

Hearings Panel Chairs (Lay): Candidate information pack

(11 vacancies in total)

Ref: GOC03/24

July 2024

This information pack is available in alternative formats (for example large print). Please submit your request to the Governance team (appointment@optical.org)

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Welcome letter



Thank you for expressing your interest in becoming a lay chair member of our Hearings Panel. The GOC's Hearings Panel consists of 70 members, including optometrists, dispensing and contact lens opticians, and lay (non-registrant) members. Hearings Panel members play an important role, helping us to maintain the public's confidence in the two professions and optical businesses we regulate.

Most of the work undertaken by our Hearings Panel members is in relation to fitness to practise (FtP). As a lay chair member of our Hearings Panel, you will chair two committees, our Fitness to Practise Committee and our Registration Appeals

Committee, both of which are described in more detail below.

This is a unique opportunity to share your skills and experience while learning from others, as well as use your professional skills to help us protect the public. In addition, we are committed to supporting personal and professional development in the role and offer a comprehensive annual induction and training programme.

The two committees you will chair are:

- the FtP Committee, which considers whether a registrant's fitness to practise is impaired and impose sanctions if appropriate to do so; and
- the Registration Appeals Committee, which considers i) appeals against any decision of the Registrar refusing to enter the name of an individual or body corporate in, or to restore it to, the appropriate register; and ii) applications for restoration by a former registrant who has been erased by the FtP Committee.

The work of our Hearings Panel is central to our mission, to protect the public by upholding high standards in the optical professions we regulate. As a lay chair member, you will ensure that all hearings are conducted fairly and with integrity. This is a challenging role, and we encourage applications from people of all backgrounds with a passion for public protection, and the ability to think critically, listen effectively, consider evidence and to build a consensus.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Wright".

Dr Anne Wright CBE, Council Chair

July 2024

Timeline

Key dates for this appointment are as follows:

Application Deadline

Midnight, Sunday 28 July 2024

Interviews

Week commencing 2 September 2024

Appointment Start Date

1 January 2025 (8 members) & 1 July 2025 (3 members)

Induction

14 November 2024

Key contact: Please email appointment@optical.org for further information and we will aim respond to your query within 48 hours. Please quote reference **GOC03/24** on all correspondence.

About the GOC

Background

We are the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. We currently register around 33,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses.

We are a registered charity and have an annual income of approximately £11 million. We employ about 100 staff, supported by about 130 members. Our twelve strong Council fulfils the trustee role for the organisation and ensures that we deliver our core functions, use our resources effectively and fulfil our statutory responsibilities as a regulator and charity.

You can read more about us in [our annual report for 2022/23](#).

We have four core functions:

Setting standards for the performance and conduct of our registrants

Approving qualifications leading to registration

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

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

Legislation

Our primary legislation is the Opticians Act 1989 (as amended) and we also have a series of related rules that describe how we carry out our statutory functions. This information can be found on our [website](#).

Our values

The interests of patients and the general public are at the heart of all we do, and we aspire to the seven public sector principles of public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

Our values underpin the way we work with each other, and with the public, our registrants and partner organisations:

- We act with **integrity**
- We pursue **excellence**
- We **respect** other people and ideas
- We are **agile** and responsive to change
- We show **empathy**
- We behave **fairly**

The role of the Hearings Panel

The Hearings Panel is a mix of lay (non-registrant) and registrant members with different backgrounds, skills, knowledge and experience from whom members of the Fitness to Practise Committee (FtPC) and our Registration Appeals Committee (RAC) are drawn, in accordance with our Committee Constitution Rules.

The FtPC considers whether a registrant's fitness to practise is impaired and impose sanctions if appropriate to do so. This includes considering allegations, hearing evidence and determining the fitness to practise of a registrant. This can include individual registered optometrists and dispensing opticians, the fitness of business registrants to carry on business as an optometrist or a dispensing optician or both; and the fitness of student registrants to undertake training as an optometrist or dispensing optician. You will be responsible for chairing a FtPC, which will have either 3 or 5 members (a mix of lay and registrant members) drawn from the Hearings Panel.

You do not have to be a legally qualified individual or have specialist medical knowledge to chair a FtPC. We are looking for individuals who can chair meetings effectively and impartially, ensuring that all allegations are considered fairly and independently, maintaining standards for registrants and the protection of the public.

A FtPC can also determine whether it is necessary for interim measures (suspension or made subject to conditions) to be put in place whilst an investigation is in progress for the protection of the public or in the interests of a registrant.

The chair is the main point of contact for all parties during the course of a hearing. It is the chair's responsibility to ensure the smooth running of proceedings, and you can read more about the duties of the chair [here](#). The chair is supported by GOC staff and specialist clinical and legal professionals when required.

You may also be asked to chair the RAC which considers appeals against any decision of the Registrar refusing to enter the name of an individual or body corporate in, or to restore it to, the appropriate register; and applications for restoration by a former registrant who has been erased by the FtPC.

A full list of our current Hearings Panel members can be found [here](#).

For more information about our Hearings functions please refer [here](#).

Appointment information and expectation

Remuneration and Time Commitment

A daily fee of £372 is paid in line with our [member fees policy](#) and [member fee schedule](#). This is taxable and subject to Class 1 National Insurance (NI) contributions. It is not pensionable.

Members can claim expenses for travel and subsistence costs incurred on Council business as set out in our [expenses policy](#).

This role requires a commitment of approximately 16-20 days per year, including time spent preparing for meetings. Hearings will usually take place via MS Teams but may on occasion be held at the GOC Offices at 10 Old Bailey, London EC4M 7NG or other suitable venues.

Appointment and Tenure of Office

The initial tenure will not exceed four years (any decision on reappointment will be subject to the needs of Council and a satisfactory member review, up to a combined maximum of ten years).

This role is a public appointment / statutory office, rather than a job, and is therefore not subject to the provisions of employment law.

Member Reviews

All Hearings Panel members are required to take part in our [member review process](#). For the Hearings Panel chairs, this involves self-assessment, observation, and a one-to-one meeting with an independent member. A satisfactory review will normally be required for Hearings Panel Chairs to continue to hold office. You will also be asked to undertake member reviews for Hearings Panel members.

Learning and Development

Potential candidates are welcome to observe a public hearing if they wish. Details of how to do this can be found on our [website](#). Appropriate learning and induction will be provided and tailored to the appointed candidates. Induction will take place prior to appointment where possible. All members are expected to undertake routine refresher training on key areas, such as information governance and equality, diversity and inclusion, as a condition of appointment.

Standards in Public Life

You will be expected to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct including impartiality, integrity and objectivity in the execution of the role and its responsibilities.

To ensure that these values are maintained by those in public service, the successful candidate will be required to subscribe to our code of conduct on appointment.

You must also confirm that you understand the standards of probity required by public appointees outlined in the “Seven Principles of Public Life”. These principles are included within our [Code of Conduct](#).

Disqualification

Appointments to healthcare professional regulatory bodies are governed by regulations which include details of the circumstances in which an individual may be disqualified from holding office.

The criteria for disqualification from appointment as a member are set out in Part 1A of the Committee Constitution Rules 2005. If you require further information about this criteria, please email appointment@optical.org.

Please read this carefully before you submit an application.

Management of Interests

You should note your requirement to declare any interests you hold which relate to the advertised role. These are:

- Business or personal interests that might be relevant to our work, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest were you to be appointed, should be declared at the application stage.
- Any close personal relationships with any GOC employees, workers or Council, committee or Hearings Panel members. Any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the selection panel at shortlisting and interview stage. Candidates will be given an opportunity to propose how they would manage or eliminate the conflict.

It is possible that certain interests will not be manageable or might be dealt with as a condition of appointment (for example, a candidate needing to terminate their conflicting activity to take up the role).

We strongly recommend that you read our [Management of Interests policy](#) and consider any interests that may conflict with the role before deciding to apply.

Examples of interests that will require the candidate to give up their interest prior to taking up appointment as a Hearings Panel Chair include:

- GOC Council member;
- Advisory Panel/committee member;
- Member of the GOC Hearings Panel or Investigation Committee;
- GOC Case Examiner;
- GOC employee;
- GOC Education Visitor Panel member; and
- Independent members of the GOC non-statutory advisory committees including Audit and Risk; Nominations and Remuneration Committee.

On appointment you will be required to declare any interests you hold which could conflict or be perceived to conflict with your role as a member. To be transparent, these interests will be published on our website.

If you wish to discuss an interest before submitting your application, please email appointment@optical.org or call the Governance team on 0207 307 3934.

Person specification

Please note that this role is for a lay member, as defined in the Opticians Act 1989. This means this vacancy is not open to individuals who are (or ever have been) registered in a register, or a director of a body corporate registered in a register, maintained by the GOC. In addition, you must not hold qualifications which would entitle you to apply for registration in one of the registers maintained by the GOC.

Candidates will be required to provide in their application examples of how their experience matches the essential criteria outlined below.

Essential Criteria

1. Able to facilitate a decision-making process as a chair, with an emphasis on encouraging active participation and consensus building, coupled with strong time management and the exercise of sound judgement.
2. Understand and operate within a complex legislative framework – taking advice and assessing large volumes of complex evidence logically to achieve well-founded impartial decisions.
3. Committed to high professional and ethical standards, including experience in taking personal responsibility, challenging discriminatory practices and holding others to account.
4. Demonstrable commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion; able to evidence how individual and collective actions make a difference to progressing the equality agenda and improving decision-making.
5. Able to reflect on your and others' performance, take on board and provide constructive feedback.
6. Experience of communicating clearly and succinctly and tailoring your communication style to meet the needs of those around you.

We are committed to working in a fair and transparent manner, free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to promoting equality, valuing diversity, being inclusive, and meeting our equality duties.

We will not discriminate on age; disability; gender reassignment; race/ethnicity; religion or belief; gender; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy; maternity; or geographical location.

How to apply

Your application

Please apply with the following:

- your CV outlining your employment history, any relevant voluntary work, public service or other experience; together with any relevant professional, academic or vocational qualifications;
- the application form, stating how your experience matches the essential criteria for the vacancy you are applying for; and
- an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) monitoring form which can be accessed [here](#).

Equality monitoring

We would welcome applications from individuals who are disabled and from diverse ethnic backgrounds as these are currently under-represented on our Council and committees.

When submitting your application, you will also be asked to complete EDI monitoring information. This is to ensure all candidates are treated fairly, through our process. The form can be accessed [here](#).

Please note the information you submit will be treated in the strictest confidence and used for monitoring purposes only. This will be separated from your application and will not be seen by anyone directly involved in the selection process.

Deadline

Please complete your application by **midnight Sunday 28 July 2024**. Please email your completed application to appointment@optical.org.

If you have any questions, please email them to appointment@optical.org and we will aim to respond to you within 48 hours. You may also contact us by telephone 0207 307 3934.

Appointments process

We will process your application as quickly as possible and keep you informed at key stages. **Please read the information below carefully, which outlines important information and our process once we receive your application:**

- We will acknowledge receipt of your CV, application and EDI form (by email) and check it for completeness and eligibility.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview with an appointments panel. The appointments panel for these appointments will be comprised of:
 - Lisa Gerson (Council member)
 - Ian Crookall (Hearing Panel Lay Chair Member)
 - Ann Brown (Independent Member)
- The appointment panel membership can be subject to change at short notice. We will confirm the final membership of the panel when inviting you to interview.
- The appointment panel will rely on the information you provide in your application form and CV to determine whether you have demonstrated that you meet selection criteria as set out in the person specification. All applications are anonymised at the shortlisting stage.
- Where 30 or more applications are received for a role, applications will be “pre-assessed” by the Director of Regulatory Operations and Head of Hearings before being forwarded to the full appointments panel for consideration. This assessment will be made against the criteria specified above.
- Candidates shortlisted for interview will be notified in the week commencing **26 August 2024**.
- If you have **not** heard from us by this date, please assume you have not been invited to interview. This will be confirmed to you via email at a later date. Please note that individual feedback will only be available to candidates who attend interview (but are not appointed).
- Interviews will take place remotely via Microsoft Teams on the week commencing **2 September 2024**.
- Where a candidate is unable to attend an interview on the published dates, the selection panel *may* consider a new date, but at their discretion and in light of those interviewed first time.

If invited to interview, you will be asked to meet remotely via Microsoft Teams some of our staff to discuss your experience and knowledge in relation to EDI.

This session will also include an exercise to test your ability to chair meetings. A summary of the outcome of this meeting will be provided to the selection panel, to assist with their assessment of candidate suitability.

- At your interview, the selection panel will question you about your experience and expertise and ask specific questions to find whether you meet the selection criteria.
- Written references from two referees, including one from a professional colleague who has worked with you closely in the last three years, and other due diligence checks (including Google/LinkedIn/Facebook searches, director/trustee checks) will be undertaken for shortlisted candidates **before interview**. Please ensure that your referees are aware and will be able to respond when contacted.
- These checks are undertaken to appropriately identify any potential conflicts of interest, and that there is nothing in the candidates past which would render them ineligible or unable to perform the role (and which could pose a risk to the GOC's reputation). If any information comes to light that might affect a candidate's suitability for appointment, an opportunity will be provided to discuss the information before a course of action is decided upon.
- All candidates who have been interviewed will be notified of the outcome once the final decision has been made which we expect to be on the week commencing **16 September 2024**.
- On appointment, you will receive further information about training and induction.

Equal opportunities and accessibility

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

We strive to be as diverse as the public we protect and welcome applications from everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity and geographical locations outside of London. We are committed to equality of opportunity for all, and appointments will be made solely on merit. We believe that for any organisation to be successful, it needs to work with the most talented and diverse people available. We positively encourage applications from people from all of the community, from all backgrounds and with a broad range of experience.

To ensure all candidates are treated fairly, we monitor diversity at all stages of the appointments process. The application process includes a monitoring section which is submitted online. Providing this information is optional, but we would be grateful for your co-operation.

Information provided will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used for monitoring purposes only. It will not be seen by anyone directly involved in the selection process and will not be treated as part of your application. No information will be published or used in any way which allows any individuals to be identified. Monitoring information gathered from application processes is published annually in our [EDI annual report](#). Our approach to monitoring can be viewed on our [website](#).

Access Requirements

We have a duty to promote equality of opportunity for people who have disabilities. One of the ways we are doing this is through identifying barriers to opportunity facing people with disabilities and making reasonable adjustments to remove them.

If you would like to discuss your requirements for reasonable adjustments at any stage of the recruitment process in more detail, please contact the Governance team on 0207 307 3934. If you would like more information on reasonable adjustments please read this link: <https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

Your data

Data Protection

Our data protection policy is published on our [website](#). We are required to retain information about the people who apply for public appointments, and make this available for audit purposes, if requested to do so. Our retention policy in relation to the information we collect in respect of public appointments is that we keep the following information for one year for unsuccessful candidates and six years for successful candidates and then it is destroyed:

- initial contact details, including your name and address;
- application form and any supporting documentation; and
- monitoring information.

Some of the information requested on the application form will be made public if you are appointed (e.g. your name, brief career/background history, other public appointments held, any other information that it is in the public interest to disclose). Moreover, we may be required to release information, including personal data, on request under the UK Data Protection Act 2018. However, we will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality, and where possible will look to gain consent from the individual. Nor will we act in contravention of our obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Questions and Concerns

We aim to process all applications as quickly as possible. However, if you have a complaint about the process used in this recruitment campaign, please refer to our [Corporate complaints and feedback procedure](#) which provides guidance on what can and cannot be considered and how to raise concerns. In the first instance, you should raise your concern/complaint informally within 72 hours of the action you are complaining about. If you are unhappy following the conclusion of the complaint procedure, you have the right to complain to the Privy Council, the contact details of which are available here: <https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/contact-us/>

You can raise your concern by email (appointment@optical.org) or telephone (0207 307 3934).

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