

General Optical Council



**Registering
with the General
Optical Council**
A guide for students





About this booklet

This booklet is for those considering studying optometry or dispensing optics in the UK, and current students. It tells you about us: what we do, how our work affects you, and what you must do to ensure that you are complying with the law during your studies.

What is the General Optical Council?

The GOC is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Our job is to protect the public by ensuring that anyone working as an optometrist or dispensing optician in the UK has the proper skills, knowledge and standards of behaviour needed to do their job safely and effectively. We set standards within the professions, investigate complaints, and keep a register of all qualified professionals and businesses.

We regulate optometrists, dispensing opticians, students, and optical businesses. There are currently around 24,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses on our registers. We are given our powers from an Act of Parliament called the Opticians Act.

An **optometrist** is the person who tests sight. They can also fit and supply glasses or contact lenses.

A **dispensing optician** is the person who fits and supplies glasses or contact lenses.

The titles 'optometrist' and 'dispensing optician' are protected in law. This means that it is a criminal offence to use these titles or work in these professions while not being registered with the GOC.

The GOC and students

Studying for an optical qualification involves learning the core competencies necessary to practise. To gain these skills and appropriate clinical experience, students work with patients and the public throughout their course.

The patients you treat and the customers you work with need to be protected to avoid problems. For this reason **student optometrists and dispensing opticians are also required to register with us and comply with our standards**. The standards you need to comply with are available on our website at www.optical.org/en/our_work/Standards/index.cfm.

Your clinical placements must be completed under the supervision of a GOC-registered optician with at least two years post-qualification experience while registered. This supervisor must be approved by the GOC and the training provider, and must maintain their GOC registration for the duration of your placement.

Registering with the General Optical Council

It is extremely important that you register with us. If you do not register while you are studying towards becoming an optometrist or dispensing optician:

- you will be breaking the law
- you will not be able to sit assessments or participate in clinics or training
- you will not be able to advance to professional practice

What do I need to do?

New students

If you are a new student, you must **apply for registration** as a student optometrist or dispensing optician.

Your university or college should provide you with a registration form, or you can download one from our website at [/www.optical.org/en/our_work/Registration/Registration_fees_and_forms/index.cfm](http://www.optical.org/en/our_work/Registration/Registration_fees_and_forms/index.cfm).

The completed form should be sent to us, along with your payment and a signed photo, before you start your start studying.

You will also need to inform us of anything that might affect your fitness to train and work with the public, such as a past criminal conviction, disciplinary action or serious health condition. If you need to make a declaration, it is especially important that you submit your application for registration well before you intend to start studying. This gives us time to consider your application fully before you need to start your course. Guidance on declarations is included on the application form.

The application form must be validated by your training provider with a signature and stamp before it is sent to the GOC, to confirm that you are enrolled at that provider. Your training provider will be able to advise you on how you should get your registration application form signed and stamped.





Current students

If you are a current student who has already registered with the GOC, you need to **apply to renew your registration each year** that you will be studying. This is known as 'retention' of your registration.

The retention year runs from 1 September to 31 August. You need to apply for retention and pay the £20 application fee **by 15 July each year** that you intend to continue studying. If your application is not completed by 15 July, you will need to pay an extra £20 late application fee.

All current GOC-registered students can apply for retention each year through our website **www.optical.org** by logging into the secure 'MyGOC' registrants' area.

We will contact you each year to remind you to complete your application for retention. It is important that you keep your contact details up to date so that we are able to contact you easily – you can update your contact details in MyGOC at any time. It is your responsibility to renew your registration each year even if we are not able to contact you with a reminder.

The annual retention process includes making declarations about anything that might affect your fitness to practise (including criminal convictions and serious health conditions). However it is also your responsibility to inform us as soon as possible of any change that might affect your fitness to train, rather than waiting for the annual retention process.

If your application is not fully completed and approved by 31 August of each year, you will be removed from the student register on 1 September. If you are removed you will not be able to continue training or sit assessments until you are restored to the GOC registers. There is a separate application process for restoring to the registers (with forms available on our website), and you will need to pay an additional £20 fee.

What do I get when I register?

Once your application has been processed, new students will receive a registration pack containing a certificate and a registration card stating your official GOC student registration number. We will send you a new registration card each year you renew your registration. You may need to show your current registration card during your studies, to indicate that you have registered with us.

All student registrants also receive the GOC newsletter, *e-bulletin*, and access to the MyGOC registrants' area of our website.

Where can I find out more?

There is more information on our website for current and prospective students. This includes information on the registration process, education options and our standards and other requirements. Websites of the optical bodies also have useful information for students (details below).

Each year, in the first few weeks of term, we visit GOC-approved training institutions on a series of roadshows. At these, first year students can meet GOC representatives and ask any questions about retention and registration or other aspects of our work. We may also be able to collect any last-minute registration applications.

If you have specific questions about registering as a student, you can also contact our Registration team on 020 7580 3898 (option 1).

Contact us

Write to:

General Optical Council
41 Harley Street
London
W1G 8DJ

Phone: 020 7580 3898

Website: www.optical.org

Fax: 020 7436 3525

Email: goc@optical.org

Other useful contacts

The College of Optometrists
41-42 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NG www.college-optometrists.org tel 020 7839 6000

Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Godmersham Park, Godmersham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7DT
www.abdo.org.uk tel 01227 733901

The Association of Optometrists
61 Southwark Street, London SE1 0HL
www.assoc-optometrists.org tel 020 7261 9661