

General Optical Council
Education Strategic Review Consultation

Open date: 12 November 2018

Closing date: 25 February 2019



Overview

This consultation forms part of our Education Strategic Review (ESR) and follows on from our analysis of key findings from the [Concepts and Principles Consultation](#) published earlier this year.

As the regulator for optometrists and dispensing opticians, our role is to protect the public. One of the key ways that we do this is by setting the standards of optical education and then approving and quality assuring education programmes and qualifications that lead to professional registration with us.

We have now developed new draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes, which you can access by clicking on the link below.

[Draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes](#)

You will need to look at these draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes to be able to answer some of the questions in the survey. You can also access a copy of these after you begin the survey.

Our aim is to provide a robust approach to approval and quality assurance of relevant optical education that ensures the public are protected as our registrants take on new roles in a changing landscape, such as greater delivery of enhanced services.

We want the education providers that we approve and quality assure to have flexibility and agility in developing their programmes so that they can respond to changing patient, service and business needs in the optical sector. At the same time we feel that our role as the regulator for the UK optical professions is to act in a proportionate way, to avoid unnecessary duplication and burden on those we regulate, whilst fulfilling our primary role of protecting the public.

We have been working with experts in the optical sector to develop new standards that education providers must adopt when designing and delivering their programmes and learning outcomes that we would expect all students to achieve before being admitted to the GOC register.

Whilst the new outcomes-based approach offers the benefits of greater freedom and flexibility than our current prescriptive approach, it also means new ways of doing things for many of our education providers. The key differences are set out in the main body of this consultation document.

We recognise that there will be challenges in establishing and transitioning to a new approach. We look forward to working closely with our providers to ensure the health and safety of the public is protected at all times, and to ensure that the intended outcomes of changing our approach are realised.

The responses to this consultation will help to inform our risk and impact assessment regarding the introduction of these new Education Standards and Learning Outcomes. We will carefully consider and account for all views before system implementation.

The Education Standards and Learning Outcomes contained within this document are in draft and do not represent the final version.

What we have heard

We have engaged widely across the optical and wider health sector, including with education and training providers, students, patient organisations, the NHS and departments of health across the UK, NHS Commissioners in England, optical businesses and other optical service providers. We have heard many consistent messages throughout the ESR, which have led us to believe:

- student practitioners need earlier, more varied and regular experience of engaging with patients;
- we should put more focus on evaluating the outcomes of education and training rather than detailed inputs, such as how programmes should be delivered;
- professionals of the future need to be able to make clinical decisions confidently and safely;
- professionals of the future need to be equipped to deliver new, different and innovative services; and
- we need to have a consistent, fair and proportionate approach to approving and quality assuring education and training that leads to registration with us.

Why We Are Consulting

This consultation sets out our draft Education Standards for providers and Learning Outcomes for students which reflect and build on the evidence and feedback we have obtained through our ESR. The main focus of the ESR is the education and training that leads to professional registration as an optical professional.

We are seeking the views of stakeholders on these current drafts to ensure our final proposals are future-proof and fit for purpose.

We welcome all responses to the consultation which we will consider in the context of our ongoing work on the ESR.

Section 1: Views on draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes

If you need to refer to a copy of the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes, please click [here](#).

[Please read this information before answering the following questions.](#)

7. What opportunities and impacts (including equality, diversity and inclusion) may arise from the content of the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes, and how could they be mitigated?

You may wish to consider the questions raised in the accompanying Impact Assessment, which can be accessed [here](#).

8. To what extent do the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes address the key themes of the Concepts and Principles of ESR?

- Fully address the key themes
- Partially address the key themes
- Do not address the key themes
- Don't know

Comments:

Section 1 (continued): Views on draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes

9. Do you have any comments to make regarding the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes?

You may wish to consider:

- Completeness;
- Language used;
- Structure or flow.

Comments:

10. Overall, do you think that the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes are fit for purpose?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Don't know
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments:

Section 2: Views on proposed timeframe for implementing changes

If you need to refer to a copy of the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes, please click [here](#).

We propose to transition to the new Education Standards for providers and Learning Outcomes for students in 2024. We plan to work closely with each provider to agree an implementation plan, in which their transition will be staggered based on their needs. We will develop a more detailed timeline once we have received feedback on the impact of these changes on all our stakeholders so that we can respond flexibly and supportively.

11. Does this timescale seem realistic?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

12. Are there any risks and/or concerns in meeting this?

Comments:

Section 3: Views on linking the Learning Outcomes to CET

If you need to refer to a copy of the draft Education Standards and Learning Outcomes, please click [here](#).

Our current approach to CET tightly defines what it is that each of our registrant groups need to know, i.e. what is required of an optometrist as opposed to a dispensing optician. The current CET competencies also focus on clinical skills and knowledge as opposed to the broader skills, knowledge and behaviours involved in being a healthcare professional that are reflected in our standards of practice.

We have heard from stakeholders that this is not flexible enough to take account of changing roles within the profession, that it restricts registrants from tailoring their CET activity to their own individual role and development and that broader skills are a very important component of being an optical professional.

We are therefore proposing to link our CET requirements to high-level learning outcomes based on our Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians. This approach will be consistent with the learning outcomes we are developing through the ESR and would mean that rather than requiring registrants to do CET in relation to all the current competencies, registrants could tailor their CET to not only their current scope of practice, but also to how they might like to develop their scope of practice and choose CET that would help them to do so.

13. Do you support this approach?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

14. What would be the benefits?

Comments:

15. What would be the barriers to using these learning outcomes for CET?

Comments:

Section 4: Views on continuing GOC student registration

Unlike other healthcare regulators, students studying to become optometrists or dispensing opticians in the UK are required to be registered with the GOC. We have previously considered whether or not we should continue to require student registration, although it is important to note that any change to the current system would require legislative change and, therefore, would be a matter for government.

We concluded that student registration was not necessary to address the risks to the public that can arise while students are undertaking their education and training, subject to giving further consideration to whether student optometrists should be registered during the pre-registration period after they have graduated and before they join the register as a qualified practitioner.

The draft Education Standards that we are now consulting on relate to the whole route to registration – from students beginning their education and training to qualifying as optometrists and dispensing opticians. They envisage that students will gain clinical experience in a range of settings from early on in their education and training, i.e. there will be a less clear divide between their university education and clinical experience gained in an optical practice.

For this reason, we are asking your views on what would be the implications for GOC student registration of introducing the new Education Standards and in particular, what would be the opportunities and risks of no longer requiring students to register with us.

16. What would be the implications for GOC student registration of introducing the new Education Standards and in particular, what would be the opportunities and risks of no longer requiring students to register with us?

You may want to reference our website for more information about our [review on our registration approach](#).

Comments:

Final thoughts

17. Do you have any further comments you would like to add on any of the points raised in this consultation?

Comments:

Publication and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion information

Please submit your form through the consultation hub – you will be asked further questions about you and your publication preferences.