

Council: candidate information pack

2 x Council Associates

Ref: GOC06/25

November 2025

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 your interest and for taking the time to read this information pack.

The General Optical Council (GOC) is one of 13 organisations in the UK known as health and social care regulators. These organisations oversee the health and social care professions by regulating individual professionals and businesses. The Council plays a key role in guiding the organisation to ensure that protecting the public is at the heart of everything we do.

We are excited to provide this Associate opportunity to two talented GOC registrants. The scheme is now in its fourth year, and feedback shows it has been a great success for those who've participated to date.

The Council Associate scheme is a way of supporting your professional learning and development, while giving you first-hand experience of sitting on a board or committee. The roles would suit people interested in working in executive decision-making, business development, or clinical governance in the future. It will also help you understand the work the GOC does as a regulator, and how the different aspects of the organisation are overseen by Council and its committees.

For the GOC, this scheme enhances the work our Council does. By gaining broader opinions and perspectives around our Council table, we can represent the diverse needs of our registrants, staff, and other stakeholder groups.

We particularly welcome applications from registrants who are disabled and/or from ethnic minority backgrounds, as these groups are currently under-represented across our Council and committees. We also encourage registrants without previous involvement or exposure to board level work to apply. On this occasion, however, we will not be accepting applications from students – only fully qualified and registered optometrists or dispensing opticians may apply.

I hope the information provided in this pack will result in your application.



Dr Anne Wright CBE, Chair of Council
November 2025

Timeline

Key dates for this appointment are as follows:

Application Deadline

Sunday 18 January 2026

Interviews

Week commencing 16 March 2026

Appointment Start Date

1 April 2026

Please email appointment@optical.org for further information and we will aim respond to your query within 48 hours. Please quote reference **GOC06/25** on all correspondence.

Key contact: appointment@optical.org

About the GOC

Background

We are the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. We currently register around 34,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, optical students, and optical businesses.

We are a registered charity and have an annual income of approximately £13 million. The GOC employs around 110 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 from 2024-25](#).

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 (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**

The role of the Council Associate

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.

The Associate role

Now in its fourth year, the GOC remain committed to the Council Associate scheme's success. The perspectives our Council Associates bring to meetings enrich debate and ensure a greater diversity of lived experiences inform our decision making.

We want to help give talented candidates the experience and skills needed to go on to have a rewarding boardroom career.

Once appointed, our Council Associates will take part in all our Council meetings and associated activity. They will also get involved in our Audit, Risk, and Finance Committee to maximise their transferable experience of governance.

Due to our governing laws, Council Associates cannot be voting members when decisions are taken. However, they will be expected to read all the Council papers and encouraged (and once settled in, expected) to participate in the debates that lead to decisions being made.

Our Associates will be encouraged to attend all Council and Audit, Risk, and Finance Committee meetings, as well as Council workshop and strategy sessions. Outside of scheduled meeting activity, we want our Associates to regularly meet informally with their assigned Council and Executive buddies.

We are committed to understanding, respecting, and representing a broad a range of views and backgrounds. We know that diverse perspectives and experiences are critical to an effective and modern GOC.

Appointment information and expectation

Remuneration and Time Commitment

Council Associate roles are unpaid. Associates can claim reasonable expenses for travel and accommodation as set out in our [expenses policy](#).

Council Associates are not GOC employees and will not have associated employment rights. They will be expected to adhere to the Council member Code of Conduct.

If you are employed, please seek permission from your employer for the time required to participate effectively.

We are afraid that we cannot consider students for Council Associate roles due to the time requirement and impact on your studies.

The appointed Associates will be expected to commit approximately 1.5 days per month to the scheme. Meetings will usually take place via MS Teams but may, on occasion, be held at the GOC offices at floor 29, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AA or other suitable venues. Attendance is not mandatory, but we encourage Council Associates to attend all meetings to get the most out of the Council Associate scheme.

The appointment will be for a maximum of two years (1 April 2026 – 31 March 2028).

Appointment and Tenure of Office

Inclusion

We are a supportive Council and very keen to hear opinions and views that may differ from our own. We include the Associates in everything that happens on a board. No issues will be off limits.

Development

We will provide comprehensive support before and feedback after meetings. You will be assigned a buddy who will support you throughout the year. The Council has several strategy days and development workshops each year which are further opportunities for professional learning and development.

Range

We will involve the Associates in our Audit, Risk, and Finance Committee work. Experience of a second boardroom environment enhances the scheme's benefits for Associates.

Support

Initial governance training will be provided by the Governance Team and your buddy will regularly check in with you for ongoing mentorship. We would appreciate your

feedback to on the level of support available, and our Chief of Staff will be on hand to provide you with practical support and assistance.

Management of interests

You should note your requirement to declare any interests you hold which relate to the 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 in order 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.

On appointment, you will be required to declare any interests you hold that could conflict or be perceived to conflict with your role as an Associate. In order 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 3451.

Person specification

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

Council Associate – 1 x Dispensing Optician and 1 x Optometrist

- Excellent interpersonal skills
- An interest in the GOC's work
- A desire to learn about being on a board
- Good communication skills
- A willingness to fulfil a time commitment of at least 1.5 days per month
- An ability to uphold the seven principles of public life

In addition, the Council Associate must be a GOC registrant (either a dispensing optician/contact lens optician or an optometrist). There are two Council Associate roles being advertised, for one dispensing optician/contact lens optician and one optometrist.

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 or 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 criteria for the vacancy you are applying for; and
- complete the [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 18 January 2026**. Please email **your completed application to appointment@optical.org** quoting reference **GOC06/25**.

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 3451.

Appointments process

For more information on our appointments process and guidance to support applicants in preparing their application form, please use this link [here](#).

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 successful candidates will be invited to interview with an appointment panel. The appointment panel will be comprised of:
 - Frank Munro (Chair, Registrant Council Member)
 - Cathy Yelf (Lay Council Member)
 - Lisa Gerson (Registrant Council 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.
- Candidates shortlisted for interview will be notified by 13 March 2026.
- 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 week commencing 16 March 2026.
- Where a candidate is unable to attend an interview on the published dates, the appointment panel *may* consider a new date. This would be at their discretion and in light of those interviewed first time.
- Written references from two referees, 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.

- 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 23 March 2026.
- 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 3451. 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: [Complaints - The Privy Council Office](#).

You can raise your concern by email (appointment@optical.org) or telephone (0207 307 3451).

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