

GOC/COVID/08

Date of statement: 15 April 2020 (updated 1 May 2020, 8 and 12 October 2020 and 28 May 2021)

GOC statement for Continuing Education and Training (CET) providers on CET provision during the COVID-19 emergency

1. This statement will apply in the **red**, **amber** and **green** phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, as defined by [The College of Optometrists' red-amber-green classification system](#).
2. It is important for our registrants to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills and performance, even during this emergency. This is particularly the case if they are required to carry out activities that they do not normally undertake. While registrants are encouraged to work up to the limits of their competence, refresher training may be needed and CET providers will play an important role.

Purpose of statement

3. The purpose of this statement is to set out additional flexibilities to allow CET providers to continue to provide CET during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patient, registrant and staff safety

4. The health of patients, and patient safety is our first priority. CET providers must also ensure the safety of their own staff and registrants engaged in CET activities. During the COVID-19 emergency period, CET providers in most circumstances should either deliver CET via remote learning methods or postpone any planned in-person events in accordance with Government guidance on social distancing measures: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
5. As social distancing measures are eased, CET providers may be able to deliver CET in different ways but should always follow Government advice and put the safety and interests of patients, staff and registrants first.

Changes to CET delivery

6. All GOC-approved CET must be delivered in line with the standards outlined in our [CET Principles and Requirements document v4](#).
7. The GOC will be flexible and pragmatic in its approach during the COVID-19 emergency and recognises that CET providers will be working with their institutions, regulatory bodies, national qualification organisations and professional associations in considering what changes might be needed to ensure continued provision of CET.

8. The current situation will bring significant challenges for CET providers in supporting registrants and staff to adapt to different and/or remote learning and assessment methods, whilst also maintaining GOC standards.
9. To support the reduction in risk and allow more remote delivery of CET to take place, the GOC will make temporary changes to the CET requirements for certain modalities outlined below.
10. If providers would like to apply any other changes that are not described in this statement, please contact us and we will be happy to consider them.

Changes to requirements for lectures and peer discussion involving ten registrants or less

11. Many events due to take place in the next few months will have already engaged speakers and topics. We therefore propose that both lectures and peer discussion of ten registrants or less may be delivered using remote webinar and video-conferencing facilities. Examples of software that the GOC has already approved are provided [here](#).
12. The software used must allow accurate tracking of registrant participation (sometimes referred to as registrant analytics). Software that does not allow for accurate tracking of registrant participation is **not** suitable for webinar delivery. For online peer discussion, some platforms allow the sharing of a screen for delivery, but not automatic tracking of registrant participation. It is therefore necessary for providers to put a system in place to track participation. This is likely to be through recording.
13. If you wish to use any other webinar or video-conferencing software that has not already been approved, please contact our CET department for advice.

Changes to requirements for provider-led online peer discussion for more than ten registrants

14. Only platforms that allow both audio and video capability of registrants may be used for an online peer discussion for more than ten registrants in one session to allow for virtual break-out rooms with tracking of registrant participation. See paragraph 18 regarding confidentiality for further information.
15. CET providers are currently required to provide a trained facilitator for each table of ten participants in peer discussion. This is still the preferred quality model for peer discussion. However, during this emergency period, providers can use an alternate model for facilitating, whereby each table has a nominated 'table lead' to facilitate discussion, while one trained expert facilitator can support up to four tables/sessions by moving between each to ensure that the table lead is supported.

Changes to role definition of lead for discussion workshops, visual recognition tests etc

16. Modalities where an attendee is used as a lead for a discussion group rather than a facilitator will need to, as per facilitators, identify the registrant within the CET application prior to delivery. The registrant will need to have an understanding of online etiquette and agree to feed back the group's discussion to the provider. This registrant will still be eligible for the full number of points offered for the event.

Full list of CET modalities that may be used or altered for online digital delivery

17. The table below contains a list of the current CET modalities suitable for remote delivery and ones that may be altered for that purpose.

Modality	Currently an option for online/digital delivery	Potential for online/digital delivery	Comments
Discussion workshop	No	Yes	Using software (or equivalent) mentioned in this statement. Ratios amended to 1-10 maximum. Leads would need to be defined in line with guidance in this statement.
Peer discussion	Yes	Yes	Using software (or equivalent) mentioned in this statement. Ratios amended to 1-10 maximum. Alternative facilitator model available whereby each table has a 'table lead' to facilitate discussion, supported by a 'roving' expert, trained facilitator supporting a maximum of four tables/sessions.
Online peer discussion	Yes	Yes	Using software (or equivalent) mentioned in this statement. Ratios amended to 1-10 maximum.
Visual recognition and discussion	No	Yes	Cases would need to be sent out to delegates with a set time for video discussion using software (or equivalent) mentioned in this statement. Leads would need to be defined in line with guidance outlined in this statement.

Modality	Currently an option for online/digital delivery	Potential for online/digital delivery	Comments
Lecture with discussion workshop	No	Yes	Using software (or equivalent) mentioned in this statement. Could be performed as an online lecture with breakouts. Leads would need to be defined in line with guidance in this statement.
Online lecture with group discussion	Yes	Yes	
Demonstration and discussion workshop	No	Yes	Demonstration could be recording of skill etc. Leads would need to be defined in line with guidance outlined in this statement.
Lecture (online or in person)	Yes	Yes	

Confidentiality

18. Whichever software is used, providers should satisfy themselves that the platform has appropriate security arrangements in place. Providers should exercise caution to ensure that no confidential information or real-life cases are shared.

Approval

19. If you already have approval for a CET activity, there is no need to seek further approval in order to deliver remotely as outlined in this statement. Once you deliver the CET and upload your declaration, simply state that it was delivered remotely in line with the GOC statement GOC/COVID/07. For any new CET that you wish to have approved while this statement is in place, either select a remote delivery modality or explain in the application that you intend to deliver remotely during this period and the technology you will use.

Record keeping

20. Where CET is delivered remotely, there needs to be some record of the activity to demonstrate registrant participation. Examples of this have been provided earlier in the statement.