



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS

Questions and answers from Session 2: Finding a CLiP Placement

This document responds to all the questions raised in the College Professional formation and development session on 'Finding a CLiP placement' held in October 2024 (recording available [here](#)). In places, we have merged two questions to form one or slightly re-worded questions to make for easier reading. Please contact clip@college-optometrists.org if you have any questions.

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1. The CLiP placement as part of your degree

What is the difference between the current Scheme for Registration and CLiP?

There are several but, from a student's point of view, the main differences are that your programme is a Master's degree and that you will go on your extended work-based placement *during* your degree rather than after. This means that you will have ongoing support and learning provided by your University during your long placement. Previously, most students studied a Bachelor's programme and then started their work-based learning and assessment on the Scheme for Registration after graduating.

What positive changes have been introduced with the change to the new route to registration?

The changes to qualification requirements were made by the General Optical Council, not the College, so we cannot comment on what the intended benefits were. However, we think that positive changes for students will include better integration between your academic study and your work-based learning. We have also taken the opportunity to develop the CLiP Portal to document your progress and ensure that your University and course team, your employer and the College can work together effectively to support you throughout your placement. This will enable you to work with a wider supervisory team to get the best support in practice. We will also, for the first time, have oversight of the experience provided by your employer, as well as your supervisor.

Will we pay tuition fees for the year in which we do the CLiP placement?

Yes, this is part of your degree and comes under the same financial arrangements, including fees, for the period in which you complete the CLiP placement. You will, however, also be paid as an employee.

Do we need to attend University during the CLiP placement period?

This may depend on where you are studying, but you should not be required to regularly attend on-campus sessions at your University. It is likely that your University will arrange online sessions and you will have one working day per week off for learning, to focus on your studies, and to document and reflect on your clinical experiences.

Is CLiP one 44-week placement or two 22-week placements?

Although the assessment framework is arranged in two main parts, it is one 44-week placement (plus 4 weeks holiday) during which you will normally work in the same main location.

Does the CLiP placement have to be in the UK?

Yes, it does, to fulfil the requirements for you to register with the General Optical Council after graduating.

What is the CLiP Portal and how do I log in?

The CLiP Portal is the software platform we have developed to manage all aspects of your CLiP placement, from finding a role in a practice to logging your experience and receiving your assessment outcomes.

Your username for the CLiP Portal is your University email address, and this is also where the Portal will send auto-generated emails such as password re-sets.

If you haven't logged in yet or you need to re-set your password, you can use [this link](#), and check your University email for the response.

2. Making applications

When will applications for CLiP placements open?

We will have all the placements available on the Portal for you to view in early 2025 and will confirm the date on which we will open applications in due course.

What do I need to do about my application now?

You can't look for placements on the Portal until the opening date, but you can prepare for applications by:

- Creating a CV, or reviewing and updating your existing CV.
- Preparing draft answers to questions on the application form. There are four 'additional information' questions which you will be asked as part of each application. These are copied in another answer below.

When we apply, are jobs allocated on a first-come, first-served basis?

No, there is a set start and finish time for applications to be made. After the deadline, employers will start the recruitment process by assessing all the applications they have received and deciding who to invite for interview. The employers will make the decision on who to select.

Why is there a limit of five applications?

There are different reasons for establishing a limit, and this number has been agreed in discussions with our University and Employer stakeholder groups as well as on the advice of the company which created the software and has the experience of using it. One reason which touches on the student experience is the risk of someone making numerous applications at the expense of focussing on studies.

Do I have to write out all sections of the application form for all five of my applications?

No, after you have submitted one application, the system asks if you would like to copy the content over to a new one, and you can then edit it further. After you've submitted more than one application, you can choose which one you want to copy over to use for your next.

When I add qualifications on the Portal, do I need to give GCSEs and A-levels?

There is a limit on how many qualifications you can add, so we suggest starting with your A-levels and add any other relevant qualifications you wish to highlight, if you have them.

What are the 'Additional information' questions in the application form, and can I talk about work experience there?

These are:

1. Explain why you would like to work on this CLiP placement and what you would bring to the role at this practice (answer in up to 300 words).
2. Describe a time when you have displayed strong communication skills with patients or members of the public. (answer in up to 300 words).
3. Give an example of how you have dealt with either: (a) a complaint (b) a failure or (c) a difficult task (answer in up to 300 words).
4. Describe one thing you have learnt or done on your degree which will have an important influence on your clinical practice (answer in up to 300 words).

As you can see, these questions do lend themselves to mentioning specific relevant examples from your prior work experience, whether it's optical or generally customer-facing.

Can we add a cover letter as well as a CV in our applications?

You can only upload one document and you have to upload a CV. It would be possible to include a cover letter as the first page of your CV. However, we don't recommend this – if employers wanted a cover letter they would have asked us to include it in the form.

If I live in a city centre location, where there is likely to be competition for placements, how many of my applications should be in the city centre?

It is difficult to provide a definitive answer as it may depend on the town or city, but we think it would be worth considering two or three choices further out of town or in an entirely different location. Bear in mind that there will be a lot of applications to city centre practices and you are not guaranteed a place.

Can we apply for different locations with the same company?

Yes, within the limit of five applications, they could all be different vacancies within the same company.

Will employers only be interested in optical experience we've got or do other types of experience count?

Employers are very interested in hearing about any experience you have dealing with people directly, whether it's patients, customers or members of the public more generally. Provide examples of times when you have had to communicate with new people directly in any context.

Will employers only be interested in very recent experience?

No, the most important thing is to refer to experience you have which is relevant to the question you've been asked. Employers are generally interested in customer / public facing experience and this does not have to be recent.

Will employers be put off if we ask about salaries?

It is acceptable to ask questions about salary at an interview, but try to ask some questions about the role and the practice as well as this. With regard to the application, the job advert should include salary range but the application form does not include a section for questions.

How many placements will there be for independent practices or hospital settings compared to the multiple-group companies?

It is difficult to say at this stage what the exact mix will be. While we expect there to be a range of experiences on offer, the majority will probably be with multiple-group companies, as is the case with the Scheme for Registration.

3. Failing to secure a placement

What happens if I don't get an offer from any of my first five applications and I need to apply again in another round? Will that mean I start placement later?

No, you will need to apply to vacancies which are included in a second round of placement applications, but your placement start date will be the same. The applications are happening a year or more before the placement starts.

What happens if I haven't found a placement by the time my fourth year comes?

That should not happen. We will organise the application rounds during your second year and will be working to ensure that everyone finds a place. We have worked with employers to try and ensure that there are more vacancies than students so that you have opportunities to find a placement that suits you.

What happens if I don't get a placement at all? Will I be allocated a place?

We would hope that anyone who is not successful in the first round will find a place through making applications in two subsequent rounds. If you did not find a place in the second round we would work with you to advise on applying for great opportunities that you may have otherwise overlooked.

4. Making arrangements with an employer who knows you

If I don't have prior experience with an employer, should I try to get that now so that I can arrange a placement with them?

No, we do not suggest that you try to set up this type of arrangement in the few months prior to applications opening. This is something to consider if you already have prior experience with an employer when you come to your second year of studies. However, if you have the opportunity to get some additional optical or customer-facing experience during holiday periods, it may help round out your application.

What do I need to do if an employer has told me they are prepared to take me on for a CLiP placement?

- Discuss the upcoming application process with the employer and ask if they are committed to offering you the CLiP placement, to start in 2026. You both need to be certain about this arrangement, as we would then advise you not to make other job applications.
- Let them know that they should formally register with the College as a CLiP employer – they would need to do this by early December. Details here: <https://www.college-optometrists.org/qualifying/education-and-training-requirements/clip-for-employers>
- If you think your employer is going to register and make this arrangement with us, please write to us at clip@college-optometrists.org. Your employer can use the same email address if they need to check anything with us.

What's the deadline for making this kind of arrangement?

We would need to know about the arrangement and your employer would need to be registered with the College as a CLiP Employer before the date when other job applications open. Ideally, they should complete the process before the end of 2024.

Will the employer need to pay a fee to register? Are there any other requirements for the employer?

They need to register with us as a CLiP employer, but there are no upfront fees for this. All current information for employers can be found on the [employer pages](#) of our website.

If I make an arrangement with an employer who knows me, does that mean I don't have to do CLiP?

No, this would still be a CLiP placement and they would need to be registered with us as a CLiP employer. The only difference is that you are not going to go through the standard application process to get the role.

If I'm making this type of arrangement, should I also apply for other jobs?

No, we would want the employer to register with us and confirm their offer prior to the first round of applications opening and then we would ask you not to apply to other jobs.

5. Conditions of employment

Are placements paid?

Yes, you will enter into an employment contract and you will be paid, at a minimum, for the four days each week you are required in practice.

Can we still obtain student finance during the placement year?

Yes, this is a clinical placement organised as a requirement of, and as part of, your degree so this is still a study year.

Will stores offer accommodation as part of the package?

Some may do so, yes, but you should not expect it from all stores. Those in more remote locations may offer this, as well as other package enhancements, such as financial help with re-location, additional types of experience, or a higher salary.

How many students will practices take on? Can there be more than one?

Yes, a practice will be able to take on more than one CLiP student, or a mix of Scheme for Registration and CLiP students. Many, for reasons of space or resources, will only take one student at a time.

Will we be paid an amount relating to our University grades?

No, the salary offered will be determined by the employer and should be advertised as part of the package when you apply.

What is the average salary for a pre-registration optometrist?

This, as well as the overall employment package, can vary significantly depending on location, as is the case for qualified optometrists. In general, if you are looking for a higher salary, consider applying to practices in rural and coastal areas.

Will there be CLiP placements in Manchester, given that University of Manchester students are on a different system?

Yes, we expect to have CLiP placements in Manchester. Students from University of Manchester are on a different system and will not be applying for CLiP placements.

If my supervisor left during my placement, would I need to find a new place to work?

We encourage practices to consider contingency plans for this eventuality. Where possible, we recommend they put together a supervisory team rather than just a one-to-one arrangement, so there may be other people within the team who can assume the lead role. If you are working for a large multiple then they would try to make alternative arrangements for your supervision, either using staff from a nearby practice or perhaps moving you to another nearby practice. For smaller groups and independent practices, there could be situations where you would need a new placement arranged, but we would support you in this eventuality.

Do we have secured employment once the CLiP placement is finished?

In many cases we expect employers may build this into the contract, so that you can continue working with them once your degree is completed.

6. Different settings for CLiP placements

Will there be jobs available in independent practices, hospitals and other settings?

We aim to have a variety of settings available for you to apply. At the outset, we expect the majority of vacancies available to be in high street practices offered by the large multiple-group companies. It is unlikely that there will be many placements offered which are in a hospital setting alone. For comparison, less than one percent of current Scheme placements are in hospital settings. However, the College is working to encourage employers to offer opportunities in primary care settings which include some time working in other settings such as domiciliary or hospitals.

Will students working in a high street practice get any hospital experience?

All students will continue to have access to our online hospital experience course, which Scheme for Registration students also use. You should not expect to get actual experience in a hospital as a standard offer for a CLiP placement, but it is worth looking out for these opportunities. Practices outside of city centres may be more likely to offer enhanced packages with experience in other settings.

What's the difference between a high street practice and a hospital experience?

There are many differences but the main one would be the type of patient consultations you would engage in on a daily basis. Patients do not generally go to a hospital for a standard eye examination, so you would get less experience in this area. You would expect to see a greater variety of eye conditions and pathology in a hospital setting. It is possible that in certain hospital arrangements, they may need to arrange for you to have some time in a primary care setting to gain the full range of experience required.

7. Assessment arrangements on the CLiP placement

Will assessors on visits just be checking logbook records or will they also observe us with patients?

There will be a mix of assessment activities and on the face-to-face visits they will be observing you working with patients as well as reviewing your patient records. More detail on assessment will be published in the coming year.

Is there a written assessment?

Yes, there is a Service Evaluation Project which you will complete in the first half of your CLiP placement. You will also be required to log your patient interactions, and

in some cases upload additional evidence such as anonymised patient records, in the CLiP Portal. These records will then be used for assessment purposes.

Will there be an OSCE, like at the end of the Scheme for Registration?

No, you may have one or more OSCEs as part of your degree but they will not be delivered by the College as an element of your CLiP placement.

What happens if you fail an assessment?

There will be opportunities to take the assessment again. Each visit will be split up into separate tasks, so that you if you fail something, we can arrange for you to take that specific task again, rather than repeat the whole assessment visit. In some cases, tasks can be taken again at the next visit and in others we would arrange a time before the next visit to do this.

Will all competencies and requirements be recorded on the CLiP Portal?

One of the changes the GOC has made is that you are assessed by learning outcomes rather than competencies. With that in mind, the answer is yes, the University and the College will be able to sign off to say that you have passed learning outcomes on the Portal. We will publish more information on this in the coming year.

What happens if we don't pass all our competencies by the end of Year 4?

If you do not pass any of the required assessments set as part of CLiP assessment visits, there will be opportunities to attempt them again and pass within the time allotted for your CLiP placement. This means you could fail a task, attempt it again, and pass without creating any delay in your progress through CLiP.

If you did this and were unsuccessful a second time though, you would need to repeat the relevant part (1 or 2) of your CLiP placement again, to develop your clinical skills and decision-making through more experience to increase chances of success in assessment. The need to repeat a whole part of CLiP would mean that you would complete your degree at a later date.

Do we have to go back to our University in the fourth year after our CLiP placement? Will we have to find accommodation again?

The University will generally set assessments for you to complete after the CLiP placement, but we do not expect that you would need to return to University for an extended period of time, unless your degree structure requires your CLiP placement to start in January/February.