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Standards for Optical Centers and Optometry Services

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The Health Policy and Standards Department (HPSD) developed this Standard in collaboration with Subject Matter Experts and would like to acknowledge and thank these health professionals for their dedication toward improving quality and safety of healthcare services in the Emirate of Dubai.

Health Regulation Sector

Dubai Health Authority

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INTRODUCTION

The Health Regulation Sector (HRS) plays a key role in regulating the health sector. HRS is mandated by the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) Law No. (6) of the year (2018) with its amendments pertaining to DHA, to undertake several functions including but not limited to:

- Developing regulation, policy, standards, guidelines to improve quality and patient safety and promote the growth and development of the health sector;
- Licensure and inspection of health facilities as well as healthcare professionals and ensuring compliance to best practice;
- Managing patient complaints and assuring patient and physician rights are upheld;
- Governing the use of narcotics, controlled and semi-controlled medications;
- Strengthening health tourism and assuring ongoing growth; and
- Assuring management of health informatics, e-health and promoting innovation.

The Optical Center and Optometry Services Standards aims to fulfill the following overarching Dubai Health Sector Strategy 2026:

- Pioneering Human-centered health system to promote trust, safety, quality and care for patients and their families.
- Make Dubai a lighthouse for healthcare governance, integration and regulation.
- Leading global efforts to combat epidemics and infectious diseases and prepare for disasters.
- Pioneering prevention efforts against non-communicable diseases.
- Become a global digital health hub.

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- Foster healthcare education, research and innovation.
 - Strengthening the economic contribution of the health sector, including health tourism to support Dubai economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to assure the provision of the highest levels of safety and quality in DHA licensed Optical Center and Optometry Services. The standards have been developed to align with the evolving healthcare needs and international best practices. The standard includes several aspects which are required to provide effective, efficient, safe and high-quality services. This standard includes health facility registration, licensing requirements, facility requirements, healthcare professional requirements and elaborates on the minimum services. This includes but not limited to safety, pre-assessment, diagnostics, informed consent, equipment use and maintenance, medication management, health records management and infection control.

DEFINITIONS

Dispensing optician: is an allied healthcare professional who adapts and fits corrective eyewear, as prescribed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

People of determination: people with personal condition(s) or situation(s) that could make it difficult for them to participate fully in their health care. It includes individuals with disabilities such as (physical, intellectual or sensory), age affected (either elderly or very young), affected by trauma or affected by medications/ drugs.

Eye examination: tests performed by an ophthalmologist (medical doctor), optometrist or orthoptist that measures an individual's eye health and vision to detect any abnormalities and determine the visual status of the person.

Healthcare professional: healthcare personnel working in healthcare facilities and required to be licensed as per the applicable laws in United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Licensure: the process of issuing a license to operate a health facility by an individual, government, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other forms of business operations that are legally responsible for the facility's operation.

Optometrist: is a healthcare professional concerned especially with examining the eye for refractive error problems and prescribing ophthalmic and contact lenses to correct these problems.

Orthoptist: is an allied health professional who cares for patients with eye disorders and plays a crucial role in detecting, diagnosing and managing eye movement abnormalities in both adults and children. They are specialised in eye muscles, squints and binocular vision abnormalities.

Optometry: is the health-care profession concerned especially with examining the eye for defects and faults of refraction, with prescribing correctional lenses or eye exercises, with diagnosing diseases of the eye, and with treating such diseases or referring them for treatment.

Optical Center: A facility focused on examining the eye for refractive error problems and prescribing spectacle lenses, contact lenses and low vision to improve /treat these related problems.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARTG	:	Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods
CE	:	Conformité Européenne
DCD	:	Dubai Civil Defence
DET	:	Dubai Economic and Tourism
DHA	:	Dubai Health Authority
DM	:	Dubai Municipality
FDA	:	Food and Drug Administration
HRS	:	Health Regulation Sector
PQR	:	Professionals Qualification Requirements
PM	:	Preventive Maintenance
MOHAP	:	Ministry of Health and Prevention
UAE	:	United Arab Emirates

1. BACKGROUND

Optical centers and optometry services are essential components of eye care, focusing on the diagnosis, treatment, and management of vision-related issues. Optical centers provide services such as comprehensive eye exams, the prescription of corrective lenses (glasses or contact lenses), and the fitting and dispensing of eyewear. Optometrists, who are healthcare professionals specializing in vision care, play a central role in these services. They perform thorough eye examinations to detect vision problems like nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism, and can also identify and manage eye conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration. In addition to vision correction, optometrists are often involved in the pre- and post-operative care for patients undergoing eye surgeries. The optical centers aim to ensure optimal eye health while providing tailored vision solutions to meet individual needs.

2. SCOPE

2.1. Optical Centers and Optometry Services Standards in DHA licensed health facilities.

3. PURPOSE

3.1. To assure provision of the highest levels of safety and quality in Optical Centers and Optometry Services in Dubai Health Authority (DHA) licensed health facilities.

4. APPLICABILITY

4.1. DHA licensed healthcare professionals and health facilities providing Optometry Services.

5. STANDARD ONE: REGISTRATION AND LICENSURE PROCEDURES

- 5.1. All health facilities providing Optometry services shall adhere to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Laws and Dubai regulations.
- 5.2. Health facilities aiming to provide Optometry services shall comply with the DHA licensure and administrative procedures available on the DHA website <https://www.dha.gov.ae>.
- 5.3. Licensed health facilities opting to add Optometry services shall inform Health Regulation Sector (HRS) and submit an application to HRS to obtain permission to provide the required service.
- 5.4. The health facility should develop the following policies and procedure; but not limited to:
 - 5.4.1. Patient acceptance criteria
 - 5.4.2. Patient assessment and admission
 - 5.4.3. Patient education and Informed consent
 - 5.4.4. Patient health record
 - 5.4.5. Infection control measures and hazardous waste management
 - 5.4.6. Incident reporting
 - 5.4.7. Patient privacy
 - 5.4.8. Medication management
 - 5.4.9. Emergency action plan
 - 5.4.10. Patient discharge/transfer.

- 5.5. The health facility shall maintain charter of patients' rights and responsibilities posted at the entrance of the premise in two languages (Arabic and English).
- 5.6. The health facility shall have in place a written plan for monitoring equipment for electrical and mechanical safety, with monthly visual inspections for apparent defects.
- 5.7. The health facility shall ensure it has in place adequate lighting and utilities, including temperature controls, water taps, medical gases, sinks and drains, lighting, electrical outlets and communications.

6. STANDARD TWO: HEALTH FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1. A Health facility intending to establish stand alone "Optical Center" shall obtain a license from Dubai Health Authority (DHA) to operate and provide optometry services.
- 6.2. The standalone or existing health facility shall have the following:
 - 6.2.1. Display area shall have shelves or cupboards to display optical frames, glasses and lenses.
 - 6.2.2. Eye examination room shall:
 - a. Have a minimum floor area of 7.5 square meters. Smaller floor areas shall be approved upon submitting appropriate justification
 - b. Have an examination chair, which shall be placed not less than three (3) meters away from the sight chart or according to the manufacture's recommendation
 - c. Have a counter or table for writing

- d. Have a hand-washing station with a hands-free operating tap, non-refillable soap or liquid or Foam soap dispensers, a hand sanitizer dispenser and provisions for hand drying at the hand-washing station(s), and education posters for handrub and handwash.
- e. Not permit entry of light during eye examination.
- f. Be oriented to provide patient privacy.
- g. The facility shall be designed to easily accommodate People of Determination and aligned with the Dubai Universal Design Code.

6.3. Management responsibilities:

- 6.3.1. Ensure DHA license is visibly displayed in the health facility.
- 6.3.2. Ensure that all healthcare professionals maintain an active DHA license with malpractice insurance.
- 6.3.3. Ensure that enough optometry staff is available to provide the service during the facility working hours.
- 6.3.4. Ensure that the facility environment is clean and safe.

6.4. Final inspection (Pre-operation assessment)

- 6.4.1. The applicant shall submit an online request for final inspection, upon which the HRS shall conduct an onsite pre-operational assessment.
- 6.4.2. To obtain the DHA license, the applicant must meet the following:
 - a. Appoint a DHA licensed dispensing optician or an optometrist holding a valid eligibility letter issued by DHA

- b. Employ and license qualified optometry staff as per the functional program of the facility
- c. The walls floors and doors shall have contrast colours to reduce the risks of falls by patients with blurred vision
- d. Selected flooring surfaces shall be easy to maintain, readily cleanable, slip-resistant and appropriately wear-resistant for the location
- e. Based on the anticipated special needs patients the health facility should provide access to optometry services.
- f. Keep floors, work surfaces and other areas clean and neat
- g. Maintain adequate lighting and utilities
- h. Designate specific areas for general storage of supplies and equipment
- i. A “No Smoking” sign must be visibly displayed in the facility
- j. First aid kit shall be labelled and provided in the optical center

6.4.3. The applicant should develop standard operating procedures to govern all administrative functions and optometry services including, but not limited to:

- a. Patient assessment and care planning
- b. Health record documentation methodology
- c. Access and transfer of patient data and/ or health records including use of electronic health records
- d. Training program for optometry staff

e. The applicant should display the facility safety plan and install fire safety equipment to comply with the fire safety requirements by the Dubai Civil Defence Department.

6.4.4. Based on the result of the onsite pre-operational assessment and after meeting the DHA requirements, the health facility management shall add the required healthcare professionals to the Optical Center upon which DHA license will be issued by the HRS.

6.4.5. However, in case of non-compliance or any modification recommendations an online report will be issued (within five (5) working days). The facility management is required to act accordingly and schedule another pre-operational assessment visit.

6.4.6. HRS shall issue the facility license, the DHA license shall state the name and address of the facility, the DET license number, the period of licensure validity and the service licensed to provide in the facility.

For DHA licensing services, refer to DHA website www.dha.gov.ae

7. STANDARD THREE: HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS REQUIREMENTS

7.1. The optical center shall employ sufficient number of optometrists to meet the functional requirement of the optometry services.

7.2. Optometry services in optical centers, clinics and hospitals shall employ sufficient number of optometry staff to meet the functional requirement of the services.

7.3. All healthcare professionals shall hold an active DHA license as per the Professionals Qualification Requirements (PQR) and work within their scope of practice.

7.4. All healthcare professionals shall wear clean uniforms, display name badges or DHA license during working hours.

8. STANDARD FOUR: PRESCRIBING AND DISPENSING OF OPTICAL DEVICES

8.1. An ophthalmologist or optometrist shall prescribe the optical devices and lenses. A dispensing optician or optometrist dispenses the optical devices prescribed.

8.2. All prescriptions should have the following details but not limited to:

8.2.1. Facility name, address and DHA license number at which examination has been conducted

8.2.2. Patient identification including but not limited to; name, record number or emirates identity card number

8.2.3. Prescriber name, DHA license number and signature

8.2.4. Date of test

8.2.5. Main reason for the visit

8.2.6. Ocular history (Applicable to ophthalmologists only).

8.2.7. Family ocular history (Applicable to ophthalmologists only).

8.3. Validity of prescription

8.3.1. Prescriptions are valid for one (1) year.

8.3.2. Prescriptions shall be saved as either a hard copy or soft copy in the database for future reference.

8.3.3. Optical devices could be dispensed without prescription, such as when duplicating a recent and existing pair of spectacles.

9. STANDARD FIVE: EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT

9.1. Functional, accurate and safe equipment is an essential requirement in the provision of optometry services and the type of equipment shall meet functional program of the health facility. The equipment to be found at an optical center are listed below:

9.1.1. Retinoscope

9.1.2. Direct Ophthalmoscope

9.1.3. Lensometer/focimeter

9.1.4. Slitlamp

9.1.5. Keratometers/Autorefractometers

9.1.6. Trails lenses with Trail Frame or Phoroptors

9.1.7. Testing charts.

9.2. The equipment that should not be found at an optical center are listed below:

9.2.1. Fundus camera

9.2.2. Tonometer

9.2.3. Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT)

9.3. All equipment used for optometry services should be registered with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in the UAE.

9.4. Equipment used should be approved by the following or equivalent bodies:

9.4.1. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

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- 9.4.2. Conformité Européene (CE)
- 9.4.3. Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).
- 9.5. Equipment shall be installed and operated in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
- 9.6. Instructions of the equipment manufacturer must be followed in performing the cleansing or priming procedure prior to commencing any examination. The manufacturer should recommend cleansing solution used.
- 9.7. The facility shall maintain the following:
- 9.7.1. Operating and safety manuals for equipment.
- 9.7.2. Maintenance logbooks for equipment.
- 9.8. Preventive maintenance (PM) of equipment shall be maintained, documented and signed.
- 9.9. All necessary parts should be changed as per manufacturer's instructions, documented and signed.
- 9.10. Eye lenses set shall be kept clean and in good condition.
- 9.11. Computer used for eye measures should be calibrated according to manufacturers' requirements.
- 9.12. Out of service equipment shall be clearly marked.
- 9.13. Healthcare professionals providing optometry services shall be trained to operate the equipment assigned to them. Training should include the following aspects but not limited to:

9.13.1. Fundamentals of ophthalmic lenses dispensing

9.13.2. Entrance tests

9.13.3. Objective & subjective refraction

9.13.4. Binocular vision assessments & functional tests

9.13.5. Bio-microscopy slit-lamp

9.13.6. Keratometry & contact lens fitting for soft/hard, toric & multifocal.

9.14. Operating new equipment

9.14.1. Orientation programs for new recruited staff

9.14.2. Equipment management and failure.

10. STANDARD SIX: FIRE SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT

10.1. The health facility shall ensure all signs for fire routes are clearly noticeable and marked.

10.2. There should be evacuation maps posted in the facility to indicate current locations marked with "You are here".

10.3. The health facility shall maintain fire extinguishers, fire protection equipment as per the DCD requirements and ensure equipment are working properly.

10.4. The health facility shall abide with the fire prevention and safety measures required by DCD.

11. STANDARD SIX: INFECTION PREVENTION

11.1. Hygiene procedures and precautions shall be in place, up-to-date and accessible to prevent exposure and reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases within the eye examination area.

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- 11.2. Chinrests and headrests on slit lamps, field screeners, keratometers, auto refractors, or any other equipment should be cleaned with a sterile wipe before use by each patient.
- 11.3. The bridge and sides of trial frames and forehead and cheek rests of auto refractor and slit-lamp heads are cleaned anew for each patient.
- 11.4. Items coming into contact with a patient's eye shall not be reused.
- 11.5. Diagnostic solutions such as sterile saline or contact lens soaking solutions shall be clearly marked with the date first used and stored with caps on and not used beyond the recommended dates.

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