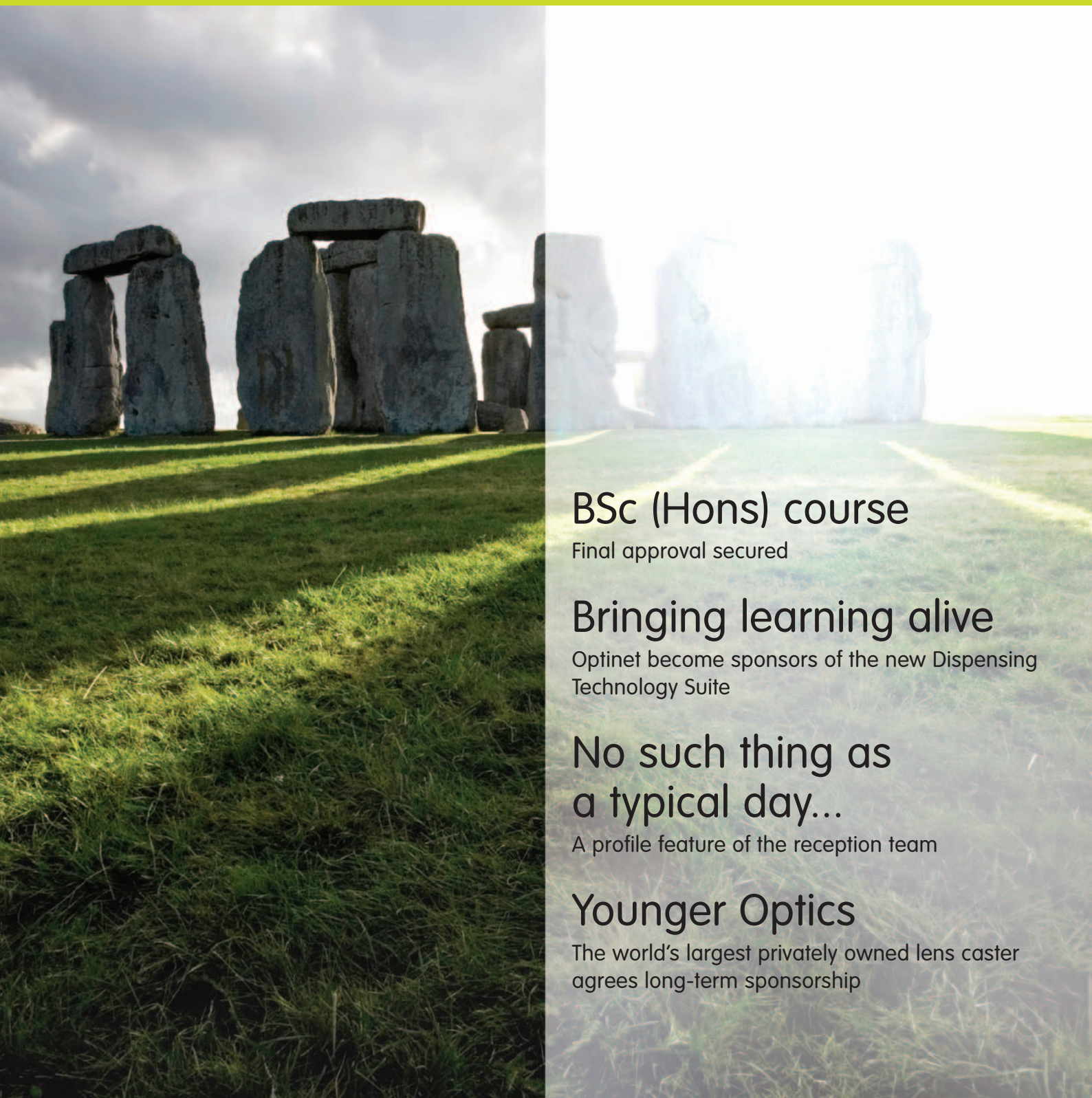
abdo COLLEGE

# Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | September 2010 | Issue 5



## BSc (Hons) course

Final approval secured

## Bringing learning alive

Optinet become sponsors of the new Dispensing Technology Suite

## No such thing as a typical day...

A profile feature of the reception team

## Younger Optics

The world's largest privately owned lens caster agrees long-term sponsorship

# A monumental belief in distance learning

Welcome to issue 5 of *Re:View* where, once more, we hope to bring you up to date with the latest events at ABDO College together with our plans and aspirations for the future.

The theme of this edition, 'bringing learning alive', is absolutely appropriate to our College and to the way in which we teach the dispensing opticians of the future.

I apologise to you at the start, for going back a few years to when I started in optics and how I first learnt about distance learning.

I had not had a good time in school, I found it totally de-motivating, many of the teachers were there to while away the time until they could go home or retire! They were totally uninterested in the pupils, their subject and indeed in teaching! I came out of school, aged 16, having gained five GCE O levels, two of which were in occupational subjects. I therefore went into my father's business, mainly because I couldn't think of anything else to do. Fortunately after a couple of years I became friendly with an optician who offered me a job in his optical workshop.

I greatly enjoyed working with my hands and took to this new life with much enthusiasm. My optician friend came upon the ADO (Association of Dispensing Opticians) course in Ophthalmic Dispensing and suggested I took it up so I could also help in his practices with patients and their care. This was in the 1960s and, looking back, I can now appreciate how far sighted my friend was as it was rare for OOs to work with DOs in those days.

I found working on my own, answering a course paper every week, extremely difficult. My colleagues were not very close to the academic aspects, so I had to work very hard. But then I had a great deal of motivation, I wanted to better myself and come out at the end with a qualification. I found the relationship between my work and my learning was totally compatible although not always apparently relevant! I managed to pass my preliminary examinations and went onto the last two years, with block release being introduced during my final year. I found the block release sessions a great help and although I failed one part of the final first time round, I passed it at the second attempt. We had to wait a further year in those days before taking the final practical exams which I passed first time; I was so proud and so pleased with myself!

Ever since those days (I qualified in 1969) I have had a monumental belief in distance learning. I believe it to be the most effective learning method, particularly where you are actually putting the results of your learning into practice every day. It is a way of students ensuring they are happy in the job they have chosen at a very early stage. There are so many times when one hears about someone gaining a university place, going through their three years of study and finally starting the job, only to find they don't like it and going back to learn something else!

We are really in a 'chicken and egg' situation. Learn the job, put it into practice, do the job and then learn more about it and go into greater depth to ensure you are good at the job.

Many of our students have experienced the vagaries of an optical practice before they start on the academic learning. They know what the job is like, whether they like it or not, and can go on with the knowledge that they are learning to better their skills and their care of the patient.

That way, they are bringing learning alive.

**Colin Lee FBDO, Chairman,**
**ABDO College Board of Trustees**

**ABDO College**
Godmersham Park, Godmersham
Canterbury, Kent CT4 7DT

tel: 01227 733 901 | fax: 01227 733 910

info@abdocollege.org.uk
www.abdocollege.org.uk

**Front cover:**
The cover picture illustrates the benefits of polarised lens – see Younger Optics feature on page 4.

# Bringing learning alive in the Optinet suite

Students at ABDO College are gaining indispensable hands-on experience with up-to-the-minute practice tools thanks to the support of Optinet the sponsor of the new *Dispensing Technology Suite*.

ABDO College Technician, Sue Rose, using the Optinet practice management system.

Optinet, the IT division of the National Eyecare Group (NEG), has been working with a number of suppliers to assist ABDO College in developing and enhancing the new *'Optinet Dispensing Technology Suite'* in the College at Godmersham.

In addition to supplying the hardware and installing the latest edition of the Optinet Practice Management Software (PMS), the company has installed a high quality, freestanding frame bar from Top Vision, stocked with frames donated by Charmant, Norville and Viva Eyewear. This adds to the already installed Anyview from BiB, Cerium's Mark III Colorimeter and electronic magnifiers from Bierley.

The Optinet Dispensing Technology Suite enables students to take their theory from the classroom and bring it alive with hands-on experience. The integrated catalogues that the Optinet software offers, both for spectacle lenses and contact lenses, gives students access to a vast array of information, enhancing their knowledge and educational development.

Over the coming months, Optinet will be looking to work closely with the College and other supporters to further enhance the students' learning experience, enabling them to follow the complete patient journey. As well as the patient-orientated aspects of dispensing, the Optinet PMS will help students to understand broader issues such as stock control, pricing, appointment diary structure and performance analysis – making them an even greater asset to any future employer.

Commenting on this exciting initiative, Michael Daunt, NEG managing director, said: 'We are delighted to be supporting the ABDO College and in particular the Dispensing Technology Suite. We believe this suite will demonstrate in a real practical way the benefits of technology such as practice management software and how by integrating it into their business, students can maximise their career potential.'

Daunt continued: 'As a Group we have always supported the industry where we can. By working closely with the College and its students, we believe these partnerships will continue to benefit the profession for many years to come.'

# Final approval secured for BSc (Hons) course

ABDO College has successfully secured validation from Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) and final approval from the General Optical Council (GOC) for its BSc (Hons) course in Ophthalmic Dispensing. This means that the College can now provide students studying ophthalmic dispensing a seamless programme from its existing Foundation Degree course through to BSc (Hons). The College now offers two clear distance learning options on the route to becoming a qualified dispensing optician. The first is to successfully complete a three year ABDO Diploma course, the other pathway takes ophthalmic dispensing to undergraduate degree level after two years via a Foundation Degree course with the opportunity to gain a BSc (Hons) qualification in Ophthalmic Dispensing after successfully undertaking a third and final year and, with either of the pathway options, gain the registerable FBDO professional qualification.

Michelle Derbyshire, Head of ABDO College DLI (Distance Learning Institute), said: 'This is a significant milestone for both ABDO College and the dispensing profession, as the official validation means we have achieved our aim to provide distance learning courses for our profession that are now completely in-line with mainstream education in the UK. The College would like to express it's thanks to everyone at CCCU and to the dedicated team at ABDO college for all of the hard work that has been carried out to achieve this successful result.'

# Official ABDO College sponsors

The ABDO College Board of Trustees and staff would like to thank its official sponsors for their generous and continued support:

BIB Ophthalmic Instruments
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Transitions Optical
The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers
Younger Optics

For further information on ABDO College sponsorship opportunities contact Michael R Potter FBDO on 01227 733 913 or email: mpotter@abdo.org.uk

# Younger Optics commits to sponsorship

ABDO College has negotiated a four year sponsorship agreement with Younger Optics, the world's largest privately owned lens caster.

Based in Torrance, California, Younger Optics distribute their innovative lenses throughout five continents. They have strategic partnerships with PPG Industries and Transitions Optical which has led to the development of the award winning Trilogy/Trivex material and DriveWear lenses which have enhanced their NuPolar polarised lens range.

Younger Optics' Julian Wiles (left) and ABDO's Tony Garrett in the College's new Dispensing Technology Suite.

Upon securing the sponsorship agreement Michael Potter, ABDO's head of marketing and communications, commented: 'It is vitally important that DO students are fully aware of the latest technological developments in ophthalmic lenses. We are therefore delighted that Younger Optics has decided to form a long-term partnership with the College.

'The innovations that Younger Optics has developed in recent years, together with the unique way they supply their lenses and the wide ranging point of sale and marketing material that they can provide offers dispensing opticians an ideal opportunity to differentiate their practice and deliver premium lens products, with added value, to their patients.

'While students spend time at Godmersham, in addition to their required syllabus related studies, they can also be subtly exposed to the exciting technical and commercial opportunities that are readily available to enable them to generate better quality dispensing.'

On behalf of Younger Optics Julian Wiles, their territory sales manager of UK & Ireland, said: 'We feel this sponsorship opportunity is the perfect platform for raising awareness of our products and services throughout the UK and in the overseas markets from which the ABDO College draws its students. Their focus on top quality optical education and practical training, their establishment of a new BSc (Hons) course in Ophthalmic Dispensing and their way of delivering courses via distance learning, which includes block release at the College in Godmersham, is a perfect match with our business model. Although initially the sponsorship agreement is for four years, I see no reason why this partnership shouldn't be extended beyond that.'

# Dispensing high powered lenses

by Sally Bates FBDO, ABDO College Lecturer

**The choice of lens material to be dispensed should be affected by:**
Refractive index
V-value (Abbe number)
Lens form (aspheric surface)
Weight
Durability
Aspects of safety

**Refractive index**
The higher the refractive index, the thinner the lens - thinner lenses are due to the increased index and also the flatter radii of curvature of the lens surfaces. However there will also be a reduction in v-value, leading to increased chromatic aberration, which is usually noticeable to the wearer at the lens periphery. Using relative curvature, or curve variation factor (CVF) it is possible to calculate how much thinner a high index lens will be in comparison to a standard lens of the same power.

**Percentage reduction in edge thickness compared to crown glass**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zeiss Tital | 1.7 | 25% reduction | CVF | 0.75 |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.8 | 35% reduction | CVF | 0.65 |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.9 | 45% reduction | CVF | 0.55 |

**Percentage reduction in edge thickness compared to CR39**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trivex | 1.53 | 6% reduction | CVF | 0.94 |
| Sola Spectralite | 1.537 | 7% reduction | CVF | 0.93 |
| Polycarbonate | 1.586 | 15% reduction | CVF | 0.85 |
| Hoya Eyas | 1.6 | 17% reduction | CVF | 0.83 |
| Nikon NLV | 1.74 | 33% reduction | CVF | 0.67 |

CVF is the curve variation factor of a high index lens compared to crown glass or CR39 (the curve being 1.0).

**We can use: CVF x Power in order to calculate the appearance of a lens if made in hi-index material**
For example: Focimeter power = -10.00D
If made in 1.8 glass, the lens will have the appearance of –6.50D
If made in 1.9 glass, the lens will have the appearance of –5.50D
If made in 1.6 Eyas, the lens will have the appearance of –8.30D
If made in 1.74 Nikon NLV, the lens will have the appearance of –6.70D

Comparison of a -5.00D 1.5 plastics material compared to Kodak 1.67AS

**V-value (Abbe number)**
Crown glass has a v-value of 59 compared to a 1.9 index lens which has a v-value of 30. The v-value controls the dispersion of light by the lens; therefore when dispensing high index lenses there will be an increase of unwanted chromatic aberration due to white light splitting into coloured components. It is noticeable to the patient when looking off axis, and they may experience yellow colour fringing around lights, windows and areas of high contrast, for example black print on white paper.

**Weight**
High Index lenses are denser, therefore gram per gram they are heavier. This is measured in relation to cubic cm of water and it is referred to as specific gravity, which is denoted as 'Sg' in lens data information. The majority of lens companies manufacture polycarbonate lenses including BBGR Tilium, Essilor Airwear and Nikon NL PC; however Trivex/Trilogy are the lightest weight lenses available with the added benefit of a higher v-value.

| Glass | Index | V-value | sg |
|---|---|---|---|
| Crown Glass | 1.523 | 59 | 2.54 |
| Hoya LHI | 1.7 | 40 | 2.99 |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.8 | 35 | 3.62 |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.9 | 30 | 4.0 |

| Plastics | Index | V-value | sg |
|---|---|---|---|
| CR39 | 1.498 | 58 | 1.32 |
| Trivex | 1.53 | 43-45 | 1.11 |
| Essilor Ormex | 1.56 | 37 | 1.23 |
| Nikon DX 2 | 1.56 | 41 | 1.17 |
| BBGR Tilium | 1.59 | 31 | 1.20 |
| Essilor Airwear | 1.59 | 31 | 1.20 |
| Nikon NL PC | 1.59 | 32 | 1.20 |
| Essilor Ormil | 1.6 | 36 | 1.36 |
| Hoya Eyas | 1.6 | 41 | 1.32 |
| Essilor Stylis | 1.67 | 32 | 1.36 |
| Nikon NLV | 1.74 | 33 | 1.46 |

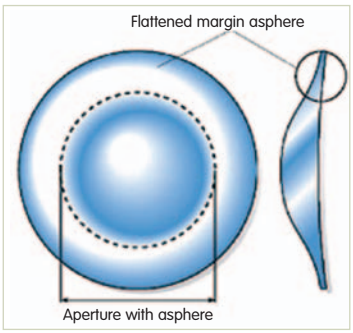
**Aspheric surface**
An Aspheric lens form will reduce spectacle magnification, due to the reduced centre thickness and flatter base curve which is usually 2D to 3D less than standard lenses. The overall lens thickness is reduced by approximately 10%, therefore improving the cosmetic appearance. For positive powers, ideally the front surface is aspheric, and for minus powers the back surface is aspheric. They can be classified as 'best form' lenses, due to the aspheric surface eliminating large amounts of oblique astigmatism. The back surface is flatter which enables the lenses to be fitted closer to the eye, consequently increasing the wearer's field of view, and reducing the spectacle magnification, therefore improving the cosmetic appearance.

**Spectacle magnification = Power Factor x Shape Factor**
The power of the lens remains the same; however the shape is flatter and thinner, therefore reducing the effect of spectacle magnification/minification.

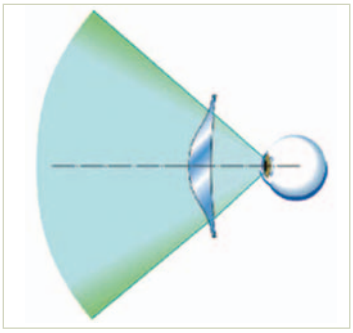
Comparison of a +5.00D Kodak 1.67AS surfaced compared to 1.5 plastics material 70mm blank

## Lenticulars

**High positive powers**
For powers over +12.00D blended aspheric lenticular lenses may be dispensed, n=1.5. When ordered with a UV inhibitor, they are ideal for aphakic patients and are also available in bifocal form, the segment is 24mm and elliptically shaped. For example: Zeiss Aphal, Essilor Omega, Rodenstock Perfastar.



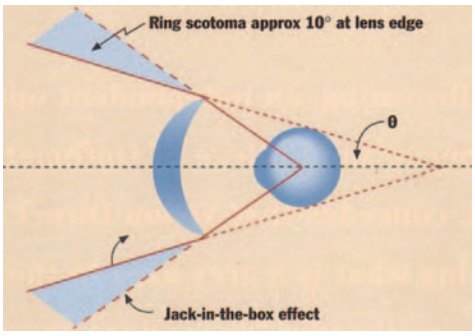

The 'bowl' is approximately 42mm diameter. It is recommended to dispense a frame with approximately the same depth as the bowl to reduce the thickness at the top and bottom of the lenses, and order surfaced lenses for the optimum cosmetic effect.



Ring scotoma is significantly reduced with blended aspherics compared to lenticulars.

Standard convex lenticular lenses are still available. The shape (round or oval), the aperture (button size is usually 34mm or 40mm) and the required margin power (usually plano or the cyl power only) should be specified when ordering.

Dispensing disadvantages include an ugly cosmetic appearance, increased spectacle magnification, reduced field of view and the 'jack in the box' effect (ring scotoma) when viewing through the lens margin.




**High minus powers**
An obvious disadvantage of high minus lenses is the edge thickness. Concave lenticulars give a very small field of view as they are available in either 30mm or 34mm apertures, therefore restricting peripheral vision. Blended aspheric lenticulars such as the Rodenstock Lentilux, have a continuous aspheric back surface and the central optic zone surface flattens smoothly into the thin edge of the margin. This is recommended for powers over -12.00D and available up to –24.00D. Manufactured from Perfalux 1.7 glass, n = 1.7, v value 40, the maximum edge thickness for any power is 5mm. However, as the power increases, the lens aperture decreases.

**Dispensing duplicate spectacles**
When ordering a duplicate pair of spectacles it is important to check the following from the previous pair:
Lens material
Refractive index
Form (base curves)
Design (aspheric or spherical)
Pantoscopic tilt
Vertical and horizontal centres
Vertex distance of spectacle frame
Frame fitting – bridge, tilt, frontal bow, head width, side length

**To calculate the refractive index of a lens, use the Curve Variation Factor:**

$$\frac{\text{Lens Measure Power}}{\text{Focimeter Power}} = \text{CVF}$$

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| n = 1.7 | CVF | 0.75 |
| n = 1.8 | CVF | 0.65 |
| n = 1.9 | CVF | 0.55 |

For example: If the lens measure reads = -6.50D, the focimeter Rx = –10.00D

$$\frac{-6.50}{-10.00} = 0.65$$

Therefore, the lens is a 1.8 material, as the relative curvature of a 1.8 lens is 0.65.

## Dispensing top tips

- Check the frame fitting compared to the previous pair.
- Pre-adjust the frame prior to recording the measurements.
- Check the bridge fitting, vertex distance, pantoscopic tilt, frontal bow, head width and length to bend.
- Check the vertex distance is equal right and left, and kept to a minimum in order to increase the field of view.
- Check the front isn't too flat or excessively bowed, as this may cause distortion.
- Record the horizontal and vertical optical centres.
- Check the pantoscopic tilt of the frame and the vertical centration, for every 2 degrees of tilt the vertical centres should be decentred 1mm downwards.
- To verify if the previous lenses are aspheric, use the straight edge test. A plus powered aspheric will be flatter on the back surface, compared to a standard lens, whereas a minus powered aspheric will be flat on the front surface. Alternatively use a piece of graph paper to check the reduction in distortion of an aspheric lens compared to a standard lens.
- Use sample thick and thin glazed spectacles to demonstrate the cosmetic appearance and benefits of high index lenses. The dispensing mats available from BBGR and Essilor demonstrating comparison lens thickness are excellent dispensing tools.

## Frames on faces

**Rimless styles** - not recommended to be dispensed with standard plastics, 1.74 or glass lenses due to easy cracking at the drill holes, or high powered lenses over +/- 5.00D due to the excessive lens thickness. Take care if dispensing high positive powers as the edges maybe extremely thin and chip easily. Polycarbonate may 'star' around the drill holes if water leaks onto the lens whilst glazing. Recommend plastic 1.6 or 1.67 aspheric or polycarbonate lenses which are flexible and 10 times more impact resistant than CR39. Trivex is the ideal material for rimless glazing but is principally designed for powers within +/-4.00D, however it can be used for higher powers providing minimum thickness is not a prime consideration.

**Supra styles** - recommend polycarbonate lenses which are impact resistant or plastic 1.6, 1.67 or 1.74 aspheric lenses. Supras are not recommended for high powered lenses over +/– 5.00D due to the excessive lens thickness. The spectacles are lightweight and the top of the lens is hidden by the frame rim.

**Small metal frames** – are ideal for high plus and minus powers; the smaller the frame, the thinner the lenses.

**Small plastics frames** – recommend small plastics frame styles for high minus powers to hide the lens edge thickness and request a mini-bevel edge to conceal the thickness. Recommend plastic 1.6, 1.67 or 1.74 aspheric lenses or high index glass lenses for minus powers. Order surfaced positive lenses to reduce thickness and minimise spectacle magnification.

**Rectangular, Oval and Round styles** – excellent for dispensing high powers and high cyls, as the lens thickness will be reduced in an even/regular shaped frame. For the best cosmetic effect select frames where the Box Centre Distance (frame PD) is the same as the patient's PD. This minimises lens decentration and results in an even edge thickness.

# Single vision lens availability

**High minus powered lens availability**

| Product | Index | Density | V-value | Range | Form |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rodenstock Impression Mono | 1.67 | 1.37 | 31.4 | up to -12.00 | Atoric |
| Seiko SPG AZ | 1.74 | 1.47 | 33 | up to -15.00 | Bi-Aspheric |
| Essilor Lineus | 1.74 | 1.46 | 33 | up to -18.00 | Aspheric |
| Nikon Lite V AS | 1.74 | 1.35 | 32 | up to -20.00 | Aspheric |
| Norville Highlite | 1.70 Glass | 2.90 | 31 | up to -18.00 | Spherical |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.80 Glass | 3.62 | 35.4 | up to -20.00 | Spherical |
| Nikon Pointal | 1.80 Glass | 3.65 | 24.4 | up to -20.00 | Spherical |
| Rodenstock Perfalux 1.9 | 1.90 Glass | 4.02 | 30.4 | up to -20.00 | Spherical |
| Zeiss Lantal | 1.90 Glass | 4.02 | 30.4 | up to -20.00 | Spherical |

**Very high minus powered lens availability**

| Product | Index | Density | V-value | Range up to | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Norville Lenticular | 1.498 | 1.30 | 58 | up to -23.00 | |
| Zeiss Profile Lenticular | 1.501 | 2.55 | 58.3 | up to -25.00 | |
| Norville Lenticular | 1.523 Glass | 2.50 | 58 | up to -23.00 | |
| Zeiss Profile Lenticular | 1.706 Glass | 3.19 | 39.3 | up to -30.00 | |
| Norville Lenticular | 1.701 Glass | 2.90 | 31 | up to -33.50 | |
| Rodenstock Lentilux | 1.707 Glass | 3.21 | 39.2 | up to -24.00 | |

**Very high plus powered lens availability**

| Product | Index | V-value | Range | Form |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Norlite Aspheric | 1.498 | 58 | up to +15.50 | Aspheric |
| Norville Hi Drop | 1.498 | 58 | up to +15.00 | Aspheric |
| Norlite Lenticular | 1.498 | 58 | up to +48.00 | Spherical |
| Norlite Lenticular | 1.498 | 58 | up to +22.00 | Aspheric |
| Essilor Omega | 1.5 | 58 | up to +20.00 | Aspheric |
| Zeiss Clarlet | 1.501 | 58 | up to +23.00 | Spherical |
| Zeiss Aphal | 1.501 | 58 | up to +23.00 | Aspheric |
| Rodenstock Perfastar | 1.502 | 58.2 | up to +22.00 | Aspheric |
| Seiko SSV | 1.67 | 32 | up to +16.00 | Aspheric |
| Rodenstock Impression Mono | 1.67 | 31.4 | up to +12.00 | Atoric |
| Rodenstock Cosmolit | 1.67 | 31.4 | up to +12.00 | Aspheric |
| Norville Highlite | 1.701 Glass | 31 | up to +12.00 | Spherical |
| Zeiss Tital | 1.706 Glass | 39.3 | up to +25.00 | Spherical |
| Norville Lentic | 1.701 Glass | 31 | up to +28.00 | Button |
| Norville Bi-Lentic | 1.701 Glass | 31 | up to +20.00 | Spherical |

The charts above are not exhaustive and show a typical selection of lens products available at the time of going to print. A top tip is to ensure that you always have a up-to-date set of manufacturers' lens catalogues within your practice for reference.

## References


**Lens availability data** by Robert Cubbidge
**The principles of ophthalmic lenses** by Mo Jalie
**Clinical optics and refraction** by Andrew Keirl
**Practical Optical Dispensing** by David Wilson


These books are available to order from the ABDO College bookshop.


## Sally Bates FBDO

Sally is a self employed dispensing optician and part-time lecturer at the ABDO College in Godmersham, Canterbury. She is the proprietor of 'Identity Optical Training' and frequently organises dispensing courses for professional and support staff, including NVQ courses, revision days, mock exams and CET evenings.


# No such thing as a typical day...

Working in reception at ABDO College requires the ability to cope with a diverse range of tasks. Each member of the reception team brings a rounded and versatile background of skills and interests to meet the challenges.

**Several hats at once**

Sue Rose's official title at ABDO College is College Technician. However, this does not explain the other components of her work: teaching, supporting other teaching staff and managing the all-important College reception area.

'There is definitely no such thing here as a typical day,' Sue says. 'The work in reception can be unpredictable and, being part of a relatively small and diverse team in a rural community, this also means we must deal quickly with different challenges as they arise.'

Sue has been at the College for six years. She started out her working life as a technician, gaining the SMC(Tech) qualification in 1999, progressing to qualify as a dispensing optician by distance learning at ABDO College and she is now studying for a degree. Sue has worked for independent opticians as well as a multiple and, in order to 'keep up to date' continues to work in practice on some Saturdays.

'On a busy day, I may be wearing several hats at once,' Sue explains. 'It's a bit like keeping lots of spinning plates in the air, rather like dealing with patients in practice and being mindful of them all together – something all optical professionals can relate to.'

Sue ensures that teaching rooms and equipment are suitably arranged for students according to their busy timetables. As well as teaching practical work, at lunchtimes she often helps small student groups to enable them to explore the extra equipment available at the College. This provides the opportunity to try glazing, colorimetry or to investigate practice software, measuring systems or low vision technology. In addition, like the others in the reception team, she helps students with their queries and concerns.

Sue says: 'The biggest satisfaction comes from the clear appreciation our students have of the College. It is personally satisfying to be involved in a team, which helps them achieve success in their examinations. It is also rewarding to know that, as a result of the teamwork here, the students have had an enjoyable and fruitful time during their block release visits to Godmersham.

'Students are in a superb environment in which to study and we do our best to assist the College in providing a relaxed atmosphere, which our students say is also conducive to study. They also find the time to have plenty of fun and forge lasting friendships.'

**Coffee provider and brow-mopper**

Helen Lilley says: 'Working on reception there are always duties that are dealt with on a daily basis, but the nature of the work requires that we are ready for all eventualities. My role as full-time receptionist means I am tea and coffee provider, brow-mopper, post lady and telephonist. However, the main focus of the job is to make sure the needs of the students are properly catered for.

'Whether students are here in person, or at the end of the telephone, they get treated the same way, in that we do all that we can to help. That includes a hug or two, if needed, which often comes at the end of block release. It is important to have empathy between the students and reception staff. Since we are always available by phone when they are not in residence, they can be reassured to recognise a friendly voice and someone able to quickly forward their query to the right person. Helen continues: 'It is important to be flexible in the role and able to offer help wherever that may be. In my case I am also a 'first-aider'. Helen sees the biggest challenge as: '…trying to balance the needs of our students, staff and ABDO members to equally high standards whilst remaining calm, positive and friendly.'

Helen has been with the College for almost two years and cannot imagine working anywhere else. The bonuses come from '…working in a beautiful environment and feeling like part of a big family rather than the traditional employer/employee relationship.' She previously worked in retail, focusing on customer service. For 13 years this was for WHSmith and she has also made curtains for a living, been a 'Woolies' girl and worked at a holiday camp.

Helen lives with her husband Chris and daughter Rebecca in Crundale, a small village two miles from Godmersham. Rebecca has just graduated and Helen believes this has helped her better understand the student culture. 'Being a local girl (I grew up in Chilham) my knowledge of this area is very useful in the line of duty. Sometimes it might be

as trivial as knowing where to get the best fish and chips but also locating a doctor or dentist.

'If I were to have a claim to fame it would be that I have appeared on Bargain Hunt (yes, David Dickinson really is that colour) and that I have been published, as a poet, both here and in America.' Helen's varied range of other interests include bootfairs and antiques (making her a natural for Bargain Hunt!), visiting period houses and gardens, reading, sewing – and cake baking. Her cakes are held in great esteem throughout the College!

**A little of the unexpected**

Part-time receptionist Belinda Jeffries, who has been with the College for a year, says: 'The role of receptionist gives a great sense of satisfaction. To be surrounded by young and enthusiastic students is fulfilling and supporting them is infinitely rewarding. I think I can speak for the others when I say we usually return home with a feeling of well-being and a job well done. We work in the most beautiful surroundings and, whether it's winter or summer, our spirits are always lifted by simply looking out of the window at an uninterrupted view of fields, horses and trees.'

Belinda explains that most days on reception tend to fall into a pattern, especially when there are no students on block release – such as during the summer holidays. 'However, when the students are in residence, our days still involve the usual responsibilities, but the students add a little of the unexpected. Reception staff are never sure what the day will bring.

'We are the first port of call for all the students when they are on block release and they come to us with any queries or problems. We then offer assistance ourselves or direct them on to the appropriate department, whichever is the best option. Working on reception means we get to know the students well and they have confidence in us. Therefore, they often contact us after they have departed. Our priority is always the student's welfare. We will do whatever we can to ensure that they are happy and feel secure.

'We also cater to them in other ways; any illnesses or medical problems are reported to reception where we either provide first-aid or arrange a visit to the local doctor or dentist. We supply any stationery as required – our stock cupboard could be described as a mini WHSmith – and student post also goes through us.'

Reception staff are available to help with the other departments such as the Distance Learning Institute and Membership and occasionally the Examinations department. They play a role in the Graduation Ceremony in November, and Helen assisted at this event in 2009.

After leaving school, Belinda started work at Natwest Bank where she stayed for 14 years. She left to help her husband with his commercial vehicle sales company for eleven years. 'We now own a site where we still sell vans but we also let commercial land. I was therefore able to return to the outside workforce on a part-time basis while continuing to do his book-keeping.'

The couple live with their son and daughter in the village of Wye, a few miles from the College. Belinda says: 'My daughter recently took her GCSEs while my son has finished his first year at secondary school. I have lived in Wye for my entire life and my parents live just around the corner – wonderful for me but possibly a little too close for my husband!'

Belinda is a keen craftswoman and belongs to two local patchwork groups. These are part of a larger organisation based in Canterbury boasting three hundred members. She is programme secretary for the organisation which entails booking speakers and workshops for five meetings each year – a position of considerable organisational skill and responsibilty in itself.

In addition, she works as a volunteer at the local Pilgrim's Hospice which she finds, '…incredibly humbling and rewarding' and helps out with the local RNLI. 'I am also a member of the Wye Footpath Preservation Society where volunteers work regularly to retain our local footpaths. I love to walk with them when I get the opportunity which is not as often as I would like.'

**Meeting students past and present**

'I have worked for ABDO for over 20 years and have enjoyed every minute of it' says Deanne Gray. Deanne has seen at first hand the remarkable changes and developments that have taken place with the Association over two decades, as well as the formation of ABDO College in 2001. During this time she has played a key role in 'front of house' activities, enjoying direct contact with ABDO members, those in the manufacturing side of optics – and now the students of the College.

Deanne is also a part-time member of the ABDO College reception team alongside her role as administration manager for *Dispensing Optics* which involves attendance at all the Journal Advisory Committee meetings. As well as helping Michael Potter organise the annual ABDO Graduation Ceremony, she is also a well-known face at the

The ABDO College reception team, from left to right Sue Rose, Deanne Gray, Belinda Jeffries and Helen Lilley.

ABDO Conference and Exhibition. Deanne says: 'I continue to meet many of our students past and present when manning the ABDO stand at Optrafair, at CET weekends and on reception at the ABDO Conference. It is important for students old and new to have a familiar and friendly face when attending these events; it makes them feel comfortable as they know you are approachable and happy to help in any way you can.

'At College reception, I attend to routine responsibilities such as answering phones and dealing with post while helping and supporting students and visitors. Like the others, I am always ready to do anything else within the College during the one day I am there, although I don't get involved with quite same the range of situations as my colleagues.'

Outside ABDO and the College, Deanne enjoys a busy family life with husband Mike, three daughters and three sons-in-law, plus 3.5 grandchildren under two and a half! Then there are the two dogs. Deanne says: 'Tug our Newfoundland occasionally visits the College and makes the ground floor his own, usually sleeping in a doorway so everyone has to step over his considerable frame.' Right now Deanne and Mike are involved in building their own house – designed by Mike – and living on site in a caravan, 'It's great fun and, at the moment very dusty and hot! Work is progressing well.'

Deanne must be fully prepared for caravan living having been a member of the Girl Guide Association – now known as Girlguiding UK – since becoming a Brownie aged five. Her enduring support has included running a guide unit for over 26 years, and her present role as County Camp Advisor. Her next step is in passing on her love and commitment for the Association through becoming a Trainer for adult leaders.

Deanne is a keen craftswoman – something her colleague friends on *Dispensing Optics* benefit from each Christmas. She particularly enjoys: '…quilting and crafting beautiful and cute things, hence I am always surrounded by scraps of fabric, buttons, beads and ribbons – not always easy with caravan living!'

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