

Standards, Regulation and Legislation

What are standards?

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists is the professional body for ophthalmologists and is responsible for **creating and maintaining standards** in ophthalmic training and practice. Standards are the recommended care and behaviours, based on clinical evidence, for providing safe and effective treatment and management of eye diseases and conditions. **The RCOphth is not a regulatory body**, but works with government, Department of Health, home nations health bodies, regulatory and other organisations (charities, faculties, academies and colleges) involved in the eye care sector.

What is regulation?

Regulation is the process whereby standards are used to monitor, inspect and regulate services. The **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** is a **regulatory body** that ensures services meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. The CQC, as part of their role can ***'Take action when they judge that services need to improve or to make sure those responsible for poor care are held accountable for it.'*** For more information on CQC go to www.cqc.org.uk

The **General Medical Council (GMC)** is an independent organisation that helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice across the UK. Their role is to set the professional standards that doctors need to follow and can **take action to prevent a doctor *'from putting the safety of patients, or the public's confidence in doctors, at risk'***. The GMC also oversees medical education and training and decides which doctors are qualified to work in the UK.

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/role.asp>

How is law made?

The Government introduces most plans for new laws, with many included in the Queen's Speech at the opening of each session of Parliament, and changes to existing laws. However, new laws can originate from an MP or a Lord. Bills are a proposal for a new law and are introduced into either the House of Commons or House of Lords for examination, discussion and amendment, with the government issuing a paper for public discussion and response. The best-known examples of this are White and Green Papers.

Public Bills change the law as it applies to the general population and are the most common type of Bill introduced in Parliament. Government ministers propose the majority of Public Bills, those put forward by other MPs or Lords are known as Private Members' Bills.

When both Houses have agreed on the content of a Bill it is then presented to the reigning monarch for approval (known as Royal Assent). **Once Royal Assent is given a Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and is law.** <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/>