

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL
Registration Fees Proposal

Summary

To set the registration fees for 2009-10.

A. Individual registration/retention fee

Finance and Procedure (F&P) Committee recommend a full registration fee for 2009-10 of **£219.00**.

This represents a significant increase in the fee from its current level. The increase is needed in order to meet the level of expenditure set out in the draft budget for 2009-10.

The Committee noted that Council has avoided passing on increased costs to registrants in previous years when this was not required.

The current fee has been held at £169.00 for the past four years. In real terms, this can be considered a reduction since during this period it will not have kept pace with inflation. If in the past four years, we had applied an RPI increase, the current fee would have been £194.68 (based on compound RPI of 15.2% for the period April 04 – April 08). From this level, applying an inflation-linked increase alone in 2009-10 would have increased the fee to over £200.00.

The F&P Committee has sought to minimise the increase in the registration fees as set out in the budget papers.

The recommendation of £219.00 is contingent upon the following Committee recommendations being approved by Council:

That having taken account of Council insurance policies and a detailed review of the legal reserve by the Director of Legal Services & FTP, Council legal reserves be reduced by £750,000 (an interim reserves schedule is attached at Appendix 1 for Council approval);

That an ongoing review of the Council reserves take place so as to recommend a final budget to March 2009 Council;

That the Executive be held to account to work within the recommended budget for the year 2009-10;

That a transitional change management provision of £282,766 be established from reserves in the current financial year to be drawn down during the 2009 -10 year as costs occur.

B. Student registration/retention fee

F&P Committee recommend that the student registration and retention fee remains unchanged at **£20.00**.

Despite no fee increase for the past three years, it is not proposed that the basic fee be increased effective 1 April 2009.

C. Late payment fees

A new additional late application fee of **£10.00** is proposed for students renewing after 15 July but before 31 August. A new additional student restoration fee of **£20.00** is proposed for students applying for restoration to the registers after 1 September.

A new additional late payment fee of **£20.00** is proposed for registrants who renew after 15 March but before 31 March. F&P Committee recommend that the additional fee for registrants to restore to the register after 1 April remain at **£70.00**.

At its September meeting, the Registration Committee considered the position of students who failed to meet the statutory deadline for retention and registration.

Student retention forms are sent out by 1 April. The deadline for return of forms and payments is 15 July. However, there is little incentive to comply with the cut-off date. Students who fail to do so are sent a notice of money owing advising them that failure to apply by 31 August may result in their removal from the register. Students who are removed do not currently pay a restoration fee as full registrants do, but simply apply as new registrants and pay a fee of £20.00.

The cost of implementing student registration exceeded the fees generated by a small amount of approx. £5,000. It was not intended that this figure be recouped from all students but that it be borne directly by those who incur additional costs of mailings and processing.

By the same logic as that outlined above for student retention, the Committee endorsed the proposal that full registrants who involve the Council in additional administration should also meet the additional costs.

The Director of Legal Services has sought advice on the new fee elements and has been advised that there is no reason why Council cannot apply a variable fee.