Strategic Plan
2017-2020
Professional Excellence in Eye Health
We believe in professional excellence in eye health.

We are the professional body for optometry. We promote professional excellence in eye health by qualifying the profession and delivering guidance, development and training to ensure optometrists provide the best possible care. We promote excellence through the College's affixes, by building the evidence base for optometry, and raising awareness of the profession with the public, commissioners and health care professionals.
College values

These values reflect the way College staff, members and fellows carry out their daily work:

• We act with honesty and integrity.
• We work in a fair, open and transparent way.
• We encourage, listen to and act upon feedback.
• We provide high quality services.
• We embrace diversity and people’s differences, and recognise each individual’s contributions.
• We show support and consideration in our dealings with colleagues.
• We are committed to our own personal and professional development.
Introduction from the President and Chief Executive

We are here to help our members to deliver the best care for patients in whatever setting they work.

We are also here to champion the profession – to provide an impartial and authoritative voice for optometry so that policy makers, commissioners and other health professionals are clear about the value that optometrists bring to eye care and understand that they are highly trained, clinical professionals.

These are challenging times. An ageing population, new technology and treatments, and a lack of resources in the health service mean rapid change and uncertainty; however, these changes provide exciting opportunities too. Optometrists are already experiencing an expanding scope of practice and are in a position to offer solutions to the challenges faced by those charged with delivering health care.

We are here to provide support during this shift in emphasis, by offering help with difficult work situations and by up-skilling those who want to take on expanded roles.

We have been working hard for our members and, over the last three years, we have provided a whole range of new products and services. These include clear guidance, an increased clinical advice service, new higher qualifications, high impact research evidence and professional development opportunities on a wide variety of topics. We now have a new website, have increased the range of materials our members can use with their patients and have developed our branding to help raise the profile of College membership and the profession with patients and the wider public.

Behind the scenes, we have been working with others to ensure that optometry is firmly established in the design of eye care services, and continue to contribute to the evidence base that will increase the authority of the profession, through the work of our research and policy teams.
By end of this Strategic Plan in 2020, we want our members to feel that we have given them the support they need to continue to deliver professional excellence in whatever areas of optometry they have chosen, and that the College is the place they can go to for advice and to learn. As usual, we want to hear what you expect from us and what you think of what we provide.

**Our members can be proud of their profession and their membership of the College**

You will see that we have taken a lead in advancing the profession and secured optometrists a place in emerging eye care services, where other professions recognise them as highly trained clinical professionals.

Our members can be proud of their profession and their membership of the College, and we will continue to support them in demonstrating professional excellence in their practice.
Strategic objective 1:

We will support members in providing the best care they can for patients and help them meet the challenges of an evolving health care system in their daily practice.
Strategic actions

We will:

• tailor the way we keep in touch with members and what we offer, bearing in mind the increasingly different ways of working and different service delivery models in each nation
• provide:
  • professional development opportunities that are accessible and relevant to everyday practice
  • support and advice to members on clinical, professional and other issues that affect their day-to-day practice
  • practical guidance on how to deal with the everyday challenges of working in practice
  • practical guidance on the wider health and eye care context and how this relates to current and future practice
  • information about products and services used in everyday practice
  • materials that will help practitioners explain to patients their conditions and treatments.

What will this mean for members?

Our members have told us that they want support in their day-to-day practice, particularly at a time when health care, including eye care, is changing rapidly. We understand that while opportunities exist for an increasingly clinical role, most optometrists still spend the majority of their time helping people optimise their vision. Members have told us that they value our clinical advice service, Guidance for professional practice and Using evidence in practice series particularly, but we can do more. We know that our members are facing challenging times, so we will support them by increasing the number of easily accessible materials we offer them to help tackle the difficult issues they meet every day, whether that is managing their time in a busy practice, dealing with challenging patients, or writing good referral letters. So whether it’s through friendly advice over the phone, ‘how to...’ guides on our website, or events near where they live, we are here to provide practical solutions to the pressures members encounter in their daily work.
Strategic objective 2:

We will help members develop their expertise and gain the knowledge and skills they need to develop their careers.
Strategic actions

We will:

• develop a tool to help members understand what career opportunities are available to them and what they need to do to achieve their professional goals
• develop our assessment processes in line with the outcomes of the GOC’s education review
• continue to build our support services for trainees, assessors, examiners and supervisors
• continue to accredit higher qualifications in areas where optometrists may choose to specialise
• raise funds to enable us to help members develop careers in research
• nurture an evidence-based approach to practice and enable members to participate in research at a practice level
• give Research Excellence Awards for outstanding research
• provide friendly and accessible support and guidance to members on clinical, professional and other issues that affect their practice
• provide continuing professional development (CPD) that relates to different areas of specialisation and broader professional skills.

What will this mean for members?

Eye care delivery is changing – the ageing population, together with new technology and treatments, means that there are exciting new opportunities for optometrists to develop different careers. We know that many of our members want to increase their clinical knowledge and skills and take on new roles. We will be involved in the GOC’s education review and develop our training for optometrists in line with any recommended changes. We will continue to provide guidance about the career options available, as well as offer a range of professional development opportunities that will give optometrists the confidence to operate in evolving clinical settings.
Strategic objective 3:

We will champion the value of optometrists in delivering eye care in all four nations
Strategic actions

We will:

• work with other sector organisations to show policy makers how optometrists can play a major part in solving current challenges in delivering eye care
• work with employers to enable their optometrists to develop their full potential
• demonstrate the role of the optometrist to the public
• provide the secretariat for the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning.

What will this mean for members?

We know that many of our members are concerned that they are seen as refractionists and sales people, rather than highly trained clinical professionals. In debates about the future shape of eye care delivery, we continue to champion the role that optometrists can play, so that others recognise their value, and design services that take advantage of their skills.

The College affixes demonstrate to patients that their optometrist is committed to professional excellence and allow them to have confidence in the care they receive.

We continue to work across all channels, including the media, to help the wider public recognise the expertise of optometrists and the crucial role they play in improving eye health and preventing sight loss.
Strategic objective 4:

We will provide leadership by being an impartial, authoritative voice for the profession
Strategic actions

We will:

• provide leadership in debates about key issues affecting the sector
• provide reports, opinions and briefings about matters of interest to the sector
• commission, promote and take part in research that is relevant to the profession
• produce guidance, briefings and reports to inform members about applying evidence to practice
• develop evidence-based responses to consultations that are relevant to eye health, eye care and the sector.

What will this mean for members?

We play our part in advancing the profession by looking outwards and influencing others. We do this by providing an impartial, balanced voice in debates about issues that are important to our members, and by advocating high standards and an evidence-based approach to practice that puts patients at the heart.

This has meant that we have been instrumental in giving the profession greater influence over its own future by leading roundtable debates on important issues, such as the future of the profession, and working with other bodies, such as the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, to lead the development of future practice and service design.