



## **Policy Advisory Panel**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Purpose**

1. The Policy Advisory Panel [the Panel] informs College policy and influencing activities, with the views and experiences of a UK-wide, representative group of members and other College advisers.

#### **Main duties**

2. The Panel will be advisory, and exists to:

- a.) Inform the direction, content or approach of College policy and influencing activities across the UK nations, including workforce and new models of care.
- b.) Raise awareness of local or national policy-related issues that may impact the profession and/or the College.
- c.) Propose policy-related topics/issues for the College to consider.

3. The Panel will be consulted on the following activities, when time permits, including but not limited to:

- a) Development of new policy positions.
- b) Updating existing policy positions.
- c) Direction of new and existing policy/influencing activities
- d) Messages and communications related to policy and influencing.
- e) Impact of policy and influencing activities.

4. The Panel will not have a decision-making remit. While Panel members' views are essential to inform College policy-related activities, final decisions on the direction, content or approach of policy and influencing activities will be approved at the appropriate staff or Board level, as per the College's agreed decision-making framework.

#### **Membership**

The Policy Advisory Panel is formed of between 20 (minimum) and 30 (maximum) members, including members from the following (non-mutually exclusive) backgrounds as a minimum:

- a) 2 members who practise in Northern Ireland.
- b) 2 members who practise in Scotland.
- c) 2 members who practise in Wales.
- d) 3 hospital optometrists.
- e) 1 academic/research optometrist.
- f) 1 domiciliary optometrist.
- g) 15 primary care optometrists (including those who work in independent and multiple practices).
- h) 3 locums.



- i) 1 newly qualified optometrist.
- j) 4 optometrists with independent prescribing and/or higher qualifications.
- k) 1 optometric member of College Council.
- l) 1 member of the Lay Advisory Panel with policy expertise (acting as Chair).
- m) 1 member of the Patient and Public Reference Group (PPRG).

6. The membership will reflect the diversity of the College's overall members as much as possible.

### **Time commitment**

7. Members are expected to dedicate the necessary time to:

- a) Attend six virtual Policy Advisory Panel meetings a year and take part in discussions on current and future policy and influencing activities
- b) Read briefings and/or complete surveys ahead of meetings.

8. Members may be contacted by email between meetings to inform policy positions where there is a short timescale that cannot wait until the next meeting.

9. Members can also contact the Policy Advisory Panel secretariat between meetings to share intelligence, feedback or suggestions.

### **Appointment of members**

10. Policy Advisory Panel members who are not from the Lay Advisory Panel, PPRG or College Council will be recruited via an open application process and will be selected based on the following criteria:

- a) Interest or experience in shaping health policy, and eye care policy in particular.
- b) Effective verbal communication skills.
- c) An enthusiasm for sharing personal views and representing views of other optometrists they have contact with.
- d) Ability to listen and respectfully consider others' views.
- e) Commitment to attending at least four of the six meetings a year and timely responding to emails between meetings.
- f) Understanding that they will not be making decisions related to policy and influencing but will contribute to informing and shaping the College's activities.

11. Vacancies to the Panel will be advertised on College's website and applicants will be asked to provide a CV and covering letter.

12. Applicants who meet the criteria will be invited to a short, informal telephone or Teams discussion with the Policy & Public Affairs team to ensure that they understand the commitment required, meet the criteria listed in paragraph 10, and can ask questions about the role.

13. If there are more suitable applicants in each category than needed, names will be drawn out of a hat.



14. The Lay Advisory Panel, PPRG and Council representatives will be chosen through asking members of those bodies to express an interest in joining the Panel. If more than one member of each group expresses an interest and can meet the time commitments and criteria listed in paragraph 10, names will be drawn out of a hat.

### **Term of Office**

15. Membership of the Panel will be for two years.

16. After a member has completed their first two years in the Panel, they may volunteer to continue in the Panel for an additional one year.

17. Should a member wish to step down before the end of their two-year period, they are requested to give the secretariat at least one month's notice.

18. Panel members who can no longer commit to the role will be replaced as and when they step down.

### **College representation and spokespeople**

19. Members of the Panel provide advice and opinions based on their personal/professional experiences and expertise. They do not represent the views of their employer/s or any other organisation or group.

20. Members of the Panel do not have a mandate to act as spokespeople for The College of Optometrists or to represent the College's position/s. Members should direct any enquiries they receive or requests for comments or further information about the College's work to the Panel secretariat.

### **Meetings**

21. The Panel will meet virtually six times a year for up to 90 minutes.

22. Meeting dates and times will be set up by the Panel secretariat for the calendar year ahead. Meetings will generally be held mid-week, in the evening (6pm) to enable members to join after work.

23. Discussions within the meetings are deemed confidential to allow free exchange of ideas.

24. Panel meetings will consist of:

- a) Short updates on the progress of the College's strands of policy and influencing work.
- b) Opportunities for Panel members to feedback on progress/approach/communication of the College's policy and influencing work.
- c) Facilitated sessions where Panel members will be asked for their views on particular aspects of policy and influencing work. These will include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Horizon scanning i.e. key issues that have recently occurred or are expected (in all four UK nations)



- ii. Content of new policy positions
- iii. Review of existing positions
- iv. Feedback on communications related to policy and influencing e.g. social media, emails, website.
- v. Direction of new policy/influencing activities.

### **Chair**

25. The Panel will be chaired by a member of the Lay Advisory Panel.

26. The Chair is responsible for making sure that each meeting is planned effectively and that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner.

27. The Chair must make the most of the Panel members' expertise and ensure that all views are represented.

### **Reporting**

28. A record of proceedings will be prepared by the Panel secretariat.

29. The Panel secretariat will update the College Board of Trustees on the Panel's activities through a short report twice a year.

### **Conflict of interests**

30. When the interests of a member conflict or appears to conflict with that of the College policy or influencing activities, such conflicts must be declared.

### **Fees and expenses**

31. There is no fee for work carried out by the Panel, as all members join on a voluntary basis.

### **Secretariat**

32. The secretariat is provided by the Policy & Public Affairs team and can be contacted Monday - Friday via the email address [policy@college-optometrists.org](mailto:policy@college-optometrists.org)

**Approved by the Board: 6 March 2024**

**Date of next review: 6 March 2027**