

GOC/COVID/14

Date of statement: 7 September 2020

General Optical Council (GOC) statement on service of registration notices during the COVID-19 emergency

1. In this statement we set out how we will serve notices under the GOC Registration Rules 2005 ('Rules') during the COVID-19 emergency.
2. In taking the steps set out below, we are putting our overarching objective under section 2A of the Opticians Act 1989 ("the Act") – the protection of the public – at the forefront of our efforts to continue maintaining our functions during this challenging period.

Service of registration notices

3. Rules 19-20 create requirements in respect of the service on registrants of notices relating to entry to, and removal from, the GOC's Register. Section 23A of the Act requires these notices to be served by delivery to the individual personally, by being left at the person's address, by registered post or by recorded delivery.
4. We are mindful that, during the COVID-19 emergency, there might be delays or difficulties in registrants and applicants receiving notices that are sent by recorded delivery, registered post, courier or personal service.
5. Accordingly, in order to continue to be able to maintain our registration function and our overarching objective to protect the public, we have (with one exception) moved to a process of serving all notices and other communications electronically. The exception is notice of Registrar's decision to remove a registrant's name, which we will serve by recorded delivery as well as email.
6. Service is to the email address that the registrant has provided to us for the purpose of communication. We therefore ask all registrants to ensure that their contact details are up to date on their MyGOC account.
7. With the exception of removal decisions, electronic service will apply to all communications relating to our registration function, and will include (but will not be limited to) the following:
 - notice of Registrar refusing registration or restoration;
 - notice of fully qualified or business registrant's failure to apply for renewal;
 - notice of student registrant's failure to apply for renewal; or
 - notice of Registrar's decision to remove a registrant's specialty.

8. When sending notice of the Registrar's refusal to allow registration or restoration, or notice of the Registrar's decision to remove a registrant's specialty, we will ask the recipient to confirm receipt within seven days. We will follow up (by email, telephone and/or post) if confirmation is not received. If an applicant is having particular difficulty in receiving emails, we will consider advance requests to send a specific communication by hard copy.

The GOC will keep this statement under review

9. Next routine review due: not later than 31 January 2021.