

## **The Federation of Opticians (FODO) Position on Student Registration**

Like our Optical Confederation colleagues, FODO favours the removal of registration requirements for undergraduate students. However, unlike the AOP, we favour its retention for optometrists undergoing vocational training, so called ‘pre-registration optometrists’ and agree with the ABDO that it should also be retained for trainee opticians working in high-street practice.

The case for pre-registration optometrists is finely balanced but we believe that

- this is what the public expects in high-street practice
- this is different from patient expectations when they visit a campus-based training clinic
- the purpose of the vocational training period for optometrists is to enable graduates to practise independently with patients by its conclusion
- GOC registration is by far the simplest and most cost-effective means of regulating trainees who, towards the end of their vocational training, will be alone in consulting rooms with patients
- the public should have their reassurance that the GOC Codes of conduct apply to trainee optometrists in such circumstances

as set out below

If necessary we would support provisional registration for trainee optometrists working in practice as a safe alternative but would be concerned that this might add unnecessarily to costs.

### **Registration of Undergraduate Students**

There is significant variation amongst the various regulators, particularly in relation to student registration. We note that, other than the GOC, only one other healthcare regulator (GSCC) requires its students to register as undergraduates. We do not think this is necessary in the case of optometrists (because trainee optometrists do not see patients without close supervision and only then in campus-based training clinics where it is clear to all that the students are trainees). This simply adds to the costs borne by other registrants with demonstrable disadvantages. In fact, the GOC has already indicated that it intends to review student registration and we look forward to working with them on this matter.

We understand that the goal of such registration is to instill professionalism among the optometric student population; however we strongly believe that this can be achieved by other means, principally through their university study and training.

We would like to see the complete removal of undergraduate student registration for optometrists. Removing undergraduates from registration would certainly reduce the cost of regulation and could produce significant savings. In our view the associated costs significantly outweigh the revenues brought in from student registration, while delivering

little if any public benefit. It is very much hoped that any costs savings achieved in this, and other, areas will be reflected in reduced fees for other registrants in the future.

### **Registration for Optometrists in Vocational Training ‘Pre-Registration Optometrists’ and Trainee Opticians**

Notwithstanding our views expressed above with respect to undergraduate students, we feel there is a marked difference once the trainee optometrist has completed their university degree, and is undertaking a period of vocational training prior to full registration.

In our view both

- optometrists in vocational training (i.e. who have left university, test sight and see patients in practice) and
- trainee dispensing opticians (who also see patients in practice)

should remain within the scope of the register in that they are providing clinical care to the general public (albeit under supervision) and that registration brings them definitively within the GOC Codes of Conduct and regulations.

In both cases the purpose of the training period in general high-street practice is to enable the trainees to practise independently with patients by its conclusion. In our view the public finds it hard to distinguish between one clinical member of an optical practice and another (despite name badges, uniforms etc) and that they deserve to be able to have confidence that whoever they see outside a campus-based university training clinic is properly GOC registered and will comply with GOC rules and codes of conduct.