

**Training and Accreditation Standards for Slit Lamp Examiners Version 5**  
**- Agreed by the Quality Assurance Committee of the English Screening Programme**

This document was produced following a meeting in Liverpool between  
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Following this meeting there has been extensive consultation and final agreement at the QA meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

**Training and Accreditation Standards for Slit Lamp Examiners working within the English Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme**

**The Slit Lamp Examiner (SLE)**

1. An accredited slit lamp examiner in the English Diabetic Retinopathy Screening (DRS) Programme is either

1a) an Ophthalmologist who meets the following requirements and is prepared to feed back information to the screening service in the required format:

A Consultant, Associate Specialist, Staff Grade or SPR year III or higher with at least one year's experience of Medical retina clinics and is familiar with the aims and objective of the English Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme and in the classification of DR according to NSC guidelines

or

1b) an individual who meets all of the following criteria:

1. Has passed the Certificate in Diabetic Retinopathy Screening including the following Units:

Unit 1: National Screening Programmes, Principles, Processes and Protocols

Unit 2: Diabetes and its relevance to retinopathy screening

Unit 3: Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology of the Eye and its Clinical Relevance

Unit 4: Preparing the patient for Retinal Screening

Unit 5: Measuring Visual Acuity and Performing Pharmacological Dilatation

Unit 7: Detecting Retinal Disease

Unit 8: Classifying Diabetic Retinopathy

2. Is working within the DRS programme as a grader, grading images of at least 1000 patients per year or is a qualified practicing optometrist registered with General Optical Council (GOC) or ophthalmologist registered with the General Medical Council (GMC).
3. Is participating, or is prepared to participate in internal and external quality assurance within the DRS programme.
4. Has undertaken the training described below
5. Has passed the assessment/accreditation described below

### **Eligibility Criteria**

#### Prospective Candidates

The following criteria must be met by prospective SLEs prior to embarking on the training and accreditation programme:

- The agreement of the clinical lead of the screening programme or lead clinician and the service manager of the NHS Trust or PCT providing the diabetic retinopathy screening slit lamp service.
- Participation in grading diabetic retinopathy (not just the disease/no disease level) and taking part in the photographic DRS Quality Assurance process or is a qualified practicing optometrist registered with General Optical Council (GOC) or ophthalmologist registered with the General Medical Council (GMC).
- Demonstrate good interpersonal and communication skills
- Where the prospective SLE is not directly employed by the NHS, but is working as an independent contractor, they should have arranged appropriate indemnity cover via their professional organisation.

#### **Provision of Training and Assessment**

Training can be provided by either:

An Ophthalmologist who meets the requirements given in section 1a above

or

An Hospital Clinical Optometrist with a recent minimum of two years experience of working in Medical Retina Clinics and the DRS Service

or

An accredited SLE working in a Medical Retina Clinic or similar dedicated clinic approved by the Clinical Lead.

An Assessor shall be an Ophthalmologist who is either the Clinical Lead for the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening programme who meets the requirements of section 1a or someone appointed by the Clinical Lead for the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening programme who meets the requirements of section 1a.

The Clinical Lead for the Screening programme is responsible for organising the Assessors.

### **Pathway to Accreditation**

#### **1. Observation of slit lamp BIO examinations.**

This is essential for those candidates who are not competent in performing slit lamp BIO examinations

#### **2. Supervised slit lamp BIO examinations. (Level I / Preliminary Training)**

At this stage all slit lamp BIO examinations performed by the candidate must be under direct supervision of a trainer (see definition).

The supervised training period is complete when all of the following criteria have been met:

#### **1. Successful completion of the following modules of the City & Guilds Level 3 Certificate in Diabetic Retinopathy Screening:**

- Unit 1: National Screening Programmes, Principles, Processes and Protocols
- Unit 2: Diabetes and its relevance to retinopathy screening
- Unit 3 - Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology of the Eye and its Clinical Relevance
- Unit 4 - Preparing the Patient for Retinal Screening
- Unit 5 – Measuring Visual Acuity and Performing Pharmacological Dilatation
- Unit 7 - Detecting Retinal Disease
- Unit 8 – Classifying Diabetic Retinopathy

NB Optometrists registered with the General Optical Council (GOC) are not required to sit units 3, 4 and 5 for the purposes of slit lamp accreditation.

2. Level I / Preliminary assessment: The individual is able to demonstrate competence as assessed by the Assessor when the individual has completed Slit lamp BIO assessments on 10 patients with various stages of diabetic retinopathy and related common retinal disorders, which can take place over a number of clinics.

The Level I / Preliminary assessment can commence when the assessor is satisfied that the candidate has a high likelihood of success. The assessor is required to sign a completion certificate to confirm that the training has been satisfactorily completed and the assessment passed.

If the assessor is satisfied that the SLE is already capable of performing slit-lamp biomicroscopy to the Level I standard, they may be allowed to proceed directly to the Level II assessment in order to demonstrate their competence.

### **3. Supervised grading of diabetic retinopathy and related disorders using slit lamp BIO – Level II / Final Assessment**

After a period of training, the Level II / Final assessment can commence when the assessor considers that the candidate has a high likelihood of success.

The Level II / Final assessment will comprise formal assessments of 10 patients with various stages of diabetic retinopathy and related common retinal disorders performed in a special single session or over a number of clinics within a reasonable time scale.

A formal assessment must be documented using the national grading criteria.

The candidates who are not performing full disease grading in the National photographic DR screening programme should, as part of Level II / Final Assessment, successfully grade images of at least 20 people with diabetes in a special single session.

On confirmation of successful completion of the Level II / Final assessment the Assessor shall inform the Clinical Lead of the screening programme about the success or failure of the candidate. The Clinical Lead of the screening programme shall advise the English National Screening programme of the names of “Accredited Slit Lamp Examiners”.

Candidates who fail the Level II / Final assessment will be required to return to a period of directly supervised training and will be required to re-take the assessment. The Clinical Lead shall advise the English National Screening programme in writing of unsuccessful candidates.

## **Quality Assurance**

To maintain accreditation the SLE shall:

1. Attend a formal continuing professional development/feedback session with the Clinical Lead of the screening programme (organised by the clinical lead) once a year.
2. Maintain a minimum number of slit lamp biomicroscopy examinations of at least 100 people with diabetes per year.
3. Perform peer-reviewed grading of diabetic retinopathy using slit lamp BIO on at least 8 patients with the Assessor once in 3 years (a number chosen because this should be feasible from one clinic). If the Assessor has concerns about the performance of a particular SLE, that SLE must repeat the Level II assessment,
4. The SLEs, whether or not they are performing full disease grading in the National Photographic DR screening programme should participate in the External QA grading set up by the English National Screening Programme for Diabetic Retinopathy. If they are not grading in the National Screening Programme, more frequent External QA grading assessments may be required.

### **SLE Register**

The English National Screening programme shall be responsible for maintaining a register of accredited SLEs.

The register shall identify the accredited SLEs, their screening programme, their Trust / PCT of accreditation, and the date of first accreditation and dates of re-confirmation.

The Lead Clinician for each Screening programme will be responsible for confirming on an annual basis that accredited examiners working within their screening programme meet the requirements of these standards.