

## Non-UK Optometry Qualifications Evaluation Guidance

Guidance last updated: October 2025

### Section One

#### Background

- 1.1 Following the launch of the Education and Training Requirements (ETR) in March 2021, the General Optical Council (GOC) decided to review how it might manage future applications to the GOC register from individuals who qualified outside the UK, given that some assessment processes associated with the previous requirements, notably the Scheme for Registration for optometrists, will eventually become obsolete. A public consultation was launched in July 2022, and having carefully considered feedback received, we decided to develop two alternative routes to registration for applicants who have qualified outside of the UK:
  - successfully completing a short GOC approved qualification, designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry and dispensing optics qualification(s), which meets the ETR (either in the UK or overseas); or
  - direct entry to the register.
- 1.2 To support the consideration of applications under both routes to registration, an independent panel compared qualifications or qualification systems in a selected number of countries with the GOC's ETR (see paragraph 1.13).
- 1.3 As we receive very few applications from dispensing opticians who qualify outside of the UK, our analysis only compared optometry qualifications. The evaluation guidance is primarily based on the optometry qualification acquired from the institution or qualification system. However, there are circumstances where professional experience may be required in addition to the recognised optometry qualification and further information concerning where this applies is provided in this document.
- 1.4 This analysis has identified two qualification systems that match or exceed the ETR, enabling direct entry to the GOC register subject to final checks by our registration team. These are Canada and the USA. This comprises all optometric degree (OD) qualifications in both countries recognised by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education in the USA and Canada. Thus, applications received from individuals with qualifications from Canada and USA will be considered for direct entry to the GOC register with immediate effect.
- 1.5 In most other cases, applicants will need to complete a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) prior to joining the GOC register. Where the gap between the qualification/qualification system and the ETR is limited to insufficient clinical

experience (group 2A – Australia, Ireland, New Zealand), we may consider applicants for direct entry to the register based on their qualification and career history.

- 1.6 The panel also evaluated qualifications in countries from which the GOC receives a high number of applications but which it considered significantly fall short of the ETR and consequently would not be suitable for entry by either of the above routes. Graduates/professionals with qualifications from these countries must undertake a GOC approved qualification designed for individuals with no prior learning/professional experience.
- 1.7 The selection of qualifications and/or qualification systems for the panel's analysis was based on the following factors:
  - Countries from which we currently receive a high number of applications;
  - countries with which the UK Government has signed a trade agreement including sections on recognition of profession qualifications; and
  - countries whose requirements to become an optometry professional were considered most closely aligned with ours in stakeholder responses to the GOC's consultation in July 2022.
- 1.8 The panel's analysis considered a mix of individual qualifications and qualification systems, i.e. countries where a regulatory or similar body accredits individual qualifications as a route to registration. Meanwhile, the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) is an accreditation system that currently recognises six national qualifications across six European countries. Four of these have been evaluated by the panel separately without requiring graduates to have achieved the Diploma.
- 1.9 We welcome enquiries from qualification providers and/or qualification system providers not included in this guidance. Providers who wish to submit their syllabus (and any supporting documentation) may do so for inclusion in the next evaluation, scheduled for summer/Autumn 2027.

**Table 1 – Qualifications and qualification systems considered**

<b>Qualification systems</b>	Australia – Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand New Zealand – Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand Canada – Accreditation Council on Optometric Education United States of America (USA) – Accreditation Council on Optometric Education
<b>Countries where only some of its qualifications were considered</b>	Ghana India Iran Malaysia Nigeria Pakistan

	South Africa	
<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>
	Berliner Hochschule für Technik (BHT)	Berlin, Germany
	Hogeschool	Utrecht, Netherlands
	Technological University (TU)	Dublin, Ireland
	Karolinska Institute	Stockholm, Sweden
	Linnaeus University	Småland, Sweden
	Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Helsinki, Finland
	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong
	European Diploma in Optometry (EDO), European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) – accreditation system	N/A

## Evaluation panel

1.10 The qualifications were assessed by a panel comprising some of the GOC's Education Visitor Panel (EVP) members and International Assessors (who consider international registration applications). The panel members were:

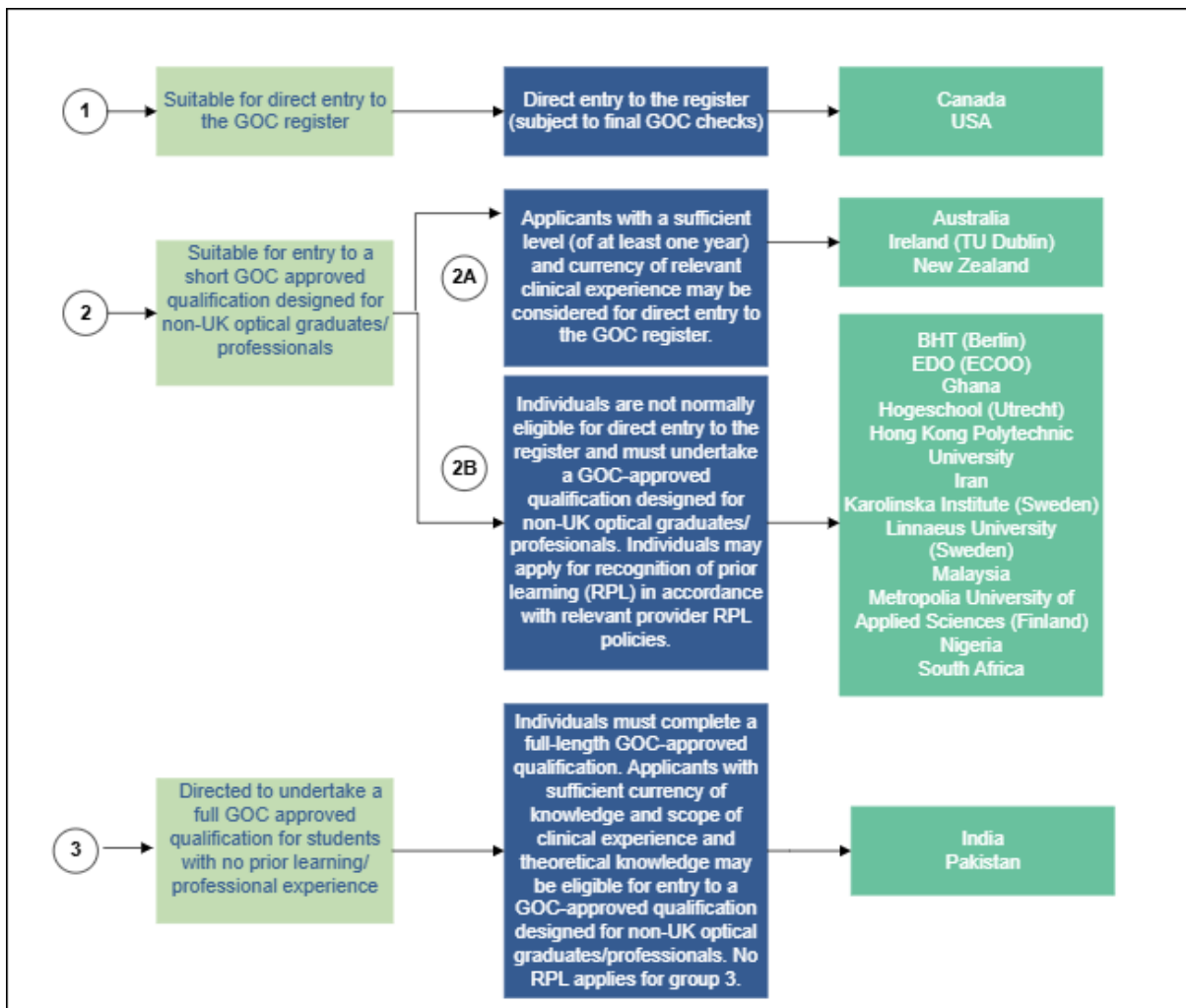
- Professor Carl Stychin – Lay Chair (EVP)
- Professor John Siderov – Optometrist member (EVP)
- Professor Julie-Anne Little – Optometrist member (EVP)
- Professor Niall Strang – Optometrist member (International Assessor)
- Professor Shehzad Naroo – Optometrist member (International Assessor)

1.11 In line with the GOC's [Management of Interests policy](#), Professor Julie-Anne Little did not participate in the panel's review of the European Diploma in Optometry.

## Section Two

### Summary of qualification/qualification systems

2.1 The graphic below provides an overview of the recommendations made by the panel for each qualification or qualification system reviewed and its grouping (1, 2(A or B) or 3). Further information about each qualification / qualification system can be found in the summary sheets (see section three).



2.2 The panel has made recommendations for each qualification and qualification system reviewed considering the circumstances of both newly qualified optometry professionals as well as those who have been practising for some time. In exceptional circumstances, the GOC may consider an applicant who has sufficient experience and additional qualifications to be placed in a different group, including direct entry to the GOC register. Individuals who consider this applies to them should contact the GOC's registration team.

2.3 No RPL applies for individuals in group 3. This is because qualifications allocated to this group were either not deemed by the panel to sufficiently meet the GOC Outcomes for Registration or have not been evaluated by the panel (thereby automatically belonging in group 3). In exceptional cases, some optometry professionals might be suitable for entry to a GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK qualification(s) (no RPL).

### Universal entry requirements

2.4 As now, all applicants with non-UK qualifications seeking entry to the GOC register must satisfy certain universal requirements. These will be subject to a GOC desk-based review upon receipt of the relevant documentation:

- demonstrating current registration with a regulatory body (where one exists) in country of practice;
- demonstrating the required English language requirement as outlined in the [education and training requirements](#) (overall International English Language Testing System (IELTS or equivalent) score of level 7 or equivalent);
- proof of successful completion of an appropriate qualification;
- for group 2 applicants, proof of practice for one year within the last ten years (unsupervised practice, post-qualification); and
- proof of in which country practice experience has been acquired.

2.5 Relevant health, character and fitness to train checks will also be carried out.

## Section Three

### Outcomes of the qualification/qualification system reviews

- 3.1 Summary sheets for the qualifications and/or qualification systems reviewed as part of the evaluation process are provided below. The qualifications and qualification systems were reviewed against GOC's *Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry and Dispensing Optics* (March 2021), which can be found on the [education and training requirements](#) webpage.
- 3.2 Each qualification / qualification system has been allocated one of the groups provided in section two of the guidance.
- 3.3 Where the panel has made recommendations regarding qualification systems, unless stated otherwise, these will apply to all qualifications recognised under that system including new qualifications developed after the guidance was published.

Australia and New Zealand – (OCANZ qualification system)	
<b>Date of panel review</b>	27 May 2025
<b>Background</b>	<p>Australia and New Zealand share the same optometry education and training standards. The two countries have a combined total of 8 relevant optometry qualifications (7 in Australia and 1 in New Zealand). The qualifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deakin University (Bachelor Degree / Masters Degree),</li> <li>• Flinders University (Bachelor Degree / Masters Degree),</li> <li>• Queensland University of Technology (Bachelor Degree / Masters Degree),</li> <li>• University of Auckland (Bachelor Degree),</li> <li>• University of Melbourne (Doctor of Optometry),</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Canberra (Bachelor of Vision Science / Master of Optometry),</li> <li>• University of New South Wales (Bachelor of Vision Science / Masters of Clinical Optometry), and</li> <li>• University of Western Australia (Doctor of Optometry).</li> </ul> <p>Typically, optometry qualifications are delivered as Degrees, at either Bachelor's or Master's level, and all students are required to complete a minimum of one year clinical training.</p> <p>Australian optometry degrees are regulated by the Optometry Board of Australia, whilst in New Zealand, the sole optometry degree is regulated by the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board. Both make use of an independent agency, the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ), to provide quality assurance.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2A	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s).</p> <p>Applicants with a sufficient level (of at least one in the previous 10 years) and currency of relevant clinical experience may be considered for direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g., on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel agreed that accreditation by OCANZ is sufficient for the purposes of its evaluation of accredited qualifications in both countries. The panel noted that the currency and variability of clinical experience for successful graduates could be below the minimum threshold outlined in the GOC's education and training requirements. The executive was advised to consider individual clinical experience where successful graduates could be asked to demonstrate their competency and currency of knowledge and experience via a portfolio and/or relevant continuing professional development (CPD) of patient cases and clinical hours to allow for direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>The panel noted that successful graduates unable to demonstrate sufficient currency of experience and number of hours of optometric clinical experience could undertake a short GOC-approved qualification for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) to make up this shortfall before joining the register.</p> <p>Given the quality of and confidence in the OCANZ quality assurance system, the executive was advised that it would not be relevant for successful graduates from Australia and New Zealand to undertake a</p>	

	full GOC-approved qualification designed for students with no prior learning/professional experience.
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<b>Berliner Hochschule fur Technik (Berlin)</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	14 July 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>The delivery of primary eye care in Germany is conducted by a mix of ophthalmologists, augen-optiker meisters and optometrists. There are several Bachelors and Masters programmes focused on vision science and eye care and graduates can apply for professional recognition and licensure with state level and professional bodies.</p> <p>The Berliner Hochschule fur Technik based in Berlin, Germany, runs the BSc Optometry qualification which is accredited by the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) which awards the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO). The EDO has also been reviewed by the Non-UK Optometry Qualifications Evaluation Panel.</p> <p>Students who study at the Berliner Hochschule fur Technik have the option to obtain the EDO at the same time as their institutional qualification, allowing them to (upon successful graduation) practice the profession in most European countries.</p> <p>For this evaluation the panel considered the university qualification itself rather than the accreditation body's diploma.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>Group 2B</p>	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the GOC Register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Whilst the panel were satisfied that the theoretical knowledge was sufficient, the clinical experience was not sufficiently in line with the GOC's education and training requirements to be suitable for direct entry to the register. Further, German legislation does not allow the use of diagnostic drugs by optometrists.</p> <p>The panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry</p>	



	<p>qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>
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<b>Canada – (Accreditation Council on Optometry Education qualification system)</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>Optometry qualifications in Canada are accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education. There are two relevant optometry qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Montreal, École d'Optométrie, and</li> <li>• University of Waterloo, School of Optometry and Vision Science.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 1	<p>Successful graduates are suitable for direct entry to the GOC register (subject to final GOC checks).</p> <p>Optometry qualifications in Canada accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education sufficiently meet or exceed the General Optical Council (GOC)'s education and training requirements.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel indicated its confidence in the quality assurance system and qualifications in Canada.</p> <p>Given the quality of and confidence in the quality assurance system, the executive was advised that it would not be relevant for successful graduates from Canada to undertake either a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) or a GOC-approved qualification for students with no prior learning/ professional experience provided they successfully complete final GOC checks.</p>	

<b>European Diploma in Optometry (EDO), European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO)</b>	
<b>Date of panel review</b>	27 May 2025
<b>Background</b>	The EDO is an accreditation system operated by the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) which aims to provide a



	<p>harmonised standard for optometry provision in Europe. Six institutes are accredited with the Diploma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz, Hochschule für Technik, Institut für Optometrie - Olten, Switzerland (Bachelor of Science FHNW in Optometry),</li> <li>• University of South-Eastern Norway - Kongsberg, Norway (Bachelor in Optometry),</li> <li>• Berliner Hochschule für Technik - Berlin, Germany (Bachelor course in Optometry),</li> <li>• University of Applied Sciences Utrecht - Utrecht, the Netherlands (Bachelor programme in Optometry),</li> <li>• Karolinska Institutet - Stockholm, Sweden (BSc in Optometry, and MSc in Clinical Optometry), and</li> <li>• Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - (Helsinki, Finland) (Bachelor of Health Care – Optometry).</li> </ul> <p>Students who study at one of these providers have the option to graduate with the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) alongside the qualification they achieved at their provider.</p> <p>The panel considered the EDO requirements rather than the qualifications run by the individual accredited providers.</p>	
<b>Recommendation*</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the GOC Register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Whilst the panel acknowledged the EDO's aim to create a more harmonised standard for optometry in Europe, it concluded there remained differences between countries in the network, and that the ETR's emphasis on "Doing" through its use of Miller's Pyramid of Clinical Competence, sets a sufficiently high standard to justify further training (particularly with regard to extent of clinical optometric experience).</p>	

	<p>The panel noted differences in the scope of practice between the UK and some European countries even though theoretical elements may be taught within qualifications, including in relation to paediatric care and prescribing of medicines.</p> <p>Therefore, the panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>
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Ghana		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>The Ghana Optometric Association (GOA) acts as the country's main professional organisation for optometrists. All optometrists in Ghana must pass a professional exam administered through the GOA to obtain certification to practice within the country. There is currently no dedicated regulator for optometry, but it falls under the broader jurisdiction of the Allied Health Professions Council, which regulates multiple health professions in Ghana. A draft optometry bill to establish an Optometric Council is pending.</p> <p>Please note that the Panel's advice is restricted to the following qualifications in Ghana:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, University of Cape Coast, and</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the GOC Register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>

<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel indicated that optometry qualifications in Ghana appear to be largely tailored to meet the scope of practice required of optometrists in Ghana. It was noted by the panel that the scope of practice is different to the UK and therefore the education system would not provide sufficient knowledge and clinical experience required for direct entry to the GOC's register.</p> <p>The panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>
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<b>Hogeschool (Utrecht)</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>In the Netherlands, optometry is a regulated profession primarily overseen through professional associations (Optometristen Vereniging Nederland - OVN) and educational accreditation, but it does not require mandatory registration with a statutory regulator.</p> <p>Hogeschool Utrecht runs the Bachelor in Optometry qualification which is accredited by European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) as part of the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO). The EDO has also been reviewed by the Non-UK Optometry Qualifications Evaluation Panel.</p> <p>Students who study at Hogeschool Utrecht have the option to graduate with the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) provided they submit an additional clinical portfolio.</p> <p>For this evaluation the panel considered the university qualification itself rather than the accreditation body's diploma.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.

		<p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the GOC Register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Whilst the panel were satisfied that the theoretical knowledge was sufficient for direct entry to the register, the clinical experience was not sufficiently in line with the GOC's education and training requirements.</p> <p>The panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>	

<b>Hong Kong Polytechnic University</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>In Hong Kong registration of optometrists commenced in December 1994 and they are regulated by the Optometrists Board. Hong Kong has a five-year BSc (Hons) Optometry qualification run by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the GOC Register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel considered the quality of the qualification, noting that the teaching level appears high with a strong research focus but concluded individual clinical experience should be assessed to</p>	

	<p>ensure that it is in line with the GOC's education and training requirements. The panel did not have confidence that all of the ETR outcomes would be met for successful graduates, however it did consider that this was a strong qualification.</p> <p>The panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>
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India		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>The Optometry Council of India (OCI) is the professional body created to maintain high standards in optometric education and practice across India and accredits programmes and schools.</p> <p>India is in the process of establishing state-level councils for allied health professions, including optometry. Optometrists will be required to register with these emerging state councils alongside the central registration maintained by OCI.</p> <p>There are over 100 institutions offering four-year degree programmes with many other shorter courses also available.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 3	<p>Graduates must undertake a full GOC approved qualification for students with no prior learning/professional experience.</p> <p>It is possible that individuals with qualifications from India may be eligible for entry to a GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) (no RPL) should they be able to demonstrate sufficient currency and scope of clinical experience and theoretical knowledge.</p> <p>Applicants from countries in group 3 are unable to participate in RPL.</p>

		No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel noted that optometry qualifications in India are not currently fully regulated, and the 'optometrist' title is not protected.</p> <p>Additionally, the panel noted the variability of clinical experience and theoretical knowledge of optometry professionals with a qualification from India whilst recognising that in exceptional cases, some optometry professionals might be suitable for entry to a GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s).</p>	

Iran		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>In Iran, the main regulatory body for healthcare professionals, including optometrists, is the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRIMC), which oversees licensing and professional conduct for allied health workers.</p> <p>Most universities offer a BSc in Optometry, with some institutions also providing MSc and PhD programmes.</p> <p>Please note that the Panel's advice is restricted to the following qualifications in Iran:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BSc Optometry, Iran University of Medical Sciences,</li> <li>• BSc Optometry, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences,</li> <li>• BSc Optometry, Tehran University of Medical Science, and</li> <li>• BSc Optometry, Zahedan University of Medical Science.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel noted that optometry qualifications in Iran are regulated by the Ministry of Education, and it was likely that graduates would have a base level of knowledge, understanding and clinical experience but that the depth of this may vary between individuals.</p>	

	<p>Given the differing levels of knowledge and experience, the panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>
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<b>Ireland (Technological University (TU), Dublin)</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	27 May 2025	
<b>Background</b>	The Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Optometry run by TU Dublin is the only optometry qualification regulated by Ireland's multi-professional health regulator, CORU (Health and Social Care Professionals Council). The panel considered documents including Standards of Proficiency for Optometrists published by CORU, and a 2024 copy of the syllabus for the optometry qualification.	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>Group 2A</p>	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s).</p> <p>Applicants with a sufficient level (of at least one in the previous ten years) and currency of relevant clinical experience may be considered for direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel considered the historical precedent between Ireland and the UK which suggests broad alignment. Nevertheless, the panel identified some differences in scope of practice, including in relation to serving young children (although the qualification does contain a mandatory module on paediatric optometry), as well as the amount of time required in clinical practice during education and training.</p> <p>The panel noted that successful graduates unable to demonstrate sufficient currency of clinical experience could undertake a short GOC-approved qualification for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) to make up this shortfall before joining the register.</p>	



Karolinska Institute and Linnaeus University (Sweden)		
Date of panel review	19 August 2025	
Background	<p>In Sweden, the profession of optician (and optometrist with extended qualifications) is regulated and licensed by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), with supervision by the Swedish Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO).</p> <p>There are two BSc Optometry programmes in Sweden: at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, and Linnaeus University, Vaxjo.</p> <p>The Karolinska Institute's Optometry qualification is accredited by the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) as part of the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO). The EDO has also been reviewed by the Non-UK Optometry Qualifications Evaluation Panel.</p> <p>Students who study at the Karolinska Institute have the option to graduate with the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) if they obtain both the Bachelors and Masters qualification and submit an additional clinical portfolio.</p> <p>For this evaluation the panel considered the university qualification itself rather than the accreditation body's diploma. Linnaeus University's optometry is not accredited by ECOO.</p>	
Recommendation	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are, however, exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
Rationale	<p>The panel indicated that the scope of practice in Sweden appears to be limited in comparison to the UK, noting that Swedish optometry graduates/professionals did not manage paediatric care (children under six) which is carried out by ophthalmologists.</p> <p>The panel concluded that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p>	

	As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).
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<b>Malaysia</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	19 August 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>Malaysia regulates optometrists through the Malaysian Optical Council, a statutory body established under the Optical Act 1991. Malaysia is preparing to strengthen regulation by introducing an Optometry Bill, which will include measures to regulate optometry practice, training, registration, and scope of duties in more detail.</p> <p>Please note that the Panel's advice is restricted to the following qualifications in Malaysia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOptom, SEGi University,</li> <li>• BOptom, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,</li> <li>• BOptom, International Islamic University of Malaysia, and</li> <li>• BOptom, USCI University.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel noted that the Malaysian Optical Council (MOC) regulate the qualifications above and advised that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be</p>	

	exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).
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<b>Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Finland)</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	19 August 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>Optometry in Finland is regulated by licensed authorities including the Ethical Council of Optometry (OEN) which supervises professional practice, and the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) which handles licensing and overall regulation of healthcare professionals.</p> <p>Metropolia University's Bachelor of Health Care (Optometry) qualification is accredited by European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) as part of the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO). The EDO has also been reviewed by the Non-UK Optometry Qualifications Evaluation Panel.</p> <p>Students who study at Metropolia University have the option to graduate with the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO).</p> <p>For this evaluation the panel considered the university qualification itself rather than the accreditation body's diploma.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>Group 2B</p>	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel advised that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance</p>	

	(Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).
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<b>Nigeria</b>		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	<p>Optometrists in Nigeria are regulated by a statutory government body known as the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Registration Board of Nigeria (ODORBN). ODOBRN accredits optometry training institutions and sets education standards.</p> <p>Please note that the Panel's advice is restricted to the following qualifications in Nigeria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Abia State University,</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Bayero University,</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Federal University of Technology Owerri,</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Imo State University,</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, Madonna University, and</li> <li>• Doctor of Optometry, University of Benin.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>Group 2B</p>	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel indicated that optometry qualifications in Nigeria appear to be largely tailored to meet the scope of practice required of optometrists in Nigeria. It was noted by the panel that the scope of practice is different to the UK and therefore the education system would not provide sufficient knowledge and clinical experience required for direct entry to the GOC's register.</p> <p>The panel advised that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry</p>	

	qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).
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Pakistan		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025	
<b>Background</b>	There is currently no centralised regulatory system for optometry in Pakistan. Optometry education is available through multiple institutes offering degrees of varying length, including a 5yr Doctor of Optometry (OD) qualification.	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 3	<p>Graduates/professionals must undertake a full GOC approved qualification for students with no prior learning/professional experience.</p> <p>It is possible that individuals with qualifications from Pakistan may be eligible for entry to a GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) (no RPL) should they be able to demonstrate sufficient currency and scope of clinical experience and theoretical knowledge.</p> <p>Applicants from countries in group 3 are unable to participate in RPL.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel indicated that optometry qualifications in Pakistan are not currently fully regulated, and the 'optometrist' title is not protected.</p> <p>Additionally, the panel noted the variability of clinical experience and theoretical knowledge of optometry professionals with a qualification from Pakistan whilst recognising that in exceptional cases some optometry professionals might be suitable for entry to a GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s).</p>	

South Africa		
<b>Date of panel review</b>	14 July 2025	
<b>Background</b>	Optometry qualifications in South Africa are regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).	

	<p>Please note that the Panel's advice is restricted to the following qualifications in South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOptom, University of the Free State,</li> <li>• BOptom, University of Limpopo, and</li> <li>• BOptom, University of KwaZulu-Natal.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 2B	<p>Suitable for entry to a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s). Eligible to apply for RPL in accordance with education provider RPL policies.</p> <p>Individuals are not normally eligible for direct entry to the register. There are however exceptions to this and individuals with a sufficient level of clinical experience may be eligible for direct entry.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>The panel indicated that the scope of practice for optometry graduates in South Africa is variable, with the clinical experience not sufficiently in line with the GOC's education and training requirements.</p> <p>The panel advised that a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) would be more suitable than direct entry to the GOC register.</p> <p>As part of the application process to GOC-approved qualifications designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s), individual knowledge and experience may be considered to determine what education and training may be exempted (if any) in accordance with the GOC's RPL guidance (Standard 2.5 of the Education and Training Requirements for Approved Qualifications in Optometry – 2021).</p>	

<b>United States of America (USA) – (Accreditation Council on Optometry Education qualification system)</b>	
<b>Date of panel review</b>	23 June 2025
<b>Background</b>	<p>Optometry qualifications in the USA are accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education. There are 24 relevant optometry qualifications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ferris State University Michigan College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Illinois College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Indiana University, School of Optometry,</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter American University of Puerto Rico, School of Optometry,</li> <li>• MCPHS University School of Optometry,</li> <li>• Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Midwestern University Chicago College of Optometry,</li> <li>• New England College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Pacific University, College of Optometry,</li> <li>• Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions,</li> <li>• Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus at Drexel University,</li> <li>• Southern California College of Optometry at Marshall B. Ketchum University,</li> <li>• Southern College of Optometry,</li> <li>• State University of New York College of Optometry,</li> <li>• The Ohio State University, College of Optometry,</li> <li>• University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Optometry,</li> <li>• University of California, Berkeley, Herbert Wertheim School of Optometry and Vision Science,</li> <li>• University of Houston, College of Optometry,</li> <li>• University of Missouri-St. Louis, College of Optometry,</li> <li>• University of Pikeville Kentucky College of Optometry,</li> <li>• University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg School of Optometry, and</li> <li>• Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	Group 1	<p>Successful graduates are suitable for direct entry to the GOC register (subject to final GOC checks).</p> <p>Optometry qualifications in the USA accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education sufficiently meet or exceed the General Optical Council (GOC)'s education and training requirements.</p> <p>No time limitations (e.g. on graduating year) apply.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	The panel indicated its confidence in the quality assurance system and qualifications in the USA.	



	<p>Given the quality of and confidence in the quality assurance system, the executive was advised that it would not be relevant for successful graduates from the USA to undertake either a short GOC approved qualification designed for graduates/professionals with non-UK optometry qualification(s) or a GOC-approved qualification for students with no prior learning/ professional experience provided they successfully complete final GOC checks.</p>
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