



**What to
expect from
your optician**



About this booklet

This booklet tells you about what you can expect when you visit your optician. It also contains information on our Code of Conduct. You can read our full code at www.optical.org/en/our_work/Standards/Standards_in_conduct.cfm, or you can ask us for a paper copy by phoning 020 7580 3898 (choose option 4)





About us

We regulate opticians, students training to be opticians and optical businesses in the UK. There are currently around 23,500 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses on our registers. Our powers come from the Opticians Act 1989.

What do the different words mean?

An **optometrist** is the person who tests your sight. They can also fit and supply glasses or contact lenses.

A **dispensing optician** is the person who fits and supplies your glasses or contact lenses. In this booklet we describe optometrists and dispensing opticians as '**opticians**'. We describe people who are registered with us as '**registrants**'. We use these words in this booklet to make it clearer for you.

What do you do?

We protect the public by:

- setting standards for optical education, training, performance and behaviour;
- approving the qualifications that lead to registration;
- publishing a register of opticians, students and optical businesses in the UK; and
- investigating and acting on concerns that a registrant is not fit to:
 - practise;
 - train as an optician; or
 - run a business that is registered with us.



What does 'fit to practise' mean?

If an optician is described as 'fit to practise', this means that they meet the standards of health, character, knowledge, skill and behaviour that they need for them to do their job safely and effectively.

What can I expect from my optician?

Opticians who want to register with us have to meet certain standards of knowledge, skill and behaviour. Opticians must meet standards in two areas – 'competence' and 'conduct'.

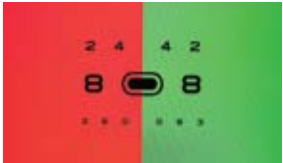
'Competence' – knowledge and skill

There are four documents that explain the level of professional knowledge and skill that registrants must have. These documents are available on our website at www.optical.org.

'Conduct' – professional, personal and honest behaviour

The standards in conduct are known as 'Codes of Conduct'.

All opticians must behave professionally and respectfully in all parts of their work and personal life. Our Code of Conduct says that you must be able to trust your optician with your care. Your optician must always treat you fairly and they must be able to explain to you the action they have taken and the decisions they have made about your eyecare.



Your optician must:

- make your care their priority;
- be polite;
- respect your dignity and privacy;
- listen to you and respect your views;
- give you clear information and explain the treatments that are available;
- agree with you any procedure or treatment they carry out;
- keep clear and detailed notes of the treatment you have received;
- involve you in decisions about your care;
- keep their knowledge and skills up to date;
- make sure they only do things that they are trained to do;
- be honest with you;
- be trustworthy in their professional and personal life;
- keep information about you and your care confidential;
- make sure their personal views do not affect the care you receive;
- protect you from any risks;
- report any concerns they have about themselves, or a colleague, that they may not be fit to practise;
- never abuse their professional position;
- have insurance so they are able pay you any compensation you may be entitled to if anything goes wrong with the eyecare you receive; and
- never behave in a way that could damage your confidence in them as an optician, or in the optical profession as a whole.



If a registrant does not meet these standards and we find that they are not fit to practise, we can stop them from working in the UK or we can restrict the work they are allowed to do.

What can I do if my optician does not behave in this way?

If you want to make a complaint about one of our registrants, you can find out how to do this in our booklet 'How to complain about an optician'. You can get a copy of this booklet from our website at www.optical.org or by phoning **020 7580 3898** (choose option two). If one of our registrants does not meet our standards and is not fit to practise because they are not able to do their job safely and effectively, we can stop them from working in the UK (this is often known as 'striking off'). Or, we can restrict the type of work they are allowed to do.

Contact us

General Optical Council
41 Harley Street
London
W1G 8DJ
Phone: 020 7580 3898
Fax: 020 7307 3939
Email: goc@optical.org
Website: www.optical.org

Other useful contacts

Optical Consumer Complaints Service

For help with issues such as getting a refund for faulty glasses, phone the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) on 0844 800 5071 or visit www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk.

Citizens Advice

If you are not sure who to complain to, or if you need legal advice, phone Citizens Advice on 020 7833 2181 or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Advertising Standards Authority

To complain about false or misleading advertising, phone the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) on 020 7492 2222 or visit www.asa.org.uk.



Have you found
this booklet useful?

We would like to know what you think about this information booklet. Have you found the information useful? Are there any sections that you think need more explanation? How could it be improved? Please tell us what you think by emailing communications@optical.org.

You can get
this booklet in
Welsh by visiting
www.optical.org