



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2019/20



Regulator reviewed: **General Optical Council**

Key facts & figures:

- Regulates the practice of **optometrists** and **dispensing opticians** in the **United Kingdom**
- **28,184 professionals; 2,759 optical businesses** on register as at 30 September 2020
- Annual retention fee is **£360**

Standards of good regulation met

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|------------------------|-----|
| General Standards | 5/5 |
| Guidance and Standards | 2/2 |
| Education and Training | 2/2 |
| Registration | 3/4 |
| Fitness to Practise | 4/5 |

We look carefully at a range of evidence to decide whether each Standard is met or not. The total number of Standards met does not on its own give the full picture of how a regulator is performing. Read the full performance review to find out more.

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

Focus on: How the GOC is meeting the Standards

The GOC has met 16 of our 18 Standards of Good Regulation. It did not meet Standard 10 (about the Register) because its systems did not appear to have been robust enough to ensure that it only added people to its register when they were appropriately qualified and that suspensions were clearly marked. The GOC also failed to meet Standard 15 because it was still taking too long to deal with fitness to practise cases, although we recognise it is showing commitment to tackling its backlog.

THE GOC'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The GOC responded quickly and constructively to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It issued guidance for registrants and businesses on a range of topics which was well received by many stakeholders. It showed agility in adapting its core activities, making good use of technology to continue its work to approve and quality assure education providers and to hold remote fitness to practise hearings. The GOC consulted quickly and constructively with key stakeholders as it made these changes, and has consulted more widely and thoroughly as it considers making longer-term changes.

GENERAL STANDARDS: UNDERSTANDS THE DIVERSITY OF ITS REGISTRANTS, THEIR PATIENTS/ SERVICE USERS AND ENSURES ITS PROCESSES DO NOT IMPOSE INAPPROPRIATE BARRIERS OR OTHERWISE DISADVANTAGE PEOPLE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The GOC demonstrated a good understanding of the diversity of its registrants and used this to inform its policy work such as its Education Strategic Review. It recognises that there is more to do, such as increasing its ability to collect equality, diversity and inclusion data from complainants, and has plans in place to improve its performance. We encourage the GOC to push ahead with this important work.

REGISTRATION: MAINTAINS AND PUBLISHES AN ACCURATE REGISTER OF THOSE WHO MEET ITS REQUIREMENTS INCLUDING ANY RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR PRACTICE

Three separate, unrelated errors on the GOC's register mean that the GOC has not met Standard 10. In each case, the GOC subsequently took appropriate action to correct the register and change its processes. Together, however, they indicate that during the performance review period the GOC did not have sufficiently robust processes to ensure that it only added people to its register when they were appropriately qualified and that suspensions were clearly marked.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: PROCESS FOR EXAMINING/INVESTIGATING CASES IS FAIR, PROPORTIONATE, DEALS WITH CASES AS QUICKLY AS IS CONSISTENT WITH A FAIR RESOLUTION AND ENSURES PUBLIC PROTECTION AT EACH STAGE OF THE PROCESS

This is the sixth year the GOC has not met our Standard relating to timeliness and its timescales for dealing with such cases are the longest of all the regulators we oversee. It is implementing an improvement plan to tackle its longstanding issues, including the introduction of a new triage process to reduce the number of complaints entering the fitness to practise system unnecessarily. It is also working to close its older, more complex cases. Because the GOC is still taking too long to resolve fitness to practise cases, we determined that Standard 15 was not met.

You can find out more details in the full report which is available on our website www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews