



THE COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS

How to become a Fellow of the College of Optometrists

**An introduction to the portfolio route to
Fellowship and guidance on how to apply**

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Introduction

1. Fellowship by portfolio is a flexible route that allows members to apply by submitting a portfolio of evidence in a number of categories covering a wide range of optometric practice. Optometrists from a broad spectrum of practice have the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements in the workplace or other areas related to the advancement of optometry.

What is a Fellow?

2. A Fellow is someone who has been recognised by the College as having demonstrated work that has had an impact in the field of practice on which the application was based at local, national and/or international levels. The successful applicant for Fellowship will have made a significant contribution to the practice of optometry, showing excellence and/or innovation in one or more of the categories set out below¹: The award of Fellowship is held in high esteem but it is achievable through success in a wide variety of optometry-related work and is, therefore, accessible to many people.

- a. Clinical practice
- b. The provision of visual or wider healthcare
- c. Optometric research
- d. Optometric education
- e. The management of visual healthcare
- f. Higher qualifications in vision science

3. The College's Fellowship is a mark of achievement to which all members can aspire. The portfolio route is intended to be supportive and encourage members from diverse backgrounds to aim for recognition of their accomplishments by their peers.

¹ Subject to the processes set out in this document

How to apply

Summary of the process

4. You may nominate yourself and submit a portfolio of evidence in one, any or all of the six categories of achievement set out in the introduction. If you apply under only one category, you will have to demonstrate excellence in greater depth in that field. If you apply under several categories, the breadth of your contribution will carry more weight.
5. The portfolio may reflect your past and/or current roles and activities.
6. For each category in which you have submitted evidence, you must give the name of a referee who can verify your evidence.
7. College nominated assessors will evaluate your application against a number of headings.
8. A flowchart summarising the application and assessment processes is at Annex C.

Eligibility

9. You must be registered with the GOC.
10. If you are an overseas member you must be registered with the appropriate regulatory authority.
11. You must have been a member of the College for at least the last five years without a break.
12. You must declare any pending or upheld complaints or adverse findings made against you. Please provide details of any pending or upheld formal complaint, breach of terms of service, litigation or referral to the GOC (or for overseas members the appropriate regulatory authority). These will not necessarily prevent you applying for Fellowship and you can discuss them in confidence before submitting an application.

Applying for Fellowship

13. This is a three-stage process:

Stage one: Registration

Stage two: Preparing the evidence

Stage three: Submitting the application

Stage one: registration

14. To make sure that you do not do a lot of work on your portfolio before we confirm that you are eligible, you must register your intention to apply by completing:

- a. A registration form
- b. If appropriate, a declaration of complaints form (on which you should declare any relevant complaints made against you)

15. You should send these, together with the non-refundable fee of £75, to cover the administrative costs.

16. You can pay when you register by credit/debit card over the phone (020 7766 4354) or by sending a cheque payable to the College of Optometrists.

17. We will check your application for registration against the eligibility criteria (see above).

18. You can seek support or advice about your suitability at this stage by contacting education.help@college-optometrists.org.

19. When we confirm your eligibility we will give you a reference number. This is for you to use on your application to make your submission anonymous to the assessors. We appreciate that if you have a high profile in a particular area, this may not be possible but we will make the submissions anonymous where we can to avoid bias in the assessment process.

Stage two: preparing the evidence

Categories

20. You may submit evidence in one, any, or all of the categories. Your evidence can demonstrate an outstanding and far-reaching achievement in a specialist field or contributions made in a number of areas over an extended period. You should remember that the assessors will consider your achievement and will pay particular attention to your analysis of the impact it has had, or will potentially have, and your reflections on the difference the achievement has made to your own work.

How much evidence do you need to provide?

21. We recognise that it might be difficult to decide whether your accomplishments will be worthy of Fellowship. To help you decide on the type of achievements that might lead to Fellowship, we have set out some examples under each category at Annex A. The lists are not exhaustive, nor do all the listed items carry equal weight. Remember that the award of Fellowship is held in high esteem and signifies an achievement above the norm. But remember too that it is achievable through success in a wide variety of optometry-related work locally as well as nationally or internationally, and is, therefore, accessible to many people.

22. Some example profiles worthy of Fellowship can be found in Annex B.

23. You may seek advice from the College by emailing education.help@college-optometrists.org.

Setting out your evidence

24. You need to submit your evidence using the application form which can be found on the College's website.

25. You should set out details of your past and current roles and activities, giving specific examples that support your achievements under each of your chosen categories. You may draw on achievements from throughout your career.

26. You should explain how your achievements have made a difference by:

- a. Giving concrete examples as evidence of your achievements and the value added.
- b. Analysing the impact, or potential impact, of your achievements on the practice of optometry.
- c. Reflecting on what you have learned from your achievements and the difference this has made to your own work.
- d. Describing how your work was disseminated so that it had an influence on the practice of optometry, locally, nationally or internationally.

27. Remember that the assessors will pay particular attention to the reflection on what you have learned or your analysis of the impact of your work. It is not enough to list your achievements.

28. You may find that you want to submit one principal piece of evidence but that this could appear under several achievement categories. If this is the case you should choose one category in which to place the principal evidence. You should not repeat the evidence in the other categories; rather, you should refer to it and explain the impact it has had in those other areas.

29. We would not expect you to need to provide more than 3,000 words overall. Remember that the analysis and reflection on your achievements will form an important part of your submission.

30. You will have to submit a list of supporting documents for assessment. You will not be expected to submit the actual documents as a matter of course, although you may be asked to provide them on occasion either for clarification or quality assurance purposes.

31. The supporting documents should be no more than the equivalent of one lever arch file in volume. Your referee (see below) will check these documents and the assessors will not see them as a matter of course.

Referees

32. The role of your referees is to verify that the evidence you provide is authentic and credible. They will check your statement and supporting documents. Fellowship Assessors, members of the Fellowship Group and members of the Board of Trustees may not act as referees.

33. Referees must be of sufficient standing to be able to attest to the accuracy of your evidence and confirm that they know of no reason why you should not be considered for Fellowship. If you are supplying evidence from a number of different areas of work you will need more than one referee, as the referee must be able to verify the evidence in the appropriate context.

34. Referees may include other Members or Fellows of the College, Members or Fellows of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists or General Practitioners, British and Irish Orthoptics Society or any person of appropriate standing who can verify your submission. For overseas applicants referees must be members of equivalent bodies.

35. Your referees will complete the referee declaration form to verify the evidence you are submitting, and send it to the College.

Stage three: submitting the application

36. When you are ready to submit, you should complete an application form. The form includes sections for:

- a. Personal details
- b. Details of your referees
- c. Updating us on any complaints made against you, if necessary
- d. A professional history (but not a CV)
- e. Personal statement
- f. A list of supporting documents

37. You should submit the form electronically to education.help@college-optometrists.org

Checklist

I have:

- Been confirmed as eligible to apply for fellowship and paid the £75 application fee.
- Completed the application form using the instructions above and submitted it to education.help@college-optometrists.org or to the Education Department at the College's address.
- Sent the referees a copy of the application form and supporting documents.
- Asked the referee(s) to submit the referee declaration form direct to education.help@college-optometrists.org.

The assessment process

38. There are two possible stages to the assessment process:

Stage one: Three independent assessors will evaluate your evidence.

Stage two: Under certain circumstances (set out below), the Fellowship Group, whose members will not include any assessors who judged your portfolio in stage one of the process, will evaluate and discuss your evidence.

Stage one

39. The three assessors will consider your application independently against the following headings:

- a. The achievement
- b. Impact, or potential impact, of the achievement on the practice of optometry
- c. Your reflection on what you have learned from your achievements and the difference this has made to your own work
- d. The type of supporting evidence and the value it adds
- e. Extent of the dissemination of the achievement in terms of its influence on the practice of optometry, locally, nationally or internationally

40. After considering the application, the assessors may discuss it with each other if they wish to clarify any issues.

41. Each assessor will make one of the following recommendations:

- a. Recommend for Fellowship
- b. Borderline
- c. Do not support for Fellowship

42. The following outcomes are possible:

Outcome	What will happen next
Recommend for Fellowship	To Board of Trustees to note award
No agreement. Two recommendations and one borderline decision	To Board of Trustees to note award
No agreement. One or more assessors do not support or two or more borderline decisions.	To Fellowship Group for discussion
Do not support for Fellowship	To Fellowship Group for discussion

Stage two

43. Where necessary, the Fellowship Group will discuss your portfolio using the same headings as the assessors, and will take the assessors' comments into account. This group may approve or reject your application or may ask for modifications to your submission. If your application is rejected you may re-apply at a later date.

44. If you are asked to make modifications to your submission you should re-submit it within twelve months of being required to make the modifications.

Outcome

45. We will write and let you know the outcome of your application, setting out any modifications requested if appropriate. If your application is unsuccessful we will give you feedback on the reasons for this result. You will be able to appeal against the decision only on procedural grounds by contacting education.help@college-optometrists.org. The appeal will normally be considered within six weeks.

Annex A: Categories and Examples of Evidence

Clinical practice

1. You should set out the nature of your clinical responsibilities in either community or hospital practice. Evidence you might submit to demonstrate a high standard of eye care could include:

- a. Verifiable statements from clinical colleagues who have standing in their own profession, explaining how you are providing an advanced standard of care, including accurate referrals.
- b. Patient satisfaction surveys or thank you letters from patients.
- c. Examples of clear communication with patients resulting in good attendance and compliance.
- d. Significant event auditing. (This means that when there has been a significant occurrence, either beneficial or damaging, the incident is analysed in a systematic and detailed way to see what can be learnt about the overall quality of care, and to decide on changes that might lead to future improvements. Less formally it means that, at a regular meeting, team members focus on particular incidents considered significant, to learn and improve.)
- e. Documentary evidence of three recent satisfactory appraisals.
- f. Evidence of demonstrable change made as a result of patient involvement.
- g. Examples of using specialist skills in your practice.
- h. Examples of innovative practice.
- i. Evidence of accreditation for enhanced services in local co-management arrangements.

The provision of visual or wider healthcare

2. You should set out the nature of the contribution you have made to visual or wider healthcare. Evidence you might submit could include a significant contribution to:

- a. Developing and evaluating a project which has made a difference to community or acute eye care locally or nationally.
- b. Charitable work in optometry that has made a difference to those who would not otherwise benefit from eye care.
- c. Developing and evaluating a project, which has had a significant impact in improving eye care internationally.

- d. Developing and evaluating a project working with doctors or other healthcare professionals, which has resulted in improved eye care services locally or nationally.
- e. Developing and evaluating a project that has had an impact on the social and public health agenda locally or nationally.

Optometric research

3. You should set out the nature of the contribution you have made to optometric research. Evidence you might submit could include:
- a. A significant contribution to practice-based research which has had a significant impact locally, nationally or internationally.
 - b. A significant contribution to technical innovation which has reached the wider market.
 - c. A high international profile in the world of optometric research.
 - d. Publications in peer-reviewed journals.
 - e. Editorship or membership of the editorial board of an eye care journal which includes peer-reviewed research papers.
 - f. A significant contribution to optometric research through a research post in a university department or a significant role in a research network.
 - g. A significant contribution to research capacity building.
 - h. Invitations to present research work at national and international conferences.

Optometric education

4. You should set out the nature of the contribution you have made to optometric education. Evidence you might submit could include:
- a. A significant contribution to improving optometric education nationally.
 - b. A significant contribution to designing an innovative training programme.
 - c. Supervising successful PhD students in visual science.
 - d. A significant contribution to the Scheme for Registration, or other College qualifications, as a supervisor, assessor or examiner.
 - e. A high international profile in the world of optometric education.

- f. Invitations to present optometric education work at national and international conferences.
- g. Publications in peer-reviewed journals.
- h. Authorship of or contribution to significant textbooks used in optometric education.
- i. A professorial appointment in a university department.

The management of visual healthcare

5. You should set out the nature of the contribution you have made to the management of visual healthcare. Evidence you might submit could include:
- a. Impact on Government policy.
 - b. Chairmanship of, or other major role on, an optometric committee, or a Local Optical Society or similar body, which has a significant impact on optometric practice locally or nationally.
 - c. Chairmanship of, or other major role on, a committee which decides optometric policy.
 - d. President of a national optometric body.
 - e. Significant contribution to a committee which has an important contribution to national optometric practice.
 - f. Specialist adviser to other optometrists.
 - g. A significant contribution to organisational work within the NHS which has had an important impact on eye care locally or nationally.
 - h. Promoting the understanding of and higher standards for eye care through contributions in newspapers, magazines, radio and television.
 - i. An MBA or other Masters Degree in business or administration, which you have used to influence the management of optometric practice.

Higher qualifications in vision science

6. You should set out the nature of the contribution you have made as a result of the higher qualification. Evidence you might submit could include the following, where they have been used to make a contribution to the knowledge base of your optometric practice or more widely:
- a. MSc/PhD thesis.

- b. Other study for higher qualifications in vision science.
- c. A specialist qualification.
- d. College Higher Certificates.

Annex B: Profiles of Fellows

Example profiles of Fellows

All the optometrists below are fictitious but serve as examples of the types of optometrists who might be awarded Fellowship.

Catriona Brydon

Categories: Management of visual healthcare and clinical practice

Catriona Brydon has been an optometrist in Birmingham for 15 years. She is an Optometric Advisor to the Birmingham PCT. She:

- Has been a member of the Local Optical Committee for the last seven years, during which time she:
 - Played a major role in setting up a shared care scheme for diabetes, including negotiating with the local PCT Commissioners, diabetologists, ophthalmologists, GPs (etc), agreeing the training, accreditation and revalidation processes, equipment, logistics and software standards, referral criteria and fees for the provision of this service.
 - Has been involved in drawing up other local protocols (eg direct referral, Choose & Book, etc) and took particular responsibility for communicating the new protocols to local optometrists.
- Was instrumental in rallying local optometrists to contact their local MPs during the early stages of the Health Bill to ensure they understood the impactful issues relating to the provision of local eyecare services.
- Has been the Area AOP Representative for 6 years.
- Has provided talks on eye care to the local community (including schools etc), which have helped to increase local awareness of the need for regular eye care and the role of the optometrist.
- Is currently undertaking a course in Therapeutics: Supplementary Prescribing and Additional Supply.

Annex B: Profiles of Fellows

Henry Crosshill

Optometric education and research

Henry Crosshill qualified as an Optometrist 10 years ago. An interest in research fuelled by his final year project led to him returning after the Professional Qualifying Examinations (PQE) Part 2 to undertake a College of Optometrists sponsored PhD on the epidemiology of refractive error.

Following completion of his PhD, Henry obtained a post at St Swithin's Hospital as an Optometrist working within the Ophthalmology Department. In his first two years he was instrumental in setting up a glaucoma shared care scheme, both with clinical input and by acting as an intermediary with the Optometric Advisor and LOCs in the Hospital Catchment Area.

He has now attained the Senior Optometrist post at the Hospital and runs several clinics including the glaucoma triage unit that analyses referral and prioritises patients.

He maintains a keen interest in research and has had several papers published in peer reviewed journals over the years. He also uses his knowledge to lecture to students and clinicians and writes CET articles for the optical press.

Brian Goggles

Categories: Management of visual healthcare, clinical practice, higher qualifications in visual science

Brian Goggles is the Clinical Development Manager (CDM) for Eyescratchers, a small chain of optical practices in the Yorkshire Area. He qualified 12 years ago, first as the optometrist in his local practice and became CDM five years ago.

- His responsibilities include the recruitment and retention (including training, continuing education and development) of the Group's optometrists, dispensing & contact lens opticians, selection of the equipment and management of the customer complaints.
- He still works two days a week in clinical practice.
- He is a Member of FODO's Professional Development and Standards Committee.
- He is a member of the LOC.
- He has taken several modules from City University and gained an MSc and has achieved a Diploma in Contact Lens Practice, which he has used in his role as Development Manager to create training programmes for staff.

Annex B: Profiles of Fellows

James Campbell

The management of visual healthcare

Qualified in 1987 with a 2.1 degree from Glasgow Caledonian University.

Has served on the local Area Optometric Committee (AOC) for 15 years and has been Secretary and Chairman. In this role has been instrumental in developing the Clinician-to-Clinician contact group involving the AOC, Health Board, local GPs and Ophthalmologists in round table forum. This has led to development of shared care schemes in Glaucoma monitoring and a Red Eye scheme. For both of these he was involved in preparing the business case and in the negotiation, both clinical and financial, that allowed them to proceed.

He was shortlisted for a place on the local Community Health Partnership Committee but was unsuccessful at the final stage (the chair of the Local Pharmaceutical Committee eventually being chosen).

He served on the College of Optometrists Council for three years during which time he sat on the PDS committee and the Guidance Review Group.

He has been accredited for the Glaucoma monitoring and the Red Eye scheme by the local Eye Hospital consultants. He has also completed six modules at City University – Therapeutics 1,2 and 3, Glaucoma, Diabetes and Children's eye-care.

Rachel Paulson

Category: Clinical practice, the provision of visual or wider healthcare, the management of visual healthcare

Rachel Paulson has been an optometrist in Surrey for 15 years. During this time she has:

- Been Area Principal Optometrist for a group of opticians and managed the optometrists and dispensing opticians.
- Led a Patient Involvement Group within her company which has targeted optometric services to local needs such as Occupational Optometry Advice Clinics, colour overlays for learning difficulties and domiciliary services for the elderly.
- Been Secretary of the Local Optometric Committee for eight years and led a group which commissioned acute ophthalmology referrals on behalf of community optometrists.
- Advised the Primary Care Trust (PCT) on clinical governance issues to monitor community optometric services to which acute cases had been referred on the triaging of primary ophthalmological acute conditions.
- Been a regular contributor to optometric journals on changes and opportunities in the local PCT and opportunities for practice-based commissioning.

Annex B: Profiles of Fellows

- Awarded an MBA at Surrey University in 2004, with a final dissertation on *Community optometry – a business*.

Ashok Patel

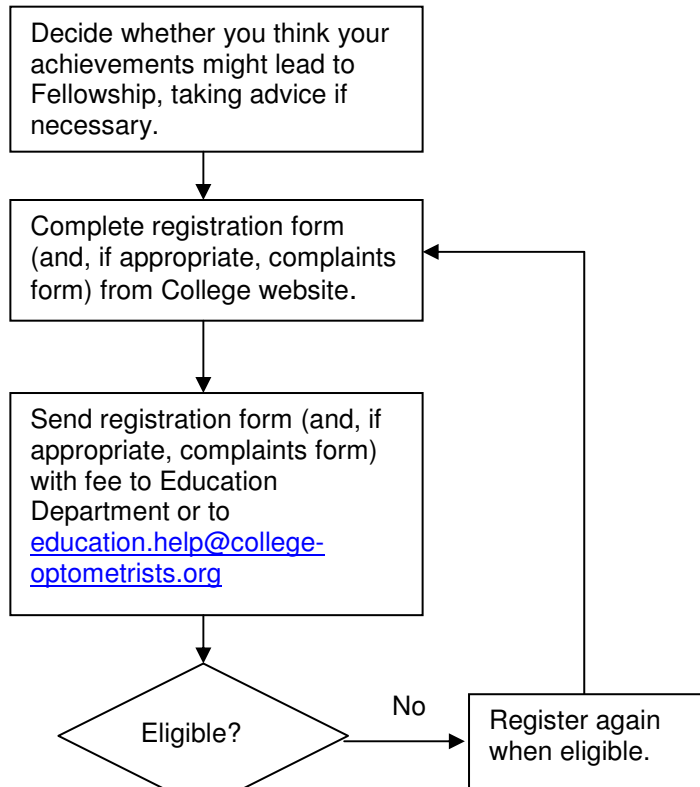
Category: The provision of visual or wider healthcare, the management of visual healthcare, higher qualifications

Ashok Patel graduated from City University in 1984 with a first Class Honours Degree. He was awarded a PhD from Bradford University in 1988. He is based in South London

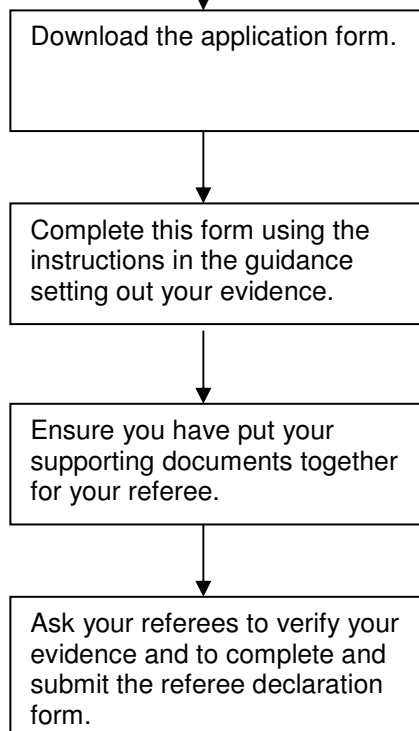
Since then he has:

- Undertaken sessional work in paediatric and binocular vision clinics in a multi-disciplinary team.
- Worked full time in a hospital post since 1995 during which time he:
 - Identified a need in primary care so developed a direct referral scheme, a referral feedback scheme and choose and book scheme using a secure email link between the hospital and community optometrists.
 - Restructured clinics with optometrist-led glaucoma clinics, teaching other optometrists and trainee ophthalmologists.
 - Developed a clinical management forum including optometrists, ophthalmologists, orthoptists, GPs, ophthalmic nurses, PCT administrators and commissioning staff.
 - Been a member of the Staff Representative Council.
 - Negotiated with local management, Department of Health and lobbied politicians about the effects of planned service changes on the viability of the hospital service.
- Been a member of the Local Optometric Committee since 1991 and chair from 2000-2005.
- Been a member of the AOP Hospital Optometrists Committee and chair from 2000-2002.

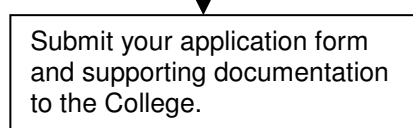
Step 1: Registration



Step 2: Preparation



Step 3: Submitting



Step 4: Assessment

