



Post Graduate Diploma in Community Eye Health (PgDCEH)

Course brochure

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This one year post graduate diploma in community eye health is designed to provide training in the management of district eye care programmes.

ABOUT THE PgDCEH:

- The only university qualification in eye care programme management in sub-Saharan Africa
- Aimed at aspiring eye care programme managers at district, province or country level
- 1-year blended mode programme, 7 weeks on-campus, 34 weeks distance studies
- Class number 6-12, small enough for individual tutelage, big enough to be recognised
- Applicants who are working in eye care in sub-Saharan Africa, have strong English literacy, numeracy and with a minimum of 4-years' degree or diploma obtained at a recognised educational institution are eligible.
- Previous alumni of the PgDCEH include all cadres of ophthalmic professionals as well as medical, public health and management graduates from all over sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Many are in key roles in eye care management on district, provincial and national level.

What is Community Eye Health?

Community eye health is the application of health promotion and disease prevention, together with the delivery of curative services, at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level of health care, in order to reduce eye disease, visual loss and disability in a community. Community eye health extends the traditional clinical practice of ophthalmology applied to individual patients to a consideration of the eye health of whole populations or "communities", and how these can be assessed and provided for. This requires training in specific skills not usually included in conventional clinical ophthalmology training.

The role of a community eye health specialist will vary from country to country, but will include some or all of the following:

- Assessment of the eye care needs of the community.
- Design and planning of eye care programmes.
- Implementation and management of these programmes.
- Monitoring and evaluation of these programmes
- Development of human resources for eye care services.
- Advocacy for community eye health with politicians, health policy makers, and other decision-makers.
- Research into the main eye diseases, including aetiology and risk factors, clinical trials, and health service research.

What are the aims of the Postgraduate Diploma in Community Eye Health?

The aim of the course is to facilitate the implementation of community eye health programmes in sub-Saharan Africa countries by offering appropriate training in community eye health to people working in blindness prevention programmes.

Where is the course held?

The course is held at the University of Cape Town's Community Eye Health Institute at Groote Schuur Hospital, University of Cape Town, South Africa. It is run by the Division of Ophthalmology of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Cape Town.

The course faculty is made up of a combination of South African and international educators, ophthalmologists and management and public health specialists practicing in the sub-Saharan African region.

Who is the course for?

The course is intended for people working in prevention of blindness programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. These may include national eye care programme coordinators, district, provincial or national eye care programme managers, and clinical professionals working in eye care programmes (ophthalmologists, ophthalmic medical officers, ophthalmic clinical officers, optometrists, ophthalmic medical assistants, and ophthalmic nurses). Administrators and managers responsible for divisions under which eye care resort can also benefit from the training.

It is primarily for (aspirant) programme managers, with the intention that the participants would be able to plan and manage a district eye care programme. The course is in English and would therefore be most suitable for people with good English speaking and writing abilities. **IT DOES NOT PROVIDE CLINICAL TRAINING IN EYE CARE!**

What are the entry requirements?

The course is a post-graduate diploma of the University of Cape Town. The entry requirements are:

- An undergraduate degree in health sciences, social sciences, or business management, or an equivalent university qualification, or recognition of prior learning;
- A minimum of two years of work experience in eye care, with an interest in the management of eye care projects or programmes;
- Fluency in English, as demonstrated by a Grade 12 (matric or school-leaving certificate) or equivalent pass in English;
- Good computer literacy is essential
- Regular and reliable access to computer, internet and data facilities
- It is recommended that students obtain a written undertaking from their employer that adequate support will be provided for practical assignments during the course.

Candidates may be required to complete a Portfolio of evidence (a structured knowledge, skills and activities summary) to support their applications, should some of the eligibility criteria not be fully met.

What is the course structure?

The courses are based on planning, implementing, and managing an eye care programme for a one million population (0,5 million – 2 million) “health management unit” (district, region, province) specific to the student’s own country.

The first course (*Community Eye Health, CHM4000F*) is made up of 12 2-hour lecture sessions, plus 8 1-hour tutorial sessions. For assessment, students must complete two assignments (one of which is a district eye care plan) and write a course test. The lecture and tutorial sessions can be attended in either synchronous or asynchronous online mode. There are individual and group exercises as well as opportunities for consultation with the course faculty with regards to district eye care planning.

Course 2 (CHM4028Q) is offered in blended format over four weeks, one of which is a contact period of one week to cover *Advocacy and Health Promotion for eye care*. Four online sub-modules, namely *Health Professional Education, Eye and health systems, Using Information for Eye Care and Human Resource Development* are covered while engaging with faculty and fellow students over the internet.

Course 3 (CHM4002F) is made up of 5 sub-modules (*Leadership and management, Project Management Essentials and Developing Action Plans, Programme Implementation and Development and Programme Administration and Management* offered in online format over the course of the academic year. During this period, the students develop strategies for human resource development, infrastructure development, and disease control. These strategies are integrated into an eye care programme for the specified service unit. The exercises, group work and assignments are designed to ensure that the students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to successfully manage an eye care programme.

In course 4 (CHM4003W) of the programme, the students return to their health districts, where they implement, administer, manage, and monitor an eye care programme. This period (approximately 22 weeks) is one of “reflective practice”, during which students have opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the initial period. Using remote correspondence, the students are required to report back and debrief on the progress that has been made with their learning. Students are required to complete a portfolio of assignments which are supervised and assessed by course faculty. There is also opportunity to share experiences and to plan their programme activities for the next period.

Which teaching and assessment methods are used?

The teaching methods include interactive, didactic lectures, individual exercises, group work and reflective practice. Programmed Instruction is a method used to assist students to study certain aspects of the coursework through exploration and self-assessment, to augment the distance learning experience.

The assessment methods include modular formative and summative assessments in the form of tests and assignments as well as a course examination.

Courses are made up of individual, discrete modules. Assessments occur continuously and in various modalities, including short answer tests, “take home” assignments, group exercises and role-plays. Students failing to obtain 50% for a modular assessment will have one opportunity to be re-assessed. Students may be permitted to repeat a course they have failed, at the convenor’s discretion. No course may be repeated more than once.

Where a candidate fails any course twice, or fails more than one course, a recommendation may be made to the Faculty Examination Committee to refuse re-admission.

Students are required to obtain a minimum of 50% in each course to qualify for the diploma. The diploma is a post graduate diploma in community eye health, awarded by the University of Cape Town. The Diploma may be awarded with distinction if the student obtains 75% - 100% for all courses with no course less than 70% for any individual course. All courses must be passed at first attempt.

Graduation is usually held in March or April of the following year.

What are the dates for 2026?

Here is the provisional timeline, which will be confirmed early in January:

- Registration starts (online) – beginning February
- Contact coursework starts (Course 1, 2 & 3) – middle February to end of March
- Online coursework starts (Course 1, 2 & 3) – April to June
- Course 4 (5- 6 Portfolio assignments) - Distant – online – July to November

THESE DATES MAY CHANGE!

COURSE OUTLINE

The table contains a provisional outline of the course curriculum for 2024.

Course	Course Component	Outcomes
1	Introduction to community eye health	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the magnitude, causes, and alternative control strategies for the major blinding eye diseases in the world and in Africa Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the components of the WHO / IAPB Eye health initiative Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of programme planning Conduct a situational analysis of the needs and resources for a programme
	Cataract	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the risk factors and pathophysiology of cataract Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the different models of cataract surgical service delivery Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of the control of cataract blindness Design a programme outline for the control of cataract blindness
	Childhood blindness, refractive error, low vision	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the risk factors and pathophysiology of the major blinding diseases of childhood and of refractive error, and the causes of low vision Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of the control of childhood blindness and visual impairment due to refractive error and low vision Design a programme outline for the control of childhood blindness, refractive error, and low vision
	Other blinding eye diseases	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the risk factors and pathophysiology of each of trachoma, onchocerciasis, glaucoma, and diabetes Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of the control of blindness due to trachoma, onchocerciasis, glaucoma, and diabetes Design a programme outline for the control of blindness and visual loss due to each of trachoma, glaucoma, and diabetes
2	Advocacy for eye health	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of advocacy
	Health promotion for Eye health	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the theories of health promotion Design the strategies for health promotion for an eye health programme
	Human resource development and health education for Eye health	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the human resource needs for Eye health programmes Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the theories of teaching and learning Design the programme strategies for the training, recruitment, deployment, and retention of the personnel needed for a programme Design a curriculum for the training of a cadre of primary eye care workers
3	Management 1 – advocacy and strategic leadership	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of management in eye care programmes Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of strategic leadership Be able to apply these in managing a district Eye health programme
	Management 2 – project management	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of project management Be able to apply these in managing a district Eye health programme
	Management 3 – programme development and implementation	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of programme development and implementation Be able to apply these in managing a district Eye health programme
	Management 4 – programme administration and management	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the principles of programme administration and management Be able to apply these in managing a district Eye health programme
4	Eye health programme implementation	Demonstrate an ability to implement a district Eye health programme
	Eye health programme administration and management 1	Demonstrate an ability to administer and manage a district Eye health programme
	Programme administration and management 2	Demonstrate an ability to administer and manage a district Eye health programme
	Programme monitoring	Demonstrate an ability to monitor the progress of a district Eye health programme
	Report back and debriefing on programme implementation	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate a district Eye health programme and to plan the programme activities for the next period

What are the financial requirements?

A fee structure for the 2025 academic year is shown below for illustrative purposes only. The amounts are in South African Rands (R). The exact rates should be used to calculate the foreign currency costs at the time of expected transactions. Note: this excludes travel, accommodation and living costs in Cape Town.

COST ITEM	Students from South Africa	Students from SADC	Students from other African countries	Students from outside Africa
Fee per student	59730	59730	59730	59730
Non-SA Student administrative fee		3750	3750	3750
Additional fee per international student (non-SADC)			45000	60000
	R59730	R63480	R108480	R123480

Applicants must obtain exact quotations for expenses as applicable in 2026.

The course codes for the courses to be taken are:

CHM4000F – Community eye health,
CHM4028Q – Eye care and Health Systems,
CHM4002F – Programme management, and
CHM4003W – Programme Implementation.

Obtain an official quote here:

https://publicaccess.uct.ac.za/psp/public/EMPLOYEE/SA/c/UCT_PUBLIC_MENU.UCT_PROFO RMA_DIST.GBL? Use your application number as your CampusID.

Are there scholarships available and how does one apply?

NO SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE.

Prospective students should make every effort to obtain financial assistance from their employers, NGO funders or other sources, as the allocation of scholarships is a very competitive process. Even if a scholarship is awarded from these sources, it may still be required from prospective students to obtain additional funding to cover some of the costs.

How will I know if I am accepted for the course?

Applicants who are accepted for the course will be informed by the Postgraduate Office of the Health Sciences Faculty in October or November. This will be in the form of an “Offer letter”. Students must respond to this letter by “accepting” and sending back to the sender.

Do I need a visa?

The course requires students to be in Cape Town, South Africa **for approximately seven (7) weeks**, to attend contact teaching and learning activities. Prospective students must ensure that they obtain the correct information regarding visa requirements from the South African consular offices in their countries.

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