale. Learn some of their tips for survival on pages 4–5.

Happy reading!

Angela McNamee

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Image courtesy of Spec-Care

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How to improve your critical thinking skills

At some point in every student's life there comes a realisation: success doesn't simply involve remembering what you are told. While learning formulae and how to apply them is important, you also need to be able to assess the information that you are given, rather than accepting it at face value. These critical thinking skills are more relevant in some subjects than others, but they are something that every trainee dispensing optician needs to develop. In this article, you can find out more about what critical thinking is, and how to do it. You may even find that you are doing it already!



Critical thinking skills allow you to look at research or manufacturers' literature and weigh up what you are being told, then translate how it applies in practice. It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information, something that is key when you are studying through blended learning, with the advantage of both periods of study and periods of practical application. You are probably already returning to practice and testing out what you are learning in real life situations.

Critical thinking is even more vital if you are taking a degree, whether the BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing, the Vision Sciences top-up degree, or a masters level course. Critical thinking skills are essential when it comes to writing an essay or extended project, as you will be asked to not just repeat other's research, but to assess its relative validity and develop your own conclusions. If you think back to primary school, you took what you were told as fact – parents and teachers seemed to know

everything. At some point in your journey through school and college, though, you will have been asked to read around a subject and come up with your own views. This is where your critical thinking skills begin to develop. As a critical thinker, you need to rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than

consider if there are other points of view. This takes you on to the next stage: identifying the different arguments there are in relation to a particular issue.

If you are looking at a research paper, it is likely that the researchers will come to a certain conclusion. However, if you look beyond the abstract and conclusion

'Critical thinking is even more vital if you are taking a degree.'

accept them at face value. You need to determine whether ideas, arguments and findings represent the entire picture.

Critical thinking can sound vague or even daunting. If you are unsure whether you can do it, you can break the process down into a number of stages. Firstly, you need to think about a topic or issue in an objective and critical way. This might mean that you need to identify your 'gut reaction' to the topic, and

you may find that they explore a range of possibilities in the introduction. Alternatively, you may need to look at different textbooks or a wider range of research papers to find alternative points of view. At this stage, why not make a mind map of the possible theories and ideas in the field you are researching.

Look for gaps too: finding a gap in current knowledge can be the first step in thinking about your own research

Steve Hertz interview

projects. Once you have identified two or more arguments, you need to make your own assessment of how strong or valid each one is. If you have a research question and a number of papers each of which have a different verdict, you might want to examine the different methodologies, the number of people in the study etc, before deciding on the relative validity. Try to spot any weaknesses or negative points that there are in the evidence or argument and see if that backs up or weakens your initial view. It can be helpful to make notes of the strong points and weak points for each point of view, which you can then extend into a structured evaluation that gives a rationale for your final verdict.

If this seems all too distant from everyday practice, remind yourself that critical thinking will help you make better decisions and generally understand things better on all levels. As you practise throughout your studies, reading around a subject and weighing up the evidence will become second nature. When faced with real-life decisions, such as which lenses are best for a patient, and a pile of manufacturers' brochures, websites and research, take a moment to apply your critical thinking skills.

By weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of different solutions in a critical way you will be able to help the patient to the best of your abilities, and you may well find that you are putting your critical thinking skills – and all the knowledge you have acquired through your studies – into use automatically.

Steve Hertz has just been appointed to a new role in the Operations Department at ABDO College. Known as 'Ops', the department is responsible for all the behind-the-scenes administration of course applications and progression as well as many more unseen tasks. In this article, you can find out more about DO Steve and his new role.

Steve Hertz has been working in optics since his first part-time job. He says, "I applied to Boots the Chemists for a Saturday position and they passed my CV onto the manager of the optical practice who gave me a job." Steve worked for Boots Opticians for 15 years prior to making the leap to ABDO College. He joins the College not only with plenty of optical experience but also with some more unusual skills for a DO.

He says, "I went to uni and studied media production, all the time working

in practice in Lincoln, Sheffield and Grimsby, to help fund my way through. After graduating I moved back to Kent and worked full-time in the Canterbury branch, starting my manager training there, as well as Ashford and Maidstone."

Alongside his day job, though, Steve had another occupation. He explains, "I got up at 4am, drove an hour to a local radio station, worked on the breakfast show from 5am to 9am, then did a full day in practice from 10am to 6pm. I was mainly in the background of the show, and only on air very sporadically. It was good fun but I had an image in my head of working in radio allowing me to be creative all the time. The reality is that it's not like that, there are commercial pressures, you have to stick to a rigid mantra of what you can and can't do. There was a lot of repetition for little or no reward. The industry is cut throat which I didn't find easy."

Seeing the pressure he was under trying to combine both jobs, Steve's boss at the time, Jill Kemp, suggested that the radio work wasn't for him and he should take the DO course. Steve says, "I decided Jill was right. I started



Steve Hertz

studying through Anglia, did the first two years there, then got transferred to ABDO, which was an interesting journey. There were two different ways of doing the course, and it quickly became apparent that the former Anglia students were a long way behind. With great support from the College, though, we all got through it."

It was at that time that Steve started to think that ABDO College might be a good place to work. He adds, "I really liked the atmosphere at the College. And although the start of my course was a struggle, I feel my experiences help when students come in with supervisor or transfer problems. I got through it, so you can too."

I needed in the radio job. You are dealing with people in different departments and fields, celebrities who you have to deal with as human beings, or dealing with the guy who comes in to deal with the copier. Just like in my recent and current roles, you need to be professional but friendly."

Steve's new role is one that is going to evolve. As well as supporting students with administrative queries, he is also contributing to the process of moving courses online. He says, "I like the College set-up, I've really enjoyed my first few weeks in post. The College is full of people who are passionate about the things I'm passionate about. I've come in mid project on a lot of things,

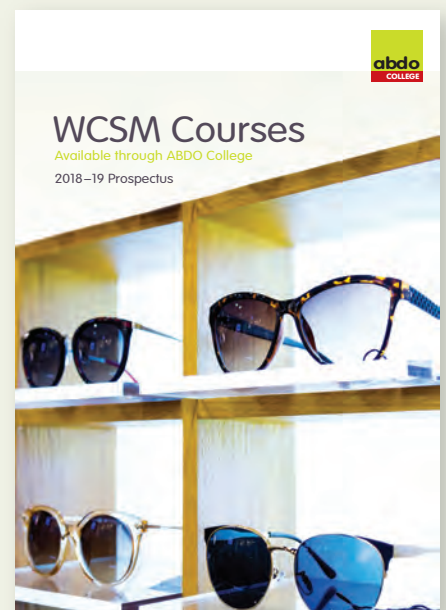
'The College is full of people who are passionate about the things I'm passionate about.'

Steve enjoyed the Ophthalmic Dispensing course. He says, "I really liked being able to find out why things were the way they were. As an OA, you get briefed by someone above you that a certain lens is good, and you take their word for it. It was good to do the course and finally understand why, to talk about it confidently. Also, going further, I could deal with the trickier prescriptions that I might have passed on to someone else."

Alongside his skills as a DO, Steve's time in radio has helped him both in practice and his new role. He says, "Being able to talk to anyone is something

and am helping colleagues out because the number of students coming in is rising, but the number of staff has stayed the same until now. Going forward, I hope that students will come to me if they have a problem that isn't the sort of thing to approach a tutor about. Administratively I aim to help the department develop a strategic approach."

If you need to get in touch with Steve Hertz, his office number is 01227 733929 and his email is shertz@abdocollege.org.uk



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How to move practice mid-study

Few trainee DOs intend to move practice while studying, but over the course of three years many people find their circumstances change, so the team at ABDO College are used to supporting students through a move. In this article, you can hear from students who share their tips on moving practice, and get advice from the College too.

Steven Pringle, dispensing optician at Thompsons Opticians, changed practices between year one and two of the degree course. He says, "Making sure all the paperwork was completed correctly and signed off was difficult as it was two years before it was due to be submitted. The same applies with case records, you need to ensure they are all completed and signed if they are to be used."

Amy Barker is a DO at Boots Opticians in Oxford, and over the course of her training worked in three different practices. She also moved from Anglia Ruskin University to ABDO College. She says, "I changed supervisors about six times." For Amy, the biggest issues were dealing with the paperwork and informing everyone who needed to know. She says, "I learned on the second change that I have to completely take responsibility for my own learning and actively seek any advice I needed as I couldn't rely on all the supervisors to recognise when I needed help. At the time, I didn't enjoy all the change but in hindsight, I have learned how to adapt and am now quite happy to accept change at short notice."

Amy has found the skills she has learnt in making the change to be invaluable. She adds, "I would strongly recommend a change in practice during studying. On reflection, I feel it was key in helping me become a more well-rounded DO, I learned so much from each DO and Optom I worked with, each practice had its own processes. I wouldn't have seen as much if I had worked in one

The paperwork is onerous, you have to keep on top of it and I would say it is the worst thing about the whole experience. You have to be organised and not rely on others to pick up the pieces for you, especially when it comes to the case studies. Get on top of them early as leaving it all to the last minute is just too stressful!"

Another DO with plenty of experience of moving is James Chester-Hall, now practising at Vision Express Solihull. He says, "During my studies I moved practice five times. The easiest way I found to transition was to ensure my logbook of hours and dispensing tasks was kept up-to-date and signed regularly. Maintain a good professional relationship with previous supervisors to ensure if you need to make alterations that they will be willing to re-sign."

'You have to be organised and not rely on others to pick up the pieces for you,'

Suzanne Flay

place. It also helped with my case studies, I didn't see the same people year in year out."

One challenge can be moving from one type of practice to another. DO Suzanne Flay says, "I moved from a multiple to an independent mid-way through my course and I would agree with Amy it gives you a different perspective as the two practices were very different. I feel I learned much more by moving than I would have done if I stayed. I had numerous supervisors too.

Rachel Jayne Aspinall is due to sit her practical FQEs. She explains her move: "I did the Cert 4 course with Specsavers then moved to an independent between the summer exams and the start of ABDO year two. I felt that I hadn't covered some topics in as much detail on Cert 4 as my peers who had studied with ABDO their first year."

In order to overcome the gaps in her knowledge, Rachel says, "I worked really hard! I read absolutely everything on the reading list, read extra online material



Amy Barker

and practised the mathematics over and over. It has probably helped me in the long run as I worked through formulas until I completely understood why they work. I also have a supportive supervisor who was happy to talk through topics at length if I wanted extra info on any areas."

It's not just TDOs who move mid-course. Locum dispensing optician and contact lens optician (CLO) Vesta



Steven Pringle

Charlesworth moved practices while studying for her CLO qualifications. She says, "It was quite smooth for me. I stayed with the same company so there were no issues there. I think timing is key. Don't transfer at a point that's either nearing course deadlines or exam deadlines. You don't want the paperwork to go astray and find that you can't complete for another six months because of it."



Vesta Charlesworth

If you are faced with a move, Jill Kemp, Head of Operations at ABDO College, advises, "If you want to change practice, your supervisor or your circumstances change, you need to let ABDO College, ABDO Exams and the General Optical Council know. You can have up to four weeks' gap without supervision or employment. For that period, you can continue to submit coursework but you can't do anything related to your case studies. You then have to notify all three bodies of your new practice, address or supervisor."

Moving practices can seem stressful but it is also a chance to broaden your knowledge. Stay on top of the paper work and liaise with the relevant bodies and your move will go smoothly.

'It was quite smooth for me. I stayed with the same company so there were no issues there. I think timing is key. Don't transfer at a point that's either nearing course deadlines or exam deadlines.'

Vesta Charlesworth

Jane Frampton

We find out about Jane and her research

In their final year, ABDO College degree students are all required to complete a dissertation, which focuses on a research question of their own choice. Dispensing optician Jane Frampton qualified last year. In this feature, you can read about Jane and her research paper, *'Should bifocal spectacles be prescribed to paediatric patients with Down's syndrome as routine clinical management?'*



Like many people in the profession Jane tumbled into optics. She explains, "I'm a military wife and, through a contact of my husband, ended up helping out an optometrist with her own practice. Someone had left at short notice, I was available to simply act as a spare pair of hands, but I found I liked it. It didn't take very long for me to want to become a DO. I didn't know much about the world of optics, the different roles of OA, DO and optometrist, but when I became aware of the qualification

I wanted to learn everything to become a dispensing optician."

Jane was based in the North of Scotland at that stage, which affected her choice of training establishment. She says, "As a military wife I knew I would be likely to move in the time it would take me to complete the study so I needed to study somewhere that would allow for that. This meant that ABDO College was the obvious choice. We moved to London before I started the course, which made getting there easier, and I started a job in North West London."

Commenting on her first experiences at ABDO College, Jane says, "I thought it was brilliant, really well run, we were

provided a forum for us to support each other."

There are always a good number of mature students registered at ABDO College. It had been 25 years since Jane completed her first degree, but she didn't find this a problem. She explains, "I liked all the subjects, I really enjoyed the learning and the lectures. I liked block release and enjoyed staying in a hotel!"

Every student has their favourite and least liked parts of the course. Commenting on her least favourite part of the course, Jane says, "While they were interesting and very informative, I didn't enjoy writing the essays, I was more comfortable with the anatomy and the science around the lenses."

Every student has to write a dissertation as part of their degree course. There is an open choice of topic too, giving students the chance to pick up a personal interest and relate their research to their own experiences in practice. Although extended writing wasn't her preferred part of the course, Jane says, "I knew that the dissertation had to be done. I was going to look at intraocular lenses and accommodative

'I liked all the subjects, I really enjoyed the learning and the lectures.'

really well guided." Like many students, between the periods of block release, Jane found it helpful to stay in touch with other students". She recalls, "We belonged to a Facebook group which

lenses because my mother has a cataract, but then I started thinking about the way people need to spend money for certain optical solutions, and what happens to those who can't.

This led on to me considering patients who are disadvantaged in other ways. In the past I had volunteered for Riding for the Disabled and this made me think about children with Down's syndrome, and their eyewear needs."

This led onto Jane's research question, *'Should bifocal spectacles be prescribed to paediatric patients with Down's syndrome as routine clinical management?'* Jane compared four recent research papers on the topic, identifying the strengths and weaknesses in each. Her research showed that bifocal spectacles offer benefits to paediatric patients with Down's syndrome, improving functional visual skills, visual acuity at distance and near, and correcting accommodative lag. Prescribing bifocals improved wearing compliance and contributed

to academic progress. However, it should not be adopted as routine clinical management but should continue to be prescribed on a case-by-case basis. Jane sums up her overall thoughts after reviewing the literature on the topic: "Although I found a number of papers, my overall summary is that more research needs to be done."

Jane isn't currently practising, as she is in the Falkland Islands. She says, "There is an optometrist who visits once or twice a year." Jane and her husband are due back in the UK this month (February 2018) and she plans to go back into optics. She says, "A career in dispensing optics is very good for me in my position, because wherever my husband ends up I can find a great job."



Image courtesy of Spec-Care



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Should bifocal spectacles be prescribed to paediatric patients with Down's Syndrome as routine clinical management?

By Jane Frampton FBDO

INTRODUCTION

Down's Syndrome was first identified in 1866 (Down's Syndrome Association, 2016) and in 1959 the condition was linked to an extra copy of part or all of chromosome 21 (Mégarbané *et al.*, 2009).

Down's syndrome (DS) is associated with physical and intellectual disability, including hypotonia, hearing and ocular problems, and development is often slower than for a typical child (NHS, 2015). Ocular issues include refractive errors, keratoconus, reduced accommodation, strabismus, nystagmus, failure in the emmetropisation process, blepharitis, and cataract. Young children with typical development have facial characteristics differing to those of adults, and the facial characteristics develop in a non-standard way to typical children (Woodhouse *et al.*, 1993).

Previous studies identified that the majority of paediatric DS patients under-accommodate, focusing behind a near object, making near tasks difficult and hampering academic progress (Woodhouse *et al.*, 1997). It has been shown that a refractive correction for distance does not improve accommodation at near, and also demonstrated that while presbyopic adults endeavour to increase accommodative response as working distance is reduced, the paediatric DS patient does not show an increase in accommodative response (Cregg *et al.*, 2001).

This study aims to investigate whether bifocal spectacles should be prescribed and dispensed to paediatric patients with DS as routine clinical management, rather than on a purely case-by-case basis.

FINDINGS

The search procedure identified four recent documents suitable for the analysis required, all containing primary research. However, a number of limitations were identified. The articles all involved small sample sizes, the largest having 57 participants (Adyanthaya *et al.*, 2014). This retrospective study included a comparative group of 30 single vision lens wearers some of whom were not fully tested, which may compromised a comparison with the patients prescribed bifocals.

In the longitudinal case-controlled studies performed by Nandakumar and Leat (2010) and Nandakumar *et al.* (2011) the sample size of 14 was further reduced leaving a sample size of four for one test. Small sample sizes indicate caution must be taken in extrapolating the conclusions drawn. Additionally, the studies covered a wide range of ages (from two–eighteen years) and this combination of small samples sizes and significant age ranges may not have identified age-related factors, and consequently, any age-related inflexion points in accommodative ability may not have been apparent in the study results.

Adyanthaya *et al.* (2014) acknowledge that consideration of compliance affected by behavioural disorders and/or intellectual disability was not made. Additionally, the assessment of compliance in spectacle wearing was made by telephone with the patients' parents, who's responses may have been subjective, and only verbal cues were available to the researcher. This study may require caution when considering its detailed findings. In contrast, the study by Nandakumar *et al.* (2011) reports a tightly controlled testing environment. Overall, therefore, assumptions cannot be made about the consistency of the data gathered.

In the studies by Adyanthaya *et al.*, 2014 and Nandakumar and Leat (2010), logical conjecture is made regarding the resulting increased compliance in spectacle wear and improved academic progress of patients due to the provision of bifocals and the associated reduction in blur at near.

However, there may be alternative or additional reasons for the increased compliance and academic progress.

The studies have differing approaches to the addition prescribed to the bifocal segment. This may be noteworthy because while the other studies used a reading addition based on working distance, Al-Bagdady *et al.* (2009) used a reading addition of +2.50D for each patient and reported improvement in accommodation through both the distance and near portions of the lens.

All the studies involved the use of dynamic retinoscopy to assess accommodative accuracy and lag, however, the differences in procedure could be a cause of the variations in the conclusions drawn.

DISCUSSION

The studies all agree that paediatric patients with DS have widespread accommodative lag. All prescribed flat-top segments, fitted 'high' or 1–2mm above pupil centre. Prescribed additions were based on habitual working distance, or from +2.50D to +3.00D. All studies reported an increase in accommodative ability, correction to distance and near vision, and decreasing blur. The response to the bifocals appeared swift across the studies and Nandakumar and Leat (2010) discuss that while an improvement is observed after changing from single vision lenses to bifocals, no further statistically significant change was observed.

Al-Bagdady *et al.* (2009) noted that single vision lens wearers with poor accommodative ability do not improve, while 95 per cent of the bifocal wearers show accommodative improvement through the segment, and 65 per cent show an improvement in accommodation through the distance portion. The accommodative accuracy was sustained even after resuming single vision wear. However, Nandakumar and Leat (2010) do not conclude that bifocals stimulate a lasting improvement in accommodation, indicating the need for ongoing monitoring.

All studies identified high refractive errors were frequently seen in these patients and the prescribing of bifocal lenses produced a increase in near visual acuity. Nandakumar and Leat (2010) demonstrated an improvement in near visual acuity with bifocals over single vision



gement?

lenses, although again, no statistically significant improvement was shown after the first examination. Nandakumar *et al* (2011) provide evidence of improvement in academic scores.

Adyanthaya *et al* (2014) observed the prescribing of bifocals led to an improvement in spectacle wearing compliance, this was confirmed by Nandakumar and Leat (2010). Adyanthaya *et al* (2014) highlighted that regardless of patient accommodative ability single vision spectacle wear compliance was poor (40–43 per cent) compared to bifocal compliance (89 per cent) and postulate the cause being a perceived immediate benefit from bifocal use. They recommended that paediatric patients with DS with good accommodation but poor compliance should also be prescribed bifocal spectacles, monitored the effect of bifocals, and weaning patients back to single vision lenses when appropriate. This echoed the point made by Al-Bagdady *et al* (2009) that it may be possible for patients who have been prescribed bifocals to subsequently change to single vision lenses with sustained accommodative accuracy.

Nandakumar and Leat (2010) suggested that improved compliance led to increased academic achievement. They were interested in the link between bifocal prescription and early literacy and visual perceptual skills. Significant improvement in scores on three tasks were observed after the bifocals were prescribed, and a reduced time to complete various tasks compared with single vision spectacle wearers. An unadjusted standard child's fashion frame is unlikely to fit the low crest height, wide temples and short length to bend as typical for paediatric patients with DS (Woodhouse *et al* 1993), allowing the patient to peer over the top rim, rendering the spectacle lenses redundant. None of the studies addressed any relationship between compliance and the fit of the spectacles.

The Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning (2014) have identified that better use should be made high street practices for community eye care services. Vision 2020 guidelines (2015) recommend that paediatric patients with DS should be dispensed by a GOC registered optician, who should ensure

they are informed and able to provide suitable care for these patients. The optician should complete the entire dispensing process to allow the building of a trusting relationship, and should explain each process to the patient at their level of understanding, explaining why the spectacles should be worn and when. Parents and/or carers should also be informed of the need to impress upon all members of the patient's support network the necessity of correct fit and spectacle wear compliance.

Additionally, a Special Facial Characteristic supplement may be claimed to assist in providing suitable frames to paediatric patients with DS, and suppliers who can provide frames specially designed to fit the facial characteristics for these patients include Specs4us (2015) and Tomato Glasses UK (2016).

CONCLUSION

Bifocal spectacles offer benefit to paediatric patients with DS, improving functional visual skills, visual acuity at distance and near, and correcting accommodative lag. Prescribing bifocals improved wearing compliance and contributed to academic progress. However, it should not be adopted as routine clinical management but should continue to be prescribed on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, there is a requirement for continually monitoring accommodative lag and the prescription of bifocals.

There appears to be a virtuous relationship between the prescribing of bifocals and improvement in spectacle wear compliance for paediatric patients with DS. Bifocals improve compliance, thus realising potential benefits to distance and near acuity when dispensed, and improvements in accommodative ability. It is important that the dispensing optician is able to explain these issues to the patient and their immediate support network. This will reinforce the need for good compliance. It may also prompt the parent/carer to seek further assistance if the expected improvement in compliance does not materialise. This will allow consideration of further assessment to be made to the long-term benefit of the patient.

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Simon Matthews

We find out about new College lecturer, Simon Matthews

Optometrist, CLO and DO Simon Matthews has just started work as a lecturer at ABDO College. He is combining this role with that of Academic Link Tutor at Canterbury Christ Church University. Read on to find out more about Simon's background and his aims for his new positions.

You may meet Simon Matthews taking a lecture at ABDO College, or you could come across him at Canterbury Christ Church University, or he may be carrying out an eye examination in practice. In the last few years, Simon has fulfilled his initial ambition to become an optometrist, and is now helping the next generation of DOs brush up their optical knowledge.

Simon says, "I first thought about an optical career at school. I was looking in the UCAS handbook for something biology based. The book said an optometrist could earn £100k and I thought 'that sounds nice.' I had other challenges going on at the time, got poor grades in my AS levels, and left school. I did still have an interest in optics, though, so I started work on the reception desk for a multiple.

"It was a lot busier than I had expected but I liked the job. I had agreed with my employer that when the next chance came up I could do the DO training. I wanted to be in a position where I could move ahead. My parents were very supportive of my interest and ambition: they gave

me Kanski that Christmas. Even though it was a little bit over my head, they had written inside, 'Keep a vision on your ambition'."

It was a year or two before Simon was able to start the ophthalmic dispensing course which he did via City College on day release. He says, "I like to keep learning, but I really struggled with the DO course. I failed my optics exam three times, but it was fourth time lucky."

Undaunted by his struggles, Simon went straight onto the CLO course. He says, "I passed Optics first time round –



Simon's ambitions didn't stop there. His contact lens work only fuelled his interest. He says, "The challenge in working in a multiple is that most patients turn up simply wanting to renew their daily disposables. I was fortunate enough to do some RGP fittings and work with a couple of patients with keratoconus."

Keen to learn more about pathology, Simon committed to the Career

'I believe that the best way to learn is to teach.'

'I find locum work challenging but varied. Working with different equipment every day keeps me interested and ensures I'm out of the comfort zone.'

that was at ABDO College and I was really pleased to find that the block release and distance learning model of learning worked for me."

Progression Programme at the University of Bradford, which allows GOC registered DOs to graduate with a BSc (Hons) in Optometry in 18 months, through six

months of distance learning beginning in January, followed by 12 months of study at university.

Simon says, "I started the optometry fast track degree in 2015 and finished it in July 2016. I can highly recommend it." Since then, Simon has been working as a locum optometrist. He says, "I find locum work challenging but varied. Working with different equipment every day keeps me interested and ensures I'm out of the comfort zone."

As someone who loves learning and has overcome plenty of challenges to progress his career, becoming a lecturer with ABDO College has been a great next step for Simon. He says, "I applied for this because I always want to do something more rewarding and continue learning. I believe that the best way to learn is to teach."

Simon does not want to stop learning, either. He says, "Moving forward I would like to do a doctorate. Myopia control and glaucoma are the two areas I'm most interested in." He is looking forward to sharing his wide knowledge of all parts of the optical career path with his students. Simon says, "Hopefully I can offer a great deal of knowledge, information and experience across the whole range of optics, I've worked in a lab, run a lab, worked as a DO, CLO, and optometrist."

"In this new job, I hope to be able to share my further experience with pathology and use of equipment as an optometrist, with the backing of my skills and experience as a DO and CLO," Simon concludes.

ABDO College on social media

ABDO College is now active on social media. You'll find news about current and future courses, and everything from dates of manufacturer visits to application deadlines and revision tips. Do like, follow, share and invite colleagues:

 <https://www.facebook.com/ABDOCollege/>

 <https://twitter.com/abdocollege>

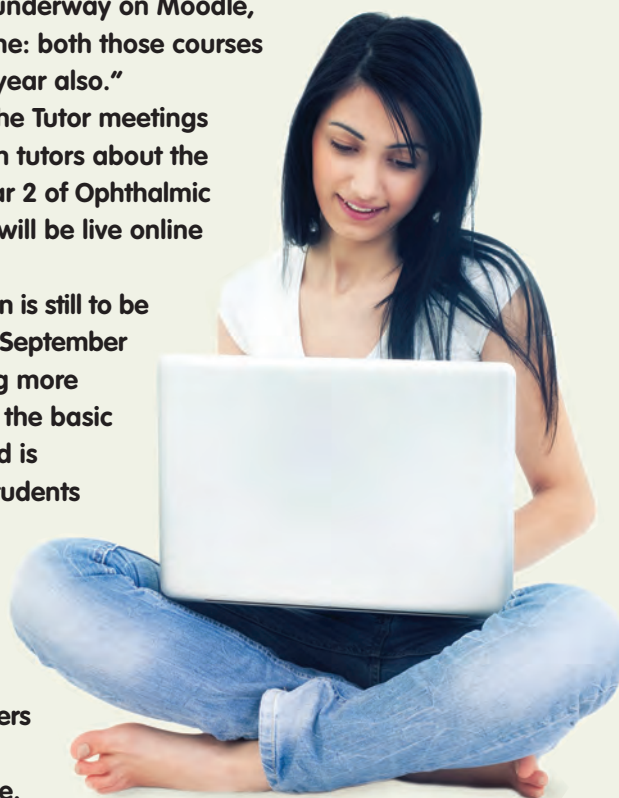
Moodle update

ABDO College's move to put all courses online is continuing successfully. Lecturer Simon Butterfield who is overseeing the project says, "The Tutor Training course is currently underway on Moodle, and Access is also now online: both those courses were run electronically last year also."

Simon will be attending the Tutor meetings at Optrafair and liaising with tutors about the Contact Lens course and year 2 of Ophthalmic Dispensing as both courses will be live online from this September.

Simon continues, "The plan is still to be fully electronic by the end of September 2019. We will also be adding more content to the VLP now that the basic delivery has been tested and is relatively smooth running; students will find more instructional videos, lecture notes etc."

If you have any queries, Simon will be at Optrafair to field any questions from tutors, students, and employers regarding the delivery, and any feedback they may have.



A home from home for students

ABDO College is situated in the beautiful Kent countryside, and there is accommodation on site available to students on block release. Many students opt for this due to its handy location. It also provides a chance to get to know fellow students. Other students like to stay off site for a break from the course. Read on to find out more about the accommodation options, both on and off site.

ABDO College offers 11 single rooms and three twin rooms for students. The accommodation is within a converted barn, looking out onto fields, just a few hundred yards walk past fields of sheep to the main building where classes take place at Godmersham.

On their first day as a new student, there will always be a warm welcome. Food is arranged for new first-year arrivals and staff will be on hand for a few hours to make sure everyone settles in. On arrival, students will find a communal kitchen and living area. The kitchen is equipped just like a home, with microwave, dishwasher and washing machine. In the living area, students can relax and watch a DVD on the large screen TV.

After new students have been shown around the shared facilities they'll be taken to their allocated bedroom. Each room is simply furnished, with everything a student might need: a bed, desk and wardrobe, plus small TV and DVD player. All the rooms have en suite bathrooms with bath or shower too.

ABDO College accommodation is a popular choice with students. Those coming from further afield like the fact

that they can walk to classes and don't need a car. The accommodation fills quickly, and recommendations spread by word of mouth.

Getting to know each other

Once students have been in the accommodation a little while they get together and work as a group. This might mean cooking together in the evening. Everything is provided for a self-service breakfast and lunch is provided in the main building, but often by the second day the students have filled the fridge for an evening meal in their accommodation, even accompanied by beer or wine.

A housekeeper comes in every day to look after the communal areas, and she does a changeover every Friday. Towels and basic household essentials are provided but it is recommended that

students bring their own washing powder in case of allergies.

Almost every student now comes to ABDO College with a laptop or tablet, and the College accommodation is equipped with WiFi. It is a good base to get to know people. All the students stay in touch, but the accommodation allows students to get to know each other a lot more, bond and help one another with their studies. Most students stay over the middle weekend of their block if they don't have to work. The College is well located for a trip to France if students bring their passports with them: one step down the road you can jump on the ferry. Students staying in College accommodation always have a big celebration on their last fortnight of block release too.

College accommodation may not be everyone's choice so a list of smaller bed and breakfasts in the local area is available. Many students like to stay in the accommodation at the Conningbrook Hotel – a pub just a few miles down the road. If any issues arise, whether they are accommodation issues or academic issues, there is always someone to talk to. ABDO College is a small college, but that means everyone is looked on as an individual, and the staff are committed to making students' time at the College a great experience.

Resources

Find out more about studying and staying at ABDO College from the website at www.abdocollege.org.uk

For a list of smaller bed and breakfasts, and if you have any questions, call 01227 733911 or email accommodation@abdocollege.org.uk

ABDO College seeks Blended Learning Tutors

Earn in your spare time | Flexible ongoing paid work

A chance to give back to the profession and invest in professional development and learning of trainee dispensing opticians and support staff

ABDO College offers a comprehensive programme of blended learning courses. With growing numbers of students, the College is now looking to recruit and train more tutors.

What's involved?

Every tutor needs to complete a ten week online course on tutoring, involving 10–15 hours study per week, followed by an extended period of mentoring and support.

With all course material you will receive a comprehensive marking schedule to assess student assignments and support your personal knowledge and understanding.

How much time is needed?

Once you have completed the course you will be able to determine how many students you would like to tutor each year.

What do I need to join?

The FBDO programme is now delivered on-line via the Moodle platform so basic IT skills are essential but full training and support will be given to extend these to the required level.

You must have passed the ABDO Level 6 ophthalmic dispensing final theory examinations at the first attempt.

What are the benefits?

You will be paid when you commence marking student's papers. Rates of pay vary depending on the demands of each course. ABDO College will provide full support whilst being a tutor.

How do I apply?

If you would like to apply, please email Claire Raffill at crffill@abdocollege.org.uk for an application pack, or call the ABDO College Courses Dept on 01227 738829 to discuss.



Become a dispensing optician

Foundation Degree/BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing (Year 1) Fellowship Dispensing Diploma (Year 1)

ABDO College offers a choice of two distance learning courses on the route to becoming a qualified dispensing optician:

Option 1

A two-year Foundation Degree course followed by a third year BSc Degree course in Ophthalmic Dispensing – leading to BSc (Hons) and the ABDO Level 6 FBDO qualifications.

Option 2

A three-year diploma course in Ophthalmic Dispensing – leading to the ABDO Level 6 FBDO qualification.

Course features

- Combines academic and work-based learning
- 32 weekly distance learning units in each academic year
- Four weeks block release at Godmersham in each academic year
- Access to supplementary web-based interactive tutorial presentations
- Block release accommodation can be provided
- Year 1 courses will commence in September 2018

Entry requirements

- Grade C or above GCSE in English, mathematics, science and two other subjects, including evidence of recent learning
- Applicants must be working in practice as a trainee dispensing optician for a minimum of 30 hours per week and have the support of their employer

For further information and application forms for these and other courses, or to request a copy of the ABDO College Prospectus, please contact the ABDO College Courses Team on **01227 738 829** (Option 1) or email **info@abdocollege.org.uk**

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Canterbury, Kent CT4 7DT**

www.abdocollege.org.uk

