



Optometry Council of
Australia and New Zealand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education Provider: University of Canberra
Program: Bachelor of Vision Science / Master of Optometry
Date: May 2023
Outcome: Accredited with three conditions until 30 June 2031

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 Procedures Guide 2022* (<https://www.ocanz.org/accreditation/standards/>).

The accreditation process evaluates the extent to which the 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. The School prepared a submission that addressed how it was meeting each of the Standards.

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 December 2022, the University of Canberra submitted its reaccreditation submission, addressing each of the OCANZ Standards and providing the associated 15 core pieces of evidence outlined in the *OCANZ Accreditation Standards and Evidence Guide* as well as a wide range of additional evidence. This report outlines the findings of the assessment team which assessed the submission and conducted the February 2023 assessment team site visit.

The OCANZ Board notified the Optometry Board of Australia (OptomBA), Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board – New Zealand (ODOB), the Discipline Lead and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra of its decision.

KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The assessment team is satisfied that the graduates of the University of Canberra optometry program will have the knowledge, skills and attributes to meet competency standards as entry level practitioners in Australia and New Zealand and that they will be equipped with the necessary skills to maintain those competencies.

The following table displays the key findings of the assessment team. Where Accreditation Standards are noted as “substantially met” the Discipline is required to provide evidence to OCANZ that the actions detailed in order to meet the specific standard have been appropriately completed. 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 is 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 is SUBSTANTIALLY MET WITH ONE CONDITION

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>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong student feedback culture <p>Observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal feedback mechanisms promote inconsistency in bidirectional feedback processes and may not be sustainable as student numbers grow. Adherence to formal processes is suggested. <p>Conditions</p> <p>1) The 2023 annual report to OCANZ must provide an appropriate plan on how the Discipline will seek ongoing external academic input to improve the program. This report must include external input on ways in which program is delivering content in: contact lenses, paediatrics (including myopia control), binocular vision, low vision, therapeutics, glaucoma, medical retina and anterior eye.</p>

Standard 3 Program of Study - Standard 3 is SUBSTANTIALLY MET WITH ONE CONDITION

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>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Faculty and University level support. • Multi-disciplinary approach with medicine and allied health professionals. • Articulate, thoughtful, open, professional and self-reflective students. <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a more explicit statement of the overall goals and philosophy of the optometry program, and a statement in each unit guide around how it contributes to these goals and philosophy, would strengthen the external perception of overall coherence of the program. • overview on how interprofessional learning is scaffolded throughout the program • a consideration of the need to increased staffing numbers to create a more flexible and robust staffing profile, rather than simply to fill perceived gaps in expertise.

- 3.7 Learning environments support the achievement of the required learning outcomes.
- 3.8 Learning environments support the achievement of research skills appropriate to the academic level of the program
- 3.9 Facilities and equipment are accessible, well-maintained, fit for purpose and support the achievement of learning outcomes.
- 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.
- 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.

Condition

The 2023 Annual Report to OCANZ must provide a) an appropriate staffing plan, including the planned appointments of a Level B (shared education/clinical educator), a Level C and a Level D academic, and report to OCANZ any changes and justifications of those changes, to this plan and b) an appropriate plan to develop robust senior management within the optometry discipline.

Standard 4 The Student Experience – Standard 4 is MET

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>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong culture of student faculty support. • Strong student culture of peer-to-peer support. • Students are engaged at University, Faculty and Discipline level. <p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved intradisciplinary communication may positively impact student experience and outcomes. <p>Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for students who fail to maintain clinical skills currency prior to recommencing study.

Standard 5 Assessment – Standard 5 is SUBSTANTIALLY MET WITH ONE CONDITION

Criteria	Comments
<p>5.1 There is a clear relationship between learning outcomes and assessment strategies.</p> <p>5.2 Scope of assessment covers all learning outcomes relevant to the competencies.</p> <p>5.3 Multiple assessment tools, modes and sampling are used including direct observation in the clinical setting.</p> <p>5.4 Program management and co-ordination, including internal and external moderation, ensure consistent and appropriate assessment and feedback to students.</p> <p>5.5 Suitably qualified and experienced staff assess students, including external experts for final year.</p> <p>5.6 All learning outcomes are mapped to the required competencies, and are assessed.</p>	<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest clinical rubric review to identify students outside of pass/fail band • Provision of formative and summative feedback may improve skills and knowledge acquisition • Delayed assessment feedback may adversely impact learning/skills development. <p>Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide external assessors with clear instructions identifying their role and expectations and ensure regular feedback is provided to the assessors. <p>Condition</p> <p>The 2023 Annual Report to OCANZ must report on external moderation of assessments of fitness to practice within the Master of Optometry program, and how the program has integrated this requirement into its program.</p>

OUTCOME

OCANZ is satisfied the Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry program at the University of Canberra meets the OCANZ Accreditation Standards with conditions.

The OCANZ Board had agreed to accredit the program until 30 June 2031 with three conditions, provided there are no material changes to the program during this period. The conditions are:

Conditions:

- 1) The 2023 annual report to OCANZ must provide a plan on how the Discipline will seek ongoing external academic input to improve the program. This report must include external input on ways in which program is delivering content in: contact lenses, paediatrics (including myopia control), binocular vision, low vision, therapeutics, glaucoma, medical retina and anterior eye.
- 2) The 2023 Annual Report to OCANZ must provide a) an appropriate staffing plan, including the planned appointments of a level B (shared education/clinical educator), Level C and Level D academics, and report to OCANZ any changes and justifications of those changes, to this plan and b) an appropriate plan to develop robust senior management within the optometry discipline.
- 3) The 2023 Annual Report to OCANZ must report on external moderation of assessments of fitness to practice within the Master of Optometry program, and how the program has integrated this requirement into its program.

The Discipline is required, within its annual report, to include any changes made to the program in the preceding year and describe any significant changes to the resources allocated to the program during that year.