



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

Department of Vision and Hearing Sciences, Faculty of
Science and Technology

Optometric Clinical Assistant

Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistant

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Introduction

The University Certificates in Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistants (OCA) and the Optometric Clinical Assistant are **recognised qualifications**. These level 4 courses are designed to offer formal learning for entry or trainee roles in the retail optics sector and provide a springboard to higher professionally accredited qualifications.

The courses provide:

- Understanding of the techniques, principle and skills used in optical practice
- Personal and professional development, ensuring you have the tools you need to support future development to achieve your potential for career progression
- Practical competence in the execution of defined clinical techniques
- Ability to collect and evaluate clinical data under supervision
- Opportunity to explore, learn with and from other students, reflecting upon challenges and opportunities in a constructive way

This qualification helps you:

- Achieve an internationally recognised university qualification
- Gain formal recognition for the level at which you are working
- Enhance career development opportunities
- Enjoy the challenge of learning new skills
- Spend minimum time away from work as there is no need to attend university or lectures
- Add value in your workplace whilst training
- Access to the University's services
- Complete first step on an optical career ladder

This Frequently Asked Questions document contains information about the course, why we developed it, what you will be studying on the course, how you will be studying, the benefits to yourself and to your organisation, and also the ways in which we will support you in your studies.

I hope you find it useful.

Suparna Ghose
Principal Consultant,
Degrees at Work
Anglia Ruskin University

2. Who is the qualification for?

These courses are for anyone working in an optical practice in the UK or overseas in a trainee or assistance role or for someone in a related role in the optical industry.

3. What is a University Certificate?

A university certificate is an Anglia Ruskin University award accredited to a level 4 qualification and is worth 60 credits.

4. Why Anglia Ruskin University?

Anglia Ruskin University is based in Cambridge and Chelmsford and is one of the foremost work based learning universities in the Eastern Region, and indeed in the UK. Working with clients as diverse as Barclays Bank, Specsavers, Harrods and the NHS, we have an established reputation and years of experience for developing and delivering distance learning bespoke degree level training for employees of both individual organisations and entire work sectors.

Anglia Ruskin University believes that higher education should inspire people to develop the professional skills that will enable them and their organisations to stand out in today's increasingly competitive world

The Department of Vision and Hearing Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University provides academic and vocational courses in optics at various levels. The University has been running full- and part-time courses in ophthalmic dispensing since 1990. Our courses are fully up-to-date through our close links with employers and professional bodies and by our highly experienced academic staff. Over 3,000 students have successfully completed University Certificate courses since 1999.

We have one of the highest employability rates in the higher education sector and some of our recent graduates have taken up employment with; Dolland & Aitchison (D&A), Boots Opticians, Specsavers, Vision Express, Optical Express and independent practices.

5. What is Work Based Learning?

Work Based Learning is a process of applying knowledge that focuses on people's day-to-day work responsibilities. These courses are designed to meet the needs of a busy, full-time practice employee and provide the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification through the learner's own everyday work

6. What qualifications do I need to start the course?

These courses are open to individuals 18 years and above of age, and ideally with experience of working within an optical practice. Applicants must also be numerically competent and possess good communication skills, and hold three passes (Grade C and above) at GCSE including Mathematics, English and a science-based subject, and one pass at A Level.

Applicants without the necessary prerequisites, but with other equivalent experience, may also be considered.

You will also need access to a computer and the internet, preferably via broadband.

7. What do I do if I don't have these qualifications?

Please contact us on 0845 196 6707 or degreesatwork@anglia.ac.uk and we will talk through your options.

8. Do I have to be working in practice?

Yes, as this is a work based course it is preferable for you to be working in an optical practice or in the optics sector. You will need to be involved in a variety of tasks within the practice in order to gain technical skills. This will allow you to combine theoretical study with the application of essential practical skills.

If you are not working in a practice, but wish to apply for the course, please contact us on 0845 196 6706 or degreesatwork@anglia.ac.uk.

9. How will the course be taught?

The course will be delivered entirely via online distance learning using the university's virtual learning environment (VLE). Tutorial support is available on a one to one basis throughout the course via email, telephone and the VLE.

As stated above you will need access to a computer and the internet, preferably via broadband.

Although not compulsory, the student's learning experience on the course may be enhanced by working under the supervision of a registered Optometrist within the practice.

10. How will my progress be assessed?

You will be assessed on a module-by-module basis. Depending on the module assessments consist of multiple-choice examinations, together with a portfolio based continuous assessment of practical competencies...

Participation in online activities is highly recommended and encouraged in order to all learners to benefit from for enhanced peer learning.

Please note that deadlines for submission of assignments are strictly enforced at the University. For this reason we emphasise the importance that our work based distance learning students manage their time carefully.

11. Will I have to attend the University's campus?

There is no requirement to attend the campus because all course materials are available online. The development of an online community is a flexible and exciting way to learn, to share practice and enhance generic and transferable skills.

12. How long will the course take?

Each module can be studied over 1 semester; therefore the full course can be studied over 1 year on a part time basis. We offer the part time route, as opposed to the full time mode of study in order to help you efficiently balance work and study priorities.

13. How is the course structured?

There are 2 compulsory modules with one per semester on the part time delivery. Semesters are usually January – May and September to December. All of the modules are presented in such a manner that you are able to contextualise your learning to your own work place.

The modules are covered in the following order:

Module Outline

Introduction to Delegated Clinical Procedures 30 credits (Common for both OCA and ODA routes)

Introduces basic concepts required for competent performance by an Optometric Clinical Assistant or Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistant working in optometric practice. This includes a basic knowledge of the theoretical principles of clinical optometry as well as practical competence in a range of defined delegated clinical techniques. Topics include anatomy of the visual system, nature of common visual problems, routine pre-testing techniques, contact lens practice and ophthalmic lens dispensing.

Delegated Dispensing Procedures 30 credits (for ODA route)

This course extends the knowledge required by an Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistant working in an optometric practice. All areas in dispensing of spectacles, including selection of appropriate lenses, the accurate recording of spectacle lens and frame specifications etc. are covered. Knowledge of advanced dispensing is developed, including dispensing of complex lens types, problems encountered with such lenses, and how to solve these problems. The module also looks at dispensing skills such as communication and customer relations, merchandising and stock control.

Further Delegated Clinical Procedures 30 credits (for OCA route)

The delegated techniques taught in this module relate to more specialised aspects of optometry: stereopsis, colour vision testing, visual field examination and tonometry. Learners will gain a sound knowledge of the theoretical principles of advanced aspects of clinical optometry as well as practical competence in a range of defined delegated clinical techniques, including spectacle dispensing. Knowledge of more advanced aspects of contact lens practice is developed.

You may choose to do OCA or ODA. Alternatively after successfully completing one, you may wish to undertake the other. In this case you will be required to complete the additional 30 credit module.

14. What are the specific dates?

They are as follows

Introduction to Delegated Clinical Procedures

Starts: 2 February 2015

Teaching ends: week commencing 5 May 2015

Assessment due: week commencing 11 May 2015

Delegated Dispensing Procedures and Further Delegated Clinical Procedures

Starts: week commencing 28 September 2015

Teaching ends: week commencing 14 December 2015

Assessment due: week commencing 4 January 2016

15. How much work will I have to do?

Your course will be based around your work and so some of your learning will take place during your normal work duties. There will also be the need to commit private time for studying. Everyone approaches work differently and some people will take more time than others. However it is estimated that on average you will need to spend the equivalent of approximately 5 additional hours on your studies.

Anglia Ruskin University staff will offer guidance and support throughout your academic work.

16. What IT equipment and skills will I need?

You will be required to access online learning materials during the course. For this you will need access to a standard PC linked to the internet, preferably a Broadband connection and Microsoft Office software such as Word and Excel or similar Windows compatible applications. You will need to have a basic familiarity with using the internet, using email, word and spreadsheet applications.

Anglia Ruskin University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) can be accessed via PCs or Macs. In practice we find most desktop computers and laptops are compatible with our systems. However technologies do vary, so some students find access easier at home, some easier at work, for some it makes little difference. We are happy to answer your questions about IT and certainly encourage you to raise questions you may have well in advance of commencing your studies.

17. What other skills will I need?

There are no other special skills needed other than a belief in what you can achieve and a willingness to learn. Working for a higher education qualification is a big commitment, so you will also need to be motivated and well organised.

18. How will the students support each other through the course?

We believe success on the course will be enhanced through bringing the students together to create a supportive community of learners. The structure of the course has been designed to encourage active participation and mutual support in order to build a community of learners and enable students to maximise the learning opportunities across the group. Anglia Ruskin University's Virtual Learning Environment provides an excellent platform for doing this through its discussion boards and other participative mechanisms.

As mentioned in Q10, participation in online activities is highly recommended and encouraged in order to all learners to benefit from enhanced peer learning.

19. What support will I get from the university?

While you will need to take full responsibility for your own studies, you will have plenty of support. This includes:

- One to one online academic tutor support
- One to one online personal tutor support
- Distance Learning Facilitators
- Student Advisers
- University IT helpdesk
- Personal Development Planning (PDP)
- Support in the workplace

You will also have access to a number of university resources and facilities such as the digital Library, Chaplaincy, Counselling Service, Students' Union and the Careers Service.

.Having a workplace mentor is not essential to participate in the course, however some learners may find this beneficial to their learning.

20. What books are needed?

As part of the course students may be expected to read extracts from a variety of sources such as books, journal articles, reports etc. Most of these will be freely available online through Anglia Ruskin University Library, although in some instances they may want to purchase a key course textbook. Many learning resources are available in electronic format. You will be advised of any recommended books well in advance and tutors will point you towards relevant sources of information throughout the course.

21. What are the course fees?

For January 2014, fees are,
Optometric Clinical Assistant (OCA) - £950
Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistant (ODA) - £950

In case you decide to apply for the second after successfully completing the first course fees are £550 for the additional course.

22. What happens when I complete the course?

You will receive your certificate in the post.

23. How do I apply?

We have an online application process and are currently inviting applications for September 2014 (for OCA) and January 2015 (for both OCA and ODA starts). Please click on the following links and follow instructions to complete your application.

Optometric Clinical Assistant September 2014

https://e-vision.anglia.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_ipp_lgn.login?process=siw_ipp_app&code1=EGUOO PCLPDLP&code2=0010

January 2015

https://e-vision.anglia.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_ipp_lgn.login?process=siw_ipp_app&code1=EGUOO PCLPDLP&code2=0011

Ophthalmic Dispensing Assistant January 2015

https://e-vision.anglia.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_ipp_lgn.login?process=siw_ipp_app&code1=EGUOO PTHPDLP&code2=0010

24. What happens after I apply?

Provided you meet the university's eligibility criteria and your application is complete and all the supporting documents and reference received, these are the first stages involved:

- Receipt of application form and all documents/ references
- Applicant receives a conditional letter of offer from the university
- University/admissions tutors will verify documents and references
- A final conditional offer received by student along with registration guidelines

25. How can I get more information?

Call the Degrees at Work Team on 0845 196 6707 or email degreesatwork@anglia.ac.uk. Please refer to anglia.ac.uk/optcert.