

Application Guidelines for Spectacle Supply Scheme (SSS)

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Spectacles Supply Scheme (SSS) Guidelines

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Spectacles Supply Scheme (SSS) Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS) is responsible for the management and administration of the Spectacle Supply Scheme (SSS).

These guidelines have been developed in consultation with optometrists, ophthalmologists, administrative staff and other key stakeholders.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Applicant	<i>Any person applying for provision of Spectacles under the scheme.</i>
Contractor	<i>Manufactures, repairs, and supplies spectacles to Dispensing Agents and holds a binding legal contract with Queensland Health.</i>
Dispensing Agent	<i>The Contractor has nominated service providers who also provide a measuring and fitting service for clients once spectacles have been delivered to them by the Contractor. These service providers may or may not be an Optometrist.</i>
Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS)	<i>The Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS) provides access to subsidy funding to purchase MASS endorsed aids and equipment.</i>
Prescriber (Optometrist/ Ophthalmologist)	<i>Undertakes the initial eye examinations for the client and may also be a Dispensing Agent. In the majority of cases an Applicant will attend an Optometrist. Ophthalmologists are Doctors who specialise in eye disorders and on rare occasions may provide a prescription to an SSS Applicant. However, the Applicant must attend a Dispensing Agent to complete the SSS Application form.</i>
Spectacles	<i>Refers to any optometric aids supplied under the scheme.</i>
SSS	<i>Refers to the Spectacle Supply Scheme.</i>

PRIVACY STATEMENT

The Queensland Health, MASS is collecting administrative, demographic and clinical data as part of the MASS and SSS application processes, in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2009 and Health Services Act 1991, in order to assess the applicant's eligibility for funding assistance for the supply of aids and equipment.

The information will only be accessed by Queensland Health officers. Some of this information may be given to the applicant's carer or guardian; other government departments who provide associated services; the prescribing health professional for further clinical management purposes; and to those parties (e.g. commercial suppliers, community care and repairers) requiring the information for the purpose of providing aids, equipment and services.

Your information will not be given to any other person or organisation except where required by law.

If the information provided in the application is not complete or accurate, MASS may not be able to properly assess the application. If any details change, or if the applicant finds the personal information MASS holds is inaccurate, the applicant must contact MASS and reasonable steps will be taken by MASS to ensure the information is corrected.

Queensland Health has a long-standing commitment to ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of personal information collected by the department. That commitment is supported by nine National Privacy Principles in the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld) (www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/ACTS/2009/09ACo14.pdf) (in relation to all personal information held by the department) and strict confidentiality obligations found in Part 7 of the Health Services Act 1991 (Qld) (www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/H/HealthServAg1.pdf)(in relation to health information held by the department).

Spectacles Supply Scheme (SSS) Guidelines

SSS Contact Details

Address:	41 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170
Postal Address:	PO Box 281, Cannon Hill QLD 4170
Phone:	07 3136 3696
Fax:	1300 362 276
Email:	sss184@health.qld.gov.au

Aim of SSS

SSS provides a comprehensive range of basic prescription spectacles to eligible Queensland residents. All eligible applications to SSS will be assessed through an equitable process based on clinical need.

The guidelines have been developed to provide quality, consistency and standardisation in the administration of SSS. In managing and administering SSS, MASS aims to provide a consistent centralised service with improved service delivery to clients and increased participation of Prescribers.

Objectives of SSS

The objectives of the Scheme are:

- *Eligible people have access to assistance through the Scheme;*
- *Enhanced consumer service;*
- *Effective management of existing resources;*
- *Equitable and consistent service to as many eligible people as possible;*
- *Increased participation of Optometrists/Ophthalmologists*

ELIGIBILITY

Administrative Eligibility

To be administratively eligible for assistance from SSS, a person must:

Be a permanent resident of Queensland;

and

Hold, in their own name, one of the following concession cards continuously for a minimum period of six months immediately preceding the date of application to the Scheme:

Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card;

Centrelink Health Care Card;

Queensland Government Seniors Card;

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Pensioner Concession Card (if not eligible for spectacles provided under the Department of Veterans' Affairs "Optical Supplies Program").

Children under 16 years of age appear on their parents' or guardian's concession card as "dependents" with their own Centrelink number noted on the card.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to provide evidence that they have held a concession card for a minimum of six months. The Applicant must provide details of the type of card held, card number, issue date and expiry date on the application form and must provide the card to the Dispensing Agent for verification.

The Applicant must complete the "MASS Centrelink client consent form" that provides consent for SSS to contact Centrelink to verify card eligibility.

It is recommended that holders of DVA cards first contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs to check eligibility. Holders of DVA "Gold" cards, and some holders of DVA "White" cards, are required to access spectacles through the DVA Optical Supplies Program.

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Entitlements

Eligible clients are entitled to the provision of spectacles based on clinical need as assessed by the Prescriber who completes the eye examination.

There is a **two yearly period of entitlement** for the replacement of spectacles provided under SSS. Once an Applicant has received spectacles/lenses from SSS, they are ineligible to apply to the Scheme again within a 2 year period.

Loss and Breakage

There is provision under the SSS for the replacement of lost or broken spectacles where there has been no change in an Applicant's clinical need. Applicants who are entitled to have lost or broken spectacles replaced under SSS will generally have to pay the Normal Issue Cost of the replacement spectacles directly to SSS.

Normal Issue Cost is the price of the replacement spectacles charged to Queensland Health under the SSS contract. Contract prices are contained in the copy of the SSS Standing Offer Arrangement.

Applicant entitlement to, and requirement to pay for, replacement spectacles is determined in each case by the circumstances involved in the loss or breakage of the original spectacles. SSS will assess the circumstances of each case individually, including the Applicant's level of need and any compassionate considerations.

Decisions regarding loss and breakage will be made consistently, and when contentious, the determination will be made by the Director of MASS.

The Dispensing Agent will need to fax the application and Loss/Breakage Declaration form to SSS for consideration.

Once eligibility has been approved and any required payment received by SSS from the client, SSS will order the spectacles/lenses. The Contractor will return the completed spectacles directly to the Dispensing Agent or to the Applicant if nominated.

Spectacles Supply Scheme (SSS) Guidelines

Purchase of Limited Extras

There is provision under SSS for Applicants to purchase limited extras. Extras include tinting, photochromatic lenses, UV protection, protective coating, and hardening for glass lenses. Some extras may be provided for no additional cost if required due to clinical need.

Clinical conditions that may attract funding for tinting and photochromatic lenses are associated with anterior pathology, and include:

- traumatic mydriasis
- advanced gross cataracts awaiting treatment
- conjunctival and corneal scarring disease leading to photophobia

If extras are based on Applicant choice rather than clinical need, the Applicant is responsible for all incurred costs associated with the purchase of any extras.

Choice and payment arrangements for any extras to be purchased must be made directly between the Applicant and the Dispensing Agent at the time the spectacles are selected. The Dispensing Agent will provide details of any extras purchased by the Applicant under part seven (7) “Optional Extras” on the SSS Clinical Assessment form and will be invoiced separately for these by the Contractor.

There is also provision under SSS for lenses to be fitted to a Applicant’s existing or privately purchased frames or for SSS frames to be fitted to existing or privately purchased lenses.

*SSS will not be responsible for any breakages or loss that may occur when an Applicant’s existing frames or lenses are being fitted to the SSS spectacles. SSS will also not accept responsibility for frames lost in the process of being delivered to or from the Contractor for the manufacture of the spectacles.

The Applicant is also liable for any extra costs that may be associated and are outside the normal SSS frames or lenses as determined by the contractor e.g. regular size SSS lenses being fitted to an Applicant’s larger type frames, lenses being fitted to rimless/half rim or “nylon fit” frames, and all freight costs.

Application Process

Prescriber (Optometrist/Ophthalmologist) Role

SSS operates through a prescriber model, in that Prescribers complete a prescription for the Applicant's spectacles/lenses and submit an application on behalf of the Applicant to SSS for consideration of approval.

The list of participating Prescribers who are also "Dispensing Agents" is available at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/MASS/spectacles.asp>. This list is subject to change without notice and will be regularly updated and available via the MASS website and the 13 Health Contact Centre (13 432584).

Prescriber (Optometrists/Ophthalmologists) Responsibilities

- Ensure the accuracy of the prescription section of the application and verification that the Applicant's concession card details are correct;
- Maintain current registration with their relevant state Registration Board;
- Knowledge of the SSS Guidelines;
- Involve the Applicant fully in the prescription/application process;
- Advise the Applicant of all available options;
- Conduct a full assessment of the Applicant's need and consider all available options under SSS for the client;
- Ensure that the prescription is clearly legible and unambiguous in presentation on the SSS application form;
- Ensure that they do not indicate to the Applicant that SSS approval will be automatic and that they will definitely receive the spectacles/lenses through SSS;
- Consult with SSS clinical advisors when additional information is sought;
- Provide additional information if requested to do so by SSS, in order to identify eligibility for SSS;
- Establish arrangements for direct private payment by the Applicant if an Applicant requires unfunded optional extras. SSS will not accept responsibility for either the payment of optional extras or for payment arrangements between the Applicant and the Prescriber.
- If an Applicant wishes to have new lenses due to clinical need put into their own frames, the process described below should be followed:
 - The completed application form should be forwarded to MASS for processing.
 - On receipt of the application, MASS will either approve or reject the application and contact the Dispensing Agent.
 - On approval, the MASS Office Use Only section of the Clinical Assessment form will be completed, and the form will be faxed back to the referring Dispensing Agent with approval indicated.
 - The Applicant's own frames and the approved application are then forwarded to the Contractor via the Contractor's courier service, or via Australia Post.
- If the Prescriber is a Dispensing Agent, see next section;
- If the Prescriber is not a Dispensing Agent, see section on Applicant Responsibilities.

Prescribers who are Dispensing Agents for SSS

On Applicant presentation, the Prescriber performs an eye examination to determine clinical need for spectacles.

- If the Applicant meets clinical criteria as indicated on the SSS prescription form, the Prescriber completes the prescription section of the form.
- The Prescriber requires the Applicant to complete the Applicant Details section on the application form.
- The Prescriber requires the Applicant to complete an authority form to enable SSS to contact Centrelink for verification of concession card details and expiry.
- The Prescriber or their dispensing staff must sight the Applicant's concession card, ensuring that the card is in the Applicant's own name, and verify details on the application form are correct by initialling the form in the required space.
- The Prescriber's dispensing staff will assist the client to select a suitable spectacle frame from the available SSS range.
- The dispensing staff complete the Dispensing Agent section of the form which indicates the frame style and type, as well as other information required by the Contractor.
- When the relevant sections of the SSS application form have been completed by the Prescriber, the form should be faxed, emailed or mailed to SSS for approval and processing.

Applicant Responsibility

An Applicant wishing to apply for spectacles under SSS must have an eye examination completed by a Prescriber (Optometrist/Ophthalmologist) of their choice to determine clinical eligibility for SSS application. It is strongly recommended that, for convenience, Applicants attend a Prescriber who is a Dispensing Agent.

- SSS is not responsible for any costs associated with, nor making appointments for, an Applicant's eye examination.
- Once the Applicant has had their eye examination and clinical need for spectacles has been established, the Applicant is required to complete the Part B - Applicant Details section of the SSS prescription form (see page 11).
- The Applicant is required to record the details of their concession card including the card number, type, issue date and expiry date. The Applicant must allow the Prescriber/Dispensing Agent or their administrative staff to sight their concession card to verify that the details provided on the application form are correct. The concession card must be in the Applicant's own name.
- The Applicant is required to complete and sign the authority form to enable SSS to contact Centrelink to verify eligibility card.

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- Where an Applicant has appointed someone as Power of Attorney or Enduring Power of Attorney under the Power of Attorney Act 1998, or as a Guardian or an Administrator under the Guardian and Administration Act 2000, that person can complete all the Applicant sections and sign the application form on the Applicant's behalf without needing a separate letter of authorisation.
- If an Applicant attends an Optometrist who is not a Dispensing Agent and the need for spectacles is indicated, the Applicant must obtain a copy of the prescription on the Optometrist's business prescription stationery and attend a SSS Dispensing Agent. The SSS Dispensing Agent will then generate the application, attach the Optometrist's prescription and submit the application to SSS for processing.
- The Applicant is expected to take adequate steps to prevent loss of, or damage to, their supplied spectacles. The spectacles should be kept in the supplied case when not in use and should be cleaned regularly as per manufacturer's instructions. SSS supplied spectacles should not be used inappropriately; they are to be used as a visual aid to correct a visual deficit. For example, they should not replace safety glasses when performing an industrial activity such as welding or grinding.
- Applicants applying for replacement spectacles must have a new SSS Application Form completed by a Dispensing Agent. The Applicant will also need to complete a Loss/Breakage Declaration form for eligibility approval.

SSS Staff Responsibility

On Applicant presentation, the Prescriber performs an eye examination to determine clinical need for spectacles.

- SSS staff must not assess eligibility for SSS until the Applicant has had an eye examination to determine clinical eligibility.
- SSS applications should be processed efficiently.
- Any incomplete areas on an application should be resolved as rapidly as possible to prevent extended manufacture and Applicant waiting times.

Incomplete Application Forms

- Application forms that are considered by SSS to be incompletely documented will be returned to the Prescriber/Dispensing Agent and will remain the property and responsibility of the Prescriber until completed.
- This may result in processing and delivery delays for Applicants. This applies to both initial and re-applications for both new and existing SSS Applicants. Every attempt will be made to promptly resolve incomplete forms at a local level via the SSS Senior Client Officer.

Communication Support for Applicants

- Applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds who may have difficulty in completing documentation for a SSS application should be offered the services of an accredited interpreter for the purposes of effective communication. Applicants should contact their local Community Health Centre to arrange interpreter services. Queensland Health accepts responsibility for arranging and funding interpreters for the SSS application form completion only. If an Applicant requires an interpreter for their eye test, the Applicant and Prescriber are responsible for arranging this.
- Health professionals need to work with interpreters to enhance the accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality of their communication. Public health initiatives need to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity as outlined in the Queensland Government Language Services Policy.

REFUGEES

- Eligible Applicants who claim refugee status are exempt from the six month waiting period and are entitled to immediate provision of spectacles under SSS.
- The Australian Government, through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship provides immediate assistance for the first six months to refugees under the Humanitarian Program. Assistance includes accommodation, transport, job placement service and health and welfare and ensures that refugees possess certain types of concession cards such as a Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card and a Medicare Card to access necessary services.
- To be eligible as a Refugee under SSS, Applicants will need to produce:

- A current concession card (Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card, Centrelink Health Care Card, Centrelink Low Income Health Care Card, Queensland Government Seniors Card);

AND

- Refugee Visa (subclass 200)
- In-Country Special Humanitarian Program Visa (Subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian Program Visa (Subclass 202)
- Emergency Rescue Visa (Subclass 203)
- Woman at Risk (Subclass 204)

OR

- Written evidence that the Applicant holds refugee status as above, from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Note: The above mentioned visas alone do not indicate eligibility. The Applicant must have a concession card or written evidence of refugee status.

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Aquittal

- SSS will implement an acquittal process to ensure that the Applicant receives the best possible service outcome. The aim of the acquittal process is to link payment of aids and equipment to the satisfaction of the Applicant and the Prescriber.
- MASS will forward a summary excel spreadsheet to a selection of Dispensing Agents on a weekly basis, listing the SSS applications received.
- The Dispensing Agent is to ensure that the Applicant signs the “Receipt” section of the summary spreadsheet on delivery of the requested spectacle items, or the section is initialled by the Dispensing Agent upon delivery to the applicant.
- The summary form is then faxed, mailed or scanned and emailed back to the MASS Brisbane Service Centre for acquittal of the application.
- If the spectacles/lenses are not as required by the Applicant or are not as prescribed by the Prescriber, SSS must be notified immediately.
- Prescribers should be aware that SSS will not pay for a replacement item that has been inappropriately prescribed. SSS will refer these cases back to the original Prescriber for funding.

Standing Offer Arrangements

- There is a Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) in place for the supply of spectacles, lenses and frames provided through SSS. The SOA is a formal arrangement, following a competitive offer and evaluation process, with a commercial supplier for the supply of these products at an agreed price for an agreed period.
- The SOA is in place for the exclusive right to supply these products for SSS and must be used by SSS, regardless of the expenditure value of individual purchases or the cost that the product might be able to be obtained from other suppliers.

(See list of Approved Lenses, Frames and Accessories).

Warranty and Delivery Time

- Spectacle frames supplied by the contractor shall be free from manufacturing defects for a period of two (2) years, from the date of acceptance by the Applicant. All lens coatings have a two (2) year guarantee against cracking, peeling or crazing.
- Any spectacles found to be faulty within the warranty period shall be replaced, repaired or adjusted as necessary at the expense of the contractor.
- Warranty will not extend to instances where, in the opinion of SSS, the repair, adjustment or replacement has been occasioned by:
 - Changes certified as clinically necessary by the prescriber. Dispensing agents are able to undertake replacement of frame parts and minor repairs without voiding the warranty
 - Fair wear and tear
 - Applicant mishandling
- The manufacture time for spectacles by the contractor will be a maximum of ten (10) working days from the receipt of the order from SSS. Additional time should be allowed for postage.

Client Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

Complaints regarding SSS

SSS recognises that consumer feedback, both positive and negative, is essential in order to provide a quality service that meets the needs of our consumers. Compliments and complaints can be made both verbally and in writing or by using the forms as detailed below.

Consumers such as Applicants, Dispensing Agents, and Prescribers are encouraged to provide feedback regarding the service they have received from SSS and the Contractor supplying the spectacles/lenses/frames.

Feedback can assist in resolving specific issues of concern. It also assists SSS to identify areas where there is an opportunity to improve services provided by SSS.

SSS will treat all complainants with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality. Complainants will not be subjected to any prejudicial treatment as a result of making a complaint about the standard of service received.

The consumer's privacy is protected in accordance with the SSS Privacy Statement and Information Standard 42A (IS42A). SSS is committed to maintaining strict confidentiality in respect of information provided to it, and will not divulge such information without consent of the consumer.

SSS will endeavour to provide feedback to the complainant on the progress of their complaint at regular intervals throughout the complaint management process.

Compliments and Complaints Mechanism

To assist the process, consumers are encouraged to provide factual and full information regarding their concerns. The compliments and complaints management process generally depends on the nature of the issue as follows:

- Issues concerning the performance of SSS while providing the SSS service.

These types of issues are investigated and resolved, where possible, at local SSS level via the SSS Service Manager or Assistant Manager;

- Issues concerning the outcome of an application to SSS.

These types of issues are reviewed by SSS/MASS administrative, clinical and management personnel, and if necessary, with advice from expert clinicians who have a holistic knowledge of SSS client population, SSS procedures, and services delivered under SSS. The aim is to objectively review the issues of concern relative to SSS providing an equitable and consistent service to all applicants within the scope of SSS service provision.

Complaints that cannot be resolved at the local level are referred to the Director of MASS for consideration

Compliments can be forwarded via email to sss184@health.qld.gov.au

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Complaints regarding Prescribers who are not Dispensing Agents under SSS

Applicants dissatisfied with the service provided by an Optometrist should initially discuss and try to resolve the matter directly with the Optometrist. If the client believes that the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, they can address the complaint to:

Optometry Board of Australia
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne Vic 3001
Ph: 1300 419 495

Website: <http://www.optometryboard.gov.au>

Complaints regarding Prescribers who are Dispensing Agents under SSS

Clients who are dissatisfied with the service provided by an Optometrist who is also a Dispensing Agent under the MASS SSS should contact SSS, either via phone, feedback form or email.

Complaints regarding the Contractor

Clients who are dissatisfied with the service provided by the Contractor should also advise SSS staff. The complaint process should be as above.

(Note: A client may choose to exercise their right to independently access a range of other dispute resolution mechanisms. They can contact the Health Quality and Complaints Commission or write directly to the Minister for Health or the State Ombudsman. They can also seek the assistance of the Justice Department's Community Justice Program. However, processes involved with those systems generally require that the above steps are taken initially.)

Spectacles Supply Scheme (SSS) Guidelines

LIST OF APPROVED LENSES, FRAMES AND ACCESSORIES

Lenses Conforming to AS2228.1-1992

Bifocal, D Segment, White, CR39
 Bifocal, D Segment, White, Glass
 Bifocal, Round Segment, White CR39
 Bifocal, Round Segment, White, Glass
 Single Vision, White, CR39
 Single Vision, White, Glass
 Special High Powered, Grind +/- 6, Single Vision, White, CR39
 Special High Powered, Grind +/- 6, Single Vision, White, Glass
 Trifocal, D Segment, White, CR39
 Trifocal, D Segment, White, Glass
 Polycarbonate, for children, for protection of an only eye

Plastic Frames

Frames shall comply with AS2228.2-1992 and must be capable of repair.

Eye Size – the width of the greater diagonal (i.e. the maximum dimension of the lens space) shall not exceed 56mm in adult's or children's frames. The depth of each lens space must be such that it can adequately accommodate bifocal/trifocal/graduated lenses

Bridge – a keyhole bridge or open bridge shall be supplied.

Colours – frames must be available in a minimum of four (4) different colours for adolescent male, adolescent female, adult male and adult female types to allow Applicants a choice. Nylon frames for infants – supply all colours available.

Types

Infant, Single Piece Nylon (Comoframe or similar)
 Child, Female
 Child, Male
 Adolescent, Female
 Adolescent, Male
 Adult, Female
 Adult, Male

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Metal Frames

Frames must comply with AS2228.2-1992 and must be capable of repair.

Frames must be suitable for optical prescription lenses.

Types

Child, Female

Child, Male

Adolescent, Female

Adolescent, Male

Adult, Female

Adult, Male

Spectacle Repair Materials

Joints

Sides

Spectacle Cases

Rigid Spectacle Case

Soft Spectacle Case

Options for CR39 and Glass Lenses

Photochromatic

Tinting

UV Guard

Anti Reflective (Crizal Alize)

Additional Requirements in the SOA

The Dispensing Agents will attempt to have the full range of contracted frames available for assessment by the Applicants.

Applicants approved for optometric aids under this scheme are entitled to privately purchase limited extras, such as half frames, and the above mentioned options for lenses. The Applicant is responsible for the costs associated with the purchase of extras if no clinical need is indicated.

Applicants wishing to retain existing frames and have lenses fitted or vice versa may do so. In the instances where the Applicant chooses and pays for his/her own frame outside of the contract, it is anticipated that such frame/s will accompany the approved order from the Prescriber and the Contractor will be required to fit lenses to the non-contract frame and be responsible for postage costs. Applicants are responsible for costs associated with transfer of lenses into rimless/half rim or “nylon fit” frames.

Any damage caused to the non-contract frames whilst in the possession of the Contractor will not be met by SSS.

The cost of incorrect prescriptions will not be met by SSS or the Applicant. Incorrect prescriptions are a matter for the Prescriber/Dispensing Agent and the Contractor to resolve.