

General Optical Council

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

A guide for registrants



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1.

Introduction

About this guide

This guide explains the requirements for each registrant group and aims to help you to understand the requirements of the CPD scheme.

About the General Optical Council (GOC)

We are the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Our purpose is to protect the public by promoting high standards of education, performance and conduct amongst opticians. We currently register around 30,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, students and optical businesses.

Your responsibilities

Professional development is crucial to ensure that all regulated healthcare professions, including optometrists and dispensing opticians, continue to practise safely throughout the duration of their professional career. As a GOC registrant, you have a responsibility to ensure that you maintain and develop your skills, knowledge and conduct to help improve the safety and quality of care that your patients and the public receive. This responsibility is set out in the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, and our expectations of how you will fulfil this responsibility are set out in our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme.

Our continuing professional development (CPD) scheme

Our CPD scheme covers the learning, training, education and development that you undertake throughout your professional career to develop new skills, maintain and revalidate existing ones, as well as reflect on your practice and meet patient needs.

Routinely undertaking, recording and reflecting upon your CPD demonstrates your commitment to your own professional development for the benefit of the public and patients.

CPD is a legal requirement for all fully qualified optometrists and dispensing opticians. The scheme runs over a three-year cycle. It is points-based which means that you must earn a minimum number of points by the end of each cycle (as well as meeting a number of other requirements) in order to remain registered.

You can log your CPD through your online MyCPD account, where you can view your CPD requirements and track your progress against them. **It is your responsibility to log details of all the CPD you undertake on your MyCPD account** – under the CET scheme in previous cycles, providers uploaded points for you to accept, but this will no longer be the case. MyCPD can be accessed through your MyGOC account.

2.

CPD requirements

Requirements for CPD differ by professional group and the point at which you join the register during the CPD cycle. To view an accurate list of your own CPD requirements, please log in to your MyCPD account.

CPD requirements for optometrists and dispensing opticians

1. You must obtain a minimum of **36 CPD points from domains 1-4** (see point 4 below) during a cycle. (The points requirement is adjusted pro rata for registrants joining part-way through a cycle.)
2. You must achieve a minimum of **18 points** through **interactive CPD** (see section 6).
3. We expect you to obtain at least **six points per year** but would encourage you to do more than this in order to spread your learning evenly across the three-year cycle.
4. You must cover each of the four core **domains (1-4)** by obtaining a **minimum of one point in each** (see section 5).
5. You must participate in at least one **peer review event** (after which a reflection statement must be completed). A peer review event can either be a peer review delivered by a GOC CPD provider or a registrant-led peer review as part of a registrant's self-directed CPD (see section 7).
6. You may participate in **self-directed CPD** provided that you obtain **at least 18 points from GOC CPD providers** (see section 8).
7. You must plan your personal development at the start of a cycle by creating a personal development plan in your MyCPD account (see section 4).
8. You must complete a **reflective exercise** with a peer based on your personal development plan by the end of a CPD cycle (see section 4).

CPD requirements for optometrists with an additional supply (AS), supplementary prescribing (SP) and/or independent prescribing (IP) specialty

1. You must obtain a minimum of **54 CPD points** in total during a cycle which includes:
 - a. a minimum of **36 CPD points from domains 1-4** (see point 4 below).
 - b. a minimum of **18 CPD points from the specialty CPD domain** (see point 4 below).

(The points requirement is adjusted pro rata for registrants joining part-way through a cycle.)
2. You must achieve a minimum **18 points** through **interactive CPD** (see section 6).
3. We expect you to obtain at least **six points per year**, but we would encourage you to do more than this in order to spread your learning evenly across the three-year cycle.
4. You must cover the following domains:
 - a. each of the four core **domains (1-4)** by completing a minimum of **one point in each** (see section 5).
 - b. the **specialty CPD domain for AS/SP/IP** (see section 5).
5. You must participate in at least **one peer review event** for specialty CPD with peers with the same specialty registration (after which a reflection statement must be completed). A peer review event can either be a peer review delivered by a GOC CPD provider or a registrant-led peer review as part of a registrant's self-directed CPD (see section 7).
6. You may participate in self-directed CPD provided that you obtain **at least 18 points from GOC CPD providers** (see section 8).
7. You must plan your personal development at the start of a cycle by creating a personal development plan in your MyCPD account (see section 4).
8. You must complete a **reflective exercise** with a peer based on your personal development plan by the end of a CPD cycle (see section 4).

CPD requirements for contact lens opticians

1. You are required to obtain a minimum of **36 CPD points** in total during this cycle which includes:
 - a. a minimum of **18 CPD points obtained in domains 1-4** (see point 4 below).
 - b. a minimum of **18 CPD points obtained in the specialty CPD domain** (see point 4 below).

(The points requirement is adjusted pro rata for registrants joining part-way through a cycle.)
2. You must achieve a minimum of **18 points** through **interactive CPD** (see section 6).
3. We expect you to obtain at least **six points per year**, but we would encourage you to do more than this in order to spread your learning evenly across the three-year cycle.
4. You must cover:
 - a. each of the four core **domains** (1-4) by completing a minimum of one point in each (see section 5).
 - b. the **specialty CPD domain for contact lens opticians** (see section 5).
5. You must participate in at least one **peer review event** for specialty CPD with peers with the same specialty registration (after which a reflection statement must be completed). A peer review event can either be a peer review delivered by a GOC CPD provider or a registrant-led peer review as part of a registrant's self-directed CPD (see section 7).
6. You may participate in self-directed CPD provided that you obtain **at least 18 points from GOC CPD providers** (see section 8).
7. You must plan your personal development at the start of a cycle by creating a personal development plan in your MyCPD account (see section 4).
8. You must complete a **reflective exercise** based on your personal development plan by the end of a CPD cycle (see section 4).

CPD requirements for those wishing to relinquish specialty registration

Contact lens opticians or optometrists with AS/SP/IP specialty who wish to relinquish specialty registration should notify the GOC in the first instance.

If you wish to retain registration as a dispensing optician or optometrist, then you must obtain the minimum CPD requirements for that professional group.

3.

Using MyCPD

Your online CPD account

MyCPD is the area of our website that allows you to manage and record your CPD. Access to your own 'MyCPD' account can be found by logging into 'MyGOC' on the GOC website. Here you can log your CPD and check your CPD requirements and progress.

Your MyCPD account has the following features:

- a) The ability to log your CPD activities, which will include CPD from GOC CPD providers and may also include self-directed CPD. **You will be responsible for logging details of all of your CPD, including points**, even where you have attended sessions hosted or led by GOC CPD providers.
- b) The ability to view your outstanding CPD requirements. You will be able to track how many points you need (including interactive), which domains have been covered and whether any peer review has been completed.
- c) The facility to provide feedback on CPD attended. This is important so that CPD providers and the GOC can understand if there are any issues with the CPD provided and how they can be addressed in the future. Provision of feedback will not affect the points or domains gained from CPD.
- d) Templates to help you record reflection statements and undertake peer review. Reflection statements must be completed for peer review events and for self-directed CPD. They are optional for other CPD activities, but we encourage you to complete them in relation to all CPD that you do as a matter of good practice.
- e) A professional development plan template so you can plan your professional development and set learning goals for the cycle.
- f) The ability to upload written documentation of the mandatory reflective exercise, and an optional template to use to complete this exercise.
- g) A CPD search facility where you can search for CPD events.

How to find CPD to meet your requirements

You can also use MyCPD to search for CPD events. You can search to find CPD that is:

- available in your local area or online.
- offered by a particular provider.
- in a particular format of learning, topic or domain.

It is quick and easy to use, and the search results will give you all of the information you need to plan your CPD – who the CPD is targeted at, whether it is interactive, which domain(s) it covers and how to book a place.

First login during the cycle

When you log in for the first time during the cycle you will see a welcome screen and then asked to complete a few short questions about your practice. You will then be taken to the personal development plan. You must complete a personal development plan in relation to each CPD cycle. This should involve:

- identifying areas of practice that you want to revise or update.
- identifying new areas in which you wish to develop.

You will not be able to progress further until this is completed.

4.

Personal development planning and reflection

Your personal development plan allows you to set learning goals, reflect on your experiences in practice to date and identify areas in which you want to develop your skills.

A. Personal development planning

At the start of the cycle, you will be required to complete a personal development plan on MyCPD.

The personal development plan will give you an opportunity to reflect on your scope of practice at the beginning of the CPD cycle, think about the CPD that would be useful to you and plan your activities over the next three years.

We have provided a template for you to use but you do not have to use it – you could use an alternative template provided by your employer, contracting organisation or professional body, or your own template.

B. Reflective exercise

As part of the requirements for the CPD cycle, you are required to carry out and document a reflective exercise, based on the content of your personal development plan by the end of the cycle. This will involve discussion with a peer, who may be another registered healthcare professional, including an optometrist or dispensing optician, but cannot be a close friend, employee or someone you are related to. We talk more about who can be a peer later in this section.

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is the process where you think about your experiences to gain insights about your practice and to improve the way you work or the care you give to your patients. Reflection is part of the continuous learning and development expected of you as a professional throughout your career.

What are the benefits of reflective practice?

Reflection supports you in your professional development and practice. It helps to embed good practice and has been linked to improvements in the quality of care given to patients.

When should I carry out the reflective exercise?

We would advise you to carry out the reflective exercise when you have met all or most of your CPD requirements. We would recommend undertaking your reflective exercise with your peer towards the end of the cycle, so that you can have a more meaningful discussion about progress against your personal development plan.

What should the reflective exercise consist of?

The reflective exercise must involve a discussion with a peer. The purpose of the exercise is to discuss and document reflections on your progress against your personal development plan and CPD requirements, and reflections about your professional practice more generally over the course of a cycle.

The discussion must be documented by you and recorded as having been completed on MyCPD. If you use the GOC's template, you can document the discussion directly on the template. Alternatively, instead of using the GOC's template, you may upload an alternative template provided by your employer, contracting organisation or professional body, or your own template.

You should reflect on:

- your CPD plan, CPD activity and reflection statements already carried out to date, as well as thinking about what other CPD activities you need to carry out for the remainder of the cycle (if any).
- other information you have collected about your professional practice, for example, feedback from your line manager or employer, patient satisfaction data and/or clinical audit (where available).

Who counts as a peer?

There are a number of options for peers:

- another optometrist or dispensing optician
- your employer
- another healthcare professional regulated by a statutory body (such as an ophthalmologist, orthoptist, nurse, physiotherapist, pharmacist etc).

A relative, close friend or an employee would not be considered a peer.

We suggest you identify who is going to be your peer early on in the CPD cycle, so that you are both prepared for your reflective exercise.

Can I have the discussion remotely?

Yes, you can undertake the discussion either in person, via video call or telephone.

How will the GOC know I have completed the exercise?

You will be asked to self-declare that you have completed the reflective exercise. Your peer must provide evidence to confirm that they have undertaken the exercise with you. The GOC will randomly review a selection of written reflections to ensure compliance.

How will this exercise help me to plan my CPD for the next cycle?

You can use your reflective exercise to think about what you might want to do in the next CPD cycle. If you are using the GOC's template on MyCPD, the written reflection will be displayed to you at the start of the next cycle to assist you in setting new goals.

What if my plans change and I have undertaken different CPD to that set out in my personal development plan?

This is absolutely fine – as long as you meet the minimum CPD requirements and set out clearly in your reflective exercise why you have undertaken learning in different areas than you originally planned.

C. Reflection statements

In addition to the mandatory reflective exercise set out above, you are encouraged to reflect throughout the CPD cycle. You have the option of completing a short-written reflection statement on MyCPD for any CPD activity that you undertake. You must complete these for peer review and self-directed CPD activities, but we would encourage you to complete them in relation to all CPD that you do as a matter of good practice. You can do this on your MyCPD account when you log a CPD activity.

In completing reflection statements, you may find it useful to consider:

- what your expectations were about the activity
- what you learned; whether you will be applying the learning to your practice (and why), and if so, how you will apply it.

Your reflections should be anonymised and not contain any details that could identify patients or practitioners.

5.

Domains

A. Core domains

Domains refer to the different areas of practice that you need to cover throughout your CPD in each three-year cycle. There are four core domains which must be covered by all registrants which are set out below. All registrants must complete at least one CPD activity in each of the four core domains:

1. Professionalism
2. Communication
3. Clinical practice
4. Leadership and accountability

The domains are linked to the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians. Please see the appendix for further information about how the standards have been mapped to each domain.

Individual CPD activities by GOC CPD providers will cover a maximum of two of the four core domains. You can find out what domains are covered by a CPD activity by reading the advertisement/description for the activity or by asking the CPD provider directly.

B. Specialty domain

A fifth domain covers specialty CPD. Registrants with an AS, SP or IP speciality or contact lens optician speciality will need to complete CPD activity in the fifth specialty CPD domain for it to count towards their specialty CPD points target.

- 5a. Specialty CPD – contact lens optician
- 5b. Specialty CPD – AS/SP/IP optometrist

You need to ensure that all domains relevant to you are covered by the end of the cycle.

You can see your progress in covering the domains via the tracking facility in your MyCPD account.

C. Additional domain – current risks

It is important for you to be able to respond to emerging risks in practice and, as such, we may introduce an additional sixth domain at the start of, or during a cycle for all or a sub-set of registrants. Such a domain would allow us to set targeted CPD for a cycle in response to an identified risk and specify who must undertake it.

We may invoke this domain to address or fill known gaps in skillsets, or perhaps target all registrants as a result of issues raised through our fitness to practise processes, a national emergency or a change in legislation. If this additional domain is invoked, we would notify all registrants formally as soon as possible following the decision to do so.

6.

Interactive CPD

Interactive CPD is designed to help registrants learn alongside their peers and has many benefits, including reinforcing learning outcomes, providing a forum for discussion and reducing the risk of professional isolation. At least 18 of your CPD points must come from interactive CPD activities.

Interactive CPD is any CPD which involves either:

- physical attendance with others such as lectures, workshops or peer review events.
- distance learning which includes an element of interaction with others (i.e., meaningful engagement with your peers using electronic or verbal communication, either instantaneous such as in a chat room, or non-instantaneous such as a message board or email chain).

Whether or not a CPD activity is interactive will be published in advertising materials and in the CPD search facility in your MyCPD account. You can also ask the CPD provider about whether an activity is interactive.

Self-directed CPD can count towards your interactive points requirement if it involves interaction as defined above.

7.

Peer review

Peer review activities help you to share your own experience and expertise with colleagues and learn from theirs in turn.

You can discuss interesting, difficult or unusual cases or situations in practice and exchange ideas about different ways of handling them.

We know that our registrants have a lot of good practice to share and peer review is there to help you learn from each other.

All registrants must participate in at least one peer review per cycle. Both optometrists and dispensing opticians count as peers of each other for the purposes of the peer review exercise, though if you hold a specialty registration you must undertake at least one peer review with peers with the same specialty.

You may organise and run a peer review activity yourself, or you may choose to participate in a peer review activity organised and led by a GOC-approved CPD provider. All peer review activities are eligible for three CPD points.

Registrant-led peer review groups

If you choose to organise and run your own peer review group, you should decide upon a topic or theme for discussion and which domain(s) is relevant to the topic or theme (up to a maximum of two core domains, or two core domains and a specialty domain) and inform your peers who will be attending of this information, so that they can prepare appropriate material to discuss. You should ensure there is sufficient time for a meaningful discussion to take place, and for everyone to contribute and reflect. When discussing cases involving patients, you must not share confidential or identifying patient information, such as names, addresses and dates of birth.

Registrants resident outside the UK

If you are resident outside the UK, you do not have to carry out peer review with other GOC registrants – you can undertake peer review with peers who are not registered with the GOC, provided they are performing equivalent roles within their own countries and there are a minimum of four participants in the group. More information can be found about peer review in the support area of your MyCPD account.

Provider-led peer review

These are activities where cases or topics are provided and learning outcomes set in advance by a GOC CPD provider. Such events can involve a large number of attendees, with delegates split into small discussion groups plus a facilitator.

If you are unsure whether a provider-led activity is a peer review, please check the advertising materials or ask the CPD provider whether it is.

Reflection statements for peer review events

You must complete an anonymised reflection statement within your MyCPD account to capture your learning in relation to the peer review, regardless of which of the above types of peer review event you have completed.

8.

GOC CPD providers

A. What is a GOC CPD provider?

There are two types of GOC CPD providers: an approved CPD provider and a provisional CPD provider.

Approved CPD providers

An approved CPD provider is a CPD provider that has received approved status from the GOC, which means that they have demonstrated to us that they can deliver quality CPD and as such, they have the ability to design and deliver CPD sessions without getting advance approval to do so. To ensure they continue to provide good quality CPD, we audit their provision, checking whether it meets our expectations.

Provisional CPD providers

A provisional CPD provider is a CPD provider that has registered with the GOC but has not yet demonstrated that they can deliver learning without it being reviewed in advance of delivery. We will review and approve at least ten unique and self-authored CPD submissions from these providers before we consider giving them approved status. CPD activities delivered by provisional providers are eligible for points in the same way, and you should not be discouraged from attending events based on a provider's provisional status.

B. Feedback about GOC CPD providers

You will be required to give feedback on providers' activities via your MyCPD account. We encourage you to give open and honest feedback. It helps us to audit their provision effectively and helps providers know how to improve. All feedback is anonymous.

The expectations we have of GOC CPD providers, and the processes they must follow, are set out in our Provider Guide for CPD. If you have concerns that a GOC CPD provider is not meeting the standards for CPD providers set out in that document, you should contact our CPD team, setting out your concerns in writing.

9.

Self-directed CPD

Self-directed CPD is learning from sources other than GOC CPD providers. You do not have to complete self-directed CPD, but if you wish to do so, you may, as long as the following conditions are met:

- the learning is relevant to your scope of practice (i.e., relates to your professional role);
- you log details of the CPD on your MyCPD account, including what you did, how much time you spent doing it and evidence that you have done it;
- you complete a short written reflection statement after completing the CPD to explain why it is relevant to your scope of practice; and
- you complete a minimum of 18 points of CPD from GOC CPD providers.

Self-directed CPD allows you to count learning from wider sources towards your points total and gives you the chance to benefit from undertaking relevant learning with others outside of the sector. You may also choose to log learning from relevant academic study or teaching as self-directed CPD.

Points attributable to self-directed CPD

You can claim the following points for self-directed CPD:

Duration	Maximum points available
Over 30 mins but under 1 hour	0.5
1 hour or more	1
Registrant-led peer review	3

Self-directed CPD can count towards your interactive points requirement, provided it meets the definition of interactive CPD set out in section 6. If you log self-directed CPD as interactive, you will need to explain how it meets the definition of interactive CPD and upload evidence to support this.

Alongside your completed short written reflection statement, when recording self-directed CPD on MyCPD, you will need to provide evidence of your attendance. This could be a certificate of attendance from the organiser, independent confirmation from another party (for example, letter from a consultant ophthalmologist confirming attendance at a clinic). If this was an activity you did on your own (for example, independent reading or research), the short written reflection statement as outlined above will be sufficient evidence.

Reflection statements for self-directed CPD

You must complete an anonymised reflection statement within your MyCPD account to capture your learning in relation to self-directed CPD. We advise you to do this as soon as possible after the activity takes place, to ensure that the learning is still fresh in your mind.

10.

Review of records

Review of registrants' records

A selection of registrants' CPD records will be reviewed each cycle. The review is intended to help registrants ensure they are on the right track with their learning and are keeping good-quality records.

The process will be supportive and nothing to be concerned about if you are logging your CPD honestly, and if your records are selected for review, the reviewer will give you constructive advice and feedback. Further information about the review process can be found in our 'CPD record review: A guide for registrants'.

Audit of CPD providers

The GOC will also audit a sample of CPD providers each CPD cycle. Further information can be found about this in our 'Guide to audit of providers of CPD'.

11.

Issues in meeting your CPD requirements

All GOC registrants are expected to meet the CPD requirements in order to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. CPD is available in a wide range of formats, including distance learning. This means that even registrants based outside of the UK, on a career break or struggling to attend events can access CPD regularly.

To be on the GOC register you must be fit to practise and be able to undertake CPD. If you feel your ability to practise is impaired and you are unable to undertake CPD for health reasons, then you should inform the GOC and stop practising if this potentially puts patients at risk.

Anyone who is not able to meet their CPD requirements by the end of the cycle will have the opportunity to apply for consideration to remain on the register under our CPD exceptions policy. The Registrar will consider the application when determining whether or not a registrant should be removed from the register for failing to meet all the CPD requirements at the end of the cycle.

If you have failed to meet your CPD requirements by the end of the cycle you may be removed from the GOC register, resulting in you being unable to practise.

12.

CPD requirements for those restoring or joining mid-cycle

A. Restoration following previous removal (voluntary or non-voluntary)

In order to restore your registration following removal you will have to:

- make up any shortfall you may have in meeting the CPD requirement from a previous CPD cycle which may include some or all of CPD points, domains, interactive points or peer review.
- demonstrate that in the last 12 months you have completed a minimum of 12 provider-led CPD points obtained in domains 1-4, achieved 50 per cent of these points from interactive CPD, covered all the domains for your registrant group and completed a provider-led peer review (if required for your registrant group – please note that peer review was not required for dispensing opticians before the 2022-24 CPD cycle).

If you are restoring to a specialty register you will be required to:

- complete any shortfall in specialty CPD from the previous CPD cycle.
- demonstrate that in the last 12 months you have undertaken a minimum of six specialty CPD points (of which 50 per cent are interactive) and undertaken provider-led peer review obtained in the specialty CPD domain.

If you are a contact lens optician, the six points obtained in the specialty CPD domain can count towards your requirements for your dispensing optician registration (see second bullet point above) when applying to restore both general and specialty registration at the same time.

If you are an optometrist with an AS, SP or IP specialty, the six points obtained in the specialty CPD domain must be in addition to the 12 points required under the second bullet point above when applying to restore both your optometrist registrant and specialty registration at the same time.

B. Joining the register mid-cycle

Registrants joining the register part way through the cycle need to gain one CPD point for each full month that they are on the register and at least half of the total number of points need to be interactive. For example, if a registrant were to join on 1 September 2022, they would need to obtain 28 CPD points by 31 December 2024.

You must complete CPD in all of the domains (including specialty CPD if relevant) and undertake a peer review, unless you join in the last year of the cycle, in which case the requirements for domains and peer review are not applicable.

For more information see the restoration pages of the GOC website.

Appendix

Domain	Link to Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (s = standard)
1: Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show care and compassion for your patients (s.4) • Work collaboratively with colleagues in the interests of patients (s.10) • Protect and safeguard patients, colleagues and others from harm (s.11) • Show respect and fairness to others and do not discriminate (s.13) • Maintain confidentiality and respect your patients' privacy (s.14) • Maintain appropriate boundaries with others (s.15) • Be honest and trustworthy (s.16) • Do not damage the reputation of your profession through your conduct (s.17) • Be candid when things have gone wrong (s.19)
2: Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to patients and ensure they are at the heart of decisions made about their care (s.1) • Communicate effectively with patients (s.2) • Obtain valid consent (s.3) • Respond to complaints effectively (s.18)
3: Clinical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your knowledge and skills up to date (s.5) • Recognise, and work within, your limits of competence (s.6) • Conduct appropriate assessments, examinations, treatments and referrals (s.7)
4: Leadership and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain adequate patient records (s.8) • Ensure that supervision is undertaken appropriately and complies with the law (s.9) • Ensure a safe environment for your patients (s.12)



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