

Welcome to ABDO Examinations

We would like to introduce you to the Level 6 Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing leading to the FBDO Qualification, which will enable you to enter the General Optical Council (GOC) register and practice in the UK as a fully qualified Dispensing Optician.

ABDO are the awarding body for the FBDO Qualification. The institute you are studying at is your training provider who will oversee the delivery of your theoretical and practical training for the duration of your studies. Although ABDO and your training provider work together, the two are entirely separate.

This document aims to provide you with advice and guidance to help you through the process from registration of your practice/supervisor for the purposes of your Pre-Qualification Period (PQP) to how, when and where to sit your examinations. If any of the links within this document do not work, please check the online version within the examinations section of the ABDO website.

ABDO Examinations and Registration

Association of British Dispensing Opticians



Content

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1. Useful Information

- Remember to keep ABDO updated with any changes to your personal details, i.e., mobile number, email address, home address, etc.
- Please ensure you check your emails regularly (include junk and spam).
- Include your ABDO Membership number (which is unique to you) in all communications with ABDO Examinations. Our database search function is set to search initially by membership number, which makes it easier to find you.
- We recommend that you send any documents to ABDO Examinations via secure, traceable mail, (i.e., registered or recorded delivery) so that you can track whether it has been received.
- Make sure you always keep a copy of any documents sent by post, just in case they do not arrive safely at ABDO Examinations.
- A list of important dates, ABDO Examinations Calendar, is available on the Examinations Information page of the ABDO website (www.abdo.org.uk).

2. ABDO Examinations Website

Examinations

Dispensing examinations

Contact lens examinations

ABDO Level 4 qualifications

WCSM

Examinations information

Advanced qualifications

International applicants

Graduation

Examinations news and updates

From the ABDO home page (www.abdo.org.uk) select the 'Examinations' tab. Clicking this link will provide you with the 'Examination's news and updates' tab. This is where ABDO Examinations will post the latest information. You can access any of the examination's pages listed on the left-hand side from the 'Examinations' heading.

Please be aware that you may need to be logged in as an ABDO member to view some of the pages.

When you are logged in, selecting the word 'Examinations' will take you to your personalised examinations dashboard where you will find information relating to exams you are eligible to sit, online exam bookings, exams you have been entered for and exam results. More information is provided on this later.

Take some time to familiarise yourself with the various examinations pages so that you know where certain information can be found should you require it in the future.

3. Pre-Qualification Period (PQP)

The purpose of the PQP is for you to gain broad experience of the knowledge and skills required to become a qualified dispensing optician, whilst learning in the workplace. The PQP is a collection of patient episodes achieved whilst working in practice prior to sitting your Unit 12 – Final Qualifying Examination (FQE). Your completed PQP is assessed as part of ABDO's FQE and covers several of the GOC's Core Competencies for dispensing opticians.

[Core Competencies \(optical.org\)](http://optical.org)

Students embarking on a course of study leading to the FBDO qualification are required to be:

- an ABDO student member and
- a GOC student member

for the duration of their training, especially whilst sitting exams/assessments with your chosen training provider and all ABDO examinations.

All necessary information and paperwork relating to the PQP portfolio can be accessed through the ABDO website. Links will be provided for each of the relevant paperwork. You can store your ABDO PQP paperwork in the format of your choice until it is time to present this for assessment/verification as part of your Unit 12 FQE practical examination.

The following pages will guide you through the next steps to starting your PQP.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Dispensing Examinations folder

All PQP documentation can be found by selecting 'Dispensing Examinations' and then clicking the 'Pre-Qualification Period (PQP)' tab.

The screenshot shows a website navigation menu with the following structure:

- Home > Students & Members > Examinations > Dispensing Examinations
 - Members and students
 - SEE Hub >
 - Clinical Hub >
 - CET and events >
 - Examinations >
 - Dispensing examinations > (highlighted)
 - Contact lens examinations >
 - ABDO Level 4 qualifications >
 - WCSM >
 - Examinations information >
 - Advanced qualifications >
 - International applicants >
 - Graduation >
 - Examinations news and updates >

The main content area displays a list of links, each with a plus sign to its right:

- Syllabus +
- Pre-Qualification Period ("PQP") +
- Revision guides +
- GOC Core Competencies +
- Supervisors +
- FQE Webinars 2021 +

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Dispensing Syllabus

Students studying towards the FBDO qualification are required to successfully complete all Units as outlined in the ABDO Level 6 Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing Syllabus.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ABDO-Diploma-Syllabus-2015-PAGES-MAR19.pdf>

Students studying with a GOC approved training provider other than ABDO College will have the theory units assessed internally as part of their course and will only be required to sit the following units with ABDO Examinations:

- Unit 2 – PQE practical at the end of the first year
- Unit 12 – FQE practical at the end of the course

As your ABDO PQP supervisors are ideally placed to help you prepare for these two practical ABDO examinations, all parties should have a general overview of the FBDO syllabus:

Students should be aware that Unit 2 must be successfully completed before Unit 12 can be attempted. Both units cannot be sat in the same session.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – PQP Guides

Having started your course, and working in practice, you are now able to start your PQP portfolio. Both you and your supervisor(s) should firstly read the Pre-Qualification Period Guides (for both students and supervisors) to familiarise yourselves with the requirements.

- PQP guidance for students relating to the 2015 syllabus
<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2015-ABDO-PQP-guidance-for-students-APR20-PAGES.pdf>
- PQP guidance for supervisors relating to the 2015 syllabus
https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2015-ABDO-PQP-guidance-for-supervisors-APR20_PAGES.pdf

Section E of the Unit 12 – FQE practical Examination is the assessment of the PQP portfolio, please remember this is an examination document and therefore needs to be completed to a high standard and with care.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – PQP Documents

Registration forms are required to be completed in full, to register your practice and supervisor(s) and notify ABDO of any subsequent changes.

Please ensure the following:

- GOC registration details for both yourself and your supervisor(s) are active and up-to-date (this can be checked using the GOC's 'Search the Register' www.optical.org).
- Practice details for both yourself and your supervisor(s) must match for any practices where you will be working towards your PQP.
- The original copy of any PQP registration forms are required and will therefore need to be posted; ABDO use the signatures on the form for our signature verification process.
- You are advised to use a traceable mail service when sending in the form, so that you can track the delivery online and know when it was delivered. This tracking information would be needed in case of any issues with the delivery of your document.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Initial Declaration

When you are ready to start your ABDO PQP and have identified appropriate supervision, you need to send in an Initial Declaration form for pre-approval of your practice and supervisor arrangements to ABDO Examinations.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PQP-Initial-Declaration.pdf>

On receipt of your Initial Declaration form, ABDO Examinations check all details provided against the ABDO database and against the public records held by the GOC (www.optical.org). Please ensure that the details for you and your supervisor(s) are correct against the GOC public records.

You should check the following:

- legal name(s)
- date of registration for your supervisor(s) has reached at least two years
- all relevant practice details are showing for both yourself and your supervisor(s).

Supervisors who are registered with the regulatory body in the Republic of Ireland (CORU) rather than the GOC, ABDO will check supervisor details against the public CORU register (www.coru.ie). As the CORU registers do not show length of qualified professional registration, are also required to provide a copy of their letter of professional registration (if they are not recently known to ABDO as a PQP supervisor).

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Date of Commencement

When the details from your Initial Declaration form have been checked and accepted, you will be issued with a letter confirming your ABDO PQP Date of Commencement - this is usually the date your form was received.

Any patient encounter completed prior to your date of commencement may not be submitted towards your ABDO PQP.

All training providers, including ABDO College, are separate to ABDO Examinations; we do not share supervisor registration information. Therefore, all students need to register their supervisor arrangements for course purposes separate to registering their supervisors with ABDO Examinations.

Please ensure the correct form for each organisation is sent to the correct address and that you clearly identify which organisation you have received any confirmation of registrations from.

All correspondence relating to ABDO Examinations should be sent to the address on the last page of this document.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Tracking Sheets

There are several recorded elements to complete your ABDO PQP which you are permitted to start recording as soon as you have received your Date of Commencement.

- Record a minimum of 1600 hours of supervised time in practice over no less than 200 days. We recommend for this element you record beyond the minimum requirements if you can. You can hand-write your supervised time entries or type them up, but please remember they need to be checked and physically signed by your supervisor(s) on a regular basis.

Only record the actual times you are supervised in practice by either your principal and/or secondary supervisor. Do not record time at college, annual leave, bank holidays or even lunch times!

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tracking-sheet-of-supervised-time-2015-syllabus-ML.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tracking-sheet-of-supervised-time-2015-syllabus-ML.xlsx>

- Minimum number of specified dispensing tasks over a range of ten categories. Again, we recommend with this element that you record beyond the minimum requirements if you can. You can hand-write your dispensing tasks entries or type them up, but please remember they need to be checked and physically signed by your supervisor(s) on a regular basis.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tracking-sheet-of-dispensing-tasks-2015-syllabus-ML.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tracking-sheet-of-dispensing-tasks-2015-syllabus-ML.xlsx>

Remember to include your ABDO membership number on each page of *all* tracking sheets.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Individual Case Records

You are required to record 51 detailed case records in the specified categories. However, that does not prevent you producing a greater number of case records and then selecting your best work to eventually present for examination.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-Case-record-form-pdf.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-Case-Record-form-Word.docx>

Case record 51 is based on the approved manufacturing visit. Details of the available visits can be found and booked through the ABDO Events area of the ABDO website. The front sheet of the case record 51 template needs to be completed on the day of your visit, with the report section completed subsequently.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-Case-Record-form-51-pdf.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-Case-Record-form-51-Word.docx>

You can hand-write your case records or type them up, but please remember they need to be checked and physically signed by your supervisor(s).

Please refer to the detailed portfolio guide when completing case records, to ensure they meet the required level, and they are submitted in the listed numerical order (to avoid a case record being marked against the wrong category).

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Data Protection

Written consent is required from all patients whose information will be used within your PQP portfolio and viewed as part of the ABDO practice visit and audit. You should therefore keep a data protection form with the practice record, for this purpose. These should never be presented to ABDO as part of your PQP and remain within your practice to adhere to GDPR.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Data-Protection-form.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Data-Protection-form.docx>

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Change of Details

Any changes that affect your ABDO PQP must be notified to ABDO Examinations as soon as possible; this is separate to you notifying ABDO Membership Services, or your training provider (including ABDO College).

Changes that directly affect your ABDO PQP:

- Change of Supervisor – changing job, maternity leave, secondary becomes main supervisor, long term illness etc..
- Change of practice address – moving to another employer or moved to another practice within a group.

Under any of these circumstances, it is important that any work you wish to use towards your ABDO PQP, is written up, checked and signed off before the current arrangement finishes. Please complete the form in full, including practice and supervisor details that are to remain the same.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-PQP-Change-of-Details-form.pdf>

You will receive a letter confirming any updates to your ABDO PQP supervision record.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Change of Details cont/d.

If you are moving practice, you are additionally required to complete a case record authentication form for each case record used from your old practice within your ABDO PQP. This is not submitted to ABDO but shown as evidence to an ABDO examiner during the ABDO practice visit or audit at your subsequent practice.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Case-Record-Authentication-form-pdf.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Authentication-of-PQP-Case-Record-Word.docx>

- Changes that can be emailed and do not require the change of details forms:
 - changes to GOC registration numbers linked to moves to a different part of the register rather than any break in registration,
 - practice relocations where all parties are moving to a nearby address together,
 - Secondary supervisor finishing and no new supervisor replacing them.
 - student name changes etc.
- Supervisor name changes, need to be in writing in the form of a letter, posted to ABDO Examinations, as an example of any new signature will be needed for future verification purposes.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Change of Details cont/d.

- ABDO membership and GOC registration must be maintained for the duration of your studies. If your ABDO membership or GOC registration lapses, please email ABDO Examinations immediately, your ABDO PQP will be frozen. You would then need to submit a change of details form to continue with your ABDO PQP once the registration/membership has been restored.
- If your supervisor(s) are removed from the professional register at any point, please notify ABDO Examinations as soon as possible to help you arrange an alternative principal supervisor and to continue with your ABDO PQP.
- If you or your supervisor are going to be absent from your practice for longer than four weeks, please contact ABDO Examinations to discuss alternative arrangements. This would apply for long-term sickness, maternity leave etc..

You can send in as many Change of Details forms as you need, as changes occur throughout your ABDO PQP. Most importantly, make sure you always keep ABDO Examinations informed and to follow-up if you do not receive confirmation of any changes within 3 weeks.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Specialist Clinic Supervisor

With the help of their supervisors, students may need to look for certain experience outside their regular practice(s), for example within a low vision clinic if they are having difficulty completing that particular case record category.

As the purpose of this registration is purely for gaining specified case records, this can only be a temporary arrangement (ranging from a single day to a maximum period of three months).

Complete the Specialist Clinic Supervisor form prior to working in the agreed setting:

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-PQP-Specialist-Clinic-Supervisor-form.pdf>

specialist clinic supervisors should read the sections of the PQP guide relative to the case record speciality they are being registered for prior to the student attending the practice/clinic. They also need to arrange with the student a process to ensure any case records from the experience are appropriately checked and physically signed-off afterwards.

To confirm your Specialist Clinic Supervisor has been accepted, you will receive a letter confirming these updates to your ABDO PQP supervision record.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Final Declaration

Once all PQP records have been completed, written-up, checked and signed by the relevant supervisor, the last document towards the ABDO PQP portfolio is the Final Declaration form.

This should **only** be completed as the student is approaching sitting their Unit 12 – FQE Practical exam and is ready to submit their ABDO PQP for assessment/verification.

The Final Declaration should be completed by the Principal Supervisor at the time of signing, to confirm that the PQP portfolio is complete and ready for submission and that the student is ready for the Unit 12 – FQE practical exam.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ABDO-PQP-Final-Declaration.pdf>

If you have any administrative or technical queries at any time in relation to completing the ABDO PQP portfolio folder, you will find the relevant contact details on page 14 of the ABDO Pre-Qualification Period 2015 guides.

Only students who have completed all elements of their ABDO PQP are eligible to sit Unit 12 – FQE practical exam.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Practice Visits

All students working towards their FBDO qualification will receive an ABDO practice visit during their work-based experience. We highly recommend you have your practice visit during year 2 or year 3 of your dispensing course, to ensure you have covered the correct theoretical and practical elements of the syllabus.

You must have at least 10 case records written up, from your current practice, for the practice visitor to view and provide feedback. Use their advice and apply it to your remaining case records to help you pass on first submission.

Use the FQE Practice Visit Guidance for students and supervisors to help you decide when you are ready for your practice visit. Please also doublecheck that your practice has **all** the compulsory equipment in place before you submit your form to ABDO Examinations requesting your practice visit.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ABDO-FQE-Practice-Visits-Students-Guide-2020.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Practice-Equipment-Checklist-2020.pdf>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ABDO-Dispensing-Practice-Visit-Application-Form-2020.pdf>

Once your form has been received and processed, a Practice Visitor will be provided with your details and will contact you directly to arrange a mutually convenient time for your Practice Visit to take place. ABDO Examinations do not make these arrangements.

3. Pre-Qualification Period – Applying for Unit 12 Examination

Applying for Unit 12 – FQE practical exam is conditional upon:

- You need to have successfully passed your practice visit before you will be permitted to sit Unit 12 – FQE practical exam. For this reason, ABDO do not allow students to book online for a Unit 12 exam if they have not at least sent in their Practice Visit application form, as they will not have left enough time for the process to take place.
- In order for you to attend your Unit 12 exam, your PQP Portfolio must be complete and submitted by the relevant deadline.

4. ABDO Examinations – Examinations Information page

Examinations Information:

Examinations Information

- ABDO examinations calendar
- Examination venues
- Examination policies
- Duplicate certificates
- Examination FAQs
- Examination contacts
- Training institutes
- Advanced qualifications
- International applicants
- Graduation
- Examinations news and updates

Folders within Examinations Information (found at the bottom of the page):

Exam Venues	+
BACs payment details	+
Receipts	+
Withdrawing from exams	+
Overseas students – ABDO College students only	+

4. ABDO Examinations – Certificate of Competence

At the end of the course, the training provider will provide ABDO with a Certificate of Competence document confirming that each student has successfully completed their course and has met each of the GOC's nine core competencies.

[Core Competencies \(optical.org\)](http://optical.org)

Students will have been given this document to sign the Student Declaration at the beginning of their course.

Only once this document has been received and checked and all ABDO examinations/assessments have been successfully completed will the student be Qualified.

4. ABDO Examinations – Examination Sessions

ABDO hold two main exam sessions per year:

- Summer held in June/July (online bookings available from January through to 01 March)
- Winter held in December/January (online bookings available from August through to 01 October)

All students eligible to sit exams may apply for either main session through the online booking system which is accessed via a student's personalised examinations dashboard in the Members' Area of the ABDO website. Online booking is not open all year round; it will only be available during the period of application for the two sessions as indicated above.

Re-sit sessions are also offered in April and September. Only those eligible for will be sent an application form – they cannot be booked via the online booking.

All students who enter for the Unit 12 examination will be sent separate instructions on how and when to submit their ABDO PQP portfolio documents.

A list of current exam fees can be found on the Examinations Information page of the ABDO website:

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/examinations/examinations-information/>

Scroll down to the Exam Fee Structure heading and click on the link for the document.

4. ABDO Examinations – Number of Attempts

Students are permitted 3 attempts at any of the Units outlined in the Dispensing Syllabus. After the third fail of a unit, students will be notified of this with their third attempt results. They will be required to attend some form of revision, and provide evidence of having done so, before being allowed a fourth and final attempt at the relevant unit.

All results are subject to a seven-year rule from the time the first exam is sat. After seven years, if a student has not successfully completed the qualification the older results will expire.

4. ABDO Examinations – Online Booking

A step-by-step user guide is available at the top of the 'Examinations Information' page of the ABDO website. All bookings are notified to ABDO Examinations, therefore please check the exam fee structure prior to making a booking so that you know how much each exam is going to be.

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Online-Exam-Booking-User-Guide.pdf>

Once an exam booking has been received, ABDO will check the information provided before approving the booking. After the booking has been approved, an automated confirmation email will be sent.

Exam confirmation letters will then be available to view on your personalised examinations dashboard on the ABDO website. Practical exam dates/times will only be viewable once timetables have been completed – students will be notified when these are available.

You will need to log out of any device on which you are logged in (i.e., phone, tablet, laptop, computer) as the exam's dashboard does not automatically refresh.

4. ABDO Examinations – Exam Venues

All ABDO practical exams take place at ABDO's National Resource Centre in Birmingham:

ABDO National Resource Centre,
4th Floor, Aqueous II,
Aston Cross Business Village,
Chester Street,
Birmingham,
B6 5RQ

Information on the location can be found on the 'Examinations Information' page within the 'Exam Venue' tab at the bottom of the page on the ABDO website.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this document. We hope you found the information useful. Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact ABDO Examinations using the details below:

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