

## **Consultation on a proposed revised approach to managing applications for GOC registration from optical professionals who have qualified outside the UK or Switzerland, following the introduction of the GOC's updated education and training requirements**

### **Annex Two: Briefing; existing process for managing applications for GOC registration from optical professionals who have qualified overseas and statistical summary**

#### Current process for applicants

Currently, all applicants for GOC registration from optical professionals who have qualified overseas must satisfy minimum eligibility requirements including:

- English language testing;
- registration with their own country's regulator; and
- prior training and experience.

For optometrists this includes:

- Registered with a regulatory body in the applicant's country of practice (if the profession is regulated);
- qualified to practise optometry in a country other than the UK (which consists of at least three years' full time (or equivalent part-time) optometry training at a post baccalaureate level in the applicant's country of qualification);
- at least one year within the last ten years' unsupervised practice, post-qualification
- a minimum score of **7** in the academic [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#) with no individual scores for each section of the test lower than 6, except for the 'Speaking' section where a minimum score of 7 is required; and
- ensuring familiarisation with our guidance on [Working in the UK](#).

For dispensing opticians this includes:

- a relevant qualification;
- at least one year within the last ten years' unsupervised practice, post-qualification
- a minimum score of 7 in the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS with no individual scores for each section of the test lower than 6, except for the 'Speaking' section where a minimum score of 7 is required; and
- ensuring familiarisation with our guidance on Working in the UK.

All applicants first complete a self-assessment form, which determines the application form they should complete. The applicant completes the appropriate form and provides the relevant supporting documentation, which is then scrutinised by the GOC Registration team. If necessary, further information is requested. Once the form is fully complete with all relevant documents, this is sent to the GOC appointed non-UK registrations assessors. They consider whether the applicant's qualifications and experience is equivalent to the GOC's stage 1 and 2 competencies and minimum patient experience requirements. Applicants who pass this stage are invited to an interview with two non-UK assessors.

The purpose of the interview is to further gauge the applicant's experience, competency, clinical skills and decision making against the stage 1 and 2 competencies and to assess if the applicant is fit to start the College of Optometrists Scheme for Registration (SfR)/ ABDO pre-qualification period (PQP) or if further academic training is required.

Where deficiencies are identified, assessors may recommend suitable adaptation courses. If the assessors recommend adaptation courses, the applicant must request approval from the non-UK assessor that the proposed adaptation course will address the identified deficiencies, prior to enrolling on the adaptation course. Following completion of any adaptation, the applicant will then progress onto the College of Optometrists SfR/ ABDO PQP.

For optometrists, there are three possible outcomes:

- Proceed to The College of Optometrists SfR;
- Undertake further training, such as:
  - Trailing competences to be completed during SfR, or
  - Adaptions; or
- Rejection.

For dispensing opticians, there are three possible outcomes:

- Proceed to the ABDO PQP;
- Undertake further training in the form of an adaptation course(s); or
- Rejection.

The application process from submitting the application form to completing the SfR/ ABDO PQP can be completed within 2 years, if all documentation is provided in a timely manner, no adaptations are required and the applicant is able to secure a place on the SfR/ ABDO PQP. However, if adaptation courses are required, time to completion may be significantly longer.

## Fees

Current fees are:

- £125 scrutiny fee of the application form and supporting documents
- £450 for assessment of the application (excluding those education institutes with whom we have mutual recognition agreements)
- £200 for the interview (excluding those education institutes with whom we have mutual recognition agreements)
- Applicants will also need to meet the costs of the SfR (for optometrists) or further training, as well as fees related to visas.

Analysis of applications to join the GOC's register from optical professionals qualified overseas.

Volumes of applications have changed significantly over the past several years. In summary, the changes are:

- Overall number of applications has significantly increased.
- EEA applications have declined.
- Non-EEA applications have rapidly increased.

**Number of applications received in each financial year:**

- 2018-2019 - 50 applications
- 2019-2020 – 95 applications
- 2020-2021 – 102 applications
- 2021-2022 – 226 applications
- 2022-2023 – 289 applications

**Number of applications received in each calendar year:**

Calendar Year	EEA Optometrist	EEA Dispensing Optometrist	Total EEA	Non- EEA Optometrist	Non-EEA Dispensing Optometrist	Total	Grand Total
2018	33	25	<b>58</b>	37	4	<b>41</b>	<b>99</b>
2019	33	37	<b>70</b>	33	0	<b>33</b>	<b>103</b>
2020	36	20	<b>56</b>	38	3	<b>41</b>	<b>97</b>
2021	8	2	<b>10</b>	159	8	<b>167</b>	<b>177</b>
2022	9	1	<b>10</b>	328	12	<b>340</b>	<b>350</b>

**Number of applications received between 2018-2022, broken down by country:**

Country	Number of Applications
Nigeria	387
India	84
Ghana	35
South Africa	34
Italy	32
Spain	31
Ireland	26
Romania	19
Pakistan	16
Greece	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>678</b>

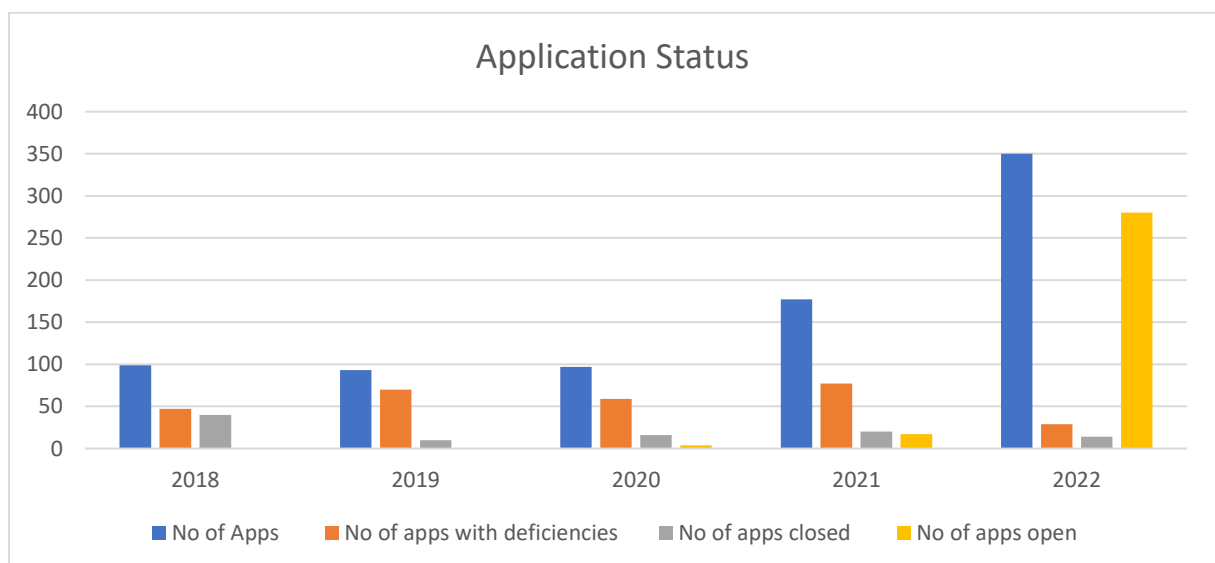
**Number of applications received between 01/01/2021 – 31/12/2022 by country:**

Country	Number of Applications
Nigeria	334
India	63
Ghana	30
South Africa	16
Ireland	12
Pakistan	10
Hong Kong	9
Islamic Republic of Iran	5
Greece	4
Italy	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>487</b>

**Number of applicants who successfully joined the fully qualified register under the non-UK route by calendar year:**

Calendar year	Number of Registrants
2018	21
2019	27
2020	18
2021	28
2022	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>

The chart below shows the number of applications received each year, broken down by applications with deficiencies, applications closed and open at various stages and highlights the importance of the assessment and interview stages carried out by the non-UK assessors.



The number of applications received annually will not correlate with the number of international individuals joining the fully qualified register. As highlighted above, they will rarely be able to join the register in the year that they applied, as the SfR/PQP is a mandatory process they need to undertake.