GOC Welsh Language Requirements Report 2021-2022

This is the General Optical Council's (GOC) Welsh Language Requirements Report, reporting on how the GOC meets the requirements and upholds the Welsh Language scheme as per the 2020-2021 requirements for Health Professional Councils set by the Welsh Language Commissioner. Data in this report has been collated in 2021-2022.

The Welsh Language Scheme was prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993. The Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under section 14 (1) of the Act on 23 November 2009.

The GOC has adopted the principle that in conducting its public business in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. This Scheme identifies how the GOC will administer this principle when providing services in Wales.

The overall intent of the Welsh Language Scheme is to promote and facilitate the Welsh language and ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales.

1. Policy Impact Assessments

1.1 Number and percentage of policies (including those that were reviewed or revised) where consideration was given to the effects the policy would have on the use of the Welsh language

In the GOC's impact assessment template, which applies to all new or revised policies, Welsh language impacts are screened, and staff are asked whether the policy or parts of the process need to be translated into Welsh.

1.2 Example of an assessment deemed to have an impact on the use of the Welsh language and details of how the policy was amended as a result

There are no examples of where an assessment was deemed to have an impact on use of the Welsh language and no amendments as a result.

2. Publication

2.1 Number of publications available to the public

On the GOC website there are a total of 203 publications. These can be found on our website - https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/index.cfm

These publications can be broken down into the categories in the table below.

Corporate information	228
Guidance and standards	192
Policy and research	80
Reports	104
Bulletins	5
COVID-19 latest information including archive	25

This totals to 634 (excluding Welsh publications).

2.2 Number of publications available to the public in Welsh

On the GOC website 19 publications can be found in Welsh. These can be accessed via the Welsh language section on the website.

3. Complaints

3.1 Number of all complaints received about the conduct of practitioners in Wales

In 2021-2022 there were 11 complaints received about the conduct of practitioners in Wales.

3.2 Number of complaints received in Welsh about the conduct of practitioners in Wales

During 2021-2022, the GOC received no complaints in Welsh about the conduct of practitioners in Wales.

3.3 Number of complaints received related to the Council's compliance with its Welsh language scheme

During 2021-2022, the GOC received no complaints related to the Council's compliance with its Welsh Language Scheme.

4. Website

4.1 Percentage of the organisation's website that is available in Welsh

On the GOC website there is one page in Welsh. The new website launched in December 2021 has 660 pages and has the capability to be translated into Welsh. In 2020 the GOC wrote a Regulatory Impact Assessment for the proposed Welsh Language Standards highlighting the costs associated with translating the whole website, and concluded that it was not a reasonable cost, given the level of demand. The GOC responded saying that it will uphold the standards where it reasonably can and will continue to review the information available on its website, taking account of guidance set by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

4.2 Evidence relating to any plans to improve or increase the Welsh Language provision on the website

The Welsh Language Standards will introduce new requirements and we will review provision in line with the compliance notice.

4.3   Evidence relating to the process used to ensure that existing content, updates and new content, complies with the requirements of the Welsh language scheme (if the process is different to that reported in 2020-21)

There has been no change to the process that was reported in 2020-2021.

5. Promotion of Welsh Language Service

5.1   Information about methods used to promote the organisation's Welsh language services and evidence of any subsequent increase in the public's use of the services.

Welsh language material is published on the Welsh section of the GOC website.

Between January and August, the page had 252 views, 0.02% of the website's 1,344,171 total page views. It was the 278th most visited page on the website.

5.2   Information about methods used to assess the quality of the organisation's Welsh language services (e.g. assessing the experience of existing/ potential service users)

Apart from data on the GOC's website page views, there has been no assessment of the quality of Welsh language services specifically.

6. Fitness to Practise Cases

6.1   Number of hearings held in Wales

During 2021-2022, there were no hearings held in Wales.

6.2   Number of hearings where a request was made by the witness to speak Welsh

During 2021-2022, there were no requests made by witnesses to speak Welsh.

6.3   Number of hearings in which evidence was presented in Welsh

During 2021-2022, there were no hearings in which evidence was presented in Welsh.

7. Language Awareness Training

7.1   Number and percentage of the organisation's new staff (i.e. new in the past 12 months) that received Welsh language awareness training

In the past 12 months no new staff have received Welsh language awareness training.

7.2   Number and percentage of the organization's entire workforce that has received Welsh language awareness training since the training was introduced

No staff have attended the training on Welsh language. The GOC is currently reviewing the training package it provides to staff.

8. Self-regulation

8.1   Details of the arrangements and procedures the organisation has adopted to enable it to self-regulate effectively

Inclusion of questions about Welsh language in our standard impact assessment screening tool ensures that staff remain conscious of the need to think about Welsh language requirements.

8.2   User Feedback

The GOC has a consultation hub to gather feedback from the public and registrants on how the GOC operates. Examples of items for consultation are policy and guidance. Through consultation, the GOC can ensure that it upholds its responsibilities of public protection by promotion of high standards of education, performance and conduct amongst opticians. This consultation hub can be found at https://consultation.optical.org/ If requested the questions for the consultation would be provided in Welsh.

The GOC has complaints procedures on the following: fitness to practise complaints about GOC registrants, consumer complaints about GOC registrants, illegal practice complaints about non-registrants, and corporate complaints. Each has a different process depending on the type of complaint. The process for each type of complaint is published on the GOC website, including a Welsh version of the Corporate Complaints Policy.

Additional complaints forms for making complaints about GOC registrants can also be found on our Welsh language page.

8.3   Internal Assurance About Performance

As part of the GOC's project and policy impact assessments and reviews, all items are screened to check whether they need to be published in Welsh, ensuring the GOC complies with the Welsh Language Standards.

Both internal and external policies have robust review processes, where policies are reviewed by the Policy Review Group. The group's members include representatives

from across the GOC, including Standards and Legal. This ensures the GOC complies with standards, the law and responsibilities as a health regulator.

9. Leadership and Strategic Planning

The Council is the governing body of the GOC and Council members are the charity trustees. They are collectively responsible for directing the affairs of the GOC, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivers public benefit.

All Council members share the same duty of public protection and oversee the full range of regulatory processes.

The primary functions of Council are:

- to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- to promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated under the Optician Act 1989;
- to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions; and
- to promote and maintain proper standards and conduct for business registrants.

Our Council is comprised of 12 Council members, of whom six are registrants and six are lay members. Membership is drawn from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is a statutory requirement that the Council includes a member from each of the devolved nations. For the purposes of complying with the legislation, this role for Wales is fulfilled by Lisa Gerson, Registrant Member.

Our governance structure consists of four non-statutory committees (Audit, Risk and Finance, Investment, Nominations, and Remuneration) and four statutory committees (Companies, Education, Registration, and Standards). The four statutory committees (sometimes referred to as Council committees) meet collectively as an Advisory Panel.

To exercise its powers, Council delegates certain responsibilities to committees with clearly defined authority and terms of reference.

The GOC's Council approve the strategy and budget of the GOC on the advice of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

SMT comprises the Chief Executive and Registrar, Director of Change, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Regulatory Operations and Director of Regulatory Strategy.

SMT are responsible for the operational leadership and management of the GOC. In their respective positions, they ensure we deliver our statutory duties, advise Council on the strategic direction of the GOC, prepare budgets for Council approval and manage strategic risks.

Responsibility within SMT for compliance with corporate, charity and equality law, and with our Welsh language obligations rests with the Chief Executive, supported by Governance.

Operational Expertise by a Specific Individual or Team

The Policy team is responsible for a range of policy issues by analysing, researching and making evidence-based recommendations, taking into account external developments and the wider regulatory context. This would include taking account of specific needs, requirements and issues from the devolved nations including Wales.

The Governance Team is responsible for supporting the Chief Executive & Registrar, Council and SMT in the day-to-day running of the GOC providing relevant information, advice and guidance, and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. The team covers Corporate Governance, Compliance, Membership Support, Governance Policies, Information Governance, EDI and Business Planning and Assurance.

The Communications Team additionally support our Welsh Language Scheme by outsourcing translation of documents and the website to translators.

The GOC has appointed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager, who reports into Governance and has responsibility for Welsh language to ensure the GOC and its leadership is kept up to date with the Welsh Language Standards and the specific requirements for Health Councils.