



The Royal College of Ophthalmologists' response to the GOC's consultation on Education and training requirements for GOC approved qualifications

October 20

Introduction

The RCOphth is the professional body for ophthalmologists and trainees in the UK. We work to ensure quality of patient care through the maintenance of high standards in ophthalmology and the wider eye service. We work closely with health policy and clinical leaders across the sector to help shape eye services for the benefit of patients.

The RCOphth welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We responded to the GOC's previous ESR consultations and support the aims of the review as part of responding to the changing environment that eye care professionals are practising within.

Comments

There are two key changes within the proposed framework we wish to comment on.

Firstly, switching to an outcomes focus, which brings the GOC in line with the GMC's medical training framework. The potential benefits of this are greater assurance that graduates have achieved the competencies, and improved consistency across professional qualifications, in an increasingly multidisciplinary environment.

Secondly, is the new requirement for 48 weeks of clinical experience. This is a significant change which asks for a large quantity of clinical training to be created. At present it is unclear how education providers and the wider system will deliver this.

We support the overall intention of raising the standard of clinical experience, given that optometrists are increasingly taking on extended clinical roles and responsibilities.

However, we have concerns about implementation. Delivering the required clinical placements will be challenging and requires much further consideration.

From our own experience and expertise in medical training, we know that providing good clinical experience requires time, space and incentives to develop the necessary training capacity and culture.

There are around 700 doctors undertaking the seven year training programme, with 70-80 achieving their certificate of completion of training per year. There is funding for each trainee, regional teaching sessions and contracted time for learning, and a long history of clinical mentoring. Despite these conditions, NHS service demands put significant pressure on the quality of clinical training that trainee ophthalmologists receive.

Optometry has a far higher number of students to provide clinical placements to, and significant commercial pressures to contend with. Creating the right conditions to meet this requirement needs a much more detailed, sector-wide conversation.

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists would welcome the opportunity to participate in further discussions around the development and delivery of the proposed framework.

For more information please contact policy@rcophth.ac.uk

