



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2020/21



Regulator reviewed: **General Optical Council**

Key facts & figures:

- Regulates the **optical professions** in the **United Kingdom**
- **28,578 professionals; 2,803 optical businesses** on its register as at 30 September 2021
- **£360** annual fee for registration

Standards of good regulation met

General Standards	5/5
Guidance and Standards	2/2
Education and Training	2/2
Registration	4/4
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 17 of our 18 Standards of Good Regulation. It did not meet Standard 15 because it was still taking too long to deal with fitness to practise cases.

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

The GOC continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to EDI. It has created a new EDI plan and appointed an EDI Partner to provide expert support. It commissioned an external consultant to produce a detailed Equality Impact Assessment for its Education Strategic Review. The GOC continues to improve its collection and use of EDI data. However, there are still gaps in the data that need to be addressed; the GOC needs to collect EDI data by default when it carries out surveys and research. On balance, however, the GOC has again performed strongly in this area.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: THE REGULATOR MAINTAINS UP-TO-DATE STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING WHICH ARE KEPT UNDER REVIEW, AND PRIORITISE PATIENT AND SERVICE USER CENTRED CARE AND SAFETY

The GOC reached a key stage in its Education Strategic Review (ESR) work during this review period. From 1 March 2021, education providers must meet a new set of requirements in order to obtain approval for new qualifications in optometry or dispensing optics. We recognise the ESR has been a controversial issue in the sector, and stakeholder views have been mixed. However, we have seen the GOC seek out and listen to stakeholder feedback, and make changes to its proposals as a result. We will continue to monitor the implementation phase of this part of the ESR, as well as the GOC's work to update its requirements for specialist entry to the register.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: THE REGULATOR'S PROCESS FOR EXAMINING AND INVESTIGATING CASES IS FAIR, PROPORTIONATE, DEALS WITH CASES AS QUICKLY AS IS CONSISTENT WITH A FAIR RESOLUTION OF THE CASE AND ENSURES THAT APPROPRIATE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT DECISION-MAKERS TO REACH A FAIR DECISION THAT PROTECTS THE PUBLIC AT EACH STAGE OF THE PROCESS

The GOC recognises that it needs to improve the speed with which it deals with fitness to practise cases. It has made progress implementing an improvement plan and this is starting to have a real impact. In particular, the GOC has significantly reduced the end-to-end timeliness measure this year, and has brought down the number of open cases in the system. We welcome these improvements, particularly in view of the ongoing challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, looking across the whole review period, the GOC still took too long to conclude its fitness to practise cases. We therefore concluded 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