

Candidate information pack

Council Associate

2 x GOC registrants (including at least one dispensing optician)

Ref: GOC06/24

December 2024

This information pack is available in alternative formats (for example large print). Please submit your request to the Governance team (appointment@optical.org)

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Welcome letter



Thank you for your interest in these positions and for taking the time to read this information pack. I hope it gives you all the details you need to apply.

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 be able to provide this Associate opportunity to two talented GOC registrants, at least one of whom will be a dispensing optician. The scheme is now in its fourth year, and feedback has shown that 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 the future in executive decision-making, business development or clinical governance. 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 that 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.

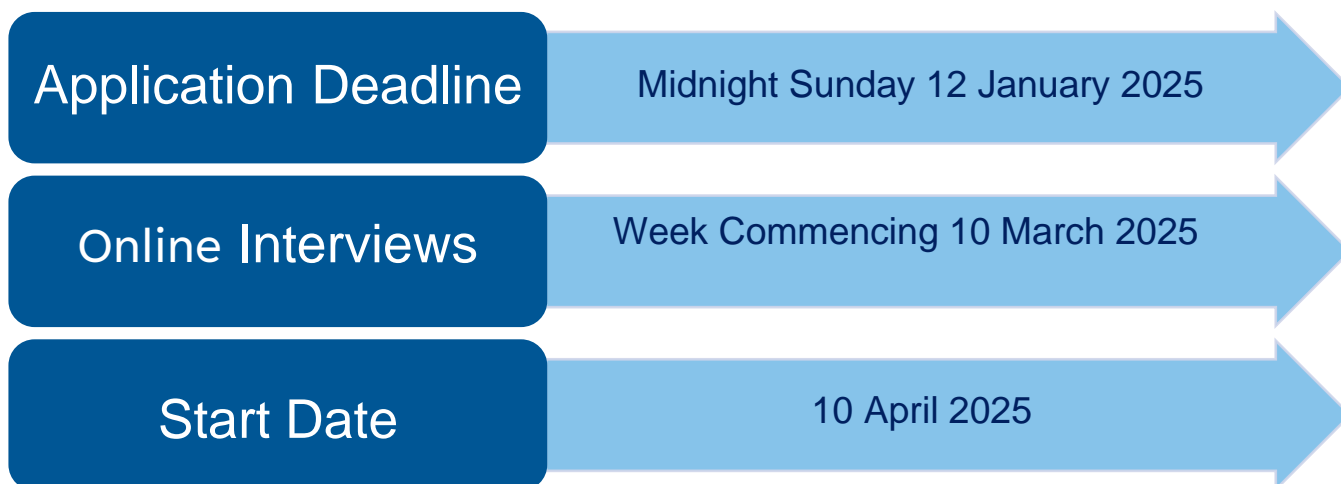
We particularly welcome applications from registrants who are disabled and/or from ethnic minority backgrounds, as these groups are currently under-represented across our Council and committees. We also encourage registrants without previous involvement or exposure to board level work to apply. On this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

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Associate. I hope the information provided in this pack will result in your application. Please email appointment@optical.org for further information and we will aim to respond to your query within 48 hours. Please quote reference **GOC06/24** on all correspondence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Anne Wright".

Dr Anne Wright CBE, Council Chair

Key dates for this appointment are as follows:



Meetings Dates 2025-2026

Council dates:

Strictly Confidential Council Meeting

- 24 June 2025
- 24 September 2025
- 16 December 2025
- 10 March 2026

Public Council Meeting

- 25 June 2025
- 25 September 2025
- 17 December 2025
- 11 March 2026

Audit, Risk & Finance Committee (ARC) dates:

- 7 May 2025
- 8 July 2025
- 2 September 2025
- 25 November 2025
- 29 January 2026
- 24 February 2026

About the GOC

Background

We are 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. We are the regulator for the optical professions in the UK, and currently register around 33,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians, and optical businesses.

We have four core functions:

Setting standards for optical education and training, performance, and conduct

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 is impaired

Legislation

Our primary legislation is the Opticians Act 1989 (as amended). 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 mission

Our mission is to protect the public by upholding high standards in the optical professions.

Our vision

Our vision is to be recognised for delivering world-class regulation and excellent customer service.

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 principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Our values underpin the way we work with each other, 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**

Council and Council Associates

What is the Council?

Our Council is our 'board'. The Council is the most senior decision-making group at the GOC. It is ultimately responsible for the success of the GOC. Our Chief Executive and her team are accountable to the Council.

There are 12 members of the Council, and they are all non-executive members as well as the charity's trustees. They are not employees, though they are required to act in the best interests of the organisation and ensure that we are fulfilling our regulatory role as defined in law.

Half of our Council members are professionals currently on our register. The other half are 'lay' members, who bring different perspectives, skills, and experience which benefit the GOC, for example, in representing the patient voice, in academia, or in finance and audit, IT, and HR, etc.

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 expectations

Remuneration, time commitment, and tenure of office

Council Associate roles are unpaid. Associates can claim reasonable expenses for travel and accommodation as required.

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.

The appointed Associates will be expected to commit approximately 1.5 days per month to the scheme.

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.

Council and Committee meetings will usually take place online via Microsoft Teams and typically take either a whole day, or half a day. You will therefore require a laptop and a stable internet connection to participate. Very occasionally, we may hold meetings at the GOC office at 10 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7NG, or other suitable venues. Reasonable travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with our expenses policy. 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 (10 April 2025 – 9 April 2027).

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 Head of Governance 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 which 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

We are looking for candidates with potential and an interest in the work of the GOC, public protection, and a desire to give back to public service. Previous committee or board experience is not a requirement.

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

The Council Associate must have the following:

- 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 an optometrist or a dispensing optician/contact lens optician). There are two Council Associate roles being advertised, at least one of which will be for a dispensing optician/contact lens optician.

How to apply

Your application

Please apply with your CV and a statement of no more than 2 sides of A4 giving examples of how your experience matches the criteria in the person specification.

Your CV should outline:

- your employment history
- any relevant voluntary work, public service, or other experiences
- any relevant professional, academic, or vocational qualifications

Equality monitoring

When submitting your application, you will be asked to complete an [equality, diversity, and inclusion \(EDI\) monitoring form](#). This helps us ensure all candidates are treated fairly throughout our process.

Please note that 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. Anonymised monitoring information gathered from application processes is published annually in our [EDI monitoring report](#). Our approach to monitoring can be viewed on our [website](#).

Deadline

Please complete your application by **midnight on Sunday 12 January 2025** and email it to appointment@optical.org.

If you have any questions, please send them to the email address above, quoting Ref: GOC01/24. We will aim to respond to you within 48 hours. You may also contact us by telephone on 0207 307 3451.

Application process

We will process your application as quickly as possible and keep you informed at key stages. **Please carefully read the information below, which outlines important information and our process once we receive your application:**

- We will acknowledge receipt of your CV, statement, and EDI form and check them for completeness and eligibility.
- The selection panels for these appointments will be comprised of:
 - Ken Gill (Lay Council Member) (Panel Chair)
 - Lisa Gerson (Registrant Council Member)
 - Nick Yeo (Lay Independent Member)
- The selection panel will rely only on the information you provide in your CV and statement and whether you have demonstrated that you meet the selection criteria as set out in the person specification.
- Candidates shortlisted for interview will be notified in the week commencing **week commencing 24 February 2025**.
- 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 **the week Commencing 10 March 2025**.
- Where a candidate is unable to attend an interview on the published dates, the selection panel may consider a new date, at their discretion.
- If invited to interview, the selection panel will ask you to talk about your experience and expertise, as well as ask specific questions to find out whether you meet the selection criteria.
- Written references from two referees will be required, and other due diligence checks (including Google/LinkedIn/Facebook searches, director/trustee checks) will be undertaken following a successful interview. Please ensure 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. We expect this to be on the week commencing 31 March 2025.
- On appointment, you will receive further information about training and induction.

Equal opportunities and accessibility

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

We strive to be as diverse as the public we protect and welcome applications from all communities and backgrounds, and from individuals with a broad range of experiences. We are committed to equality of opportunity for all, and appointments will be made solely on merit. For any organisation to be successful, we believe it needs to work with the most talented range of people available. We assess all applicants fairly and do not discriminate on differences of any kind, including but not limited to:

- age,
- disability or long-term health condition,
- race or ethnicity,
- religion or belief,
- gender, gender identity or expression, or gender reassignment,
- sexual orientation,
- marriage or civil partnership,
- pregnancy or maternity/paternity, and
- geographical location outside of London.

Access requirements

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 at governance@optical.org, quoting Ref: GOC01/24, or on 0207 307 3451. If you would like more information on reasonable adjustments, [you can read more on the Government website](#).

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 for the information we collect for public appointments is to keep the following information for one year for unsuccessful candidates and six years for successful candidates. This information is then destroyed:

- initial contact details, including your name and address,
- application form and any supporting documentation,
- 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 before sharing the information. 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, and the same recruitment processes will be applied consistently to all applicants. However, if you have a complaint about the process used in this recruitment campaign, please refer to our [Corporate Complaints Procedure](#). This 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.

You can raise your concern by email on appointment@optical.org or telephone 020 7580 3934.

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