

# Recipe for revalidation

As another three-year continuing education and training cycle ended, the General Optical Council began a review of the current CET scheme and how it might form part of revalidation proposals from 2013. GOC director of education **Linda Kennaugh** explains

**T**hroughout March and April, the GOC consulted on its existing CET scheme and how it can be enhanced to be used as the basis for the GOC's revalidation scheme. The changes to the scheme that are currently being considered will not be introduced until the next CET cycle in 2013.

With fewer than 200 registrants having been removed from the register for failure to complete their CET for the last cycle, the existing scheme has been successful in ensuring registrants are keeping their knowledge and skills up to date. However, if CET is to be used as the foundation for revalidation it will need to be enhanced and be focused around areas of risk and scope of practice.

## Specific needs

The key themes emerging from consultation were around the need to introduce more specific CET requirements, including:

- The type of CET activities undertaken
- The range of competency areas
- A mechanism to ensure that CET is completed throughout the cycle and all of the points required cannot be gained in a short period at the beginning or end of each cycle.

Many registrants who attended the CET event in London in March (News 02.04.10) were surprised to learn that 60 per cent of registrants obtained all of their CET points in the last cycle purely from article-based distance learning. Although nearly 70 per cent of the CET available was via lectures, only about a quarter of total CET points (27 per cent) were achieved this way and other face-to-face modalities were very rarely attended (Figure 1).

Looking at the breakdown of points available and achieved in the various competencies, it is also clear that there is a shortfall in participation in some areas, particularly in communications

CET by modality

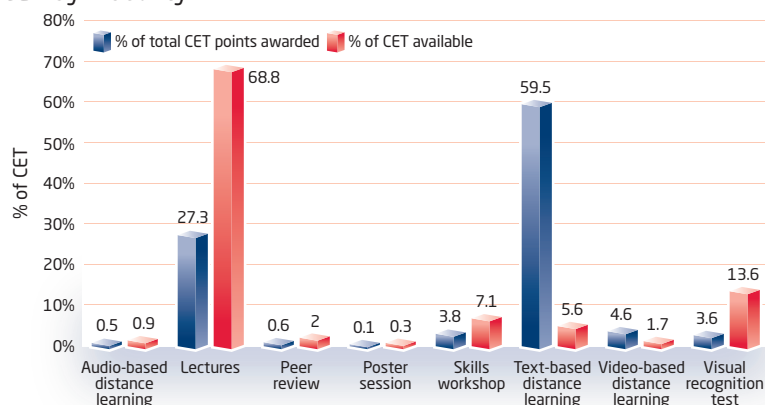


Figure 1 Percentage of total CET points awarded and CET available by modality

skills, and that some competencies, such as ocular abnormalities, are much better covered than others, both in terms of CET availability and points achieved.

We also found that a significant number of registrants obtained all of their CET points in the last six months of the cycle rather than taking part regularly throughout the three years.

For the scheme to be suitable as the foundation for revalidation, it is essential that more specific requirements be developed. It is expected that registrants will be required to undertake a variety of CET in respect of both a range of learning methods, including some interaction with peers, and CET that is linked to scope of practice and areas of risk identified through the risk profiling work commissioned by the GOC.

It is also proposed that a wider scale of CET points be introduced so the number of points available better reflects the nature of the activity. For example, interactive, peer review or clinical skills CET would carry a higher points value than distance-learning articles and attending lectures.

There was overall support for maintaining a three-year CET cycle but registrants accepted the need

to ensure that 100 per cent of CET points are not obtained in a very short period at the beginning or end of the cycle, with no activity for the remainder of the three years.

## Future powers

There is a misunderstanding among many registrants that the GOC has discretionary powers to deal with cases of exceptional circumstances such as a serious illness, maternity or career breaks. This is not the case and under the current system there is no mechanism to deal with registrants who can demonstrate genuine reasons for not having met their CET requirement any differently to those who do not have good reason. There was overwhelming support for the GOC to have such powers in any future scheme.

We are now beginning the next phase of consultation around the concept of a licence to practise. A decision on this will be taken by the Council at its next meeting in June.

The GOC expects to publish an outline revalidation scheme in late summer, with a period of consultation in the autumn prior to the final decision being made. Further details of the proposals can be found at [www.optical.org/en/about\\_us/revalidation/index.cfm](http://www.optical.org/en/about_us/revalidation/index.cfm)