

Council: Candidate information pack

Two vacancies for lay members of Council

Ref: GOC02/24

March 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 Council member. At its core, the role of a member of Council is to lead on the GOC's mission to protect and promote the health and safety of the public and patients; as well as maintain public confidence in the professions we regulate.

We are seeking to appoint two lay members to replace Sinead Burns and Michael Galvin, who come to the end of their invaluable eight-year tenure as lay Council members, in September 2024 and March 2025 respectively.

The successful candidates will contribute to Council by exercising oversight, ensuring effective corporate governance and making high-level policy decisions. They will be able to operate strategically and impartially; listen, communicate, and influence effectively; exercise judgment; and inspire confidence and support amongst our stakeholders.

Who are we looking for? The most important thing you can bring to the discussion is your knowledge and experience, and we are keen to ensure that Council's membership reflects the communities we serve as a regulator. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are particularly encouraged to apply, as we believe our decision-making is better when we ensure that there is an inclusivity of thought and experience.

We are keen to hear from critical thinkers able to express their point of view and who can provide objective advice. You may have experience as a charity trustee, or as a non-executive in a public body or private company. We want lay members who bring a breadth of specialist expertise and knowledge from a wide range of different backgrounds. You will work with the registrant members of Council to ensure that public safety is at the heart of optical services.

All Council members, be they registrant or lay, are equivalent to non-executive directors. The GOC is a charity, and you will become one of its trustees sharing equal responsibility for all aspects of the Council's work and expected to contribute to all strategic decisions.

This is a particularly important few years for the GOC, as we begin the process of consulting on our next five-year strategic plan (2025-30). Any Council members

joining us at this time will play a critical role in ensuring the plan is delivered, and that we continue to protect the public by upholding high standards in the optical professions.

If you welcome the challenge of helping to shape optical regulation at this time, we will be delighted to hear from you. Please email appointment@optical.org for further information and we will aim respond to your query within 48 hours. Please quote reference **GOC02/24** on all correspondence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Wright". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Dr Anne Wright CBE, Council Chair
March 2024

Timeline

Key dates for this appointment are as follows:

Application Deadline

Sunday 14 April 2024

Interviews

Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 May 2024

Appointment Start Date

1 October 2024 or 1 April 2025

Induction*

Week Commencing 1 October 2024 or 1 April 2025

*Subject to confirmation of appointment by the Privy Council, the successful candidates will be expected to attend scheduled inductions.

Key contact: appointment@optical.org

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 £10 million. The GOC employs around 100 staff. Council members fulfil the trustee role for the organisation and ensure that we deliver on our core functions, use our resources effectively and fulfil our statutory responsibilities as a regulator and charity. You can read more about how Council does this 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 timeless seven (Nolan) 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**

Overview of the role of Council

We are governed by a Council which sets the GOC's strategic direction. The Council is composed of six lay members (including the Chair) and six registrant members (optometrists and dispensing opticians). At least one member of the Council must work wholly or mainly in each of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. One Council member acts as a Senior Council Member whose role is to carry out the Chair's appraisal. They also provide a sounding board for the Chair and serve as an intermediary for Council members, executive and stakeholders as necessary.

The Council meets in public and private a minimum of eight times a year (a two-day meeting in March, June, September and December each year, plus occasional strategy days). In the interest of transparency, the Council conducts most of its business in public, and most Council meetings are held online via MS Teams.

Certain issues are reserved for private discussion, including those where there are certain commercial/financial sensitivities or issues that touch upon specific individuals. The Council also meets to evaluate the performance of itself, to consider strategy and to engage in member development.

Members share corporate responsibility for:

- ensuring the GOC is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit;
- providing strategic direction and making policy and strategic decisions in the interests of public protection;
- ensuring the Council's statutory functions are delivered effectively and efficiently by holding the Executive to account, monitoring performance and ensuring equality of opportunity, accountability, openness and transparency;
- exercising oversight of the Council's activity through financial stewardship;
- promoting public confidence in regulation and enhancing the Council's reputation by embodying the organisation's values;
- ensuring effective Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies and overseeing EDI performance;
- maintaining the reputation and public profile of the GOC;
- managing the charity's resources responsibly;
- acting in the charity's best interests;
- agreeing policy on important issues relevant to the Council, including standards of education, conduct and performance;
- ensuring sound governance and compliance with relevant legislation;
- setting registration fees;
- accounting for its performance to Parliament, the Charity Commission and the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) and publishing an annual report;
- appointing members (excluding Council members) and the Chief Executive and Registrar, including the setting of remuneration;

- ensuring effective communication with the public, registrants, professional bodies, government, and other interested parties; and
- delegating authority to the Chief Executive and Registrar, Executive and committees of the Council where appropriate.

Appointment information and expectation

Remuneration and Time Commitment

An annual fee of £13,962 is paid monthly. This is 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 is part time with a commitment of approximately two to three days per month, including time spent preparing for meetings. Meetings 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. There are occasional online catch-up meetings - these are currently scheduled on a Tuesday evening every 6-8 weeks, from 5.30pm – 6.30pm.

The Council currently meets in public and private a minimum of eight times a year. Dates for Council meetings in 2024/2025 (as well as previous agendas and papers) can be found [here](#). Members are expected to participate in seminars/workshops to discuss key areas of work, such as strategy and performance. Members also form part of recruitment panels for member appointments (for example, for Council associates or committee members), for which no additional remuneration is paid.

Members might be asked to become a member of one or more of Council's committees and/or a Council lead for a strategic issue or project, as identified in our strategic and business plans.

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 eight 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 Council members are required to take part in our [member review process](#), which involves self-assessment and one to one meetings with the Chair of Council and third-party feedback on completion of a specified term of office. A satisfactory review will normally be required for Council members to continue to hold office.

Training and Development

Appropriate training and induction will be provided and tailored to the appointed

candidate. 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 EDI, as a condition of appointment. No additional remuneration is payable for attendance at training, development or induction.

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 2 of [The General Optical Council \(Constitution\) Order 2009](#).

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 Council member include:

- 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 lay independent 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. Candidates who additionally provide examples of how their experience matches the desirable criteria outlined below may be better positioned to demonstrate that they meet the challenges of the appointment. For applicants who have a similar level of skills, knowledge and experience evidenced against the essential criteria, an assessment against the desirable criteria will be made in order to rank applications.

Essential Criteria

- E1. Demonstrable interest in upholding the public's confidence in the professions and businesses we regulate and the maintenance of high professional standards.
- E2. Ability to act strategically and understand the broader context of decisions and consider long-term and big-picture perspectives when formulating plans and making decisions consistent with the GOC's overall strategic direction and legislative framework.
- E3. Ability to listen, communicate and influence effectively.
- E4. Ability to analyse and evaluate large volumes of detailed written and oral information to make a recommendation, formulate advice and reach a collective decision.
- E5. Demonstrable, active engagement in respect to equality, diversity and inclusion; able to evidence how individual and collective actions make a difference to progressing the equality agenda.
- E6. Ability to participate constructively in active debate and decision-making, exercising logical argument, sound judgement and use evidence to build consensus within a multi-disciplinary group or committee.
- E7. Understanding of professional regulation and charity management and its impact on public protection.
- E8. Specialist expertise or leadership experience, preferably in an organisation of a comparable size and complexity in related field, such as patient and public safety, advocacy or research, in the public or private sector, and/or NHS service delivery.

We are committed to ensuring that in exercising all of our functions we operate in a fair and transparent manner and in a way that is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Within all of our functions, we are committed 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; and geographical locations outside of London

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 EDI monitoring form

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 equality, diversity and inclusion (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 14 April 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.
- There will be a shortlisting stage, and if candidates are successful they will be invited to interview with an appointments panel. The appointments panel for these appointments will be comprised of:
 - Dr Anne Wright CBE (Chair)
 - Ken Gill (Lay Council Member)
 - William Stockdale (Registrant Council Member)
 - TBC (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 two members of the appointment panel before being forwarded to the full appointments panel for consideration.
- **Candidates shortlisted for interview will be notified in the week commencing 13 May 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 22 and 23 May 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, 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 or the Privy Council'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 by 28 June 2024.
- Please note - Council members are appointed by the Privy Council, based on a recommendation from the appointment panel. The final decision rests with the Privy Council, and our appointment processes are subject to scrutiny by the PSA. Therefore, any offer will be conditional on Privy Council approval.
- 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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www.optical.org

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Twitter: [@GOC_UK](https://twitter.com/GOC_UK)

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