



The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers announces changes to qualifications

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM) has announced that it plans to withdraw its accredited qualifications for optical assistants.

The last main sittings for WCSM examinations at Levels 2 and 3 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and at SCQF Levels 5 and 7 in Scotland will be in December 2019. Current candidates expecting to sit examinations in June and December 2019 will not be affected and three resit opportunities will be offered to give individuals time to complete their qualifications.

Level 4 Diploma courses for optical technicians and optical assistants, leading to the SMC (Tech) and SMC (OA) awards, will continue to be available from ABDO College. It is anticipated that ABDO will take on the role of awarding body for these two nationally-recognised qualifications.

ABDO College will also offer a new introductory course for optical assistants from September 2019. Details of the new course, which will not involve examinations and will not be regulated by Ofqual, will be available from the ABDO College stand at Optrafair and online at www.abdocollege.org.uk.

Commenting on the changes, WCSM's Master, John McGregor OBE said, "The world has changed and it is right that we should move with it. Our qualifications were an important step in gaining recognition for the vital part played by optical assistants and technicians in high street practices. Those who have passed a WCSM qualification are rightly proud of what they have achieved.

In order to meet the increasing demand for eye health care, training must be a critical part of every optical professional's career. It will need to be highly flexible to meet the needs of people working in a wider range of clinical environments, in different interdisciplinary teams and with constantly developing new technologies. The time has now come for others to take on the important task of equipping assistants and technicians for what lies ahead.

WCSM was not originally established as an educational institution but as a body to support the cause of better vision much more widely. We will now be able to do more to encourage training at all levels and increase our focus on supporting new entrants to the optical professions, for example via our highly successful bursary schemes, the dissemination of scientific advance in vision care through our travel awards and the recognition of excellence in research via our medal programmes."

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Notes for editors:

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers is a City of London Livery Company, founded by Royal Charter in 1629. Its fundamental purpose is to support the prevention and treatment of vision impairment which it does through the work of the Company itself and two associated charities, The WCSM Education Trust (registered charity no 1135045) and The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' Charity (registered charity no 1072172). The Company has over 1,000 members nationally and internationally.

WCSM joined with the British Optical Association and the Scottish Association of Opticians in 1980 to set up a single examining body for ophthalmic opticians (now The College of Optometrists). It also helped to establish the independent Faculty of Dispensing Opticians, which subsequently merged with the Association of Dispensing Opticians in 1986 to form the Association of British Dispensing Opticians.

More information can be found at www.spectaclemakers.com and @spectaclemakers on Twitter and Facebook.

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