



Optometry Council of
Australia and New Zealand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education Provider:	Flinders University
Program:	Bachelor of Medical Science (Vision Science) & Master of Optometry Program
Date:	August 2018 Updated March 2019
Outcome:	Accredited with conditions until 31 December 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) was established in 1996. Its function includes assessment, for the purposes of accreditation, programs designed to produce graduates suitable for registration as optometrists in Australia or New Zealand.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The assessment follows the process and procedures described in the OCANZ publication *Accreditation Manual for Optometry Programs in Australia and New Zealand Part 1- Processes and Procedures August 2012* (www.ocanz.org).

The accreditation process evaluates the extent to which a program of study complies with the OCANZ Standards set out in *Accreditation Standards and Evidence Guide for Entry-Level Optometry Programs, Part 2 – Standards*, effective January 2017.

Under the Australian *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*, OCANZ may grant accreditation if it is reasonably satisfied that a program of study, and the education provider that provides it, meet an approved accreditation standard. It may also grant accreditation if it is reasonably satisfied that the provider and the program of study substantially meet an approved accreditation standard, and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time.

BACKGROUND

In 2011, the OCANZ Board appointed a six member assessment team to undertake the new program assessment of the Flinders University Optometry program.

The accreditation process has involved:

- In 2012, Flinders University submitted an accreditation submission addressing the OCANZ Standards.

- In October 2012, the assessment team conducted a site visit to Flinders University and produced a document *Report of the OCANZ Assessment Team, November 2012*. In this report, the assessment team recommended that the program should be accredited to 31 December 2015, subject to 13 conditions:
 - Five of the conditions related to clinical training and settings. These conditions included evidence of a complete optometry clinic, details of arrangements with providers of extramural placements and details of clinical training provided to students in 2013.
 - Remaining conditions included the requirement to submit a comprehensive progress report and undergo a site visit in 2014, updated staff details, details of the Curriculum Committee and evidence of financial sustainability to ensure staffing levels and infrastructure development.

The OCANZ Board adopted the recommendation.

- The assessment team reviewed Flinders University Optometry 2012 Annual report and July 2013 Interim report and reported its recommendation on conditions in its document *Report of the OCANZ Assessment Team August 2013*. The recommendation of the assessment team was that Flinders University had met four of the conditions on accreditation and these should be removed. The OCANZ Board adopted the recommendation.
- Flinders University Optometry program submitted its 2013 Annual Report to OCANZ in February 2014. The assessment team conducted a site visit to Flinders University in May 2014 and produced *Report of the OCANZ Assessment Team, May 2014*, which addressed the remaining conditions and site visit outcomes. The recommendation of the assessment team was to remove all but 3 of the conditions. The OCANZ Board adopted the recommendation.
- In February 2015, Flinders University submitted their 2014 Annual report which was reviewed by the assessment team. In August 2015, three members of the assessment team conducted a site visit and produced *Report of the OCANZ Assessment Team, August 2015*, which addressed the remaining conditions and site visit outcomes. The recommendation of the assessment team was to remove the 3 remaining conditions and introduce a new condition in relation to Standard 8 – Teaching and support staff. The OCANZ Board adopted the recommendation.
- *The Accreditation Committee Report February 2017* records the findings of the OCANZ Accreditation Committee review of Flinders University's 2015 and 2016 Annual Report. The Accreditation Committee recommended updating Flinders condition on accreditation and this was approved by the OCANZ Board.
- *The Accreditation Committee Report July 2018* records the findings of the OCANZ one-day site in June 2018 to visit to meet with staff, students and recent graduates and employers due to ongoing concerns with staffing levels. The Assessment Team recommended new conditions relating to staffing on Flinders' accreditation and this was endorsed by the OCANZ Accreditation Committee and approved by the OCANZ Board.
- At each stage, the OCANZ Board notified the Optometry Board of Australia (OBA), Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board – New Zealand (ODOB), Chair of Discipline of Optometry and Vision Science and the Vice-Chancellor of Flinders University of its decision.

KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The recommendation of the assessment team is that the program of study remains accredited until December 31 2023 with conditions provided there are no major changes to the program during this period and the University demonstrates significant improvement in program resourcing over the next 18 months.

The assessment team is satisfied that at present, the graduates of the Flinders University optometry program have the knowledge, skills and attributes to meet competency standards (including both universal and therapeutics competencies) as entry level practitioners in Australia and New Zealand and that they will be equipped with the necessary skills to maintain those competencies. However,

benchmarking available to the assessment team indicates that the staff resources currently available in the program are very limited compared to other accredited programs raising concerns about whether or not the resources can sustain over time the quality of education that is required to facilitate the achievement of the competency standards.

The assessment team appreciated the positive approach taken by the Flinders staff and students in their participation in the accreditation process. The assessment team was able to engage in open and frank discussion with all parties associated with the accreditation process and appreciated the prompt responses to requests for further information or clarification on issues raised.

The following table displays the key findings of the assessment team. Where Accreditation Standards are noted as “substantially met” the School is required to provide evidence to OCANZ that the actions detailed in order to meet the specific standard have been appropriately completed. A strength refers to a particularly significant achievement by the education provider with regard to the program. A condition needs to be reported on by the education provider at a time specified by OCANZ. A recommendation refers to an action or a course of actions that should be considered by the provider to improve the delivery and/or outcomes of the program.

Standard 1 Public safety - Standard 1 continues to be MET	
Criteria	Comments
1.1 Protection of the public and the care of patients are prominent amongst the guiding principles of the educational program, clinical training and student learning outcomes.	
1.2 Screening for and management of student fitness to practice are effective.	
1.3 Students achieve the relevant competencies before providing patient care as part of the program.	
1.4 Suitably qualified and registered optometrists and/or health practitioners supervise students during clinical education.	
1.5 Health services and optometry practices providing clinical placements have robust quality and safety policies and processes and meet all required regulations and standards.	
1.6 Patients consent to care by students.	
1.7 Where required, all students are registered with the relevant regulatory authority/ies.	
1.8 The education provider holds students and staff to high levels of ethical and professional conduct.	

Standard 2 Academic Governance and Quality Assurance - Standard 2 continues to be MET

Criteria	Comments
<p>2.1 The provider has robust academic governance arrangements in place for the program of study that includes systematic monitoring, review and improvement.</p> <p>2.2 Quality improvement processes use student and other evaluations, internal and external academic and professional peer review to improve the program.</p> <p>2.3 There is relevant external input to the design and management of the program, including from representatives of the optometry professions.</p> <p>2.4 Mechanisms exist for responding within the curriculum to contemporary developments in health professional education and practice.</p>	

Standard 3 Program of Study - Standard 3 is MET with conditions

Criteria	Comments
<p>3.1 A coherent educational philosophy informs the program of study design and delivery.</p> <p>3.2 Program learning outcomes address all the professional competencies endorsed by OCANZ.</p> <p>3.3 The quality, quantity and diversity of clinical training are sufficient to produce a graduate competent to practice across a range of settings.</p> <p>3.4 Learning and teaching methods are intentionally designed and used to enable students to achieve the required learning outcomes.</p> <p>3.5 Principles of inter-professional learning and practice are embedded in the curriculum.</p> <p>3.6 Teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced to deliver the units that they teach.</p> <p>3.7 Learning environments support the achievement of the required learning outcomes.</p> <p>3.8 Learning environments support the achievement of research skills appropriate to the academic level of the program</p>	<p>Condition 1 a) The 2018 Annual Report must provide a workforce plan which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the job description and timeline for the appointment of a full time Level E position to provide leadership of the optometry program • the proposed timeline for the appointment of further appropriately qualified and experienced staff at all levels of academic appointment particularly including any proposed senior staff appointments • contingent on the new workload model being released, information on the model and a description of how it will apply to optometry staff from 2019 • advice about proposed increased staff numbers and levels in the optometry program for 2019 and subsequent years including justification for the adequacy of these numbers • whether and how the university will assure itself that registered optometrists providing leadership and/or teaching in optometry subjects hold or will acquire ocular therapeutics qualifications • how future appointments at Level A in the optometry program will meet the TEQSA requirement for students to be taught by staff at one level of qualification higher than the course of study being taught

<p>3.9 Facilities and equipment are accessible, well-maintained, fit for purpose and support the achievement of learning outcomes.</p> <p>3.10 Cultural competence is appropriately integrated within the program and clearly articulated as required disciplinary learning outcomes: including an emphasis on Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori and Pasifika cultures.</p> <p>3.11 The optometry program has the resources to sustain the quality of education that is required to facilitate the achievement of the competency standards.</p>	<p>(AQF+1), or have equivalent professional experience, including reporting on any policy used to demonstrate professional equivalence and its application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of how each of the Level A staff in the optometry program have been/will be developed/mentored in teaching, scholarship and assessment • how the university assures itself that suitably qualified and experienced staff assess students, including external experts for final year. <p>b) The 2019 Annual Report must provide evidence that there has been significant progress towards full implementation of the workforce plan.</p>
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Standard 4 The Student Experience – Standard 4 is MET with a condition	
Criteria	Comments
<p>4.1 Course information is clear and accessible.</p> <p>4.2 Admission and progression requirements and processes are robust, equitable and transparent.</p> <p>4.3 Students have access to effective grievance and appeals processes.</p> <p>4.4 The provider identifies and provides support to meet the academic learning needs of students.</p> <p>4.5 Students are informed of and have appropriate access to personal support services provided by qualified personnel.</p> <p>4.6 Students are represented within the deliberative and decision making processes of the program.</p> <p>4.7 Equity and diversity principles are observed and promoted in the student experience.</p>	<p>Condition 2: The 2019 Annual Report must provide an overview of outcomes for students transferring into the program from sub-quota agreements.</p>

Standard 5 Assessment – Standard 5 is MET with conditions	
Criteria	Comments
5.1 There is a clear relationship between learning outcomes and assessment strategies. 5.2 Scope of assessment covers all learning outcomes relevant to the competencies. 5.3 Multiple assessment tools, modes and sampling are used including direct observation in the clinical setting. 5.4 Program management and co-ordination, including internal and external moderation, ensure consistent and appropriate assessment and feedback to students. 5.5 Suitably qualified and experienced staff assess students, including external experts for final year. 5.6 All learning outcomes are mapped to the required competencies, and are assessed.	(see condition 1)

OUTCOME

The program remains accredited until December 31 2023 subject to the conditions above being met and provided there are no major changes to the program during this period.

The OCANZ Board has adopted the following conditions on Flinders University Optometry program accreditation, which was recommended by the Assessment Team and endorsed by the Accreditation Committee:

1 a) The 2018 Annual Report must provide a workforce plan which includes:

- the job description and timeline for the appointment of a full time Level E position to provide leadership of the optometry program
- the proposed timeline for the appointment of further appropriately qualified and experienced staff at all levels of academic appointment particularly including any proposed senior staff appointments
- contingent on the new workload model being released, information on the model and a description of how it will apply to optometry staff from 2019
- advice about proposed increased staff numbers and levels in the optometry program for 2019 and subsequent years including justification for the adequacy of these numbers
- whether and how the university will assure itself that registered optometrists providing leadership and/or teaching in optometry subjects hold or will acquire ocular therapeutics qualifications
- how future appointments at Level A in the optometry program will meet the TEQSA requirement for students to be taught by staff at one level of qualification higher than the course of study being taught (AQF+1), or have equivalent professional experience, including reporting on any policy used to demonstrate professional equivalence and its application
- details of how each of the Level A staff in the optometry program have been/will be developed/mentored in teaching, scholarship and assessment
- how the university assures itself that suitably qualified and experienced staff assess students, including external experts for final year.

b) The 2019 Annual Report must provide evidence that there has been significant progress towards full implementation of the workforce plan.

2. The 2019 Annual Report must provide an overview of outcomes for students transferring into the program from sub-quota agreements.

The Discipline is required, within the Annual Reports, to include any changes made to the program in the preceding year and describe any significant changes to the resources allocated during that year. This is a general requirement of all accredited programs and not a condition specific to this Optometry Program.

(Update: Condition 1a was deemed met by the OCANZ Accreditation Committee at their February 2019 meeting.)