



General  
Osteopathic  
Council

## **Consultation: Reduced registration fee consultation**

**1 September to 23 October 2020**

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## About the General Osteopathic Council

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) is the regulator for the osteopathic profession in the UK. Our role is to develop and regulate the profession of osteopathy which we do by setting standards of education, training, conduct and competence and keeping a Register of those who have qualified and met those standards. By law, osteopaths must be registered with us in order to practise in the UK; there are currently around 5,400 osteopaths.

## Overview

This consultation document considers possible changes to the General Osteopathic Council (Application for Registration and Fees) Rules 2000 [the Rules].

The consultation document proposes a change to how the reduced fee is applied. The proposed change would remove an anomaly that means an osteopath may be out of clinical contact with patients for three continuous months in their registration year, return to practice for the remaining nine-months, yet remain entitled to pay the reduced fee for the full registration year.

## Background information

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) does not have a single date on which every osteopath renews their registration meaning that in every month there is a proportion of osteopaths due to renew their registration.

The registration fee payable by an osteopath is dependent on how long they have been registered and whether they are practising, non-practising or based overseas.

The table below sets out the registration fees payable, as outlined in the Rules.

<b>Practising status</b>	<b>Fee level £</b>
Year 1 (entry fee)	320
Year 2 UK practising	430
Year 2 Non-practising or overseas	215
Year 3 UK practising	570
Year 3 Non-practising or overseas	320

To qualify for the reduced fee, the Rules currently state that where an osteopath is not practising as an osteopath for three months in their registration year a reduced practising fee applies. Rule 8(2)(a)

In October 2012, the Council reaffirmed its policy position that 'non-practising' means being out of all clinical contact with patients. In a normal year, the GOsC has approximately 150-160 osteopaths registered as non-practising. The main reason for being registered as non-practising is maternity leave.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic saw a sharp rise (96%) in osteopaths converting their registration status to that of non-practising. This increase has brought into sharper focus the potential impact of this anomaly within the Rules. A consequence of this is that an osteopath may work for nine-months of their registration year but still be able to claim the full reduced fee if they are out of clinical contact with patients for three months continuously.

Council's view is that this is unfair to those who are in practice all year. It means that the overall funding available to support the profession does not fully reflect the number of practising osteopaths, as the current rules permit a proportion of practising osteopaths to be under-paying when compared with other practising osteopaths. Another consequence of the current anomaly is that the GOsC is out of step with regulators of other health professions and this inconsistency should be addressed.

In short, the Council considers that the legislative intention of this provision within the Rules was for the reduced fee to apply proportionately, only to the period where an osteopath was non-practising. This would then mean that when an osteopath returns to work, the registration fee payable would revert back to that of the practising fee.

The Council has concluded that correcting this anomaly would be fair and equitable to all osteopaths, irrespective of practising status. The annex (see page 9) Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to assess the impact of this proposed change.

## Proposed change to the Rules

If a Rule change was to be made it would be forward-looking and not retrospective.

This means that for those osteopaths who are already non-practising, the Rule change would not mean a higher fee to pay in their current registration year if they were to return to practise. The change to the Rules would apply to the osteopaths next period of registration if the osteopath had remained non-practising and then subsequently returned to work.

It is proposed that the following changes be made to the Rules:

### Retention fee

8.—(1) Subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4), the fee to be charged in respect of the retention in the register of any entry in any year following the year in which the entry was first made (“the retention fee”) shall be £570 or, where the fee is to be paid by instalments, £590.

(2) Where—

- (a) the osteopath is not, on the date on which the retention fee is due, practising as an osteopath and does not ~~intend to~~ practise as an osteopath for at least three months **continuously** during the twelve month period beginning with the date on which the retention fee is due; or
- (b) the osteopath resides outside the United Kingdom or other European Economic Area State, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man; the retention fee shall be £320 or, where the fee is to be paid by instalments, £330

**NEW: (2c) where the osteopath returns to practise as an osteopath at any time during the same twelve month period as set out in (2)(a), the fee charged shall be calculated on a pro rata basis of the retention fee specified at 8(1)**

- (3) Where an osteopath satisfies the following conditions—
- (a) the osteopath is paying a retention fee for the first time;
  - (b) he has been granted a qualification in osteopathy, whether or not it is a relevant qualification, during the period of one year immediately preceding the date on which he was first registered; and
  - (c) he has not been practising as an osteopath for longer than a period of eighteen months ending with the date on which he was first registered, the retention fee shall be £430 or, where the fee is to be paid by instalments, £445.
- (4) Where paragraphs (2) and (3) apply, the retention fee shall be £215 or, where the fee is to be paid by instalments, £225

**NEW: (4A) where the osteopath returns to practise as an osteopath at any time during the same twelve month period as set out in (2)(a), the fee charged shall be calculated on a pro rata basis of the retention fee specified at 8(3)(c)**

- (5) The retention fee may only be paid by instalments with the agreement of both the osteopath and the Registrar and where the Registrar has sent the osteopath a notice in writing specifying the date by which each instalment is to be paid to the Registrar and the amount thereof.

## Worked examples

For the purpose of the following examples, the osteopath's month of renewal has been set as April; however, the examples apply to every registration renewal month.

### Example 1:

An osteopath, who has been registered for more than three years, is due to renew their registration in April. They convert their registration status to that of non-practising as they are pregnant and about to go onto maternity leave for 12 months from 1 April.

Under the current Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for more than three continuous months and would pay the reduced fee of £320.

Under the proposed change to the Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for 12 months in their registration year and they would pay the reduced fee of £320.

### Example 2:

An osteopath, who has been registered for more than three years, is due to renew their registration in April. They convert their registration status to that of non-practising as they need to have an operation which will mean they cannot work for seven months.

Under the current Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for more than three continuous months and would pay the reduced fee of £320.

Under the proposed change to the Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for seven months (April to October) and practising for five months (November to March). The fee would be pro-rated:

- Non-practising (seven twelfths of £320) = £187
- Practising (five twelfths of £570) = £238
- Total fee payable = £425

**Example 3:**

An osteopath, who has been registered for more than three years, is due to renew their registration in April. They convert their registration status to that of non-practising as they are going travelling for three months before returning to practice.

Under the current Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for more than three continuous months and would pay the reduced fee of £320.

Under the proposed change to the Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for three months (April to June) and practising for nine months (July to March). The fee would be pro-rated:

- Non-practising (three twelfths of £320) = £80
- Practising (nine twelfths of £570) = £428
- Total fee payable = £508

**Example 4:**

An osteopath, who has been registered for more than three years, is due to renew their registration in April. They renew their registration, paying the practising registration fee in full.

In their registration year, the osteopath stops practise for four months as they are taking a career break. This cover the period from September to December. They recommence practise in January.

Under the current Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for more than three continuous months and would pay the reduced fee of £320.

Under the proposed change to the Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for four months (September to December) and practising for eight months (April to August and January to March). The fee would be pro-rated:

- Non-practising (four twelfths of £320) = £107
- Practising (eight twelfths of £570) = £380
- Total fee payable = £487

As the osteopath paid the practising registration in full at the beginning of the registration year, they would be entitled to a refund of £83 (£570 - £487).

**Example 5:**

An osteopath, who has been registered for more than three years, is due to renew their registration in April. They renew their registration, paying the practising registration fee by direct debit instalments<sup>1</sup>.

In their registration year, the osteopath stops practise for four months as they are taking a career break. This cover the period from September to December. They recommence practise in January.

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<sup>1</sup> NB: the direct debit administration fee has been removed from this worked example.

Under the current Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for more than three continuous months and would pay the reduced fee of £320.

Under the proposed change to the Rules, the osteopath would be non-practising for four months (September to December) and practising for eight months (April to August and January to March). The fee would be pro-rated:

- Non-practising (four twelfths of £320) = £107
- Practising (eight twelfths of £570) = £380
- Total fee payable = £487

As the osteopath is paying their registration fee by direct debit instalments, the GOsC would adjust the direct debit amounts collected each month so the £487 fee is collected rather than the full practising fee of £570.

### **GOsC consultation approach**

This consultation is being conducted in accordance with the GOsC consultation principles:

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Reduced fee consultation</b>
Formative	Consultations should be conducted at an early stage to be meaningful	This issue was identified by Council at the start of the coronavirus pandemic (March 2020) with this consultation launched at the first available opportunity. No decisions have been reached by the Council.
Authentic	Consultations should be truly seeking views and scrutiny	We are interested in the views of all our stakeholders to this proposal and we welcome feedback.
Accessible	Consultations should be made available for anyone to respond	We will make the consultation available in different formats to allow anyone to respond.
Inclusive	Consultations should consider the audience(s) needs	We have considered the audience needs and this is reflected in the Equality Impact Assessment, attached to this consultation.
Transparent	An analysis of consultation responses and outcomes should be made	We are committed to publishing the results of this consultation fully and transparently.

## Consultation questions

There are two questions to this consultation:

- Q 1) Do you agree that the Rules should be amended to close the anomaly that an osteopath might claim a reduced fee for the whole of their registration year, despite practising for up to nine-months in that same period? If no, please explain your reasons.
- Q 2) Having considered the Equality Impact Assessment are there any equality factors which you think the GOsC has not taken into consideration? If yes, please explain your reasons.

## How to respond

The deadline for responses to this consultation is Friday 23 October 2020.

You can send us your views by responding to our online consultation at:  
[osteopathy.org.uk/reduced-fee-consultation](https://osteopathy.org.uk/reduced-fee-consultation)

## Diversity questionnaire

We would also like to ask some questions about you. Completing [the diversity questionnaire](#) is optional, but we would welcome information about our respondents. We ask for this information to help us analyse the consultation responses to help ensure we are not inadvertently discriminating against any particular group. We are also required as an organisation to monitor diversity.

It would be very helpful to us if you would provide this information. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Please complete the [the diversity questionnaire](#)

**Thank you for your response to this consultation**



## Equality Impact Assessment Template

### Step 1 – Scoping the EIA

<b>Title of policy or activity</b>	
Reduced registration fee consultation	
<b>Is a new or existing policy/activity?</b>	
This would be an amendment to an existing set of Rules – the General Osteopathic Council (Application for Registration and Fees) Rules 2000.	
<b>What is the main purpose and what are the intended outcomes of the policy/activity?</b>	
<p>The proposed change would see the reduced fee only apply to the period of time that an osteopath was non-practising, as long as that period of non-practise was greater than three-months or more continuously in the osteopaths registration year.</p> <p>The change redresses an unfairness within the Rules which sees a proportion of practising osteopaths under-paying compared to other practising osteopaths. The change to the Rules is to make the practising fee fairer to all practising osteopaths.</p>	
<b>Who is most likely to benefit or be affected by the policy/activity?</b>	
<p>The current Rules mean that an osteopath who is out of clinical contact with patients for three-months, but who works for nine-months, may claim a reduced fee for the entire year. This is considered unfair to those who are in practice all year. Those osteopath's who could claim a reduced fee for reasons including maternity leave, ill-health will still be able to do so.</p> <p>The people most likely to be affected are those who are currently entitled to pay a reduced fee and who return to practising status within the following nine-month period of their registration year. Instead of benefitting from the fee reduction for the whole year, they will revert to the standard fee for the remained of their registration year when they return to work. However, all osteopaths will benefit from the proposed new rules as they will treat all osteopaths more equally.</p>	
<b>Who is doing the assessment?</b>	
Matthew Redford, Chief Executive and Registrar	
<b>Dates of the EQIA</b>	
• When did it start?	September 2020
• When was it completed?	August 2020
• When should the next review of the policy/activity take place?	N/A

## Useful information

### **What information would be useful to assess the impact of the policy/activity on equality?**

Registration reports to Council identify that, pre-pandemic, we had on average 150-160 osteopaths on the Register who were non-practising. The reasons for the period of non-practise would include maternity leave and ill-health. The introduction of the policy change would not prevent those osteopaths from being recorded on the Register as non-practising and claiming a reduced fee for the period that they were out of clinical contact with patients, providing that was for three-months or more continuously in their registration year.

### **Is there data relating to people with any/each of the protected characteristics?<sup>2</sup>**

- EDI data is collected from osteopaths as they join the Register.
- Data on pregnancy/maternity is collected when an osteopath completes a non-practising application form, if that is their reason for changing their registration status.

### **Where can we get this information and who can help?**

Registration update the GOsC CRM database and can help extracting data as required.

## Step 2 – Involvement and consultation

### **If you have involved stakeholders, briefly describe what was done, with whom, when and where. Please provide a brief summary of the response gained and links to relevant documents, as well as any actions.**

We intend to run a public consultation on this policy change.

## Step 3 – Data collection and evidence

### **What evidence or information do you already have about how this policy might affect equality for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? Please cite any quantitative (such as statistical data) and qualitative (such as survey data, complaints, focus groups, meeting notes or interviews) relating to these groups. Describe briefly what evidence you have used.**

The change will not prevent any osteopath with a protected characteristic from changing their status to that of non-practising, and from claiming a reduced fee for the period they were out of clinical contact with patients, providing that it was for three-months or more continuously.

### **What additional research or data is required to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the policy? Have you considered commissioning new data or research?**

None.

<sup>2</sup> The nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

#### Step 4 – assessing impact and strengthening the policy

**What does the data reviewed tell us about the people the policy/activity affects, including the impact or potential impact on people with each/any of the protected characteristics?**

Our data recognises that, pre-pandemic, the main reason for an osteopath claiming the reduced fee was because they were non-practising due to maternity leave. We recognise that, for example, an osteopath who was returning to work post maternity leave, within say 3 to 4 months under the current Rules, would be able to claim a reduced fee for the full registration year. Having the flexibility to work part-time as they return to work, without seeing their registration fee increase, is likely to be seen as beneficial to the individual.

The proposed change to the Rules would see an osteopath in these circumstances pay a higher fee, albeit a pro-rata amount of the practising fee, directly related to the period that they were working.

However, the current Rules create an unintended unfairness to those who are in practice all year. It means that the overall funding available to support the profession does not fully reflect the number of practising osteopaths, as the current rules permit a proportion of practising osteopaths to be under-paying when compared with other practising osteopaths. We consider that this is a greater inequity which needs to be addressed.

We are not proposing the introduction of a part-time registration fee, or a practising registration fee linked to earnings, as this would be impractical and no other regulator has such an arrangement in place. Additionally, the change will not prevent any osteopath with a protected characteristic from changing their status to that of non-practising, and from claiming a reduced fee for the period they were out of clinical contact with patients, providing that it was for three-months or more continuously.

**Are there any implications in relation to each/any of the different forms of discrimination defined by the Equality Act?**

No.

**What practical changes will help to reduce any adverse impact on particular groups?**

N/A.

**What could be done to improve the promotion of equality within the policy?**

We are asking a specific consultation question on equality.

## Step 5 – making a decision

<b>Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the policy will meet the GOsC's objectives in relation to equality.</b>
The policy change will not prevent an osteopath from changing their registration status to non-practising. The application of the reduced fee will only apply to their period that an osteopath is out of clinical contact with patients, as long as this is for three-months or more continuously. This closes the loophole that an osteopath who works for up to nine-months in a registration year may pay a reduced registration fee for the whole of their registration year.
<b>What practical actions do you recommend to reduce, justify or remove any adverse/negative impact?</b>
N/A
<b>What practical actions do you recommend to include or increase potential positive impact?</b>
Clearly articulating the rationale for the policy change through the consultation document and, assuming the change is implemented, post-consultation and post-Rule change.

## Step 6 – monitoring, evaluation and review

<b>How will you monitor the impact/effectiveness of the policy/activity?</b>
By reporting to Council through registration and finance reports.
<b>What is the impact of the policy/activity over time?</b>
The impact of the policy will be that the loophole which means an osteopath who works for up to nine-months in a registration year may pay a reduced registration fee for the whole of their registration year is closed.
<b>Where/how will this EIA be published and updated?</b>
The EIA will be annexed to the published consultation document.

## Step 7 – action planning

<b>Please detail any actions that need to be taken as a result of this EIA</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>
Ensure the EIA is annexed to the consultation document when published	Matthew Redford	August 2020