



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2017/18



Regulator reviewed: **General Optical Council**

Key facts & figures:

- regulates the practice of **optometrists** and **dispensing opticians** in the **United Kingdom**
- **27,976** professionals on register; **2,740** optical businesses (as at 31/12/2018)
- **£340** annual fee for registration

Standards of good regulation

Core functions

Annual performance review 2017/18

Met

(number of Standards)

Guidance & Standards

4/4

Education & Training

4/4

Registration

5/6

Fitness to Practise

9/10

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www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews

Focus on: **Activities and actions demonstrating how the GOC is meeting the Standards**

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. The GOC did not meet Standard 3 for Registration as we identified some issues around the accuracy of its register entries in relation to final fitness to practise decisions.

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 (ESR), which is one of the GOC's key priorities of its Strategic Plan 2017-2020. During this performance review period the GOC has carried out a number of consultations, most recently on the new education standards and learning outcomes. The GOC continues to engage with stakeholders to inform its work on the new education standards. We will comment further on any developments in the next performance review period.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: ANYBODY CAN RAISE A CONCERN

This Standard was not met in our last performance report due to concerns we had regarding the GOC's decision-making at the triage stage. Since then the GOC made a number of changes to its triage process and developed quality assurance measures for the triage process when making a decision as to whether to open or close a case at the triage stage. Therefore, as part of the targeted review this year, we carried out a targeted check of a sample of 25 cases closed at the triage stage. We wanted to see whether:

- there was a formal triage decision recorded;
- the triage decision was sufficiently reasoned; and
- the triage decision evidenced consideration of all aspects of the complaint.

We found a formal triage decision recorded in all 25 cases we reviewed. We did not identify examples where we considered that the triage decision was insufficiently reasoned, nor did we identify that significant aspects of the complaint were not considered when taking the decision to close the case. Following our findings from our targeted check, it is clear the GOC has made changes which have had a positive impact and therefore we are satisfied that this Standard is now met.

You can read the full report on our website www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews

REGISTRATION: EVERYONE CAN EASILY ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT REGISTRANTS

We carried out an accuracy check of the GOC's register in October 2018 and identified errors which related to seven separate register entries.

The GOC accepted that these errors were a result of human error and said that they have been rectified. The GOC has met this Standard over the last two performance reviews. Last year we did not find any errors in our accuracy check of the GOC register and only one error in the previous year. However, in 2014/15 we identified six errors and concluded that the Standard was not met. Seven errors were identified during this review period, which is a concern.

The GOC has taken a number of steps to mitigate any future errors from occurring. However, these measures were taken after this review period ended so we have not seen evidence of the outcomes following the steps the GOC has taken. As a result, we are not satisfied that this Standard is met and we will continue to monitor this in the next performance review cycle.

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

This Standard was not met in 2014/15, 2015/16 or 2016/17 and it is not met again this year. We recognise the efforts the GOC is making to facilitate change, including proactive engagement with other regulators and the ongoing dialogue to reform its legislation. We also note the outcomes the GOC expects to see in the future as a result of the work it has undertaken. However, we have not seen evidence of improvement during this performance review period. There are significant concerns about the GOC's timeliness in its fitness to practise case handling, and although the GOC has advised that it has a number of projects underway with the aim of improving timeliness, these have not yet had a positive impact on all of the measures we assess. The overall performance has not improved and therefore this Standard remains not met.