

General Optical Council



Business plan 2026-27



Safe and effective eye care

The General Optical Council (GOC) regulates nearly 36,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, students and some eye care businesses across the UK.

Our vision is safe and effective eye care for all, and our mission is to protect the public by upholding high standards in eye care services.

Our ambition remains to be a world-class regulator, well regarded by our stakeholders and continuing to meet all the Professional Standards Authority's (PSA) Standards of Good Regulation.

About this business plan

This business plan for 2026-27 is the second in our corporate strategy for 2025-30 and demonstrates how we will protect the public and ensure registrants can deliver to their full professional capabilities across each part of the UK.



Delivering our statutory responsibilities

We deliver agile, robust and effective regulation that protects the public by upholding high standards in eye care services, supports professionals to deliver quality care, and meets the needs of the UK health system.

Setting the standards for the performance and conduct of registrants

Following last year's update of our Standards for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, we will now begin work to review the Standards for Optical Businesses, including commissioning research, stakeholder engagement and developing proposed changes ahead of taking proposals to Council.

We plan to consult on proposals to update our 2013 statement on the testing of sight and standard on supervision, making any changes in line with our strategic objective of supporting responsible innovation and protecting the public.

Maintaining a register of individuals who are fit to practise or train as optometrists or dispensing opticians, and bodies corporate who are fit to carry on business as optometrists or dispensing opticians

This year we expect to register nearly 36,000 individuals and businesses. We will also launch a major upgrade to MyGOC, our online platform for registrants.

Approving qualifications leading to registration

Following the introduction of our Education Training Requirements, we will develop new international registration processes to support applications for registration from professionals qualified overseas. Reflecting the maturity of our education reforms we have received applications to deliver new qualifications in dispensing optics and optometry, which we will consider in line with our statutory processes.

Investigating and acting where registrants' fitness to practise, train or carry on business may be impaired

We will continue to embed improvements we have made in the delivery of our fitness to practise function, to improve timeliness in case resolution and in our communication with, and the support we provide to witness and registrants involved in the process.



Supporting registrants to provide effective eye care

Deepening our understanding of the sector

We will publish the outcomes of our annual surveys of registrants and the public. We use these findings to help us to track trends in the sector and we know that other organisations use them to understand the eye care workforce and patient expectations.

We will continue to engage with a wide range of individuals and organisations to deepen our understanding of the eye care sector, including by visiting different practices and care settings around the UK.

Using our research to improve outcomes

We will publish the final report of our thematic review on commercial practices and patient safety which will help us understand the nature and extent of these practices and their impact on patients and the public. The review will identify recommendations for action that either we or the wider sector can take to help support the delivery of safe and effective eye care for all.

We also plan to scope topics for a second thematic review.

Reviewing our approach to setting registrant fees

We will issue a discussion paper on how we set registrant fees to improve transparency and ensure financial stability whilst being fair and proportionate to registrants, including those on a low income.

Developing new plans for continuing professional development (CPD)

We will continue to administer our CPD scheme, which gives registrants the ability to tailor their professional learning and development, maximising opportunities for deployment of their professional capability for the benefit of patients and the public. We will conclude our consultation on changes to the scheme for 2028 onwards and beyond, to modernise our CPD requirements towards a more flexible, less prescriptive system which maximises registrants' ability to undertake learning and development relevant to their professional scope of practice and which supports career progression and acquisition of post-registration qualifications.



Contributing to fairer and more inclusive eye care services and the wider healthcare agenda

Recognising the importance of user voice

We will scope proposals for strengthening service user and patient voice across our regulatory functions, which we hope will lead to a better balancing of professional, commercial and user insights in the delivery of our regulatory responsibilities. This will put the needs of patients and the public at the heart of our regulatory approach.

Guidance on the use of AI

We will improve understanding of, and keep up to date with developments in, the use of AI in eye care and in regulation and use that understanding to produce guidance for registrants. Where appropriate, we will deploy AI to achieve internal efficiency gains in our business processes.

Engaging with legislative reform

While reform of our current legislation will not take place during this Parliament, we will continue to engage with and influence DHSC on healthcare regulatory legislative reform in preparation for forthcoming changes.



Delivering our ambitions

We will continue our public duty and commitment to progress equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), which underpins all our work. We will implement our ambitious EDI action plan in support of our corporate strategy.

We will maintain strong governance procedures, supporting the work of our Council and committees to ensure they inform decision-making and identify and manage any risk appropriately.

We will continue to invest in our staff, building an engaging, inclusive culture where everyone feels valued, including continuing to implement our new performance and behaviours framework.

Our finances

As part of developing our corporate strategy for 2025-30, we also produced a financial strategy to enable the following financial objectives:

- Financial sustainability and stability
- Transparency and accountability in financial management
- Maintain appropriate reserves for contingencies and strategic initiatives
- Deliver value for registrants' money
- Maintain a low to moderate risk appetite in our financial management.

Our budget for 2026/27 will draw on reserves to offset a planned deficit, consistent with our five-year financial strategy to 2030. This strategy aims to balance our income and expenditure over the five-years of our corporate plan, to support delivery of our long-term aims. This kind of long-term planning means we are able to deliver greater value for registrants' money, whilst helping to keep increases to registrants' fees at below inflation.

Budget 26/27	
	£'000
Income	13,095
Expenditure (Business as usual)	13,541
Operating surplus/deficit (BAU)	(446)
Strategic projects expenditure	597
Complex legal cost expenditure	110
Infrastructure cost expenditure	30
Surplus/(Deficit) before movement in reserves	(1183)
Funded by:	
General reserves	446
Strategic reserves	597
Legal reserves	110
Infrastructure/dilapidation reserves	30
	1,183

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