Improving quality, protecting patients

Standards of Proficiency for Ophthalmic Science Practitioners

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Academy for Healthcare Science's Standards of Proficiency for Ophthalmic Science Practitioners, which came into effect in September 2014 following the transfer of the Register of Ophthalmic Science Practitioners from its previous registration body (the Voluntary Registration Council).

These standards were developed by the profession, professional bodies and the previous registration body, the Voluntary Registration Council. The standards were developed to be consistent with the requirements that Healthcare Science Practitioners currently regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council have to meet. The standards have been in place for a number of years and are represented here without any changes. Anyone who is currently registered as an Ophthalmic Science Practitioner has demonstrated that they met and continue to meet the standards set out here. Individuals who apply for registration as an Ophthalmic Science Practitioner with the Academy for Healthcare Science will also need to demonstrate that they meet these standards.

One of the Academy for Healthcare Science's key tasks is to uphold professional standards across Healthcare Science, providing assurance for the public and commissioners of services. Our continuing ambition is to see statutory regulation put in place across the entire Healthcare Science profession. However, we believe it is vital to establish an appropriate and effective system for the registration and regulation of Healthcare Science Practitioners (including Ophthalmic Science Practitioners) who are not currently regulated by law through the Health and Care Professions Council.

I am confident that these standards are fit for purpose and reflect safe and effective professional practice for ophthalmic science practitioners.

Janet Monkman, CEO & Registrar

The standards

These *Standards of Proficiency* set out the minimum standard that a person must meet in order to register with the Academy for Healthcare Science (the Academy) for the first time. The standards are used to approve education and training programmes and to assess whether a person is competent to practise as an Ophthalmic Science Practitioner (that is, we undertake a formal assessment, which – when successfully completed – results in a Certificate of Competence being awarded by the Academy).

Our *Standards of Proficiency* cover three areas:

1. Professional autonomy and accountability

2. Skills required for practice as an Ophthalmic Science Practitioner

3. Knowledge of Healthcare Science.

These standards are not the same as a person's 'scope of practice'. We define 'scope of practice' as the area or areas of a registrant's profession in which they have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to them.

We recognise that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focused and specialised. This might be because of specialisation in a particular area of practice or with a particular group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research. As a registrant's scope of practice changes, they may not be able to demonstrate that they meet each and every standard required in the Standards of Proficiency. This is not a problem, as long as they make sure that they are practising safely and effectively within their given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where they are not proficient to do.

Standards of Proficiency

Professional autonomy and accountability

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

1a: Professional autonomy and accountability

1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of your profession

- understand what is required of you by the Academy for Healthcare Science
- understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity and autonomy of every patient, client and user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process
- be aware of the legal and regulatory rules and guidelines that govern and affect ophthalmic science practice

1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

- be aware and understand the needs of those with visual impairment

1a.3 be able to maintain confidentiality and obtain informed consent

1a.4 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

1a.5 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice

- be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- be able to initiate resolution of problems and are able to exercise personal initiative

1a.6 recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and be able to practise accordingly

1a.7 understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise

- understand the importance of caring for themselves, including maintaining their health
- be able to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness by adopting strategies for physical and psychological self-care, critical self-awareness, and by being able to maintain a safe working environment

1a.8 understand the need for career-long self-directed learning

1b: Professional relationships

1b.1 know the professional and personal scope of their practice and be able to make referrals

- be able to recognise the limits of personal practice and know when to seek advice
- be able to investigate and report on a range of ocular defects; instigating referrals where appropriate.

1b.2 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, patients, clients and users, and their relatives and carers

- understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
- understand the need to engage patients, clients, users and carers in planning and evaluating care
- be able to respond appropriately to enquiries regarding the service provided
- recognise the need to participate effectively in the planning, implementation and evaluation of multi-professional approaches to health care delivery by liaising with ophthalmologists and other health care professionals
- understand the need to engage patients, clients, users and carers in planning and evaluating imaging, diagnostic tests and investigations to meet their needs and goals
- be able to interpret and act upon information from other healthcare professionals, in order to maximise health gain

1b.3 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

1b.4 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, clients, users, their relatives and carers

- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5
- understand how communications skills affect the assessment of patients, clients and users, and how the means of communication should be modified to address potential barriers such as age, physical and learning disability
- understand the need to provide patients, clients and users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
- understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist patients whose first language is not English, wherever possible
- recognise that relationships with patients, clients and users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility

- be able to advise other healthcare professionals about the relevance and application of ophthalmic investigation, testing or imaging modalities to the patient's needs
- understand the psychology of illness, anxiety and likely behaviour of patients undergoing diagnostic procedures for assessment of visual loss, as well as that of their families and carers

1b.5 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the patient, client or user

- recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of patients, clients and users
- be aware of the need to empower patients to participate in the decision making process related to their proposed investigation, testing or diagnostic imaging
- recognise the need to modify interpersonal skills for the assessment and management of children

Skills required for practice as an Ophthalmic Science Practitioner

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

2a: Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

2a.1 be able to gather appropriate information

- be able to use physical, graphical, verbal and electronic methods to collect information from a range of sources including patient history, diagnostic images, physiological measurement results and psycho-physical testing

2a.2 be able to use appropriate assessment techniques

- be able to undertake and record a thorough and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- be able to conduct thorough investigation of the eye, ocular adnexae and visual pathway
- understand the principles and techniques used to examine anterior and posterior segment of the eye and the orbit
- understand the principles and techniques used to assess visual function
- understand the principles and techniques used to measure and image the eye and orbit, using light, lasers, angiographic contrast medium and/or ultrasound
- be able to demonstrate practical skills in the essentials of measurement, data generation, and analysis

2a.3 be able to undertake or arrange clinical investigations as appropriate

2a.4 be able to analyse and evaluate the information collected

- be able to identify pathological changes and related clinical features of conditions commonly encountered by ophthalmic science practitioners
- be able to interrogate and process data and information gathered accurately in order to conduct clinical investigation or imaging procedure most appropriate to the patient's needs

2b: Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

2b.1 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills

- recognise the value of research to the systematic evaluation of practice
- be able to conduct evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit procedures
- be aware of methods commonly used in health care research
- be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
- be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform your own practice
- be able to adapt and apply problem solving skills when dealing with unusual or unforeseen circumstances

2b.2 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements

- be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments
- be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their profession
- be able to recognise signs and interpret clinical information, of infection hazards and take action to minimise the effects to others

2b.3 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales

- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different client groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors
- be able to implement an investigation strategy

2b.4 be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully

- understand the need to maintain the safety of both patients, clients and users, and those involved in their care

- understand the specific local context of practice, including the socio-cultural diversity of the community
- be able to modify and adapt practice to emergency situations
- promote and comply with measures designed to control infection risk
- ensure patients, clients and users are appropriately positioned for safe and effective testing or imaging
- be able to manage complex or unpredictable situations including the ability to adapt planned investigations, tests, imaging or angiographic procedures and to manage critical care incidents prioritising workload and use of resources
- be able to use independent methods to establish and confirm patient identity prior to investigation or imaging
- recognise the need for spatial awareness, visual precision and manual dexterity in the precise use of ophthalmic instrumentation and equipment
- be able to operate ophthalmic instrumentation and equipment safely and accurately
- be able to check or calibrate ophthalmic instrumentation and equipment accurately and within the specifications, and to take appropriate action in the case of faulty functioning and operation
- be able to perform a range of ophthalmic investigations including:
    - obtain ophthalmic patient history
    - measure visual acuity
    - determine refractive error of the eye
    - determine optical prescription of optical aids
    - assess visual field
    - measure intra-ocular pressure
    - examine the anterior segment of the eye
    - obtain structural measurement of the eye, image of the eye and supporting structures using light and lasers, utilising fundus photography, confocal scanning laser ophthalmoscopy, optical coherence tomography, scanning laser polarimetry, photo-slit lamp and macro photography
    - obtain angiographic images of the eye using contrast media
    - obtain ultrasound images of the eye
    - perform electro-physiological measurement of the visual system

2b.5 be able to maintain records appropriately

- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other clinical information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- understand the need to use only accepted terminology (which includes abbreviations) in making clinical records

- be able to use systems for the accurate and correct identification of patients, test results, images and other documents associated with the ocular investigation
- recognise the risks and potential serious consequences of error in record keeping and data entry

2c: Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions

2c.1 be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly

- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that help to evaluate the responses of patients, clients and users to their care
- be able to evaluate management plans against treatment milestones using recognised health outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the patient, client or user
- recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately understand that outcomes may not always conform to expectations but may still meet the needs of patients, clients or users

2c.2 be able to audit, reflect on and review practice

- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
- be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
- understand the value of reflection on clinical practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review

Knowledge of Healthcare Science

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

3a.1 know the key concepts of the biological, physical, social, psychological and clinical sciences which are relevant to your profession-specific practice

- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to your practice, together with a knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- know and understand the structure and function of the visual system, the physical properties of electromagnetic radiation, the principles of optics and optical properties of the eye
- know and understand ocular and systemic disease affecting the eye and visual system, investigative and imaging procedure and therapy
- ensure that procedures are performed and conducted safely, with minimum intervention and that the data produced is robust and accurate
- understand the benefit and principles involved in clinical investigation, physiological measurement, imaging or angiography of the eye, supporting structures and visual pathway
- understand human anatomy and physiology, emphasising the dynamic relationships of human structure and function and focusing on the central nervous system, and visual system
- know the principles governing visual function and be able to apply them to clinical practice
- understand the pharmacology of drugs used in ophthalmic investigation or treatment and methods of administration as it relates to ophthalmic science practice
- understand the capability, application and range of technological equipment used in ophthalmology and ophthalmic science practice
- understand the role of the ophthalmic science practitioner in the promotion of health and health education in relation to healthy living and screening and detection of ocular and systemic disease
- be aware of current trends and developments in the science and practice of ophthalmology
- understand quality assurance, principles of evidence based practice and audit processes in place within ophthalmic science practice
- understand legislative, policy, ethical and research frameworks that underpin, inform and influence future practice

3a.2 know how professional principles are expressed and transmitted into action through a number of different approaches to practice, and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual

3a.3 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment.

- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
- be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety legislation
- be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly
- be able to establish safe environments for clinical practice, which minimise risks to patients, clients, users, others, including the use of risk assessment and hazard control
- understand sources of hazard in the workplace, including clinical waste and equipment
- understand the hazard and correct procedures associated with the use of laser light sources
- know and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques
- be aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health
- know the correct principles and applications of disinfectants, methods for sterilisation and decontamination and dealing with waste and spillages correctly
- be able to apply basic life support techniques and be able to deal safely with clinical emergencies