

# Inspiring and supporting excellence in eye care

Annual Report 2020 - 2021



THE COLLEGE OF  
OPTOMETRISTS





# President's report

01

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact on the way we lived and worked. But I'm proud to say that optometrists and eye health colleagues across the UK demonstrated our resilience, ingenuity and determination to overcome major challenges and continue to provide safe and effective eye care to our patients throughout.



## President's report

Our two main priorities for the profession this year were to protect practitioners and their patients, and to ensure that, as the pandemic lessens, optometrists continue play a key role in new eye care pathways:

### Protecting optometrists and patients

We have provided the evidence-based guidance for safely adapting practice that the profession has depended on from the start of 2020, and have continued to do so through 2021. Our COVID-19 guidance has become the definitive reference for the profession and the health services in all four nations.

Having achieved key worker status and priority for PPE for optometrists at the earliest stages of the pandemic, this year we led on the successful campaign for free flu vaccinations for all front-line primary care practice based staff.

### Preparing optometrists for new roles

We are playing a key part in shaping the future of optometry and the role of optometrists in transformed eye care services by leading the response to the GOC's Education Strategic Review. As the professional body for optometry, we are working closely with all stakeholders to ensure the highest professional standards in qualifying the profession continue to be upheld. We will also ensure that outcomes support the development and expansion of the profession's role and influence, and excellence in patient care.

*Our COVID-19 guidance has become the definitive reference for the profession.*

*We continued to strengthen our relationship with The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and other key partners in the sector.*

### **Transforming eye care services**

Working with policy-makers, sector partners and patients in the four nations, we are building on our profession's achievements to address the backlog and build a cost-effective, clinically safe and sustainable eye care service across the UK.

We are providing a voice for optometrists so that they are recognised for their achievements and have the opportunity to play a full and appropriate role in shaping and delivering future eye care. This year, the College and The Royal College of Ophthalmologists announced a second joint vision for safe and sustainable patient eye care services across the UK. We continued to strengthen our relationship with RCOphth and our main partners in the sector, including the GOC, governments and the health services in all four nations, in order to deliver our vision for expanding the use of optometrists in eye health delivery.

You can find more detail on our work in these areas in this annual report. And, rest assured, we will continue to make the case for a greater role for optometrists in primary and secondary eye care as we move to a post-COVID world.

This is my final year as College President, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank College Council, members and colleagues across the health care community for their dedication and support. Through this exceptional time, it has been an enormous pleasure and a privilege to work with you, and for you.



Colin Davidson FCOptom  
President

# Chief Executive's report

02

This year's annual report highlights how the College is delivering on its core purpose as the professional body for optometry - in inspiring and supporting optometrists to excel in the provision of eye health care, for the benefit of patients.



## Chief Executive's report

This central purpose is the focus of our ambitious five year strategic plan, which launched this year, and defines all that we do. We are taking the lead in transforming optometry. We provide a strong and clear voice for the profession, ensuring that their knowledge and skills are recognised and that optometrists can play a meaningful role in delivering new integrated eye health pathways. And we ensure, through our evidence-based guidance and our high quality CPD, that optometrists can excel in practice and are confident and capable in taking on new responsibilities:

### **Amplifying the expert voice of optometrists**

Like the rest of the world, our year was dominated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Our focus has been to ensure that the profession can continue to offer safe and effective eye care, and to ensure that pre-registration trainees were able to complete the Scheme safely.

We worked with decision-makers throughout to ensure that eye care was recognised as a public health priority, and optometrists were supported and resourced appropriately.

We also worked to shape the future of optometry and provision of eye care beyond the pandemic. We represented member views in responding to the final consultation on the GOC's Education Strategic Review which will inform the biggest strategic changes in optometrist's education and qualification in many years.

The College will continue to play a leading role in the profession's new route to qualification, including as the host of a knowledge hub to support the sector in developing new curricula.

*Our focus has been to ensure that the profession can continue to continue to offer safe and effective eye care.*

*By working with the GOC to adapt the IP qualification, we were able to ensure optometrists could continue their career progression.*

### **Defining and supporting good clinical practice**

Our clinical leadership was evident in our continued provision of evidence-based COVID-19 guidance, enabling practitioners to navigate change and continue to provide high quality, needs-led eye care.

Through regular updates, webinars, Q&As and one-to-one support from our clinical advisers, and our award-winning social media communications, we ensured members had all the timely information and resources they needed to maintain the highest standards of patient care.

### **Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement**

By successfully adapting the Scheme for Registration in line with COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to deliver more than 3000 Stage 1 and 1700 Stage 2 visits over the year, and to welcome 800 new optometrists to the profession.

By rapidly moving our CPD provision online, we ensured that members could maintain and develop their skills and knowledge. An astounding 12,000 members attended College events over the year.

By working with the GOC to adapt our specialist provision, including offering the IP examination online and extending the timespan for completing the qualification, and obtaining approval for appropriately qualified IP optometrists to supervise individual sessions under overall insight of a designated ophthalmologist, we were able to ensure that optometrists could continue their career progression.



## Chief Executive's report



Optometrists have shown that they are ready and able to take on more responsibilities as we move towards the integrated eye care pathways we advocate in our joint vision with RCOphth. As your professional body, we will continue to make the case for a greater role in primary and secondary care, and in providing the clinical and professional support and guidance you will need. So, although it is the role of annual reviews to look back and celebrate all that we have achieved, there is so much to look forward to.

Thanks to all who have contributed to these successes and to our members for their continued support.

  
Ian Humphreys  
Chief Executive

A year of inspiring  
and supporting  
optometrists to  
excel in the  
provision of eye  
health care,  
always for the  
benefit of  
patients...



# Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement

This year, we continued to focus on ensuring on-going access to safe and effective learning and development for practising and pre-registration optometrists during the pandemic. As we move towards a post-COVID world, we are working to ensure that we are enabling optometrists to participate fully in new integrated eye care pathways, and progress in their career.



Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement

## Key achievements of 2020-2021

### Adapting the Scheme for Registration

One of our key aims this year was to ensure that pre-reg trainees could complete the Scheme for Registration safely within the restrictions of the pandemic, while meeting the required GOC standards. We understood that the uncertainty of this time was having a significant impact on trainees, and worked as quickly as possible to gain GOC approval for an adapted Scheme, and to host a safe face-to-face OSCE for those who had been delayed. In November 2020, we were able to re-open enrolments. Over 96% of 2020 graduates were able to join the Scheme, and a total of 1363 trainees enrolled. We also introduced a new quality assurance framework, and recruited and trained additional assessors and supervisors. These measures enabled us to deliver more than 3000 Stage 1 and 1700 Stage 2 visits over the year.

As hospital clinics closed their doors to non-emergency patients, we developed, and gained approval, for a wholly online hospital eye service (HES) element of the Scheme. This has proved so effective that we will continue to deliver modules of the HES experience virtually in the future.

In January 2021, with the amazing support of all those involved, we ran the largest ever OSCE sittings, with 499 candidates taking part over 17 days.

*We understood that the uncertainty of this time was having a significant impact on trainees, and worked as quickly as possible to gain GOC approval for an adapted scheme.*

# Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement

## Shaping pre-registration education

Following consultation with our members, we responded to the GOC's Education Strategic Review (ESR) on pre-registration education. While we welcomed the proposed outcomes as an important foundation for the future of the profession, we recommended that the GOC properly consider the cost, funding and timescales that would be required to develop and deliver revised qualifications to ensure safe and effective implementation.

One key element of the GOC Council's decision to approve the new requirements for pre-registration education was to fund a new knowledge hub. This will support education providers in their design and development of qualifications, and to support practices and sector businesses in their role as post-ESR placement providers. The College led a group of sector bodies, including education providers, employers and representative bodies, in making a successful application to the fund for the Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education (SPOKE) which launched in September 2021.

## Delivering accessible and engaging CET

We continued to develop accessible CET so that all optometrists were able to maintain their skills and knowledge, as well as adapt their practice to comply with COVID-19 guidance. New courses included: How to provide telephone consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic and Investigating and managing neuro-ophthalmological symptoms.



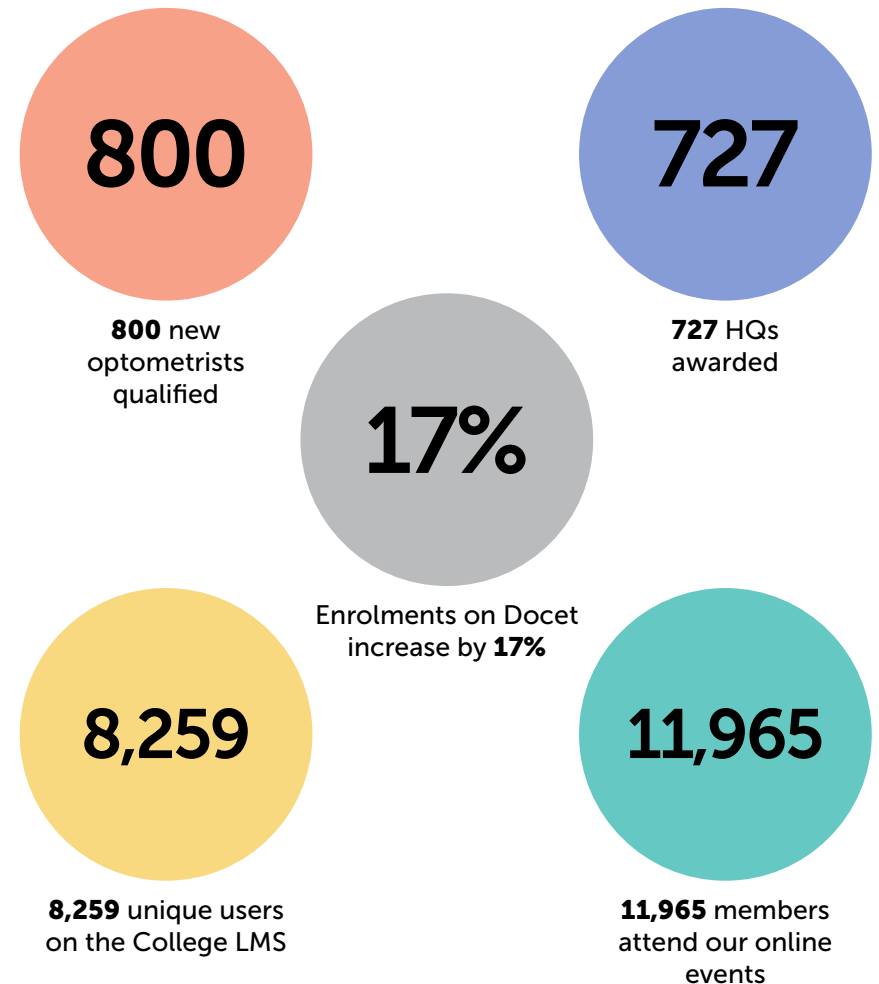
## Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement

We ran 47 online events, including Optometry Tomorrow Bitesize, which ran throughout March 2021, providing a total of 10,682 CET points. Our podcasts were a popular choice for optometrists looking to broaden their knowledge and stay in touch with their profession. Docet's monthly podcast, *Sound Optometry*, achieved more than 20,000 listens during the year.

### Supporting independent prescribing trainees

In May, we gained GOC approval to deliver the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment online. We were also able to improve access to appropriate clinical placement experience, by obtaining approval for some remote and virtual sessions, and for appropriately qualified IP optometrists to supervise individual sessions, under the overall oversight of a designated ophthalmologist.

We also agreed with the GOC an extension of the two year maximum period between the academic course and placements for IP trainees who were unable to find a placement because of COVID restrictions.



# Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists

Throughout the year, we continued to work with government and national health bodies to reinforce the importance of providing needed eye care through the pandemic, and to ensure that optometrists and their patients were protected from infection, in line with our COVID-19 Amber Guidance.



## Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists

Working in partnership with key stakeholders across eye healthcare in the four nations, we were able to ensure that optometrists were recognised as having the capability to play a significant role in new models of integrated eye care post-pandemic, and that they had a genuine opportunity to input into proposed changes and developments.

### **Key achievements of 2020-2021**

#### **Supporting safe and effective eye care during the pandemic**

In February, we wrote to employers, and met with Prospect trade union, to clarify needs-led eye care provision and to help address the profession's concerns around safety. We reinforced our focus on minimising the risk of infection in practice through our joint statement with ABDO on maintaining high standards of infection control. We led a successful campaign for the early and free provision of flu vaccinations for all frontline primary care staff in England, funded by the NHSEI.

*We are working to ensure optometrists can play a significant role in new models of integrated eye care.*



## Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists



### Working in partnership to transform eye care provision

In July, the College and The Royal College of Ophthalmologists released a joint statement of our vision for safe and sustainable patient eye care services across the UK. We recommended new models of care and integrated pathways with optometrists as the first point of contact, co-leading shared care across primary care and hospital settings, and supported by enhanced professional development and upskilling for eye care professionals.

Our vision is becoming a reality across the UK. For example, we advised NHS England Improvement's Eye Care Recovery and Transformation Programme (ECRTP). As part of our role on the ECRTP steering group, we endorsed new integrated eye care pathways and a 'roadmap' for restoring eye care services, and are now advising on workforce, electronic patient record developments and new models of care.

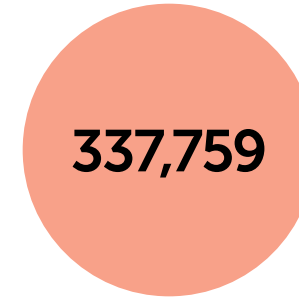
We worked with the DVLA on amending the Road Traffic Act 1988 to allow optometrists to be recognised as registered healthcare professionals that can complete DVLA medical questionnaires - a positive step in acknowledging the expertise of optometrists.

## Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists

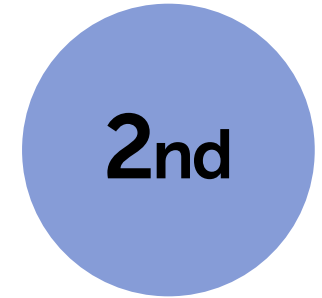
### Raising public awareness of the importance of eye care

We have been working to keep eye care high on the public health agenda during the pandemic. We kept the public informed of changes to provision and the importance of looking after their eyes, and reassured them that their optometrist could provide safe and effective eye care in line with our COVID-19 guidance. Our campaign on lockdown vision achieved 230 minutes of radio time, 40 clips of coverage in national and regional papers, and national broadcast interviews on Sky News and BBC Morning Live (1.5 million+ viewers).

In October, we launched our national campaign on the impact of having reduced or impaired vision with the YouTube premiere of *Focus on Life*. This short film, directed by a BAFTA nominated director, was shot entirely out of focus – a world first. It was viewed by 750 people within the first 15 minutes and achieved national media coverage, including a Sky News feature with College Clinical Adviser, Daniel Hardiman-McCartney FCOptom. The second phase of the campaign launched in April and focused on children's eye health, using a blurred copy of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* to illustrate the issue. We developed a range of downloadable assets for members to use on their practice website and social media feeds.



**337,759** unique page views on [lookafteryoureyes.org](https://lookafteryoureyes.org)



**2nd** joint vision with RCOphth



**5,720,103** impressions on the College's social media



**Free** flu vaccinations for all front-line primary care staff in England

# Defining and supporting good clinical practice

We continued to support optometrists in practice through the Amber phase of the COVID-19 pandemic with regularly updated guidance, supplemented with practical resources, webinars and Q&As and one-to-one advice from our clinical advisers. All of our guidance, including our Clinical Management Guidelines, Guidance for Professional Practice and COVID-19 guidance, is evidence-based.



## Defining and supporting good clinical practice

### **Key achievements of 2020-2021:**

#### **Guiding the profession through the pandemic**

The College's COVID guidance remained the reference point for all the UK health authorities, reaffirming the College's clinical leadership and position in influencing national policy. In June, the GOC published their updated COVID-19 statements, aligned to our COVID-19 traffic light classification system, providing a single point of reference for optometrists.

#### **Shaping eye care provision across the four nations**

We continued to strengthen our relationship with our partners in the sector, including the GOC, governments and health services in all four nations. We worked closely with the Welsh Government on a programme to reform primary care contracts. In Scotland, we continued working with key stakeholders on a review of the provision of community eye care. In Northern Ireland, we were invited to join the Northern Ireland Eye Care Network, which is developing an Ophthalmic Services Rebuilding Plan. This is based on learning from the impact of COVID-19 on ophthalmic services in both primary and secondary care.

*In June, the GOC published their updated COVID-19 statements, aligned to our COVID-19 traffic light classification system.*

# Defining and supporting good clinical practice

## Building the clinical evidence base

In March, we began a collaboration with King's College London investigating the changing role of the optometrist in assessing eye-sight and eye health during and after COVID-19, and co-developed and published international practice recommendations for the recognition and management of hearing and vision impairment in people with dementia.

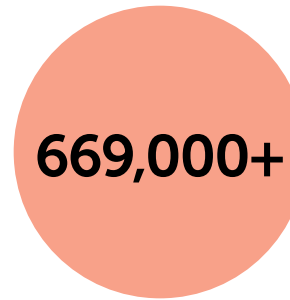
## Reviewing the Clinical Management Guidelines

In June, we launched a review of our Clinical Management Guidelines to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the profession, while remaining user-friendly. We carried out online surveys, interviews and focus groups with colleagues across the healthcare sector. Our findings are shaping the future development of this essential resource for all optometrists. The CMGs are regularly reviewed and this year we updated 63 CMGs.

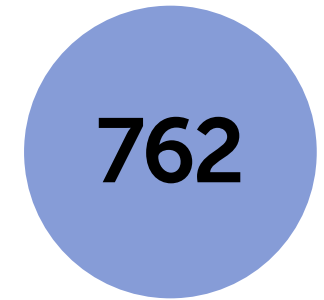
## Inspiring excellence in research

We published an impact report charting the College's 40 years at the leading edge of optometric research. The report shows how the College's investment of more than £5 million into optometry, optics, vision science and eye health sector public policy research has provided the foundation for clinical and professional practice and the development of optometry and optometrists.

This year, research projects funded and supported by the College, or in collaboration with the College, produced nine published papers on topics including the effect of the pandemic on UK primary care optometrists, glaucoma and refractive error.



**669,188** unique page views for CMGs



**762** clinical advice queries answered



The College and Ulster University receive **£120,000** NIHR funding for research skills eLearning for clinicians



OPO achieves **416** citations in peer reviewed literature

# Our year

06

## > October 2020

- College's five year strategic plan launches
- We launch the first ever completely blurred film, Focus on Life as part of our national campaign.
- We respond to the GOC's ESR consultation on pre-registration education.
- In a cross sector response, we voice our concerns about the timescales and funding required to enact the planned changes in the GOC's education strategic review.

## > January 2021

- We hold the largest ever OSCE; 499 candidates across 17 days.
- We host a webinar and podcast Q&A on delivering eye care in lockdown with representatives from the College, ABDO, AOP, FODO and the GOC.



## > November 2020

- We develop advice for drivers for Road Safety Week.

## > December 2020

- We publish our updated guidance on The Importance of Vision in Preventing Falls.

## > February 2021

- We launch our new jobs board – free to all members.
- Pre-reg trainee HES experience is delivered fully online for the first time.
- New registrants attend the College's virtual Welcome to the Profession event.
- We publish the updated Guidance for Professional Practice.

## > March 2021

- We host Optometry Tomorrow Bitesize online, including the AGM and Research Excellence Awards ceremony. 3018 College members attend one or more sessions.
- Following GOC approval of new education and training requirements, we consult again with universities and employers on the future of pre-registration education, and develop an outline offer for collaborative delivery.

# Our year



## > April 2021

- We launch the second part of the Focus on Life campaign - focusing on children's eye health.
- The GOC agrees to the inclusion of virtual clinics in the College's IP qualification.
- We issue a joint statement with ABDO on maintaining high standards of infection control.

## > May 2021

- We publish Forty Years of Research report, demonstrating our leadership in this area.
- We respond to the Office for Students' consultation on recurrent funding for 2021-22, making the case for additional funding for the clinical education of optometrists.

## > June 2021

- We issue a joint statement with The Royal College of Ophthalmologist on post-operative cataract care.
- We launch a review of the Clinical Management Guidelines.

## > July 2021

- We issue a joint vision with The Royal College of Ophthalmologists for safe and sustainable patient eye care services across the UK.
- The GOC approves an extension to September 2023 for the temporary handbook and associated changes to the Scheme for Registration.

## > August 2021

- The GOC approves the College's proposal that registered independent prescribers can sign off trainee's clinical practice placement sessions under the overall oversight of a designated ophthalmologist.

## > September 2021

- In response to a College-led campaign, NHSE/I funds flu vaccinations for all frontline primary eye care staff in England.
- We respond to the GOC consultation on education and training requirements for specialist entry on the GOC register.

# Trustees and Council members

07

## Trustees

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### **Kyla Black**

MCOptom  
Trustee

### **Dr Irene Ctori**

PhD MCOptom  
Trustee

### **Colin Davidson**

FCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Prof Cert Med Ret  
Trustee, President

### **Professor Leon Davies**

PhD FCOptom FAAO SFHEA  
Trustee, Vice President

### **Professor Edward Mallen**

PhD MCOptom  
Trustee, Immediate Past President

### **Sheetal Patel**

MCOptom Dip(Tp)IP PgDipCO  
FBCLA  
Trustee

### **Mark Redhead**

MA MBA FRSA  
Lay Trustee, Chair of the Lay  
Advisory Panel

### **Dr Gillian Rudduck**

PhD MCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Higher Cert Glauc  
Trustee

### **Professor Kathryn Saunders**

PhD FCOptom  
Trustee

### **Johnathan Waugh**

MCOptom DipTp(IP) Prof Cert  
Paed Eye Care, Prof Cert Med Ret  
Trustee

### **Dr George Anthony Gibson**

PhD FCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Prof Cert Glauc Prof Cert Med Ret  
Trustee, Treasurer

## Co-opted trustees

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### **Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt**

PhD MCOptom DipGlauc  
DipTp(IP)  
Co-opted Trustee, Chair of  
the Board of Trustees

### **Dr Rob Hogan**

PhD MCOptom  
Co-opted Trustee, Chair of  
DOCET

### **Andrew Kitchen**

BSc (Hons) ACMA MBA  
Co-opted Lay Trustee



# Trustees and Council members

## College Council

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### London



**Dr Irene Ctori**  
PhD MCOptom

**Meera Shah**  
MCOptom

**Nitika Sondhi**  
MCOptom

**Jay Varia**  
MCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Prof Cert Glau

**Shane Abbas Bhimani**  
MCOptom FBDO CL  
DipTp(IP) DipGlau

### North West



**Robert Harper**  
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DipGlau DipTp(IP)

**Matt Roney**  
MCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Higher Cert Glau

**Dr Gillian Rudduck**  
PhD MCOptom  
Higher Cert Glau  
DipTp(IP)

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**Paul Appleson**  
MSc MCOptom  
DipTp(IP) DipGlau  
Prof Cert Med Ret

**Barbara Watson**  
MSc FCOptom  
DipTp(IP) DCLP  
Higher Cert Glau

**Professor Edward Mallen**  
PhD MCOptom  
Immediate Past President

### East Midlands



**Kyla Black**  
MCOptom

**Hassnain Safdar**  
MCOptom

### Eastern



**David Hill**  
MCOptom DipTp(IP)  
FBDO Prof Cert  
Paed Eye Care

**John Kidd**  
MCOptom

**Dr Keziah Latham**  
PhD FCOptom  
Prof Cert LV

### Northern Ireland



**Katie Curran**  
PhD MPH  
MCOptom

**Professor Kathryn Saunders**  
FCOptom

### Scotland



**Dr Laura E Sweeney**  
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DipTp(IP)

**Kathryn Trimmer**  
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DipTp(IP)

**Johnathan Waugh**  
MSc MCOptom  
DipTp(IP) Prof Cert  
Paed Eye Care, Prof  
Cert Med Ret

### South West



**Lewes Hambrey**  
MCOptom  
Prof Cert Glau

**Jodie Wearne**  
MCOptom

**Kiki Soteri**  
MSc MCOptom DipTp(IP)  
FHEA Prof Cert Glau  
Prof Cert Med Ret

# Trustees and Council members

## College Council (continued)

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### West Midlands



**Shamina Asif**  
MCOptom

**Professor Leon Davies**  
FCOptom PhD  
FAAO SFHEA  
Vice President

**Jagdeep Singh**  
MCOptom Prof Cert Glauc  
Prof Cert Med Ret  
DipTp(IP)

### South East



**Colin Davidson**  
FCOptom DipTp(IP)  
President

**Lucy Blown**  
MSc MCOptom  
Prof Cert Glauc

**Mike Horler**  
Prof Cert Med Ret Cert  
DipTp(IP) Oc Pharm Cert  
Oc Therapeutics

**Sheetal Patel**  
MCOptom, DipTp(IP)  
PgDipCO FBCLA

### Wales



**Clare Pearce**  
MCOptom  
Prof Cert LV

**Dr David Grant Robinson**  
PhD MCOptom FHEA  
Prof Cert Glauc Prof Cert  
LV Prof Cert Med Ret

### North East



**Andrew McGregor**  
MCOptom

**Dr George Anthony Gibson**  
PhD FCOptom DipTp(IP)  
Prof Cert Glauc  
Prof Cert Med Ret  
Treasurer

### Early Career Representatives



**Mohammed Bilal Saleem**

**Niamh Coyle**

**Rashida Makda**

### Lay Advisory Panel Representatives



**Andrea Clerk**  
MBA, CIPD

**Katie Engel**  
LLB

**Rekha Randhawa**  
LLB (Hons), MA

**Mark Redhead**  
MA, MBA, FRSA

### Optometry Schools Council



**Will Holmes**  
MPhil PGCertMedEd MCOptom  
MAcadMED FHEA

# Financials

## Income

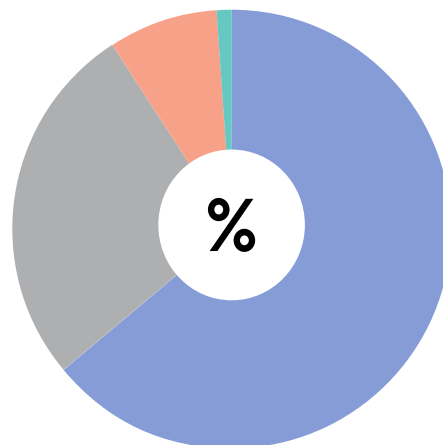
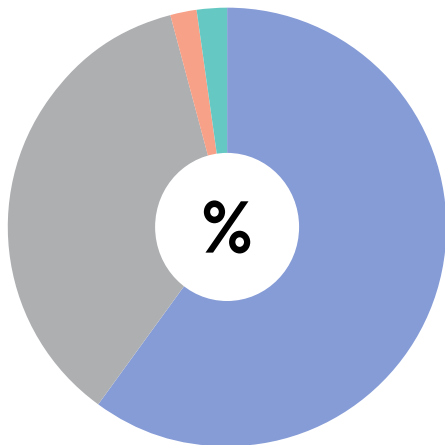
Education	60%
Membership	36%
Research	2%
Investment income	2%
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<b>Total income</b>	<b>£7,560,636</b>
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Gains on investments	£648,855

## Expenditure

Education	64%
Membership	27%
Research	8%
Investment income	1%
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<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£6,998,255</b>

## Balance sheet

<b>Fixed assets</b>	
Tangible fixed assets	£4,361,939
Investments	£5,738,777
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,100,716</b>
<b>Current assets</b>	
Debtors	£681,877
Cash at bank and in hand	£1,898,899
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,580,776</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Creditors due within one year	£4,485,995
<b>Net current liabilities</b>	<b>£(1,905,219)</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>£8,195,497</b>
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<b>Restricted funds</b>	
Research fund	-
Docet and ProVide	£523,232
Other	£68,631
<b>Total</b>	<b>£591,863</b>
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	
Designated funds	£4,653,766
General funds	£2,949,868
<hr/>	
<b>Total charity funds</b>	<b>£8,195,497</b>



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 [college-optometrists.org/linkedin](https://college-optometrists.org/linkedin)