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| ***GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES******& THE BSC OPTOMETRY SCHEME*** | *www.cardiff.ac.uk/careers* |

**OVERVIEW**

The BSc Optometry degree provides you with the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills required of an Optometrist. The course is vocational, containing syllabus recommendations from the GOC and the College of Optometrists; so by the time you graduate, you will be able to demonstrate **knowledge and competencies relevant to your subject**.

However, studying optometry also means that you are studying a health and life sciences degree. By completing an optometry degree you will have developed the necessary **graduate attributes** that can be used in many graduate jobs, regardless of the degree you have studied.

It is recognised that Optometry is a very hard degree academically, with a full timetable and continuous assessment and exams. As an optometry graduate you will leave university not only with an optometry degree, but also with an ability to work hard, work under pressure and with a **resilience** to manage your graduate career. At the same time, you will have worked with your colleagues both in practical sessions, but also in a close knit course where you are all in the same boat and all working together to pass difficult vocational exams. Not only does this provide you with fond memories, but it also develops your **collaborative skills**– a skill vital for you to take with you into any workplace.

**CLINICAL/PRACTICAL SESSIONS**

You will begin your practical work very early on in your degree In the first and second year, this practical work will involve working with each other on a regular basis, carrying out routine tests. The nature of these sessions means that **collaboration** is essential and generally students develop a huge sense of team spirit and trust amongst each other. In the third year you will do 164 hours of practical work, mostly in a clinical setting with patients. Not only will this continue to train you in the technical aspects of your course, but will also give you exposure to a lot of work with clients and patients. You will be assessed on your ability to communicate with patients and healthcare professionals, as well as on your ability to take and maintain concise, well-written records on your clinical activities. It will be vital to articulate this **ability to communicate effectively** when applying for pre-registration positions, or indeed any graduate type employment both inside and outside of the optometry field. In clinics you will learn to become a **reflective learner** – learning from your mistakes, taking constructive criticism on board and consistently improving performance.

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

The 20 credit research project that you undertake in your third year is a piece of independent experimental work in a laboratory and/or clinical setting. It will reinforce many of the employability skills essential in today’s graduate market, whilst also developing your optometric expertise. The nature of a research project means that you will develop your **ability to think independently and critically** during this module. You will need to be **innovative and investigative** in your approach to undertaking this project, generating ideas and taking initiative throughout the process. **Resilience** will also be vital throughout this research project; you will be provided with supervision, but it will be up to you to manage your time, your workload and organise yourself effectively in a very busy and pressurised third year. This will stand you in very good stead for your pre-registration year and will need to be articulated well in any application form.

**ETHICAL, SOCIAL AND COMMERCIAL AWARENESS**

Module OP3205, Occupational Optometry, Law and Business will give you ample opportunity to develop your **social and commercial awareness.** You will be given an overview on professional guidelines in practice, on the National Health Service and on legislation affecting optometric practice. You will also be given an insight into setting up, running and marketing your own practice. This taught overview on business and customer awareness will reinforce much of what you learn about patient and customer care throughout your clinical sessions and indeed, throughout any placements you undertake throughout your degree. Understanding **commercial awareness** and the importance of customer service and value for money is an employability skill that many employers say is lacking amongst today’s graduates. Optometry students could put themselves at an advantage by highlighting this in any applications that they make post-graduation.

**ARE YOU MISSING ANY ATTRIBUTES?**

Your degree provides you with varied opportunities to develop the graduate attributes that employers say are necessary to be effective in the workplace. Presenting these attributes in a convincing way on paper or at interview can feel like a real challenge, however. Should you want help with this, please look at all the sessions run by Careers & Employability to help you throughout your time at Cardiff University.

If you want to develop and experience more throughout your time at university, there are so many opportunities available for you to do so. Careers and Employability and the rest of Student Support and Wellbeing can help you with this and the Cardiff Award provides you with a structure to help you focus your efforts.

**For more information on graduate attributes and on how employable you are, search Career Central on the Intranet.**

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