



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2018/19



Regulator reviewed: **General Optical Council**

Key facts & figures:

- regulates the practice of **optometrists** and **dispensing opticians** in the **United Kingdom**
- **27,783** professionals on register; **2,778** optical businesses (as at 30/09/2019)
- **£340** annual fee for registration

Standards of good regulation

Core functions

Annual performance review 2018/19

Met

(number of Standards)

Guidance & Standards

4/4

Education & Training

4/4

Registration

6/6

Fitness to Practise

8/10

Find out more about our performance reviews at:
www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performancereviews

Focus on: **Highlights demonstrating how the GOC is meeting the Standards**

Our review of the GOC's performance was drafted before the Coronavirus pandemic struck the UK (and covers January 2019 to September 2019). The GOC has met 22 out of 24 of our Standards of Good Regulation. Standard 6 for Fitness to Practise remains unmet as the GOC is still taking too long to progress cases. For this review period, the GOC has also not met Standard 9 for Fitness to Practise.

GUIDANCE AND STANDARDS

In April 2019 the GOC published new Standards for Optical Businesses (the Standards) which came into effect in October 2019. The Standards reflect changes in optical practice including the use of new technology, expanding scopes of practice and multidisciplinary working. The Standards were the subject of a consultation and we have seen evidence that the GOC has taken on board stakeholder views and experiences to inform its standards development. During the review period the GOC also developed a new microsite to support the Standards. The microsite is intended to present the new business standards in an accessible and searchable format, making it easy for optometrists, dispensing opticians and optical business owners to find the information they require. The website hosts supporting guidance, Frequently Asked Questions and videos with tips about how to apply the standards in practice. The website also includes a blog which will feature interviews with opinion leaders and business registrants.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: CASES ARE DEALT WITH AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

This Standard has not been met since 2014/15 and it is not met again this year. We have been concerned over a number of years about the length of time taken for the GOC to progress cases through the fitness to practise process. The statistical information we collect about timeliness in fitness to practise did not show a significant improvement overall from last year. We acknowledge that the GOC remains committed in taking action aimed at addressing the ongoing issues with timeliness, has put targets in place designed to improve timeliness and is closely monitoring progress against those targets. However, although the GOC has advised that it has projects underway with the aim of improving timeliness, these have not yet demonstrated a significant impact on the time it takes to conclude cases. Therefore, this Standard is not met. We will continue to monitor the GOC's performance against this Standard.

You can read the full report on our website
[www.professionalstandards.org.uk/
performance-reviews](http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: STANDARDS ARE LINKED TO STANDARDS FOR REGISTRANTS AND PRIORITISE PATIENT SAFETY

Since our last review the GOC has carried out further work on the Education Strategic Review, which is one of the GOC's key priorities of its Strategic Plan 2017-2020. The GOC launched a consultation in November 2018 which received over 500 responses. Further to the responses it received, the GOC worked with relevant stakeholders and revisited the educational standards and learning outcomes during this performance review period. A series of seminars with stakeholders ran during summer 2019 to develop revised proposals and explore sustainable models for delivery. The GOC revised its implementation plan into three stages which we detail in our report. We are satisfied that this Standard is met and will continue to monitor this work.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: DECISIONS ARE COMMUNICATED TO RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

We carried out a targeted review of this Standard following concerns we raised with the GOC during this review period about delays in disclosing final fitness to practise decisions to us. The Authority has a power to appeal final fitness to practise decisions if we consider they are not sufficient to protect the public. There is a strict time limit for us to submit an appeal, so a delay by a regulator in notifying us of a decision can impair our ability to exercise our legal powers to protect the public. The GOC failed to provide us with outcomes of two fitness to practise decisions within a reasonable time during this review period. The GOC told us about actions it took to prevent such problems from occurring. There was also a further instance of delay shortly after the end of our review period, which suggested that there may still be difficulties at the GOC in this area. The potential impact of such delays on our ability to properly scrutinise a case poses a real risk to undermine our ability to protect the public and fulfil our statutory objective. Therefore, this Standard is not met.