



Policy and Education Committee

6 October 2022

Registrant and stakeholder Perceptions Research

Classification	Public
Purpose	For discussion
Issue	The purpose of the registrant and stakeholder perception survey and the specification for independent commissioning.
Recommendation	To consider and provide feedback on the approach to the registrant and stakeholder perception research.
Financial and resourcing implications	A budget of up to £25k to do the survey and the supporting qualitative work and up to £15k to support the question and method design.
Equality and diversity implications	We will work with the researchers to ensure that our method includes a wide and representative range of respondents and given our recent work on the experiences of osteopaths with specific protected characteristics, we will ensure that our method also includes respondents with a diverse range of these characteristics.
Communications implications	We will undertake promotion of this independent work using our usual channels. The findings will be used to influence the future direction of our communications and engagement work across the organisation.
Annex	Annex – Analysis of approaches to registrant and stakeholder perceptions research by other health professional regulators.
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Key issues

- This paper sets out the proposed approach to our registrant and stakeholder perceptions research, the aim of which is to provide evidence and insight about the impact of our Communications and Engagement Strategy over time and to inform about areas we may need to focus on to support its delivery.
- The Committee is asked to consider the scope, specification and approach to commissioning the survey and to provide feedback.
- This feedback will inform the invitation to tender that the Committee recommend that Council publish.

Background

1. Our Strategic Plan states that: 'We will build closer relationships with the public and the profession based on trust and transparency'
2. In 2021, GOsC published its [Communication and Engagement Strategy 2021 to 2024](#). This explained its three key aims and the activities that we would undertake to contribute to the achievement of this strategic goal. These include:

Aim 1: Promote trust: Continue to improve our relationships and engagement with our stakeholders so we can increase levels of trust in us as a regulator and increase understanding of our role.

Aim 2: Be timely and responsive: Take a timely approach and be responsive both to stakeholder needs and to changing situations and requirements, based firmly on insight and effective planning.

Aim 3: Be a forward looking regulator: Ensure that our communication channels and products are relevant, contemporary, forward looking and that we utilise creative and innovative approaches where helpful and required.

3. During 2021 and 2022, we have and continue to undertake a range of activities across the organisation to contribute to the delivery of these aims. These include increasing our online and face-to-face engagement activities with osteopaths, patients and key partners, and reviewing processes for our communications with osteopaths relating to core functions such as registration.
4. Further information about our engagement activities specifically is included in the [Engagement with Osteopaths paper considered by Council in July 2022](#).
5. Having undertaken these activities we are now looking to measure the impact these have had on perceptions of, and trust in GOsC. In the 2022/23 Business Plan Council agreed that we would: 'Undertake a registrant and stakeholder perceptions survey to enable our registrants and stakeholders to inform how they perceive us, their needs, and how we might better meet those needs.'

6. This paper outlines our planned approach and the Committee is invited to consider and provide feedback on this. The paper on the private agenda then asks the Committee to agree to recommend that Council publish the invitation to tender with the approach outlined below, subject to feedback and amendments.

Discussion

7. Most other regulators have been undertaking regular tracking surveys with registrants and some with stakeholders for the past few years. GOsC has traditionally undertaken high levels of face-to-face and other engagement with registrants and feedback has been consolidated and acted upon in a more ad hoc basis. GOsC has undertaken a regular public and patient perceptions survey since 2014 which we review and publish every four years or so.
8. However, this year, as part of our commitment to transparency and also to create a baseline for our Communications and Engagement Strategy, we have decided to undertake formal perceptions research with registrants and key partners/organisations. Work is also being undertaken on our regular patients and public perceptions survey and this is covered elsewhere on the agenda.
9. We reviewed the approach taken by other regulators in this area, and this is summarised at the Annex. We have undertaken meetings with the GMC and the HCPC to learn from their experiences of this kind of research as we develop something that is appropriate for our sector. Key areas of advice included keeping the survey to 15 to 20 mins to complete and not including too many open questions which can reduce response rates significantly.
10. Our analysis shows that other regulators have focused on areas such as:
 - Awareness and understanding of the regulatory role
 - Awareness and understanding of activities undertaken to perform that role (including for example, standards, guidance, resources, advice, services)
 - Information sources used to inform perceptions
 - Quality and tone of communications
 - Levels of trust and confidence
 - Impact on health professionals including the level of support provided
 - Perceptions about the job and role itself (including current challenges, level of fulfilment and how these might impact on ability to meet standards)
 - Understanding of particular issues affecting particular demographics, for example, students
11. Other regulators (of varying sizes) have undertaken these surveys in house and using external organisations. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. On balance we consider that a level of independence is required for this type of work that requires external input.

12. Using these insights we have begun to shape the specification for our own registrant perceptions work adapting this thinking to meet the needs of our own strategic goals including those of our communications and engagement strategy.

Why are we undertaking work to understand the perceptions of our stakeholders? What are our goals?

13. We want to measure to what extent we are implementing the principles of our Communications and Engagement Strategy, including what is working well and which areas we may need to focus on going forward.
14. The GMC recognised in their 2020 survey that much of the evidence of impact of their strategic goals would be measured by stakeholder perceptions. Having a tracker survey is a way of understanding where we are and where we need to get to by 2024 and beyond as we move into the development of our new Strategic Plan.
15. There are two main groups of stakeholders in relation to our strategic goals: patients and the public, and registrants (including different groups of osteopaths, such as the Osteopathic Alliance, Council of Osteopathic Educational Institutions, Institute of Osteopathy, National Council for Osteopathic Research, regional groups of osteopaths, and osteopaths with different demographics and levels of experience).
16. The overarching aim of this perceptions survey is to understand the perceptions of the following groups towards the role and performance of the GOsC: osteopaths, educators, students and key partners (the osteopathic organisations listed in para 15). (Please see public item 7 of this agenda for further information about our regular patient and public perceptions work). We want to gather views that help us to identify:
 - a. The extent to which osteopaths, educators and students trust us as their regulator.
 - b. The extent to which registrants and key partners see the GOsC as aligned with and delivering according to the values set out in our Strategic Plan and the principles set out in our Communications and Engagement Strategy.
 - c. The extent to which our audiences understand our role as a regulator, specifically in relation to each of our core functions (fitness to practise, standards and education, registration and equality, diversity and inclusion).
 - d. The extent to which our audiences believe GOsC is delivering each of these core functions in a timely, responsive and effective manner.

How might we undertake this work

17. Other regulators have undertaken a mixture of quantitative survey work and qualitative telephone interviews. We consider that a mixed methods approach, if

it fits within our budget envelope would give us the best opportunity for rich feedback. However, we would ask those tendering to provide a proposed method and rationale as part of the selection criteria.

18. We can also consider asking broad questions within the survey that allow us to identify areas that may require further exploration. This can be carried out utilising qualitative methods such as focus groups.

When would we undertake this work?

19. The proposed timeline (subject to advice and/or recommendations from our chosen supplier) would be:

Date	Activity
October 2022	Consideration of the approach to the work Recommendation from Policy and Education Committee to Council that Council publish the Invitation to Tender and agree the composition of the panel.
October / November 2022	Council agree to publish the tender electronically or at their November meeting and agree the selection panel.
October / November 2022	Advertisement of tender
November 2022	Tender selection
December 2022 / January 2023	Agreement of contract and design of research work, survey etc
February 2023	Research begins (including survey to all registrants)
March/April 2023	Survey closes (4 week survey?)
April/May 2023	Analysis of survey / interviews
June 2023	Consideration by Policy and Education Committee
July 2023	Consideration by Council with publication after that.
Late 2025 / or late 2026 to be aligned with YouGov	Repeat tracker survey to check for changes in results.

What might a proposed specification include?

20. Taking into account the above, a possible specification might be as follows:

The purpose of this research is

- to understand the perceptions of osteopaths, educators, students and key partners towards the role and performance of GOsC, to then help us identify any future areas of focus.
- to provide baseline tracking data which will be used to help assess our progress and way forward for the implementation of the GOsC's Communication and Engagement Strategy.

To support us in achieving this we want this research to find out:

- a. Audience perceptions of what the role and purpose of GOsC is and the basis upon which they have been formed.
 - i. This should include an exploration and assessment of understanding of our role in terms of our core functions (education, standards, registration, fitness to practise and equality, diversity and inclusion). We also want to explore the extent of understanding regarding our role in providing osteopaths with relevant information to support them in meeting professional standards and our wider sector role in providing assurance about the regulation of osteopaths to external providers.
- b. Audience perceptions of how GOsC performs its role and the basis upon which these perceptions have been formed.
 - i. This should include consideration of GOsC's values and the extent to which GOsC is perceived as proportionate, anticipatory, fair, inclusive, accountable and efficient in its performance.
 - ii. And consideration of our competence and the extent to which GOsC is perceived to have the knowledge and skills to carry out our role.
 - iii. This might also include a question to understand the challenges that osteopaths encounter in practice and the extent to which GOsC is seen to support osteopaths to meet these challenges and practise in accordance with our standards.
- c. The impact of [GOsC's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2021 to 2024](#) on audience perceptions of GOsC and our performance, and specifically the impact on levels of trust in us as a regulator.
- d. The extent to which our audiences trust us as their regulator and whether this has been impacted by our activities undertaken in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework, including:
 - i. ensuring our regulatory activities are fair and free from unlawful discrimination

- ii. setting standards for the osteopathy profession that promote equal opportunity and access to the osteopathy profession
- iii. communicating and engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders in an accessible and timely manner.

The tender process

21. We consider that an independent approach to this work will enable registrants and stakeholders to feel comfortable to give their honest opinions and will give greater credibility to the work.

22. We propose that the tender panel to select the successful organisation should include:

- An osteopath from Policy and Education Committee or Council – to ensure osteopathic expertise and input
- The Chief Executive or Director of Education, Standards and Development – to ensure appropriate strategic oversight for the implementation of our strategy
- The Head of Communications, Engagement and Insight – to ensure communications expertise and input
- The Head of Resources and Assurance – to ensure financial and risk expertise and input

Next steps

23. Taking into account the feedback from the Committee (and particularly our external observers with speaking rights) on the approach to the invitation to tender, we will ask the Committee to agree to recommend that Council publish the invitation to tender, subject to agreed modifications in a private meeting.

Recommendation: To consider and provide feedback on the approach to commissioning the registrant and stakeholder external perceptions work.

Analysis of approaches to registrant and stakeholder perceptions research by other health professional regulators

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
GMC	Corporate Strategy and Perceptions Tracking 2020	IFF Research	<p>Covered 7 key audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doctors - Responsible Officers - medical students - providers - educators, stakeholders, and - patients and the public <p>Online invitation extended by GMC to stratified sample in each group.</p>	<p>Areas of survey included:</p> <p>Strategic Aims of Corporate Plan:</p> <p>Supporting doctors in delivering good medical practice</p> <p>Strengthening collaboration with regulatory partners</p> <p>Strengthening relationship with the public and the profession</p> <p>Meeting the changing needs of the health services across the four countries of the UK</p> <p>There were a list of benefit measures under each strategic aim most of which were measured by perceptions of stakeholders.</p> <p>Findings included:</p> <p>32% of doctors felt supported by the GMC to deliver good and safe care</p> <p>73% agree that being a doctor is a fulfilling career</p>

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
			Online survey and telephone interviews	<p>45% of doctors are confident in the way that they are regulated by the GMC</p> <p>41% agree or strongly agree that the GMC promotes and maintains public confidence in the medical profession</p>
GDC	GDC Stakeholder Perceptions Research (2021)	DJS research	<p>In depth qualitative interviews by telephone to inform survey questions</p> <p>Online survey to dental professionals, students and stakeholders</p> <p>Further in depth qualitative interviews on the telephone to interpret survey findings</p>	<p>Aims of survey included establishing:</p> <p>Overall perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the GDC and the basis upon which they have been formed.</p> <p>Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, GDC communications relating to COVID-19.</p> <p>The different channels through which dental professionals, stakeholders and students currently receive information about the GDC's activities, and their preferences.</p> <p>Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the different GDC channels, including comparing preferred 'tone of voice' for each channel.</p> <p>Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the GDC name and brand and the basis upon which they have been formed.</p> <p>Comparisons with relevant findings from the research undertaken in 2018</p>

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
				<p>Key findings included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perceptions of the GDC were more negative (58%) than positive (21%). - Students were most positive (50%) and dental professionals most negative (65%). - The most frequently selected influences on respondents' perceptions of the GDC were 'experiences of colleagues/friends' (51%) followed by 'the GDC response to COVID-19' (45%). - Respondents were also asked to select from a list, up to three words they associated with the GDC. Negative words were more often associated with the GDC than positive ones with 'unrepresentative' (48%), 'fear' (40%) and 'aggressive' (30%) being the words most frequently selected. - Students were more likely than dental professionals to associate positive words with the GDC such as 'helpful' (39% vs. 15%) and 'supportive' (42% vs 13%). - About half of those surveyed agreed that the GDC was 'professional' (51%), followed by 'relevant' (43%), 'respectful' (36%) and 'consistent' (36%). - A minority of those surveyed thought the GDC to be 'agile' (18%), 'proportionate' (23%) or 'transparent' (28%). <p>Understanding of our remit varied, and responses were broadly similar to 2018 results. With lower awareness of our role in setting standards in education (49%) than other core GDC functions, such</p>

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
				<p>as maintaining the register (88%), investigating concerns about impaired fitness to practise (80%) and setting and promoting professional standards (75%).</p> <p>There were some misconceptions about our role and remit, particularly around setting of clinical standards, representation of dental professionals, workforce planning, and inspecting premises.</p> <p>People received most of their information from us by email or the GDC website and had a preference for these communications channels.</p> <p>Dental professionals (42%) and students (7%) were less likely to contact us than stakeholder organisation representatives (83%), and they used email to contact us more frequently than the phone in 2020 compared with 2018.</p> <p>Respondents were broadly neutral or happy with the communications they received from us, although many stated that they would prefer more summaries of information on our website and a more welcoming tone of voice.</p> <p>Dental professionals were more likely to be 'not happy' with the frequency of 'COVID-19 communications' (38%), compared to stakeholders (22%) and students (21%).</p>
HCPC		In-house	Online survey based on	Had many audiences for their survey (for example service user organisations, trade unions/professional bodies, registrants,

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
			previous year's externally managed survey	<p>students, employers, regulators, members of the public/service users) which they reflected to be less useful than initially intended. This was done in order to keep the findings high-level and allow them to identify areas of focus from analysis of findings. They suggested better to be clear about what information is needed from each audience so as not to gather information that will not be needed in the analysis/outcomes report.</p> <p>Survey focused on how perceptions from these audiences had changed over the past year (they do an annual survey).</p> <p>Questions were mostly aligned with organisation's values.</p>
GOC	General Optical Council Registrant Survey 2021	Enventure Research	Online independent and secure questionnaire for registrants only	<p>Areas of survey included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting strategic objectives - Roles and responsibilities - Understanding of Standards of Practice - Experience of registration process - Experience of communications - Experiences of COVID 19 - Support during the pandemic - Current challenges in work - Confidence to speak up or take action on patient safety issues - Awareness of consumer complaints service - Discrimination

Regulator	Survey and date	Researcher or In house	Method	Key findings or learnings
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job Satisfaction - Future plans <p>Key findings included:</p> <p>65% agreed that the GOC is building a culture of continuous improvement and 62% agreed that it is delivering world-class regulatory practice</p> <p>49% agreed that the GOC is transforming customer service. However, a significant proportion (21%) answered 'don't know' in response to this statement</p> <p>Large proportions of respondents agreed that the GOC sets fair standards for the profession (77%) and ensures the quality of optical education (74%) • There was almost an equal split between those who agreed that the GOC charges registration fees which are reasonable (48%) and those who disagreed (46%) • Just 46% agreed that the GOC is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process, but over a third answered 'don't know' in response to this statement (36%) • Dispensing opticians were far less likely to agree that the GOC charges registration fees which are reasonable when compared with other registration types • This year's results are very similar to those found in 2016</p>