

Postgraduate Programme Specification: Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Prescribing for Optometrists

This specification provides a summary of the main features of the programme and learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate where full advantage is taken of all learning opportunities offered. Further details on the learning, teaching and assessment approach for the programme and modules can be accessed on the University website and Virtual Learning Environment, GCU Learn. All programmes of the University are subject to the University's [Quality Assurance](#) processes.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION			
Programme Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Prescribing for Optometrists (PgDip IP)		
Final Award	Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Prescribing for Optometrists (PgDip IP)		
Awarding Body	Glasgow Caledonian University		
School	School of Health and Life Sciences		
Department	Department of Vision Sciences		
Mode of Study	Part-time Online Distance Learning		
Location of Delivery	Glasgow Campus		
UCAS Code	N/A		
Accreditations (PSRB)	On completion, students will be able to register as an Independent Prescribing Optometrist with the General Optical Council (GOC).		
Period of Approval	From:	September 2025	To: August 2030

2. EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF PROGRAMME

The Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Prescribing for Optometrists (PgD IP) is designed to provide an education in the area of prescribing for optometrists and is aligned with the General Optical Council's (GOC) "[Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Additional Supply \(AS\), Supplementary Prescribing \(SP\) and/or Independent Prescribing \(IP\)](#)". On successful completion of the programme, graduates will be eligible to join the GOC's specialty register of Independent Prescribing (IP) Optometrists.

The programme integrates academic study and learning and experience in practice. The programme comprises three 30-credit modules, all at SCQF Level 11 (Masters-level). The theory underpinning the GOC-specified learning outcomes is delivered within the 'Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' and 'Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively' modules. The 'Independent Prescribing: Placement' module allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge as well as to apply, extend and transfer their practical skills and refine their problem-solving ability safely within a real and simulated clinical environment.

Students will be required to identify their own designated prescribing practitioner (DPP), who will be overseeing the supervision during the placement. Any potential fee charged by the placement provider and/or DPP will be met by the student.

Students will indicate their intention to use the NES teach and treat facilities, or identify their own prospective DPP upon, or shortly after, admission to the programme.

All modules are compulsory, i.e. there are no optional or elective modules. The table below provides details of the modules along with the number of credits allocated to each and the trimester(s) in which each module is typically delivered.

PgDip Independent Prescribing for Optometrists				
Module Code	Module Title	SCQF Level	Credits	Trimester(s)
<i>MMB530563</i>	Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease	11	30	B
<i>MMB530569</i>	Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively	11	30	C
<i>MMB530572</i>	Independent Prescribing: Placement	11	30	CAB

The programme is composed of three 30-credit taught modules. The figure below shows the order in which the modules would typically be undertaken:

Tri B (Jan - May)	Tri C (June-Sept)	Tri A (Sept-Dec)	Tri B (Jan - May)
Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease	Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively		
	Independent Prescribing: Placement		

Figure 1: Structure of the PgD IP programme

In addition to the 90 credits of module content, GOC registered optometrists will be awarded 30 credits of RPiL in recognition of the knowledge and skills gained through the learning and experience from working in optometric practice. This experience is gained during the placement / pre-registration training year and, where applicable, subsequently continued by maintaining GOC registration. Every qualified optometrist will be eligible to receive this RPiL.

The proposed programme will have the following specific aims, which align with both the GCU Strategy for Learning and GCU Common Good Attributes 2030, as well as the School of Health and Life Sciences' portfolio, mission and objectives:

- To provide education that is inclusive, innovative, enquiry-based and research-led
- To provide all students with the opportunity of undertaking real-world, work-based experiences as part of their studies
- To allow the development of a variety of key transferrable skills, with a focus on enabling students to critically reflect, appraise and evaluate their learning and performance in line with continued personal and professional development
- To develop practitioners who have the skills and knowledge required to deliver enhanced eyecare services to communities across Scotland and beyond, both autonomously and as effective members or leaders of a multi-disciplinary team
- To develop practitioners who are resilient and compassionate, who treat others with dignity, and who show respect for all cultures

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas:

A: Knowledge and understanding;

- A1 Demonstrates a critical knowledge and understanding of the strategies that may be used to manage disease of the eye and surrounding tissues.
- A2 Demonstrates a critical knowledge and understanding of the use of pharmaceutical agents within eyecare
- A3 Demonstrates a critical knowledge and understanding of the legal, regulatory, and ethical principles that underlie the prescribing of medications.

B: Practice: Applied knowledge, skills and understanding;

- B1 Gathers, assesses and evaluates the risk factors, symptoms, signs and natural progression of a range of ocular conditions.
- B2 Undertakes a systematic differential diagnosis and critically applies clinical decision making in order to reach an appropriate diagnosis that will inform treatment options.
- B3 Exercises professional judgement, engages in evidence-based clinical decision-making, works within limits of competence and demonstrates self-directed problem-solving.
- B4 Develops and implements appropriate patient-centred management plans which may include, non-pharmacological and pharmacological treatment, shared management and referral .
- B5 Critically reviews information relating to a patient's medical history and existing medications in order to make safe prescribing decisions.

C: Generic cognitive skills;

- C1 Adopts a systematic approach to gathering and evaluating information from a variety of sources.
- C2 Demonstrates the ability to critically analyse, interpret, and apply the current evidence base when making clinical judgements.

D: Communication, numeracy and ICT skills

- D1 Demonstrates effective written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills with patients, the multi-disciplinary team, and other healthcare professionals.
- D2 Communicates effectively throughout the consultation and adapts their approach to meet the needs of individuals.
- D3 Demonstrates effective use of appropriate systems to ensure safe, secure, and accurate clinical record-keeping (including the outcomes of the history, clinical assessment, differential diagnosis and management decisions), prescribing, data exchange, and patient referral.
- D4 Demonstrates proficiency in the use of software for producing written reports
- D5 Keeps abreast of changes to policy and practice, as well as the application of emerging technologies in eyecare.

E: Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

- E1 Establishes relationships with colleagues based on professional understanding and respect, and work as part of a multidisciplinary team to ensure quality and continuity of care across settings.

- E2 Employs an adaptive and personalised approach to clinical care, taking into consideration the patient's social, personal, and cultural needs, and demonstrates effective collaborative working practices to ensure person-centred care, while understanding their individual role.
- E3 Upholds professional standards and ethical responsibilities and applies all relevant legislation, policies and guidance safely and effectively.
- E4 Works within their limits of competence and critically evaluates and identifies own learning and development needs and those of others.
- E5 Engages in critical reflection and applies clinical governance to safeguard and improve the quality of patient care.
- E6 Develops and utilises professional networks for support, reflection and learning.
- E7 Critically evaluates risk in relation to management of disease and prescribing and implements appropriate measures to both minimise the occurrence of adverse incidents and mitigate the impact on patient outcomes when such incidents occur.
- E8 Maintains clinical knowledge and skills appropriate to individual scope of practice.

4. LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

The programme provides a variety of learning and teaching methods. Programme and Module specific guidance will provide detail of the learning and teaching methods specific to each module.

Across the programme the learning and teaching methods and approaches may include the following:

- Specialised learning resources such as articles and interactive content that align with the module learning outcomes
- Online resources including videos, links to relevant clinical management guidelines, referencing resources, useful websites, and the online BNF
- Interactive Padlet activities and discussion boards
- Recorded lectures
- Formative online tests
- Revision sessions
- Live lectures
- Expert panel discussions
- Workshops
- Case discussions
- Clinic-based practical workshops
- Clinical placements

All modules are hosted on GCU Learn and these online module sites are the hub of learning for the two theoretical modules ('Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' and 'Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively'), with all material required to meet the module's learning outcomes provided online as distance learning. Module sites are structured to guide students learning, including which material and activities to complete at time frames. This is aimed at guiding a steady pace of learning, providing information about what needs to be covered at certain time points, in particular before assessments, whilst not being too prescriptive and allowing flexibility.

For each clinical theme, there are specialised articles, interactive versions of the content and recorded lectures to enhance the students' knowledge of the subject. There are links to external resources for students to further extend their knowledge around the subject. Students have access to online tests and quizzes in which students receive immediate feedback after each attempt, allowing them to reflect on their understanding of the material and on their ability to apply that knowledge. Padlets host peer-to-peer case-based discussions on many elements of the content and, for example, students can formulate tailored management plans, discussing management of particular cases amongst their peers. This produces a real sense of a learning community with peer learning being deeply embedded into the programme. Students learn from each other and self-reflect, receiving feedback on their work via comments, suggestions, discussion and answers from both peers and staff.

For the two theoretical modules ('Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' and 'Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively'), students have a set of learning materials to work through over the initial weeks. This is followed by the opportunity to attend one day on campus per module for face-to-face interactive learning activities which may include lectures, clinic-based practical workshops, workshops, peer discussion sessions and panel discussions where the benefit of live delivery is at its maximum. Interactive online versions of these activities, e.g. Padlets, case discussions, discussion forums, quizzes, written material/presentations, videos and external online resources are available as an alternative, or as an additional exercise to further consolidate learning. After this on campus learning session, students resume the asynchronous online learning for the duration of the module. Students attend online for suitable synchronous activities e.g. online revision session, assessment submission.

Throughout their studies, students will be able to work at their own pace and to self-assess their progress with regard to the attainment of specific GOC-specified learning outcomes and achievement of the module's learning outcomes. This approach, encompassing a diverse range of learning and teaching strategies, optimises the learning experience of student from different backgrounds and with different circumstances, and provides flexibility in course delivery.

The theory underpinning the GOC-specified learning outcomes is delivered within the 'Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' and 'Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively' modules. The 'Independent Prescribing: Placement' module allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge as well as to apply and extend and transfer their practical skills and refine their problem-solving ability safely within a real and simulated clinical environment.

During the 'Independent Prescribing: Placement' module, students will work under supervision in a combination of: community optometry practice, hospital eye department, teach-and-treat facility and simulated clinics. Students will typically complete the first of the two theoretical modules before they embark on the placement, to ensure that they have the required foundation knowledge. The placement can be started in parallel to the second theoretical module ('Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively'). This setup allows students to consolidate and implement the theoretical elements within a real or simulated clinical placement. During the placement, students will develop a portfolio of their clinical experience, including the opportunity to reflect on their clinical work, demonstrate how they integrate their knowledge and skills into practice, and demonstrate achievement of the GOC-specified learning outcomes for Independent Prescribing.

5. ASSESSMENT METHODS

The programme provides a variety of formative and summative assessment methods. Across the programme the assessment methods may include the following:

- Continuous formative multiple choice and short answer tests
- Case-based written coursework assignments composed of critical analysis, reflection and literature review
- Formal written examinations
- Clinical portfolio containing evidence of achieving the GOC-specified learning outcomes at the 'does' level

Students' academic development is supported as they progress through the programme, and as such, assessment methodologies utilised are appropriate for the student's point in the learning journey. All GOC-specified learning outcomes for Independent Prescribing will be assessed at the highest, level of Millers pyramid as stated in the GOC-specified learning outcomes, on completion of the programme. These learning outcomes have been determined by the GOC so that students successful in these are deemed to be safe and effective prescribers. The assessment modalities employed within individual modules vary depending on the module content and learning outcomes, i.e. assessments are chosen carefully to reflect the nature of the outcomes to be assessed as well as the appropriate level of Miller's pyramid (see 'GOC requirements' doc, p17 and p37). For example, outcomes are assessed at the "knows" or "knows how" level using assessments such as quizzes (formative) and written exams (summative). Assessments including case-based questions are suitable to assess students' ability to apply their knowledge. For example, case-based written assignments (summative), which include critical analysis, reflection and literature review, assess outcomes at the level of "shows how" in Miller's pyramid. They also provide opportunities for students to learn how to develop clinical cases and how to evidence their achievement of the outcomes.

The majority of GOC-specified learning outcomes for Independent Prescribing require achievement at the "does" level, and these are assessed via a comprehensive portfolio of clinical experience (summative). This final assessment comprises a portfolio of cases with reflection and evidencing that students have achieved the GOC-specified learning outcomes for Independent Prescribing that require achievement at the terminal level. As part of this, students will submit a

comprehensive portfolio of clinical experience, evidencing through a range of patient experiences how they “do” each of these outcomes. The pass/fail element of the ‘Independent Prescribing: Placement’ module ensures that no trainee can complete the programme unless all GOC-specified learning outcomes have been achieved and that there is a minimum of 90 hours of placement.

6. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Applications are required to have the following:

1. Current and active GOC registration as an optometrist
2. Existing approval on the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme, or equivalent (e.g. Disclosure and barring service (DBS) in England), to cover work with children and protected adults.

Applicants whose native language is not English are required to provide evidence of achievement of an IELTS score of at least 7 (or equivalent) with no element less than 6.5, as a condition of entry to the PgD IP programme.

Specific entry requirements for this programme will be found on the course page of the GCU website.

All students entering the programme are required to adhere to the [GCU Code of Student Conduct](#) and the [GCU School of Health and Life Sciences Fitness to Practise Policy](#).

3. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND AVAILABLE AND FINAL EXIT AWARDS¹

The following modules are delivered as part of this programme:

Module Code	Module Title	Core or Optional	SCQF Level	Credit Size	Course work %	Examination %	Practical %
MMB530563	Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease (PgD)	Core*	11	30	30	70	-
MMB530569	Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively (PgD)	Core*	11	30	30	70	-

¹ Periodically, programmes and modules may be subject to change or cancellation. Further information on this can be found on the GCU website here:

www.gcu.ac.uk/currentstudents/essentials/policiesandprocedures/changesandcancellationtoprogrammes

MMB530572	Independent Prescribing: Placement (PgD)	Core*	11	30	100	-	-
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Students undertaking the programme on a part-time basis commencing in January of each year will undertake the modules in the order presented above. This may be subject to variation for students commencing the programme at other times of year (e.g. September).

The following final and early Exit Awards are available from this programme²:

Postgraduate Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics - *achieved upon successful completion of 60 taught credits ('Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' (30) and 'Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively' (30)). Students will be unable to join the GOC's specialty register of Independent Prescribing (IP) Optometrists.*

Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Prescribing for Optometrists- *achieved upon successful completion of 120 credits which must include the modules asterisked above*

4. ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

Students should expect to complete their programme of study under the GCU Assessment Regulations that were in place at the commencement of their studies on that programme, unless proposed changes to University Regulations are advantageous to students. These can be found at: www.gcu.ac.uk/aboutgcu/supportservices/qualityassuranceandenhancement/regulationsandpolicies

In addition to the GCU Assessment Regulations noted above, the following exceptions are being prepared for the GCU Exceptions Subcommittee for the PgD IP programme, as follows:

1. *English Language*

The GCU standard admissions requirement for those whose native language is not English is an average IELTS score of 6 (or equivalent) with no element less than 5.5. In line with General Optical Council (GOC) requirements, this application seeks an exception that requires those whose native language is not English to achieve an overall IELTS score of at least 7 (or equivalent) with no element less than 6.5, as a condition of entry to the programme. This is required to meet General Optical Council (GOC) requirements.

2. *More than 15 credits for Level 11 modules*

The GCU Qualifications Framework (paragraph 3.2) specifies that modules at SCQF Level 11 should normally be based on a standard unit of 15 credits. All modules in this programme have been designed to fulfil the GOC's requirements and are 30 credit modules. Two of the three taught modules ('Independent Prescribing: Prescribing Safely and Effectively' and 'Independent Prescribing: Placement') on this programme have already been internally approved via the MOptom (IP) programme. This application seeks an exception for the remaining and first theoretical module 'Independent Prescribing: Management of Ocular Disease' to be a 30-credit module.

² Please refer to the [GCU Qualifications Framework](#) for the minimum credits required for each level of award and the Programme Handbook for requirements on any specified or prohibited module combinations for each award.

3. 30 credits of RPIL

Background summary

GOC registration is an entry requirement of this PgD IP programme. There are three possible routes that potential students will have achieved GOC registration:

- A. Traditionally, the route to qualification as an optometrist in the UK has involved a two-stage process, the first being the completion of a GOC-approved undergraduate degree programme in optometry, e.g. the BSc(Hons) Optometry programme offered by GCU. On graduation, trainees would embark on the second stage, being a supervised, employed “pre-registration” period, typically administered by the College of Optometrists (CoO). As part of this, the graduate must have demonstrated achievement of all elements of the GOC Core Competency Framework (Stage 1 and Stage 2) in order to ensure they are fit to apply to the GOC Register. This pre-registration period is not awarded with academic credits.
- B. The GOC recently published [revised Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry or Dispensing Optics](#). In response to this, Universities are developing/have recently developed new Optometry programmes, which integrate the “pre-registration” period within an extended placement period. The skills gained through the learning and experience from this extended placement year will be awarded with academic credits as part of the degree qualification.
- C. Those qualified as optometrists in another country may have an alternative route to registration.

Upon completion of either route, trainees must register with the GOC as a fully qualified individual to become an optometrist. Once registered, continuing professional development (CPD) is a statutory requirement for all fully-qualified optometrists to ensure they keep their skills up-to-date and develop new ones in order to practise safely and protect their patients. Optometrists are required to log their CPD with the GOC and declare that they meet the requirements as part of their annual renewal of registration with the GOC as an optometrist.

Exception 3

GOC registered optometrists will be awarded 30 credits of RPIL for either:

- a. For those having undergone route ‘A’ above: in recognition of the skills gained through the learning and experience from their pre-registration year, and the maintenance of this on an ongoing basis.
- b. For those having undergone route ‘B’ or route ‘C’ above: in recognition of the maintenance of their skills and CPD undertaken for at least 1 year since initial GOC registration as an optometrist.

This application seeks an exception to allow that this process does not need to undergo the individual gathering and submission of evidence for that is the standard practice for the RPIL process.

VERSION CONTROL (to be completed in line with AQPP processes)

Any changes to the PSP must be recorded below by the programme team to ensure accuracy of the programme of study being offered.

<i>Version Number</i>	<i>Changes/Updates</i>	<i>Date Changes/Updates made</i>	<i>Date Effective From</i>
1.0	New Approved Programme with Addition of Module Codes following deployment of new modules	09/01/2025	09/01/2025

