

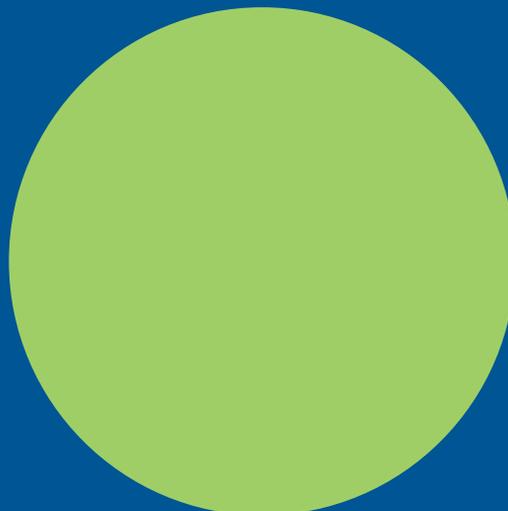
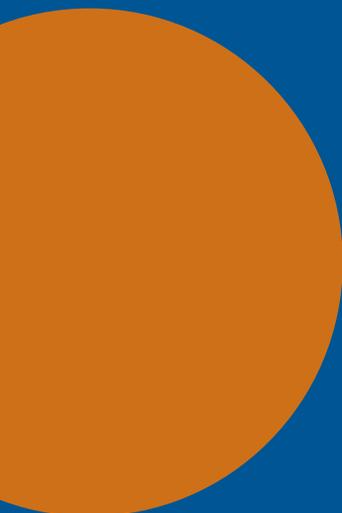


General Optical Council

What we have achieved so far

Strategic Analysis

What we want to achieve by 2020



Strategic Plan

April 2017 – March 2020

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Foreword from the Chair and Chief Executive

In producing this strategic plan we have at all times been mindful of the need to keep patient safety at the heart of what we do.

We are the regulator for professions that are changing fast. New technology could render obsolete some of the traditional ways in which our registrants have worked for decades.

But at the same time, an ageing population and pressures on NHS services mean there is more demand for eyecare services than ever more. Optometrists and dispensing opticians can play a major part in meeting these demands by taking on new roles.

In light of this it should be no surprise that education is at the heart of our strategic plan. We have recently kicked off our Education Strategic Review and are committed to making sure that optical professionals are ready to face the challenges of the coming decades.

It is a fundamentally important piece of work and will affect the standard and quality of eyecare of everyone in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. Success will depend on determination and close collaboration with our stakeholders.

We will also be driving forward improvements to the way that we carry out our core regulatory functions. We have made progress over the period of our last strategic plan in modernising our fitness to practise processes. This work will continue, together with activity across the organisation to improve our processes and customer service.

Everything we do must be targeted, effective and proportionate. This means continuing research to understand where the biggest risks lie and how we can tackle them; making policy decisions on the basis of a strong evidence base; protecting patients by helping them make informed decisions about their care; and continuing to push for legislative reform that will help us operate more effectively and with greater efficiency.

These priorities will help us to continue to fulfil our role in protecting and promoting the health and safety of the public – in the three years from 2017 to 2020 and beyond.



Gareth Hadley
Chair of the GOC

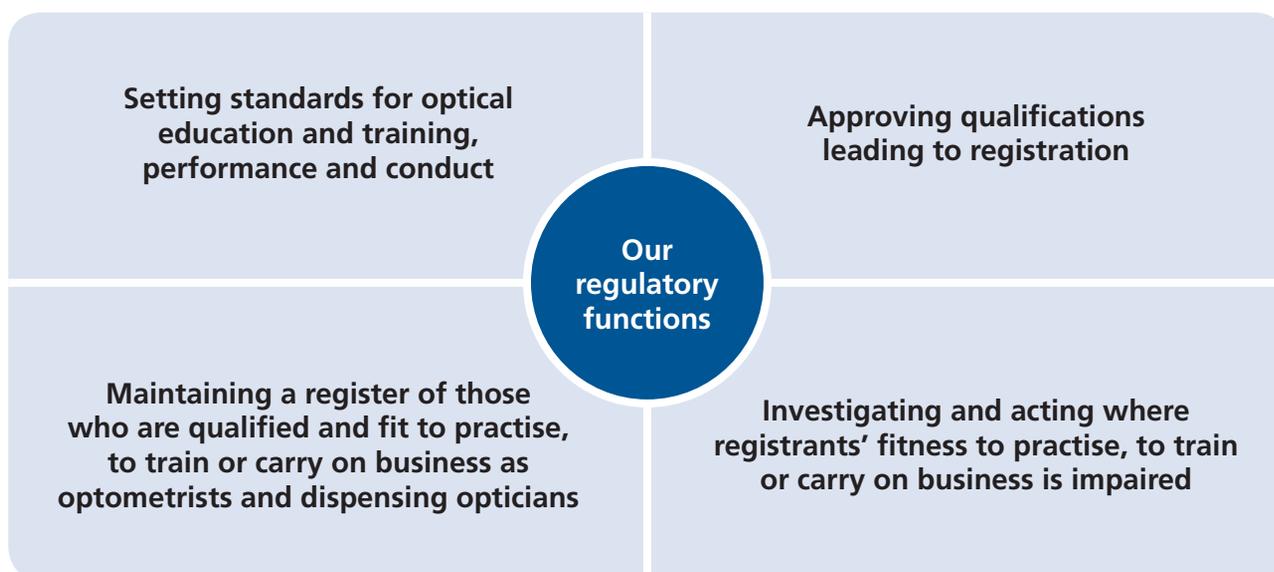


Samantha Peters
Chief Executive and Registrar

Our mission and values

Mission

To protect and promote the health and safety of the public



Our values

Responsible	Forward thinking	Principled
<p>We inspire confidence because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We make clear, well-reasoned, evidence based decisions • We account for our actions and are open to scrutiny • We apply our resources in a targeted and proportionate manner. 	<p>We make a difference because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We pursue defined goals and measure our results • We are progressive, innovative and agile in our ways of working • We achieve and deliver more by working collaboratively • We are a learning organisation committed to continuous improvement. 	<p>We build trust because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We gain respect through our credibility, integrity and high standards • We listen openly, act responsively and communicate honestly • We behave consistently and fairly to everyone • We foster a positive and productive culture.



What we have achieved so far

Higher standards promoting higher standards across the optical professions

We introduced new *Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians* and *Standards for Optical Students* that provided greater clarity about what we expect of registrants. We clarified our role in setting standards through the publication of our standards framework and have developed additional guidance on consent and candour. Learning about our standards of practice also became a compulsory part of our Continuing Education and Training (CET) scheme, which ensures registrants' ongoing fitness to practise. All registrants must now do at least one piece of CET per cycle relating to the new standards and we introduced a new focus on planning and reflection to encourage professionalism.

Increased trust and awareness promoting public trust, and enabling the public to make informed decisions about optical care and raise any concerns

We have worked with our stakeholders to improve public awareness of how to purchase and wear contact lenses safely. In March 2017 we promoted 'Love Your Lenses Week', working with stakeholders across the optical sector and patient groups to promote safe contact lens wear. We worked collaboratively with the Trading Standards Institute to raise awareness of the risks that can arise from wearing zero-powered contact lenses (ZPLs), which attracted widespread coverage across a range of national and professional media. We have also been more proactive in working with the media to raise awareness of the outcomes of fitness to practise cases, highlighting how rare it is for a registrant to be erased from the register.

Improved complaints-handling dealing with complaints more quickly and effectively

We have made a number of changes to our FTP complaints processes, including changes to our Fitness to Practise Rules which came into effect on 1 April 2014. We have made these changes to help us to handle complaints more efficiently and effectively, in the interests of patients and registrants alike. New guidance on hearings and sanctions is promoting fair and proportionate decision-making. We have also embedded a new raising concerns (whistleblowing) policy to ensure that complaints are directed to us where appropriate, as well as improving the way we handle corporate complaints.

Better service delivery delivering high quality services to the public and the professions

We have worked closely with the new provider of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) to ensure that all complaints – fitness to practise or consumer issues – are dealt with by the correct body. We have provided customer service training for those teams which have most contact with the public. We have modernised our processes, particularly in switching to electronic correspondence and online payments. We have also improved our engagement with education providers.

Regulatory change implementing a targeted and proportionate system of regulation

We have continued to pursue legislative changes to help us operate more efficiently and effectively. However, in common with other healthcare professional regulators, we were disappointed that this was not legislated for in the last Parliament. We continue to engage with the UK and devolved administrations, and our stakeholders, to push for such change. We are also considering what regulatory changes we can make without legislation, for example as part of our Fitness to Practise (FTP) Complaints Strategy.



Improved evidence base ensuring that our work is informed by an understanding of the public's perspective and how patient care is changing

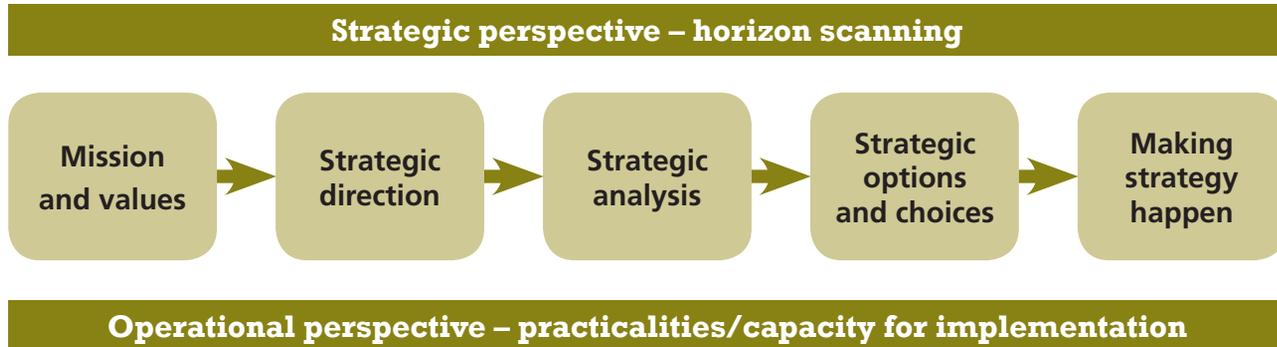
Our research programme has given us a much greater understanding of the environment in which we operate over the last three years. Surveys of patients and the public, contact lens wearers, employees, registrants and our stakeholders have informed our policy decisions, including the development of our standards of practice, and our next strategic plan.

Organisational change building a sustainable and modern organisation

In December 2015 we moved to a new, more modern office in the Farringdon area of London. The move to a new building is already having a number of benefits. The more modern working environment is helping our employees to work together more effectively, will allow us to improve our IT infrastructure and is more accessible, especially for wheelchair users and people with sight loss. We have made improvements to the training and development opportunities for employees, including the introduction of management training for newly appointed managers and a mentoring scheme. We are developing an organisation-wide approach to quality assurance that is helping us to improve the speed and accuracy of our decision-making. Our new Customer Relationship Management system will help us to operate more efficiently and provide us with improved data on our operational performance, enabling continuous improvement.



Strategic analysis



In developing our strategic plan we have considered:

- our role and place in the wider optical/regulatory system;
- the type of regulator we are; what we do well, what we do less well;
- who our stakeholders are and how we engage with them to achieve our objectives;
- what our current strategic risks are and how well we are mitigating them;
- where we are in achieving our current strategic objectives;
- what we have learned from our experience of implementing the current strategic plan and how well we use our resources;
- how we can increase our effectiveness;
- feedback from our external stakeholders through consultation; and
- the views of our internal stakeholders, including employees and members.

In developing our strategic plan we considered the following four strategic themes.



Our thinking has been informed by the research we have commissioned among contact lens wearers, patients, registrants and stakeholders. Our public research papers are available on our website: www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/policy-and-research-papers.cfm



Public protection

The future of education and CET

Given the impact on the optical sector of technological and demographic changes, it is essential that we ensure the education and training of optical professionals reflects those changes and prepares them for developments in practice. This includes both the education of future registrants and the development of our current registrants.

Reform areas of outdated legislation

Reform of the legislation that grants us our powers is crucial in certain areas. This includes reforms to improve the efficiency with which we carry out our functions, to change the way we register optical businesses and to no longer require all students to register with us. We also need to identify opportunities for us to change the way in which we regulate, while working within our current legislation.

Fully embed new individual standards and develop business standards

Our new standards of practice for individual registrants are now in place. It is important that we continue work to support registrants in meeting them, evaluate their effectiveness and develop new standards for optical businesses.

Consider issues relating to business practices and settings

We need to do more research to better understand and address the risks to the public that might arise from the pressures that registrants face in practice and in particular practice settings, particularly domiciliary care.

Consider the needs of diverse patient groups

Registrants need to understand their equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) responsibilities, in order to be able to deliver effective care tailored to their patients' needs, such as providing reasonable adjustments, including accessible information.

Review the approach to registering optical professionals from outside the UK, in the wake of Brexit

We need to consider how non-UK nationals join our register, including in the context of how the UK's relationship with the EU and EEA will change in the future following the referendum result on 23 June 2016.



The changing demands on the optical professions

Effect of new technology and automation – changing roles within the optical and healthcare sectors

As detailed in the Foresight Report, new technology, including automation, is likely to change the way that optical professionals work. Eye examinations are unlikely to remain the same as they are today and registrants are likely to need to equip themselves to carry out more clinical roles, including managing long-term conditions.

Use more professional judgement if undertaking higher risk work

As our registrants undertake higher risk work in extended roles, they will need to use their professional judgement in wide-ranging scenarios. It is therefore important that they have the education and training to carry out activities that may be more risky than that which fall within their current scope of practice.

Public perceptions of the professions

Our research has shown that many members of the public continue to view the optical profession as a retail rather than a healthcare profession. It is important the public have an understanding of the roles of optical professionals and the services available to them.

Sector challenges (internet supply, new models of care) and workforce planning

The internet and new models of care within the NHS will both continue to present a challenge to the 'status quo' and to high street opticians. Changes in the makeup of the professions, including the use of locums and part time workers, could increase the number of registrants needed to serve an aging population. This will make accurate workforce planning difficult.



The GOC's effectiveness

Importance of people development

Investing in our workforce is crucial to ensure they are motivated, act consistently with our values and have the capacity and capability to deliver.

Importance of developing infrastructure and support services

Improving our processes and IT infrastructure, while ensuring we take account of impacts on EDI and are compliant with legislation, such as information governance, are vital in enabling us to operate more efficiently and provide better services. In particular, we are keen to move more services online.

Fast and high quality customer service, especially in FTP

The public expect all healthcare regulators to be objective, transparent and provide high quality customer service, particularly in dealing with fitness to practise complaints quickly and efficiently. Although legislative reform would help with this it is important that we continue to improve regardless.

The desire for increased collaboration with other bodies

Collaborating with other bodies is important, in both achieving shared objectives (for example, working with optical stakeholders to raise awareness of how to wear contact lenses safely) and achieving efficiencies (for example, collaborating with other healthcare professional and system regulators).

Importance of accessibility

We need to ensure we are able to engage with all our stakeholders in an accessible way, including members of the public whose first language is not English.



The changes within the external environment

Drive for cost efficiencies and value for money

There is an expectation from Government, the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), registrants and the public that healthcare professional regulators will operate efficiently and minimise increases in registration fees.

Need to meet PSA Standards of Good Regulation

In our most recent performance review (2014/15) we met 21 of the PSA's 24 Standards of Good Regulation.

Possibility of merger or deregulation

The Government and the PSA have raised the idea of mergers and/or deregulation in the healthcare professional regulation sector. Particularly given the fast pace of change within eye care services, we believe the optical sector needs its own specialist regulator, working in collaboration with other professional and systems regulators.



What we want to achieve by 2020

Mission

To protect and promote the health and safety of the public

Vision

Optical professionals are equipped for the roles of the future, our regulation is targeted at risks to the public's health and safety and we are an organisation that is accessible and easy to work with



Learning and development of optical professionals

Deliver a strategic review of optical education and training and implement changes to ensure that optical professionals are equipped for future roles



Targeted approach to regulation

Build our evidence base and use the full range of our regulatory levers in a proportionate way to address risks to the public



Organisational transformation

Deliver high quality, efficient services to the public and registrants underpinned by a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement

GOC strategic objectives



Our outcomes deliver on public benefit

Learning and development of optical professionals

Patients can be assured that:



Targeted approach to regulation

Stakeholders, including patients, can be assured that:



Organisational transformation

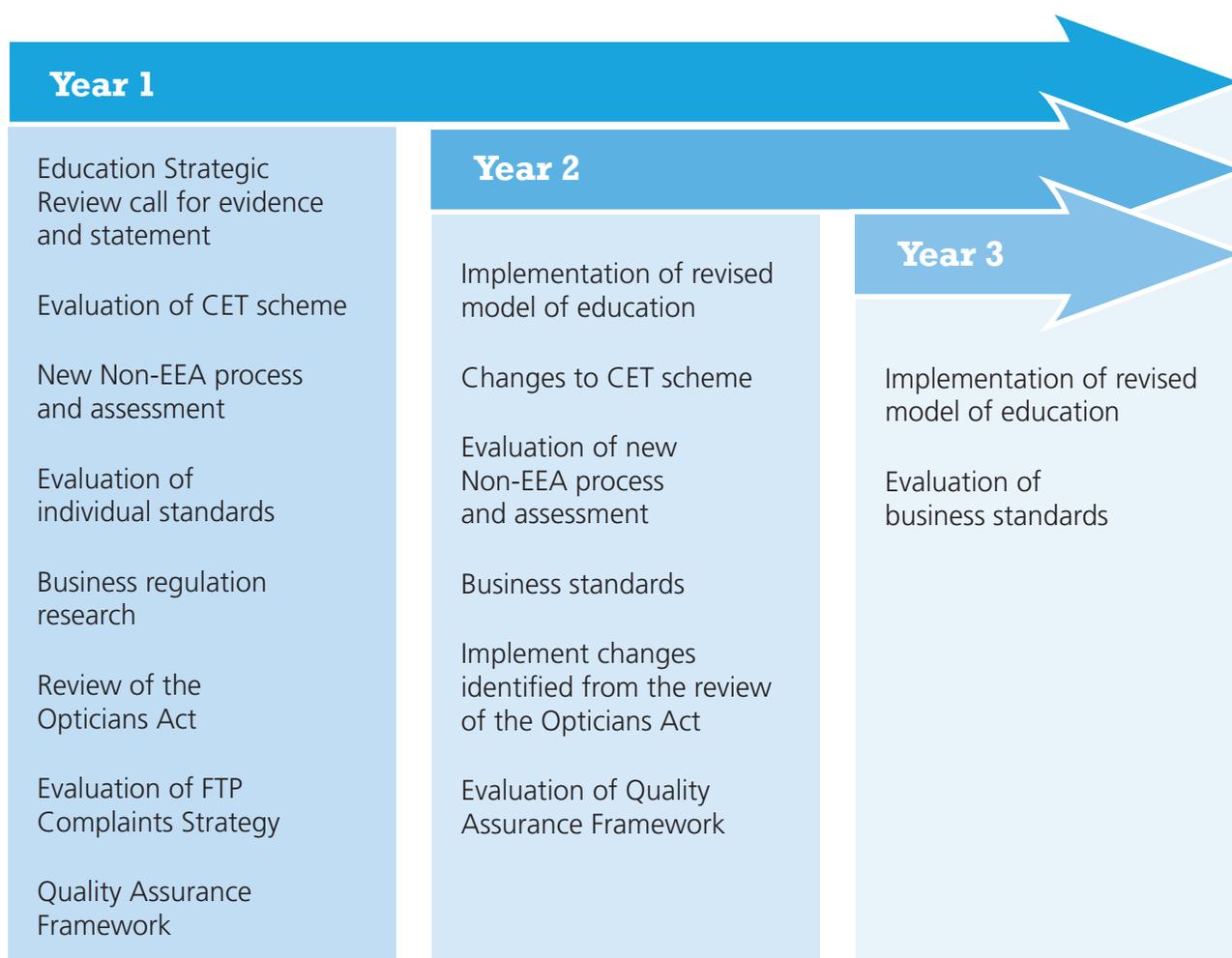
Stakeholders find:





Our activities

In order to achieve our strategic objectives and related desired outcomes we have planned activities for each of the next three years. These are shown in our annual business plans. We are clear that in order to ensure delivery of our objectives we need to plan our work over the three years. However until we complete some work and reassess our priorities we are unable to completely plan years two and three. Therefore we will evaluate our performance against our business plans annually and decide whether our future plans remain relevant or need to be re-prioritised. Key outputs from the plan will include:





How we will measure progress

We recognise the importance of measuring progress against achievement of our vision and strategic objectives, rather than waiting until the end of the strategic cycle to evaluate the impact of our work.

The following strategic performance indicators will enable us to build up a picture of how well we are performing and whether we are on track to fulfil our strategic objectives. However, we recognise that it will not be possible to make a direct causal link between our performance against these indicators and how well we are fulfilling our vision and strategic objectives.



We will track our progress against these indicators on a quarterly basis, supported by an assessment of progress against project key milestones and business plan activities.

Our assessment of progress against achievement of our vision and strategic objectives will also include the evaluation of the outputs of our internal audits, learning reviews, and key projects, including:

- Education Strategic Review;
- Continuing Education and Training scheme evaluation;
- Review of non-UK registration process;
- Review of the Opticians Act;
- Standards Strategic Review;
- Illegal Practice Strategy;
- FTP Complaints Strategy;
- Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations; and
- Quality Assurance framework.



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You can get this plan in Welsh by visiting www.optical.org

The GOC is a charity registered in England and Wales (1150137)