



Te Poari o ngā Kaimātai Whatu me ngā Kaiwahakarato Mōhiti

## CONSULTATION – DRAFT ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR OPTICAL DISPENSING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

**Released: 9 April 2021**

**Submissions Due: 21 May 2021**

### Introduction

- 1 The principal purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) is to protect public health and safety by ensuring that health practitioners are fit and competent to practise their professions. In accordance with this, Section 118 of the HPCA Act requires the Board to prescribe the qualifications required for scopes of practice within the profession, and, for that purpose, to accredit and monitor educational institutions and degrees, courses of studies, or programmes.
- 2 In terms of the prescribing of qualifications, these can be New Zealand qualifications or overseas qualifications; however, the Act distinguishes between the two by indicating that the Board must monitor New Zealand educational institutions that are accredited but has *discretion* to monitor overseas accredited educational institutions.

### Background

- 3 To date, no *New Zealand* educational institutions have formally applied to the Board for accreditation of an optical dispensing qualification, and to the Board's knowledge, none are in existence. However, a number of *overseas* educational institutions have applied and had their optical dispensing qualification programmes accredited over the years. Currently accredited overseas programmes include:
  - Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing awarded by the Australasian College of Optical Dispensing, Australia
  - Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing awarded by the New South Wales Technical and Further Education Commission, Australia
  - Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing awarded by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia
  - Fellowship awarded by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, United Kingdom.

- 4 In applying for and achieving accreditation, these overseas educational institutions/associations were required to submit a set of prescribed information through which the Board could establish whether their programme would ensure graduates had the requisite knowledge and skills to deliver safe optical care to consumers. The submitted information was assessed against the prescribed scope of practice and the Board's standards of clinical and cultural competence and ethical conduct, but not against any formal accreditation criterion or standards as such. In addition, accredited programmes were compared against each other, to ensure consistency of the approval of programmes delivering the required *minimum* level of safe care to ensure public protection.
- 5 The development of formal accreditation standards and criterion for optical dispensing education programmes has been on the Board's agenda for many years but has been lower down the priority list due to the anticipated cost of development, the declining number of registered Dispensing Opticians (to share the cost of development) and the fact that there are currently no New Zealand-based educational institutions delivering optical dispensing qualifications. While some of these issues are still to be traversed, the Board recognises that with the changing face of tertiary training in New Zealand it may not be long before a New Zealand-based educational institution emerges, and with the national and global impact of COVID-19 on the health workforce and the changing needs of the public, it is timely and appropriate to consider implementing formal accreditation standards.
- 6 Given the limitations of the Board's resources and after talking with some fellow small to medium-sized New Zealand health regulators about their own experiences in implementing accreditation standards and processes, the most cost-effective and robust solution for the implementation of accreditation standards appears to be adopting the standards and guidelines of another New Zealand health regulator and modifying them to suit the profession.
- 7 Following review of a number of accreditation standards for the different professions, one set stood out as being general enough to readily convert, of an appropriate level for programmes that are less than degree-level to achieve, robust enough to ensure safety, and that had been satisfactorily adopted and modified by another New Zealand health regulator already. These standards are those developed by the Australian and New Zealand Dental Councils, who were generous enough to grant permission for the Board to adopt and modify them for its use.

## **Purpose of accreditation**

- 8 Health profession education programmes are critical for delivering a well-educated health workforce that is responsive to New Zealand's emerging health and social care issues and priorities. To achieve these outcomes, education providers need to be guided by accreditation standards and competency standards intended to ensure contemporary programmes of study deliver the desired registrants and are designed not only to reflect international standards but to reflect the New Zealand context.
- 9 The Board sees accreditation as a process *and* a status. Having an accredited status means a student, a prospective employer and the wider community can have confidence that a qualification has value. As a process, accreditation involves reviewing the programme against how well it reflects and matches the accreditation standards set by the regulator as well as meeting the threshold for quality and providing assurance that a) it is continuing to improve, and b) that it serves students and the community well.

## Draft standards and guidelines

10 The *Draft accreditation standards for optical dispensing programmes* are attached as **Appendix 1**. As indicated in the preamble of the draft, the standards will help to ensure that only suitably trained and qualified dispensing opticians can register to practise in New Zealand. The Standards will apply to all optical dispensing programmes that are prescribed programmes that enable graduates to apply for registration as dispensing opticians in New Zealand.

11 The Standards comprise six domains:

1. Public safety
2. Academic governance and quality assurance
3. Programme of study
4. The student experience
5. Assessment
6. Cultural safety

Each Domain includes a standard statement that articulates the key purpose of the Domain. Each standard statement is supported by multiple criteria, which set out what is expected of a Board-accredited programme to meet each standard statement. The criteria are not sub-standards that will be individually assessed. When assessing a programme, the Board will have regard for whether each criterion is met but will take an on-balance view of whether the evidence presented by a programme provider clearly demonstrates that a particular Standard is met.

12 Articulated in the standards is emphasis on providers being able to demonstrate that learning outcomes address the required professional competencies for safe practice. Inherent to outcome-based education is focusing the programme on what it is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experience. In this case, provide all of the elements required for the delivery of safe optical dispensing care to health consumers.

13 It is intended that new programmes and established programmes will be assessed against the same accreditation standards, although the assessment may be varied according to the circumstances of the programme provider. Established programmes will be assessed against the new standards when their period of accreditation next comes up for renewal.

14 The standards are intended to be read in conjunction with the draft *Guidelines for Accreditation of Education and Training Programmes for Dispensing Opticians*, attached as **Appendix 2**. This document describes the process that will be followed by the Board in applying the standards to educational institutions and their programmes. The guidelines are intended to help guide education institutions and explain the various milestones in the process, from initial contact with the Board to application submission, assessment, public consultation, application outcomes, as well as post-accreditation monitoring and reaccreditation procedures.

## How to have your say

15 If you wish to make a submission on the draft standards or associated guidelines, please provide this in writing **by 5.00 pm on 21 May 2021**. The Board does not guarantee that submissions received at the Board's offices after that date will be considered.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - *Draft accreditation standards for optical dispensing programmes*

Appendix 2 – *Draft Guidelines for Accreditation of Education and Training Programmes for Dispensing Opticians*

### **Submissions can be sent to:**

The Registrar  
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board  
PO Box 9644  
Wellington 6141

Email: [registrar@odob.health.nz](mailto:registrar@odob.health.nz)