

<b>Release of Education Visit Reports Policy &amp; Procedure</b>	
<b>FOI Publication Scheme Y/N</b>	Y
<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Summary</b>	This policy with its associated procedure sets out the processes for the General Optical Council releasing Education Visits Reports into the public domain.
<b>Department</b>	Education
<b>Date created</b>	December 2009
<b>Review date</b>	December 2010

# Release of Education Visit Reports Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Under the statutory guidelines set out in the Opticians Act 1989 it states that *“The Council must from time to time publish, in such form (including electronic form) as they consider appropriate, a list of establishments and qualifications approved by them, indicating the purposes for which the approval was granted.”*
- 1.2. The General Optical Council (GOC) (the organisation) is under a legal obligation as a public body to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This act gives a legal right for anyone to ask an organisation within the public sector for access to information that it holds and the GOC has a duty to maintain and make information readily available on the publication scheme which is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act to make public and maintain a company publication scheme.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The GOC periodically makes visits to training institutions and providers of Schemes for Registration.
- 2.2 The role of the GOC Visitor is to advise the Council whether a particular training institution or scheme provider should continue to be approved under the Opticians Act 1989; and to make recommendations for improvements, where appropriate, to the programme or scheme.
- 2.3 The visit process is split into 3 separate parts. These are:
  - Pre-visit – which gives details of what needs to happen before a visit takes place;
  - The visit – which outlines what you can expect at a visit; and
  - Post visit – which gives details of what happens after a visit has been completed and the visit report is produced.
- 2.4 The GOC need to ensure that as part of the CHRE requirement that all outcomes of the Education Visit Reports be made public and that in the event of a request under the Freedom of Information Act the GOC would be required to release the report.

## 3. Application

- 3.1 The policy takes immediate effect and applies to all staff involved in the visit process.

## 4. Purpose

- 4.1 The aim of the policy is to promote a culture of openness and accountability in the core business activities enabling staff involved to improve their understanding of this process. This policy ensures that the GOC and the Education Establishments are more open and transparent in their core business activities enabling them to gain more public confidence and complying with their statutory obligation under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This policy also sets out the process that must be followed in terms of the release of the Education Visit reports into the public domain and the information that is suitable for release.

## 5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. This policy is owned by the Director of Education. The policy was developed and will be maintained by the Education Department.

## 6. Associated documents/legislation

- Visit/Approval Process Policy and Procedure
- Opticians Act 1989
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1998

## **Visit/Approval Procedure**

### **1. The Visit Report**

- 1.1 Following the visit a first draft of the visit report will be sent to the visitors' panel for consultation.
- 1.2 Four weeks after the date of the first draft of the report being sent to the panel the amended draft will be sent to the training establishment for factual correction.
- 1.3 Following receipt and consideration of any request for factual corrections the Final report will be sent to the Training Establishment. The training establishment has an obligation to respond within one month of receiving the final report. In the event of any Conditions they will be required to submit an action plan to the GOC for formal consideration by the Education Committee.
- 1.4 A copy of the Final Report and any response received from the training establishment will be submitted to Education Committee for a final decision as to the recommended period of approval or withdrawal.
- 1.5 Detail of the Visit outcome accompanied by the Report and response from the training establishment will be published on the GOC intranet for the information of Council members.
- 1.6 A list of approved training establishments and Scheme Providers will be published on the GOC Website, along with the period of approval given and the date of the next Visit.
- 1.7 The GOC can publish a copy of the visit report if the outcome of the Education Committee is to approve or confirm ongoing approval of the provider/programme, the GOC will publish a copy of the visit report for public consumption and send to the provider.
- 1.8 It is the responsibility of the Education Department to ensure that all approved visit reports are published onto the GOC website and updated when necessary.

### **2. Preparing the report for release onto the website**

- 2.1 All visitors' reports will be written in a standard format for publication. The visit report to be released is action based and will not contain fully detailed discussions of the visit.
- 2.2 Before the visit report can be released onto the GOC website certain information that is of a strictly confidential nature that would be discussed in the 'closed session' of a visit will not be released onto the website in accordance with the GOC Freedom of Information/Data Protection Policies.
- 2.3 On the visit report closed session information must be detailed in red italic to make sure that this section is redacted for the purposes of the report being released into the public domain. Under the relevant section of exempted information the person writing the visit report must include in red italic that the item was discussed in the closed session of the visit and is exempted information under the relevant section of the Freedom of Information Act.
- 2.4 The following information can be included in the report to be released onto the Publication Scheme:
  - Name of Provider
  - Name and title of Programme
  - Date of Event
  - Date of Approval to commence

- Names of Visitors in attendance
- Details of the scope of the visit
- Confirmation of meetings held during the visit
- Confirmation and details of facilities inspected
- Conditions/Recommendations section
- Any commendations by visiting panel

### **3. Supporting documentation**

- 3.1 Any observations sent by a training establishment or scheme provider to the GOC in response to a visit report, with permission from that particular training institution/scheme provider, will also be released onto the website. This is to make sure that the information provided to the public is as balanced as possible.