# Webinar Transcript

**Optometry Scotland Introduction**

**Julie Mosgrove:** Hello and welcome to the webinar on advancing optometry education in Scotland. My name is Julie Mosgrove, Chair of Optometry Scotland, and I would like to welcome and thank all attendees today for your attention whilst you hear about the reforms in Scotland's optometry undergraduate programmes.

During the session we'll listen to presentations from the Scottish Government, NHS Education for Scotland and the two Scottish optometry schools, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the Highlands and Islands. At OS, we understand that you may have questions on this reform, so we have gathered questions in advance for our members, which we hope will be covered in today's session.

The group will cover some of these within their own individual sessions, and for any remaining, these will be covered during a Q&A session at the end of all presentations. Now I'll hand the floor over to our speakers who will share their respective updates. Many thanks.

**Scottish Government Presentation**

**Janet Pooley:** Hello, I'm presenting today on the work that Scottish Government has done and is doing to support and develop the changes required by the General Optical Council in the training of our optometrists and dispensing opticians. I'm Janet Pooley, Chief Optometric Advisor at the Scottish Government.

Last month I was delighted and honoured to be invited to London by the College of Optometrists to see the newly qualified members entering our profession. It was wonderful to see their excitement and to see how proud and supportive their families were.

I graduated with a degree in Ophthalmic Optics in 1989 from Aston and gosh, don't I look young, and I did my pre-reg at the Birmingham Midland Eye Hospital. It was a long time ago and so much has changed, but being an Optom has been a really exciting and rewarding career.

Before I go on, I should say that what is being proposed for the profession in Scotland is not something that could have been considered without huge amounts of time and commitment from so many of you over many years. The care that is being provided by optoms with the support of their dispensing colleagues and their practice teams has been transformational. Lots of time and effort to deliver such a shift in the delivery of care.

Optometric care has come a long way in Scotland and the new undergraduate training will embrace this change.

In 2016 the GOC went out to consultation on changes to the undergraduate qualifications and how we train optoms and DO’s in the UK. Overwhelmingly the feedback was that our eye care professionals needed to have more clinical experience. This was all part of the GOC’s Educational Strategic Review, the ESR. The outcome is the educational training requirements the ETR published in 2021. The changes will see both the optometry and dispensing courses fully incorporate the clinical experience.

For example, in optometry, the final pre-reg year will now sit within the formalised degree course. The optometry course will award a masters level qualification on successful completion and a higher degree level qualification for DO’s will be required. This means that academic study will be combined with professional and clinical experience in a single approved qualification.

These key changes are fundamental to ensure that students gain greater experience of working with patients into professional learning, teamwork and preparation for entry into the workplace in a variety of settings to support our more clinical roles.

In order to deliver these changes in Scotland, the Scottish Government commissioned NES in 2021 to scope the options available. I wrote out to you all in early 2022 to encourage you to get involved in the wide-reaching consultation that NES undertook as part of this Commission. I'm really grateful to many of you who gave up your time and contributed to the process. I know for some of you that can't have been easy and your honesty and candidness was greatly appreciated.

The discussions evidence that current clinical placements are highly variable, not only in respect of the experience and supervision of the trainee, but also the quality. The two main recommendations from the scoping exercise related to a need for an overarching quality management programme to ensure fair and equitable delivery of training and also that optometrists in Scotland should graduate as IP qualified with a robust post registration programme to support newly qualified practitioners. Thank you very much indeed to all of you who took part and for NES for delivering this detailed and wide reaching piece of work.

Scottish Government provides additional funding to both universities, the University of the Highlands and Islands and Glasgow Caledonian University to enable them to develop their courses in line with the GOC changes and the universities have been committed to adopting the suggested changes from the NES consultations. It's important to remember that NES has significant experience supporting other healthcare professionals in their pre- registration training. They are ideally placed to support the universities in making improvements and changes for optometry too.

I'm delighted to inform you that a Foundation has been agreed on which to proceed and I was pleased to share with you the Memorandum of Understanding between Scottish Government, the universities and NES back in October, which will see Scotland taking this unique opportunity to design and develop a leading education and training programme. The changes are being implemented for good reason. We have unprecedented waiting time pressures across many hospital specialities, including in the hospitalised service. On top of this, new treatments, an ageing population and the need to provide the full range of eye care services in rural and island communities will provide future challenges. The training that is delivered needs to ensure that optometry, the optometry workforce complements the other ophthalmic services as well as meeting the needs of the patient. Optometry has already made dramatic changes to the care that's being delivered in community practices and within the hospital eye service.

Nearly a third of you are now independent prescribers, well ahead of any other UK nation in proportional terms. That's incredibly impressive and is testament to the huge amounts of hard work and time that many of you have invested. The masters courses in Scotland will enable students to register as IP optometrists at the point when they successfully complete their five years of undergraduate training. As requested too, NES will also provide mentorship to newly qualified optoms practising in Scotland.

Despite the extensive financial constraints imposed across the public sector, Scottish Government is invested in the future of optometry. This is evidenced by the significant investment already committed to support the new undergraduate training programmes, but also in the recent 6% Goss fees uplift, the highest awards in the UK for the third year running.

The new training will increase access to a wider range of community based ophthalmic care for patients across the whole of Scotland, with all optoms able to prescribe a full range of medication and it will ensure that all primary care optoms are fully able to support their GP and secondary care ophthalmic colleagues as part of the wider multidisciplinary team approach.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to improve and build on the education and training available to students to meet the challenges ahead. The foundation year supervisors will be key to the success of any new placements. Thank you to those of you who have trained numerous colleagues over many years and I really hope that you'll continue to deliver this training in the years ahead. If you've not been involved before, please do think about becoming a supervisor. A lot of you are really experienced, have been learning and developing your own clinical skills during your career and have a huge amount to offer to new colleagues. Please don't leave the profession without passing all that valuable experience onto future generations.

I do appreciate that some of these changes may give rise to concern, and we will endeavour to mitigate these. Not everything is yet in place and whilst the educational approvals are required early, some of the details, particularly for the final year, are still to be decided. With this in mind, the Universities, NES and Scottish Government will further engage with the wider profession and interested stakeholders in the future. These are exciting times for our profession, and I very much hope that you will embrace the new opportunities that are in development.
Thank you.

**NHS Education for Scotland Presentation**

**Lorraine Cameron:** Hello everyone, I'm Lorraine Cameron. I'm an IP Optometrist and Senior Specialist Tutor here at NHS Education for Scotland. I joined the Foundation Training Year team in August this year. That's led by Doctor Louise Madden.

Following on from Doctor Janet Pooley talk, I would now like to provide an update on NES’s role in supporting the reforms here in Scotland.

The Optometry Foundation Training Year will provide students with the placement experience that's required by the two schools of optometry in Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the Highlands and Islands as part of their new Master’s in Optometry programmes.

The Optometry Foundation Training Year will work towards a vision to strengthening eye care delivery to the people of Scotland through innovation and education and training.

At the core of what we will do is to produce adaptable, therapeutically qualified optometrists who will be confident and capable of operating in multi professional teams across a variety of different healthcare settings to meet diverse and changing patient needs.

Now that we have a foundation that's been agreed upon, NES will support the universities with the delivery of the placement in the 5th year. There is a vast array of expertise within NES that will be beneficial in supporting the universities with this placement experience. As the education and training body for NHS Scotland, NES manage many different training schemes for healthcare professionals and this includes dentists, pharmacists, psychologists, nurses, midwives and healthcare scientists, and these well-established programmes provide a real opportunity for the Optometry Foundation Year project to gather valuable insights, knowledge and supporting evidence for its success. We continue to work closely with colleagues in NES who share similarities in their student training and supervision models, such as Pharmacy, the Pharmacy Foundation Training year and the dental vocational training, and these partnerships not only allow us to gather evidence for implementing such methods in optometry, but also enables us to make the best use of existing resource and expertise and the reforms have really provided an opportunity for the universities and future student optometrists training in Scotland to be more integrated into NHS supported clinical teaching that exists across other NHS professions. And we hope that this will foster a multi professional mindset in line with other healthcare professionals, and as we learn from one another, we all share that common goal of improving healthcare in Scotland.

So, what will NES’s role be in the new Masters Optometry programmes?

We will support the two schools of optometry in Scotland with the delivery of the clinical placement in the 5th year. We will also ensure quality management of the placements and this includes approval of the placement sites and also includes providing a comprehensive supervisor training programme, and this will align with current supervisor training already in existence and utilised successfully in other professions that sit within NES, such as pharmacy and dentistry.

We will also deliver a core training programme for students to enhance, supplement and support that practical element of the fifth-year experience.

There will also be a post registration mentorship programme to support newly qualified independent prescribing practitioners in the early stages of their career.

This diagram provides an outline for what the foundation training year could look like. The details and specifics of this plan will undergo thorough consultation with stakeholders before the final details are confirmed with the universities, who have ultimate responsibility for the students.

The 5th year placements will consist of two different placement blocks and this allows students to have a broader range of experience in different settings. Assessments will be ongoing throughout the year that will regularly inform students of their progress throughout. We will utilise Turas portfolio. This will help ensure students are progressing throughout the year and document assessment activities and experiences that will demonstrate required skills and behaviours mapped against the required GOC learning outcomes.

The training year will provide a core training programme throughout the two placement blocks to supplement and support that practical element and this will include e-learning

modules, specialist webinars and virtual discussion groups that will focus on interactive case discussion and case scenarios as well as facilitating students to engage in a research project. There will also be one day per week of protected study and this will be set aside

for clinical development, a non-patient facing day that really allows students to help consolidate their learning.

Also included in the placement blocks will be independent prescribing placement and, already in existence for postgraduate learning in NES Optometry, our simulation placement and teaching treat clinics. The Optometry Foundation Training Year will utilise this incredibly successful expertise to enrich their students placement experiences and this will allow for a breadth of patient scenarios, pathologies and most importantly prescribing learning opportunities to be realised. Simulation is a really exciting innovation and it allows for consistent and standardised environments with invaluable reflection and feedback opportunities and we are really excited to have this integrated into the Foundation training year.

This timeline offers a glimpse into the plans ahead for this exciting new project. Now with the completion of the scoping work and a solid foundation in place, we are embarking currently on the development of the NES supported placement experience, and during this phase, design, consultation and development, we will engage in extensive consultations with our stakeholders, focusing on the key elements that are highlighted in the previous slide.

As our project evolves, we will ensure that you stay informed and updated and prior to the planned live launch in 2028, we will implement pilot runs and make necessary tweaks and adjustments to our plans and processes, all aimed at guaranteeing the project’s success.

So, what are our next steps?

Well as mentioned in the timeline, there's a substantial amount of work ahead in the coming years.

Feel free to express your thoughts and perspectives with the representatives on our stakeholder group who will serve as the voice of the profession in Scotland and these opinions will provide valuable insights into the design, consultation fees and beyond, and this will really help shape a successful development of the Foundation training year and we do have the time to ensure we do this effectively before the launch in 2028.

If the plans sound appealing, we would invite you to consider your involvement as a supervisor in the future and we will continue to share updates on the projects progress and decisions as they unfold.

Thank you very much for your time and listening to our update. I'll now hand over the floor to the universities who will share their own updates.

**Glasgow Caledonian University Presentation**

**Graeme Kennedy:** Hello, my name is Graeme Kennedy and I'm an IP Optometrist and Senior Lecturer in Vision Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University. I'm here to tell you about the development and roll out of our new Master of Optometry with Independent Prescribing programme which has been developed to fulfil revised GOC requirements for qualifications in optometry as well as for qualifications and specialist prescribing.

This new programme will be hosted within the Department of Vision Sciences here at GCU where we have a long history of providing highly regarded education for the optical and non-medical eye care professions.

Our department is unique in the UK in providing undergraduate education for optometrists, dispensing opticians and orthoptists as well as options for postgraduate study within these disciplines. Students in our various programmes learn together which allows us to foster within our students a real sense of what it's like to work within a multidisciplinary team when providing patient care.

We have an on-campus eye clinic, the GCU Vision Centre with an extensive database of patients and through which we provide a wide range of core and specialist clinical services to the public in areas including orthoptics, low vision and glaucoma shared care.

The Vision Centre is supplemented by a suite of pre-clinical facilities where students can learn and develop their clinical examination skills. Across the department our learning and teaching provision is informed by highly rated research. In the last UK wide quality review of research activities in higher education known as REF 2021, over 90% of GCU's research in the area of allied health was rated as being world leading or internationally excellent which included a significant contribution from staff in vision sciences.

Our programmes also perform consistently well against the range of other external measures including the National Student Survey and complete University guide subject league tables. However, despite the strengths of our current provision, our four-year GOC approved BSc Honours programme in Optometry requires to be adapted in order to maintain regulated approval. And so, for the last 18 months, we've been working on the

development of a new five-year master’s level qualification in Optometry that also integrates training in independent prescribing.

Now this has required the development of an entirely new curriculum for our undergraduate education in optometry and I'll explain shortly the ways in which the new curriculum differs from our current provision. But the development of the programme has been informed by feedback from various sources involving a wide range of stakeholders. These have included NES focus groups which have been discussed elsewhere and a stakeholder group which met a number of times over the first half of 2022 and had a wide-ranging representation from across the sector. We've also held internal focus groups for our academic and clinical staff as well as for our Optometry students. Finally, we've discussed our programme development with our current external examiners for optometry who both hold senior academic positions in other UK optometry departments. Discussion of the new programme development has been a standing item over the last two academic sessions on our internal programme board, which includes an external subject expert who is an experienced community IP Optometrist.

So, as I mentioned earlier, we have developed an entirely new curriculum which integrates academic study, practical experience and professional practice in a spiral design where specific concepts are introduced and then revisited as students progress through the programme. This has involved writing 26 new modules to ensure that we're addressing all the GOC specified learning outcomes for optometry and independent prescribing, of which there are some 130 in total.

The new module structure has been developed around 3 closely related and overlapping themes:

Firstly, the structure, function and disease of the eye and visual system which focuses on the development of the knowledge and skills required for the safe prescribing of medicines to manage eye disease.

Secondly, we have clinical and professional skills which targets the development of professionalism, communication skills, holistic and patient centred clinical care, eye examination skills and the management of refractive and binocular vision anomalies.

The third theme, Vision Science and Research, covers the fundamental scientific principles that underpin the study of the eye and vision and promotes the development of a range of skills and critical thinking and evidence appraisal, skills which will allow students to tackle both clinical and scientific questions and to undertake robust evidence based practice.

So how and where will the new programme be delivered?

Well, in years one to four students learning will be largely campus based and will involve an increasing volume of clinical learning as they progress. In particular, compared to our current provision, we'll deliver a significant increase in the volume of patient facing clinical experience that students gain through our GCU Vision Centre as well as through short placements to hospital eye departments. We're also currently working with various employers with a view to providing additional short placements within community optometry in the early years of the programme to allow students to gain experience of different practice environments. In addition to that, we will deliver a significant increase in the volume of clinical teaching dedicated to ocular disease which will largely comprise case-based learning.

In year five, students will undertake an extended external salaried clinical placement period, which will be split into two blocks and will integrate IP specific activities including simulation and virtual teach and treat clinics. The delivery of these placements will be supported by NES and details on the nature of the support that NES will provide are discussed elsewhere. It's important to point out that GCU will retain overall responsibility for students while they undertake these clinical placements as they form an integral part of the overall programme and so students will remain matriculated with the university throughout this period.

Ultimately, on successful completion of our new programme, graduates will be eligible to register with the GOC as an optometrist and will also be eligible to join the GOC specialty register of IP Optometrists.

So, what is our timeline for delivering this new programme?

Well, in recent months we've been going through the process that's required for internal university approval of the programme and that process is expected to be completed by early December. That process has included scrutiny of the programme documentation by a panel in order to assess the programme’s alignment with national education and regulatory frameworks, as well as with university policies and regulations, and that panel included two external industry experts, one being an experienced Scottish Community IP Optometrist, the other being a senior academic from another UK optometry department. We're also in the process of preparing a suite of quality assurance documentation for submission to the GOC to allow our programme adaptations to be noted and we expect that that submission will be made in early 2024.

Subject to all relevant approvals, we're planning for the first cohort of students to be admitted to the new programme in September 2024, followed by a continual year by year roll out. This means that the first cohort of students will be entering the extended external clinical placements supported by NES in the 2028-29 academic year, with the first cohort completing the programme and graduating in the summer of 2029.

Students who are currently enrolled in our existing BSc Honours programme in optometry will remain in that programme and will complete the College of Optometrists scheme for registration after graduation as a route to registration with the GOC. That means there will be no option for students to be transferred from the existing programme to the new, and we have discussed this already with our current students in order to manage their expectations as to what the introduction of the new programme means for them.

So, in summary, we're really excited at the prospect of delivering a new undergraduate programme in optometry and then producing graduates who are able to support communities across Scotland by providing advanced clinical services to patients. And we're delighted to be working with NES in this endeavour.

We'd like to acknowledge the support that we've received from the Scottish Government in developing our programme and in helping us to realise our shared ambition of embedding IP training within undergraduate education for optometrists, which will be unique to Scotland.

I'm very happy to be contacted by anyone who may have an enquiry about our new programme or its implementation, and I can be contacted at the e-mail address shown here.

Thank you.

**University of the Highlands and Islands Presentation**

**Sue Lightman:** Hello everyone. I'm Sue Lightman. I'm the Academic Lead for the UHI programme in optometry and the programme lead is Allison McPherson.

The programme that we run currently started in 2020 and our first cohort of students are in their 4th and final year.

Our curriculum is already very focused on clinical experience from year one so we were really ahead of the GOC education strategy and we've been teaching around clinical cases from year 2. They also have 19 weeks of community and hospital placements already included.

As you all know the GOC now require programmes to include the original pre-registration year so the programme moves from a four year to a five year programme and from a BSc

(Hons) to an MOptom. Additionally in Scotland, IP will be delivered and we already have IP teaching embedded within our current taught curriculum in the Case Studies modules in years two to four. Year five will be delivered with NES with Scottish Government funding.

So just to take the opportunity to tell you about our programme because many of you will be familiar with GCU programme structure but not ours. Basically, in year one we provide the basic skills required for a student coming straight from school into an environment where they are entering into a professionally accredited programme. So, we are sure that they have the study skills required for the programme and also the foundation of clinical practice provides the basis of how to move from being a general member of the general public to being a professional in clinical practice. We include the basic optometry understanding of structural function, visual pathway, principles of optics, introduction to clinical optometry where they have basic skills start to be taught and we also teach introduction to optometry business skills so that when they go into the practices they understand how it works.

In years two and three we have two modules each semester, case studies and Clinical Optometry. The case studies include a real-life case with all sorts of different aspects to it considered and supported lectures such as the structure of the conjunctiva in the case of conjunctivitis, microbiology, that kind of thing, are all included. And in clinical optometry, we teach the skills that are required to sort out the clinical problems.

In year three, they also undertake literature review so that they are building on their research skills done during the clinical case studies and to make sure that they understand how to look at the paper and look at evidence and see what the sources are and whether it's safe to use it. In year four they have a 12-week clinical placement and we still have a dissertation included.

This is the structure of the new programme, the new MOptom with IP. As I said, year one is going to stay exactly the same. In year two we've split the case studies into 20 credits and management of therapeutics into 20 credits and this applies across years 2 semester 1, semester 2, year 3 semester 1, semester 2 and year four. This is so that we can demonstrate the management and therapeutics teaching for our IP accreditation. Clinical Optometry stays the same. These are the practical skills needed to support the clinical diagnosis and management of these clinical problems. The literature review stays the same. In year 4, the dissertation stays the same, the community optometry placement of 12 weeks stays the same and these ones are more case studies and management of therapeutics.

In year five we have learning and experience in practice run by NES which is 80 credits, but we have a UHI exam as well. Independent prescribing is 40 credits which again is NES run but there's a UHI exam. An IP2 at 20 credits which is NES run, but we have a UHI exam.

So, the new curriculum is spiral learning in all parts of the curriculum just in the same way as we are currently doing. We build from year one up to year four in terms of complexity of teaching, complexity of clinical concepts. It's built around Miller’s pyramid because that's what the GOC has mandated and we have to teach them and so they Know and Show in years 1 to 4 and all the Does ones are carried out in year five. Well, the majority of them, there were some of them that are not.

Management and therapeutics is introduced in year 2 semester one and it's integrated with the problem based learning which is all around clinical cases, lectures, practicals, workshops and flip glossary. The learning each week surrounds a realistic case with multiple branches, case studies, man management and therapeutics and we revisit

common topics throughout to consolidate learning. Each module is now 20 credits in years one to four and the teaching staff are from a mixture of academics, experienced IP clinicians, a pharmacologist and guest lecturers including Ophthalmologists.

So just to show you how we've broken down the IP teaching assessment because we really want to make sure that the students are well equipped with the skills that they need. This is management and therapeutics one and it goes through a variety of topics that are included in the clinical case and in the next one it builds on that case now dry eye glaucoma, lid disease and it builds on the knowledge in that and the practical experience in each one is still based around the case.

Again, building now into year three more complicated concepts management of cystoid macular oedema, ocular triage and first aid, building on the knowledge that they've already got and the practical experience complementing that.

Again, moving into semester two pharmacology of glaucoma drugs, paediatric therapeutics, uveitis - so building on the knowledge that they've got.

In year 4, the practice placement, they have the evidence-based medicine sign guidelines in common diseases which we are sure that they understand.

Again, management therapeutics 5 in year four again building on the complex eye management, advanced drive management, effective versus non effective keratitis etc and again the practical experience building on that.

So, in Year 5, as GCU have already stated, the student remains the responsibility of UHI throughout the Year 5 until they graduate. NES will organise the placements and we're keen to use the Turas portfolio that NES use to document all the relevant experience. We hope to use this from year one so the students document everything that they do within this so we can build a portfolio and show that they actually do have the relevant experience we require.

It's 52 weeks and the working week includes a day in which they undergo teaching.

There are two placements instead of the one year and in each placement the named clinical supervisor of which one will be IP qualified and they have IP teaching 90 hours and this formative assessment throughout.

In Year 5, the assessments, the NES education supervisors will be involved with formative and summative assessments and the summative assessments are of the DOES component.

The education supervisors doing summative assessments on these will be pass fail and this will be a standard agreed by both UHI and GCU so that we're all on the same page here. And this includes all the learning outcomes for independent prescribing and learning and experiencing in practice.

So, the student will get a certificate of satisfactory completion and in addition to that, to pass the module, they will need to do a reflective portfolio of five cases seen which we will get them to write to a prescribed rubric and that will also be part of the module but it's UHI based assessment, UHI based assessment, not just the certificates. For IP2, again they will get a certificate of satisfaction completion when they pass all the IP learning outcomes tested by NES. But we will ask them to do a reflective portfolio on five cases seen again written in a way with the prescribed rubric and there will be 40 credits for that.

In addition, we will ask them to sit IP2 which is a closed book exam set by UHI which they must pass at 50% and above and there's 20 credits for this.

So we anticipate that the vast majority of the students will pass learning and experience in practise IP1 and IP2 and graduate MOptom with independent prescribing. If there's a problem with IP2 and they don't pass that, which for us is important because we then know that they have been taught and understood at a safe level, they can still graduate as MOptom and go onto the GOC register. But we anticipate that the vast majority of students will get all three and will graduate with IP. Our programme is start due to start in 2025. Thank you.

**Question and Answer Section**

**Janet Pooley:** Hello everybody. Very nice to see you all. So, we're now going to answer a few questions that have been put to us by Optometry Scotland. And I've got some colleagues here to help me answer some of these questions. So, I'll get everybody to introduce themselves. And Graeme, would you like to go first?

**Graeme Kennedy:** Hi, I'm Graeme Kennedy. I'm an IP optometrist and senior lecturer at Vision Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University.

**Janet Pooley:** Thanks, Graeme. And Gunter?

**Gunter Loffler:** Hello everyone. I'm Gunter Loffler. I'm Head of Department of Vision Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University.

**Janet Pooley:** Thank you. And Sue?

**Sue Lightman:** Hello. My name is Professor Sue Lightman. I'm the Academic Lead at the University of the Highlands and Islands, Department of Optometry.

**Janet Pooley:** And Lorraine?

**Lorraine Cameron:** Hi, I'm Lorraine Cameron. I'm an IP Optometrist and Senior Specialist Tutor here at NHS Education for Scotland.

**Janet Pooley:** Thanks very much and as I introduced myself earlier, I'm Janet Pooley. I'm Chief Optometrist at the Scottish Government. So, as I say, we've got these questions that have come in from Optometry Scotland, and we're very grateful for colleagues putting them together. So, we'll run through them. They are divided into various sections, and we'll answer them as we go through. So, Lorraine, if you can move the slides on.

So, the first question is about workforce and the question is “What workforce planning has taken place?”. So, in Scotland, we've been doing quite a lot of work on our optometry workforce and on our wider Ophthalmic workforce. So, we did workforce reviews at NES back in 2013 and 2016. And more recently, we did a review of the whole Ophthalmic workforce going from primary into secondary care and some of our tertiary care colleagues, which was done in 2021. And we're doing ongoing work now to ensure that we have enough practitioners and professionals working across eye care services providing care for patients. So, lots of work on workforce in Scotland. Thanks. Next question.

So, the next question is “How are we going to manage the number of students each year?”. So, this is the number of students entering our optometry courses and when we're looking at the number of students that we will need each year, and like some of the other professions medicine, dentistry, they look at the number of professionals that they need and vary the numbers that are taken on by the universities every year. Scotland is looking at doing something very similar for optometry which is something very new for us as we move into this new course. And so, we'll be reviewing the numbers that we require every year on an ongoing basis.

The next question, thank you very much.

So, the next series of questions is about funding and this question is “What will the funding model look like for the placement and what financial support will be available to the supervisor?”. So, the first group of students coming out into the community for their foundation year training will be in 2028. So, as you can imagine from a Scottish Government funding point of view, it's very difficult to plan that far ahead, but we've got approval to fund additional training placements for our students in that final year. So, it will be developed over the next few years and further information will come out in due course.

And now looking at the placements. So, Lorraine, are you going to take over here?

**Lorraine Cameron:** Yeah, I'm happy to take this question, Janet. So, this question is “What incentives will there be for students to experience different training opportunities in different locations across Scotland?”. So obviously we recognise the importance of offering a variety of placements to our students across the country and there's certainly some work that we've got planned around scoping where supervisors are currently located, what their roles and expertise are for us to see what we can utilise. And indeed where those supervisors may be in the future in the lead up to 2028, where those are located as well. So, we can plan ahead and see where those placements may be.

All students will have the financial incentive of being paid during the fifth year of their undergraduate training, which is fantastic, provided by the Scottish Government and as well as this financial incentive that all of our students will have to support them through the 5th year, there'll be many non-financial incentives and benefits to work in more remote and rural locations and we aim to work with stakeholders to help promote these benefits to students who might be interested in taking on these exciting placements and the remote and rural locations. It really would provide unique learning opportunities for students working in these rural locations. They'll get to see diverse patient experiences in episodes and we're looking forward to exploring this further. Thanks.

I'll just go to the next question. I'm actually going to take this question as well, “So how will the allocation of the protected day per week be implemented to align with business

needs?” So, the allocation of the protected day which is a non-patient facing day is a really important part of the new training model. And I think it's going to be a really good way for the students to consolidate their learning and get the most out of that fifth year and that's really what we're aiming towards. That being said, we do recognise that students will be placed in businesses, they'll be in busy clinics and we've got to think about scheduling of the current staff in those businesses as well and the scheduling of clinics. So the protected day is not intended to be fixed to a particular day and we will work to develop the programme of learning to be flexible, to allow for that day to potentially be different for different businesses. However, there will be fixed mandatory days that students must attend as part of their training to allow them to succeed in the Master’s degree. But we will give those dates well in advance so that businesses can plan their clinics around that. Thanks.

Moving onto the next question and I'll pass this question over to Gunter. Thank you. Want to take that one for us. Thank you.

**Gunter Loffler:** Thanks, Lorraine. So the question is “What is the impact for students out of Scotland undertaking their placement experience in Scotland?” So, I'll distinguish between two different scenarios in answering this question. So, the first scenario is students who are studying at a Scottish university, that's GCU or UHI. So, students from outside Scotland can enrol in our programmes as long as they meet the entry requirements and as long as they are within agreed numbers between the Scottish Government and the universities. And of course, once they are on the programme they will be undertaking the same training as the Scottish Domiciled Peers, which includes the foundation training year, which is a salaried period in final year and that will be supported by NES. The other part of the question relates to students who are studying at a university outside Scotland. Those students will not be able to take the foundation training year supported by NES.

Thanks for moving onto the next slide Lorraine.

This is a very similar question or at least the answer is very similar. The same distinction applies here in relation to businesses who might be taking on students from outside Scotland. So, if a business is taking on a student who is studying at UHI or GCU then they will fall under the same rules and regulations that support the foundation training years for Scottish domiciled students and supported with NES. If a business wants to take on a student who is studying at a different university outside Scotland, then the rules and regulations would apply that come with that university.

**Lorraine Cameron:** That's great. Thanks Gunter. We'll move on now to themed questions around independent prescribing and I'm happy to take this question. “Do all businesses intending to supervise students need to have an IP supervisor?” So short answer is no, not necessarily. This will not be a requirement that they'll have to have IP supervision for both of the placements that students undertake, although we do envisage ideally having one of the two placements having an IP supervisor in place. We recognise and we understand that students will gain a wealth of experience from supervision in different practice settings, whether the practitioners IP or not, and there's excellent supervision that goes on across the country. But we are working towards implementing simulation and teach and treat clinics as part of the IP placement experience. This is already in existence in NES Optometry and it's working really well and we're hoping to adopt that expertise for the foundation training year and this would be in addition to the two placement experiences that we're going to offer.

Thanks. We'll just move on to the next question again around independent prescribing, “Is there any ongoing support to train supervisors to become IP before August 2028?” So, as we know NES has supported the training of Scottish optometrists to become independent prescribers since 2009 and have invested a huge amount of money, millions of pounds to support this training and GCU have been providing that over this time as well and this will be ongoing as over time. So, as we said in the previous question I answered that we do recognise that IP is an important part of the new training, but we understand and we're going to utilise supervision not necessarily from independent prescribers as well.

And moving on to the next question, “Will students be able to qualify without independent prescribing?” And I wonder if I'll just pass this over to Sue?

**Sue Lightman:** Thank you. The aim is for students at GCU and UHI to qualify as MOptom with independent prescribing. So that is what the degree programme we will offer and the students cannot opt to just do MOptom, they have to go through the course which includes independent prescribing. Both universities have a way if students, which we anticipate would be very rare, but if a student does fail the IP assessments then we can get them to graduate with MOptom and do the IP prescribing afterwards. But this is not an intended outcome. The intended outcome is that students will qualify with IP.

**Lorraine Cameron:** I'll just move on to the next question and this question “Is an expected reduction IP training time from what it is currently and if so, how will it be ensured that the current level of training is achieved in less time?” I'm not sure wants to come in for this question, Sue?

**Sue Lightman:** So, if I start what we're doing at UHI in the BSc (Hons) course, we already had integrated therapeutics within our case studies modules. What we've done now for the MOptom is from years 2-3 and four, we're offering five modules on management and therapeutics, which include the whole IP training curriculum. So, we do not expect to reduce the training time and we're ensuring that by starting in year two to year four and in addition to everything they do in year five with IP that we are not reducing the time and therefore not reducing the quality of training.

**Graeme Kennedy:** I'll come in and just give a GCU perspective on that, thanks Sue. We will be offering rigorous training in prescribing. In essence, up until now we've been working under the GOC handbook, which has prescribed a very kind of linear model of training for IP, which is effectively that you do some theoretical modules at that point you would be able to start a clinical placement under the auspices of the College of Optometrists and then on passing the placement you would then set the common final assessment, the final exam for IP qualification. We see that removal of those requirements gives some flexibility in that we can now integrate better the theoretical and practical aspects and actually introduce some continual assessment of students abilities which allows us to still undertake the same level of training but with greater time efficiencies and I think in a more streamlined and integrated fashion. Thanks.

**Janet Pooley:** Great. Well, thank you very much, colleagues. That's been really interesting, and I hope those of you watching this have really enjoyed it. It's an incredibly exciting opportunity for us in Scotland to develop the new generation of optometrists coming through and I really hope that you'll get involved and take part in the changes. So, thank you very much indeed. And I'm sure in the future there will be lots of opportunities to get involved and ask questions and we'll certainly be making more information available as it comes out. Thank you very much.