



Council

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**CET post 2010 – Reaching the Future
Recommendations to Council following the consultation on the future of
the Scheme post 2010.**

Purpose:

To consider the recommendation of the CET Policy & Development [P&D] Group that Council makes no changes to its CET Scheme post 2010. The reasons for this recommendation are given.

Summary:

1. At its November 2007 meeting the Council approved the content of the consultation to review the GOC CET Scheme with the intention of introducing any changes to the Scheme from January 2001 onwards.
2. The consultation closed on 31st January 2008. An analysis of the consultation responses is attached at Appendix 1.
3. The Council has appointed the CET Policy and Development [P&D] Group to oversee the review of the Scheme and to bring recommendations to Council for consideration. The Council has also established a CET Advisory Panel of representatives from the optical bodies to advise the P&D Group.
4. The analysis of the CET consultation has been seen and discussed with the CET Advisory Panel.
5. CET P&D Group has considered the responses to the consultation in the light of the advice given by the Advisory Panel.
6. Having considered the response the CET P&D Group recommend that Council make no changes to its CET Scheme post 2010. The reasons for this recommendation are given [attached].
7. Notwithstanding its recommendation, the CET P&D Group has highlighted a non-CET issue which has arisen out of the consultation which Council is invited to consider at a later date.

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Recommendations of the CET Policy & Development Group following a consultation on options for changes [post 2010] to the GOC's CET Scheme Principles and Requirements.

Options for change:

- Q1. Continuation of a three year cycle?
Q2. Introduction of carry over from one cycle to the succeeding cycle.

1. The P&D Group recommend that Council maintains a three year cycle, with no facility for carry over from one cycle to the succeeding cycle.

2. The Group noted the proposal for a rolling three year scheme, whereby each registrant would have their own personalised CET period starting at the date of individual registration. Each registrant would be assessed at the end of each year to see if they had gained at least 36 points in the previous three years. The proposal would have the advantage of promoting a more even take-up of CET and would have the effect of an annual cycle, while maintaining the flexibility of a three year cycle allowing for career breaks. An added advantage would be in allowing CET Providers to better plan for an even supply of CET.

3. Notwithstanding these advantages, the Group noted the preference of respondents for the maintenance of the status quo and noted the nervousness expressed by respondents about changing a system with which registrants are now familiar. The Group concluded that the advantages of a rolling cycle would be outweighed by the disadvantages caused by the complexity of such a scheme and the added administrative annual burden to all stakeholders.

Options for change:

- Q3. Introducing a requirement for CET across all competencies;
Q4. limiting distance learning CET
Q5. introduction of incentives for CET by particular competencies/modalities.

4. The P&D Group recommended that the Council:

- [i] should not require registrant to gain CET across all competencies;**
- [ii] should not limit distance learning CET;**
- [iii] should not offer incentives to registrants to complete CET by particular competencies and/or modalities.**

5. The Group advocated a continuance of the Council's approach to the CET Scheme of assuming:- compliance with the Code of Conduct; that registrants

are responsible for maintaining their own CET portfolios and ; that registrants are responsible for making decisions on what CET they do and by what modalities, based on their own individual practice needs.

6. The Group suggested that the CET Administrator could in the future be invited to offer more information to registrants on their pattern of CET uptake, so that registrants are able to make their CET choices based on better, more accessible information. The Group foresaw that the information on each individual's pattern of CET uptake would in future provide important information for the revalidation of each registrant.

Options for Change

Q6. *Increasing the minimum points requirement in each three year cycle.*

7. The P&D Group recommend no change to the minimum of 36 points currently required in each three year CET cycle.

8. The Group noted that the majority of respondents were not in favour of changing the points requirement and noted that the GOC's requirement was comparable to that in the optical profession in other jurisdictions world wide.

Options for change

Q7. *Introducing a different CET points requirement [outside a specialty] for dispensing opticians and optometrists.*

9. The P&D Group recommend that there be no change to the minimum CET points required of generalists and that there should be no difference in the points requirement for dispensing opticians and optometrists. However the Group recommend that Council consider the comments made by respondents about the wider issues relating to the registration of dispensing opticians.

10. The Group noted that in response to this option, comments had brought into focus wider issues relating to the registration of dispensing opticians that cannot be resolved through the debate on CET.

Dian Taylor
March 2008

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES TO THE
CONSULTATION ON A REVIEW OF
THE GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL [GOC]
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING [CET]
PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS UNDERPINNING THE CET RULES 2005
[AMENDED 2007]**

1. Introduction

1.1.1. In November 2007 the CET Policy and Development Group [P&D Group] took a discussion paper to Council which identified questions for inclusion in a consultation on a review of the GOC's CET Scheme. Consequently, in December 2007 and January 2008, the GOC consulted on possible changes to the principles and requirements underpinning its CET Rules.

1.1.2. All registrants were given the opportunity to complete an on-line survey. This comprised a series of questions to be "ticked" by respondents, with space for comment. A total of 48 registrants responded to the on-line survey. The analysis of these responses is given in table form on page 3. Of these, 33 made some additional comment.

1.1.3. In addition, a written consultation paper was circulated to the optical bodies CET providers; BUCO and other interested parties. The option to send a written response to the consultation was available to all registrants. The professions were informed of the consultation through articles in the optical press and on the GOC website.

1.1.4. 16 responses were received to the written consultation. The responses were less structured than those for the on-line survey and did not necessarily provide direct answers to the questions. The main comments received are contained in the paragraphs below. Some Council Members had responded to an early draft of the consultation document and these comments have been taken into account in the paragraphs below.

1.1.5. The report is in two parts– one relating to the on-line survey [tick box] results and the other is an analysis of the written responses received.

2.0 The results of the on-line survey are as follows:

Q.1 Should the CET cycle continue as a three year cycle?

a. Yes	38	79%
b. No	7	15%
c. Don't know	3	6%

Q.2 Should there be a facility for practitioners to carry over points from one cycle to another?

a. Yes	17	36%
b. No	28	58%
c. Don't know	3	6%

Q.3 Should there be a requirement to gain CET points in a cross section of competences?

a. Yes	24	50%
b. No	21	44%
c. Don't know	3	6%

Q.4 Should the points gained by distance learning be limited?

a. Yes	8	17%
b. No	39	81%
c. Don't know	1	2%

Q.5 Should the GOC introduce incentives for registrants undertaking CET either in specific competency areas, or by a particular modality?

a. Yes	17	36%
b. No	25	52%
c. Don't know	6	12%

Q.6 Should the number of points to be gained in any one cycle be increased from the current 36 over three years?

a. Yes	7	15%
b. No	37	77%
c. Don't know	4	8%

Q.7 Should there be different points requirement for Dos and OOs [outside a specialty]?

a. Yes	26	54%
b. No	15	31%
c. Don't know	7	15%

3. Written Responses

3.1. Several main themes emerged from respondents' comments and these are summarised below. This does not, however, represent every single comment made.

3.2 Continuance of three-year cycle:

3.2.1. The over-riding view was that the scheme should remain a three-year cycle as this allows for flexibility for breaks in working patterns. Responses expressed nervousness about changing a system which registrants are now used to and that the benefits of change would not justify the confusion caused.

3.2.2. Some respondents felt that either an annual or two year cycle would be preferable. Some added that a three year cycle should be modified to make the take up of CET more continuous. Broadly speaking these latter suggested a change to a rolling three-year scheme where every registrant is assessed at the end of each year to see if they have 36 points from the previous three years. The experience of the last four years of running the CET scheme shows that many practitioners are choosing to complete much of their CET in blocks rather than continuously, leading to a 'feast or famine' approach to CET which is not helpful to providers in terms of planning.

3.3 Facility to carry over points from one cycle to another:

3.3.1. Concern was expressed that this facility would over-complicate the scheme, especially as a three-year cycle minimises the need for carry over of points, which would be complex to organize.

3.3.2. A rolling three-year scheme was proposed, which was considered a better alternative option to a facility allowing carry over points from one three-year cycle to another.

3.3.3. A view was expressed that some carry over of points from one three-year cycle to another would help those who encounter unforeseen circumstances and that it would give some sense of rewarding those who gain a significant number of points. A cap on the number of points which could be carried over was suggested.

3.4 CET points in a cross section of competences:

3.4.1. There was very little difference in the number of respondents who advocated this and those who did not. Concern was expressed that such a requirement could become overly prescriptive.

3.4.2. There was an acknowledgement that registrants tend to do CET in topics which appeal to them which means that their knowledge and skills can atrophy particularly in areas like binocular vision, dispensing and low vision.

3.4.3. There were suggestions that practitioners should be required to cover more than one competency in a three year period but not a requirement to cover all competencies. This would allow the majority of points to remain at the practitioner's choice.

3.4.4. Some suggested that CET targeted at a practitioner's main area of work/specialty would be fairer and that the number of points required by specialist should be altered to put the emphasis on the specialist points rather than on the general points.

3.4.5. Some respondents were of the view that the introduction of this rule would have a disproportionately detrimental effect on dispensing opticians who do not receive CET funding and would therefore have to carry a heavier financial burden to make sure they were receiving CET in a cross section of competencies.

3.5 Limit distance learning CET:

3.5.1. The majority of respondents felt that it would be unfair to limit distance learning CET as it would have significant cost implications and would limit the CET available to people living in remote areas, or who live abroad or who take a career break. Several respondents made reference to the fact that a limit on the 'free' journal distance learning CET would disproportionately disadvantage dispensing opticians who are not reimbursed for CET. There was acknowledgement that distance learning helps isolated groups keep in touch

3.5.2. It was pointed out that distance learning CET always has an element of assessment associated with it and is more able to be quality assured.

3.5.3. Two respondents indicated support for CET which gives opportunities for networking and interaction with peers as opposed to indicating a lack of support for distance learning CET. One of these made the suggestion that this should be a recommendation rather than a requirement, enabling practitioners to justify their choice of modality.

3.5.4. Two respondents emphasised the need for consistency of quality of CET irrespective of mode of delivery. Some advocated a limit on the amount of CET from any one learning format and that some of the points should come from practical classes.

3.5.6. Examples were given of how other countries manage the balance between distance learning and face to face CET.

3.6 Giving incentives for doing CET by certain modalities or in specific competences:

3.6.1. Most respondents felt that incentives would be inappropriate. The view was expressed that external guidance on which competences are a priority should not be given and that priorities should be based on personal analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Information on practice in some overseas schemes was provided.

3.7. Points requirement increased to more than 36 in three years:

3.7.1. Most respondents thought that 36 points over three years was appropriate, and that the level is comparable to the 10 to 15 a year required in other jurisdictions. There was a suggestion that the balance between specialist

and general points should be equalized. Two respondents felt that the quality rather than the quantity of CET is the important factor.

3.8 Different points requirement for dispensing opticians and optometrists [outside a specialty]?

3.8.1. Responses linked the number of points with the level of risk associated with each professional group and argued that lower risk activities should have to gain fewer points. There were a number of comments relating to the lack of funding of dispensing opticians CET. One respondent commented that having seen the GOC work long and hard to support dispensing opticians in their desire for greater recognition, competency and career progression, this would be a retrograde step.

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