



European Council of Optometry and Optics

**Guidelines for the accreditation of
qualifications which meet the standards of
the European Qualification in Optics (EQO)**

Part I

EQO and the ECOO Accreditation Scheme

February 2022

Part I: The ECOO Accreditation System

1. Introduction

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) has a vision of Europe where there is easy access to affordable eye care provided by opticians and optometrists who practise autonomously to conserve and improve human vision.

One of the goals of the European Council of Optometry & Optics (ECOO) is to harmonise and develop educational standards and the scope of practice for optometry and optics. It is envisaged that this Qualification in Optics will have particular relevance to and be adopted by training institutions in countries where there is either a lower, or no, established standard for optics.

The European Diploma in Optometry has been an important tool in influencing the development of optometric education and raising the recognition, the level of competence and the scope of practice of optometry in Europe. There are three parts to the European Diploma in optometry. Part A is Optics and Optical Appliances, Part B is Clinical Investigation and Management and Part C is Biological and Medical Sciences and includes ocular disease and ocular pharmacology.

The World Council of Optometry also has developed a global competency-based model of the scope of practice for optometry to reflect the varying scope of practice across the world and which is based on the Parts of the European Diploma with the addition of level 4. Within this, they have defined four levels as follows;

- Level 1 Optical Technology services
- Level 2 Visual Function services, also encompassing Level 1
- Level 3 Ocular Diagnostic services, also encompassing Levels 1, and 2
- Level 4 Ocular Therapeutic services, also encompassing Levels 1, 2 and 3

The European Diploma in Optometry is set at level 3; the qualification in optics is set at Level 1.

However, given the broad range of education and scope of practice of both optometry and optics in Europe and the difficulty of the majority of members to relate closely with the European Diploma in Optometry there is a strong case for a qualification which would (i) establish a basic entry standard for optics at a European level and (ii) encourage professional bodies and training institutions to develop beyond this entry standard.

This competency framework has been developed with reference to Part A of the European Diploma and should serve as part of the 'ladder' of qualification in optics and optometry. It is envisaged that this qualification would allow exemption from Part A of the European Diploma in Optometry. This framework has been designed to be similar to the WCO competency framework at level 1 and has been informed by existing European ophthalmic dispensing competencies. The intention is that delivery of this competency framework will be

assessed by the accreditation of training institutions or by examinations run by other bodies and accredited by the Accreditation agency of ECOO. This competency framework, in conjunction with the EQO syllabus, should also be an important reference to any syllabus revision or development for national training institutions.

The legal scope of practice within the countries of ECOO varies from assembling spectacles to the autonomous management of eye disease. In the spirit of the Bologna declaration ECOO has established the European Diploma in Optometry and the European Qualification in Optics (EQO) as a stimulus to the harmonisation of European optical and optometric education and clinical practice. The European Diploma (ED) is set at the European Qualifications Framework level 6/7 and provides a qualification appropriate for Optometric practice at Category 3 of the World Council of Optometry's four categories model. The countries of ECOO have adopted the Diploma as the "Gold Standard" for European Optometry. The EQO is a new qualification set at an entry standard for dispensing optics in Europe and is intended to be the first step on a ladder of qualification which could lead to qualification as an optometrist.

As harmonisation progresses an increasing number of schools and universities now base their curriculum on the EDO, similarly it is hoped that the EQO will be used as a minimum standard by institutions teaching opticians. To foster this harmonization ECOO has established an **Accreditation agency** to invite training institutions to benchmark their programmes against the ED and EQO.

Furthermore, the suggested number of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation point (ECTS) based on the credit point system of European Higher Education and European Credit for Vocational Education and Training point (ECVET) based on the more recently developed credit point system for educational programmes at vocational training institutions are included in this document. Both types of credit points express the volume of learning and workload on the defined learning outcome or unit for students. In addition, they are a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification. In most countries, 60 credit points reflect the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent. Depending on the country, **one credit point** can equal on average between **25 and 30 study hours**. For those learning outcomes that are part of the ED as well as the EQO, both credit point systems are indicated to ascertain equivalency of learning outcomes. The syllabi may be found on the ECOO website at www.ecoo.info

2. What will be the benefits of the accreditation process?

- All European Optics programmes can be compared against an agreed international standard, the EQO.
- Training Institutions will be encouraged to match their programmes to all or part of the competency-based EQO, with reference to the European Qualification in Optics syllabus - this will help to harmonize optics within Europe.
- It may help training institutions, in the course of their national academic accreditation, if they can demonstrate that all or part of their programme meets the European standard.
- Graduates of accredited EQO institutions can be exempted from Part A examination of the European Diploma in Optometry if they aspire a career in Optometry by attending an accredited European Diploma institution.
- National “competent authorities” will find it easier to evaluate the training of applicants from another EU country – this will help to facilitate free movement of professionals.

3. What will actually be accredited?

- Because of the diversity of Optometry/Optics training within Europe the system will be Competency-based. The emphasis will be on the quality of the graduate rather than on details of the training process.
- The European Qualification in Optics is competency-based:
Competency is the ability to perform the activities within an occupation to the standard expected in employment. **Competencies** are the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to be able to practice.
- In the context of this document “**Competency**” refers to the performance of the optometric/optical practitioner: the integration of skills, attitudes and knowledge that informs the practitioner in his/her professional activities. “**Competencies**” are the individual components of the skills, attitudes and knowledge that must be mastered to achieve “Competency”.
- In training programmes the skills, attitudes and knowledge gained on successful completion of a module or course are referred to as the “**learning outcomes**” of that module or course. The student demonstrates the achievement of these “**learning outcomes**” by passing the corresponding module assessments (examinations) that are designed to test specifically for the acquisition of these “**learning outcomes**”.
- “**Learning outcomes**” are typically defined in the format: “On successful completion of the module the student will be able to”. Hence “**Learning Outcomes**” can be conveniently matched against the EQO “**Competencies**”.

- The accreditation system will consider the skills, attitudes and knowledge achieved by graduates of the programme. The approach will be to benchmark the learning outcomes of the training programme being considered against the competencies of the European Qualification in Optics.

4. The Accreditation Self-Assessment Document.

- A Self-assessment document has been prepared that lists all the Competencies/Learning outcomes of the EQO. (See Part II).
- An Institution applying for accreditation completes the self-assessment document indicating where these European Qualification outcomes are being taught and assessed within the programme being considered.
- The location of each competency/learning outcome within the programme is defined with respect to the Institution's formal Optics **programme specification/course documentation**.
- The relative importance of each competency/learning outcome within the programme is given by the associated ECTS weighting.
- The method of assessment of each competency/learning outcome and its contribution to the final examination mark is indicated by reference to the programme's **examination document** or equivalent.

The Self-assessment document is long, but it is straightforward. It does not ask for details of the teaching process over many years. It asks for evidence of the quality of the graduate - the learning outcomes and the clinical/practical competencies achieved by graduates after successful completion of the programme.

5. Additional documentation in support of the Self-assessment document.

In addition to completing the Self-assessment document, please supply the following:

- Comprehensive Programme Handbook/document which contains the structure of the programme, including ECTS, where and how subject areas are taught and assessed, entry criteria and information about how students' progress through the programme.
- Student numbers, progression and graduate rates.

- History of programme and how it fits with the development of the optical profession in your country
- Details of the patrons or donators of the institution and if it is a public/state supported or private institution.
- Details of how the programme is assessed internally by the institution.
- Detailed course descriptions/subject handbooks, including information supporting the self-assessment document in terms of how learning outcomes are taught and assessed.
- Programme structure and timetable indicating when each aspect of the programme is taught and assessed.
- Assessment schedules (or equivalent)
- Student timetable, didactic and clinical.
- Records of students' clinical experience held by the institution.
- Staff list, including CVs and programme responsibilities

Please also give a synopsis of the programme as follows

Programme details.

- Programme leader:
Contact Email: _____
- Duration of programme
Number of years: _____
Full-time or part-time: _____
- Is the programme competency-based? _____
- Is there a period of supervised clinical practice? _____
Is this organised by the training institution? _____

Is this external to the training institution? _____

How many weeks does it last? _____

• Qualification awarded on graduation: _____

• National Qualification Framework Level _____

• What is the national scope of practice for optics/optometry? Please indicate where this sits in the World Council of Optometry (WCO) global competencies model in terms of levels 1-4.

• Are there any developments in national legislation to change scope of practice? If so what changes?

• Is this qualification graduates receive recognised by national legislation?

• Is this qualification linked to a regulatory body that the graduate needs to register with?

6. Analysis and verification of the Completed Self-assessment document.

- The completed Self-assessment document is considered by ECOO and a provisional opinion is given as to possible exemptions.
- If the training institution wishes to continue with Accreditation a panel of ECOO nominated Opticians, Optometrists and Educationalists (the Visitors) are invited to visit the Institution to verify the contents of the Self-assessment document and associated information.
- The procedure to be followed on the Visit by both the Visitors and the Institution is defined in the **Part III** of these supporting documents.

7. Guidance in Completing the Self-assessment document.

- Guidance in the completion of the Self-assessment document is given in the examples from the Self-assessment document reproduced below in Tables 1 and 2.

The Self-Assessment document itself is Part II of these suite of documents on the ECOO website.

- In the Self-assessment document (see examples in Tables 1 and 2 below) the first column lists all of the thirteen EQO Subjects that cover the curriculum.

Knowledge base

- Some of the thirteen Subjects in the Competency-based EQO relate to the knowledge base that supports the competency and practical skill whereas other competencies require only theoretical knowledge, to **“have an understanding of”**.
- The achievement of **“understanding”** can be acceptably demonstrated by indicating the formal written examination(s) in which the candidate demonstrated satisfactory understanding and knowledge of all aspects (including health-related aspects) of the specific competency. An example of how this part of the Self-assessment document could be completed is given in Table 1.
- **Note:** If the Learning Outcomes of a Subject are achieved across several different courses/modules it may be more convenient when completing the questionnaire to subdivide the list of Learning Outcomes amongst the relevant courses/modules.

Table 1. Example of the Knowledge Base for the European Qualification in Optics competencies

Subject 1: Geometrical Optics

Learning outcomes: The student should demonstrate fundamental knowledge and insight into geometrical optics in order for the student to be able to understand, explain, and solve problems related to the eye and optical instruments/lenses, their function and correction. Knowledge and understanding should be demonstrated in the following areas:

Learning outcomes	Details of how* and where this is delivered in the programme? <i>*theoretical/practical/self-directed</i>	Contribution of this component to Credit weighting?	Method of assessment?
(1) refraction at single spherical or plane surfaces	OP101: Geometrical Optics Course First Year (12ECTS) See Programme Specification pXX	0.5 ECTS	Closed book written MCQ Examination. See Examination Document pXX
(2) thin lenses	OP101: Geometrical Optics Course First Year (12ECTS) See Programme Specification pXX	0.5 ECTS	Closed book written MCQ Examination. See Examination Document pXX

Practical Competencies

- Some of the thirteen Subjects in the EQO relate to the practical skills as well as the knowledge base (see Table 2). The information required is how is the competency assessed? Where in the programme is it assessed? Number of clients i.e. how much practical experience do the students get? Is a record kept of this practical experience?
- **Note:** If the Learning Outcomes of a Subject are achieved across several different modules it may be more convenient when completing the questionnaire to subdivide the list of Learning Outcomes amongst the relevant modules.

Table 2. Example of Practical EQO Competencies

Subject 4: Optical Appliances

Learning outcomes: The student should demonstrate the ability to produce a complete pair of spectacles to given specifications. The student should demonstrate Practical competency in the following areas:					
	Practical competencies:	Competency assessment		Practical experience	
		Brief details of the assessment	Where in the programme?	Minimum number of clients/patients a student would examine	Brief description of how evidence of practical experience is recorded
1	The ability to advise on and to dispense the most suitable form of optical correction taking into account visual performance and comfort, durability, comfort (anatomical), cosmetic appearance and lifestyle.	OP305 Ophthalmic Dispensing Clinic Assessment See Exam Doc p xx	OP305 Ophthalmic Dispensing Third Year (12ECTS) See Prog Spec p X	10 (Third Year)	Student logbook
2	The ability to measure and verify optical appliances, taking into account relevant standards.	OP305 Ophthalmic Dispensing Clinic Assessment See Exam Doc p xx	OP305 Ophthalmic Dispensing Third Year (12ECTS) See Prog Spec p X	20 (Third Year)	Student logbook

8. Portfolio

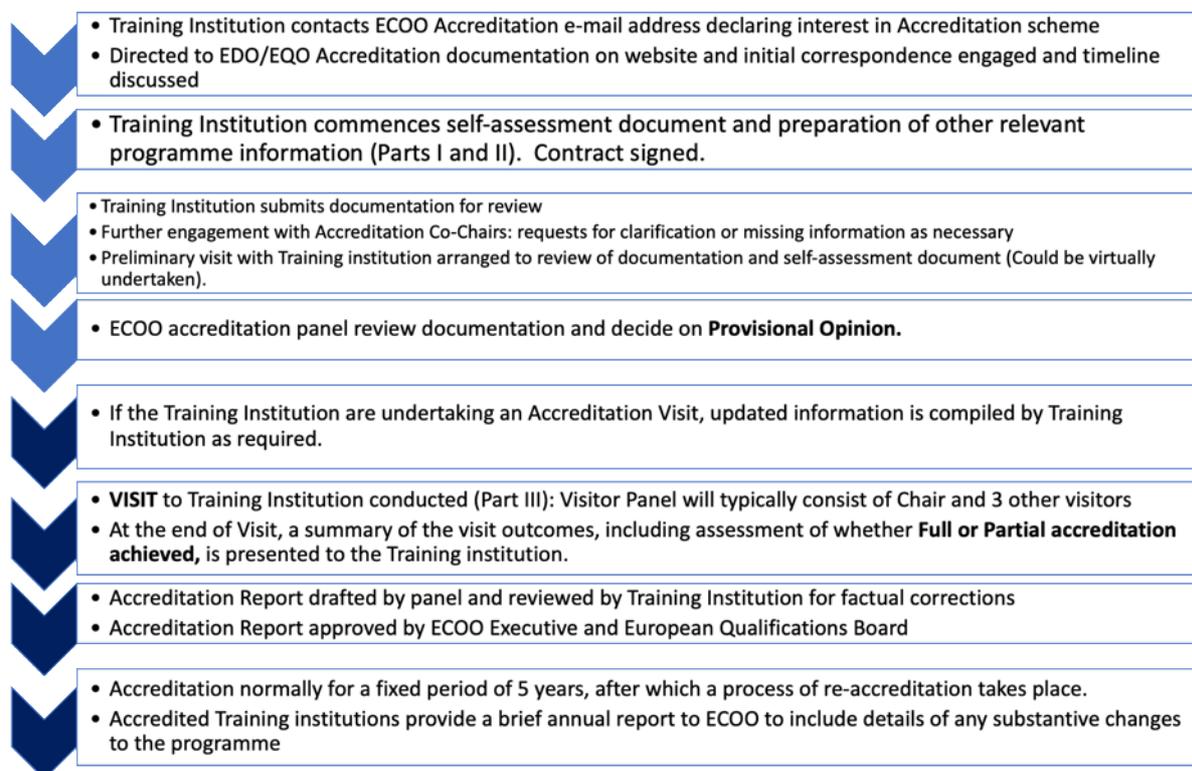
Information on the Portfolio is contained in Part III of the European Qualification in Optics documentation.

For full accreditation, all graduates must complete a portfolio recording their patient experience and this must be assessed by training institutions. The assessment process of training institutions for these portfolios needs to be described and approved as part of the accreditation work. Please refer to the 'Portfolio Guidance' document for more detailed information.

9. Timescale of the Accreditation process

The following flowchart indicates the steps for the Accreditation process.

Timescales are unique to each training institution as it is dependent on the readiness of the institution and the resourcing and time allocated to it, as well as the capacity of the Accreditation panel to review documentation and organise visits. However, as an indicative timescale, institutions have completed the process in a 12-18 month-period.



END of Part I