

**BEFORE THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE
OF THE GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL**

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

F(24)04

AND

ATEEQ ASHRAF (01-28601)

**DETERMINATION OF A SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW
3 JUNE 2025**

Committee Members:	Sarah Hamilton (Chair/Lay) Audrey McFarlane (Lay) Alice Robertson-Rickard (Lay) Caroline Clark (Optometrist) Sanna Nasrullah (Optometrist)
Legal adviser:	Aaminah Khan
GOC Presenting Officer:	Neel Rokad
Registrant:	Present and represented
Registrant representative:	Rebecca Vanstone (Counsel) Katie Holland (AOP)
Hearings Officer:	Terence Yates
Outcome:	Registrant remains impaired and substantive conditions of practice order to continue - (With Review)

DETERMINATION**ALLEGATION**

The Council alleges that in relation to you, Mr Ateeq Ashraf (01-28601), a registered Optometrist, whilst you were working for Specsavers [Branch 1] and Specsavers [Branch 2]:

1) Between 20 July 2019 and 21 September 2019 (inclusive), you completed eye examinations in less than 12 minutes for:

a. one or more patients listed in Schedule A, namely:

- i. Patient A1,*
- ii. Patient A2,*
- iii. Patient A3,*
- iv. Patient A4,*
- v. Patient A5,*
- vi. Patient A6,*
- vii. Patient A7,*
- viii. Patient A8,*
- ix. Patient A10,*
- x. Patient A11,*
- xi. Patient A12,*
- xii. Patient A13,*
- xiii. Patient A14,*
- xiv. Patient A15,*
- xv. Patient A16,*
- xvi. Patient A17,*
- xvii. Patient A18,*
- xviii. Patient A19,*
- xix. Patient A20,*
- xx. Patient A21,*
- xxi. Patient A22,*
- xxii. Patient A23,*
- xxiii. Patient A24,*
- xxiv. Patient A27,*

b. one or more of the patients listed in Schedule B, namely:

- i. Patient B1,*
- ii. Patient B3,*
- iii. Patient B4,*
- iv. Patient B5,*

- v. *Patient B6,*
 - vi. *Patient B7,*
 - vii. *Patient B8,*
 - viii. *Patient B9,*
 - ix. *Patient B10,*
 - x. *Patient B11,*
 - xi. *Patient B13,*
 - xii. *Patient B15,*
 - xiii. *Patient B16,*
 - xiv. *Patient B17,*
 - c. *one or more of the patients listed in Schedule C, namely:*
 - i. *Patient C5,*
 - ii. *Patient C19,*
 - iii. *Patient C21,*
 - iv. *Patient C22,*
 - d. *one or more of the patients listed in Schedule D, namely:*
 - i. *Patient D3,*
 - ii. *Patient D7,*
 - iii. *Patient D11,*
 - iv. *Patient D13,*
 - v. *Patient D16,*
 - vi. *Patient D18;*
- 2) *You failed to allow sufficient time to conduct adequate and/or complete examinations on some or all of the patients listed in paragraph 1(a) and/or 1(b) and/or 1(c) and/or 1(d);*
- 3) *The eye examinations you conducted for some or all of the patients listed in paragraph 1(a) and/or 1(b) and/or 1(c) and/or 1(d) were incomplete and/or performed to an inadequate standard;*
- 4) *On 20 July 2019, you failed to reach an adequate standard in performing and/or recording eye examinations in relation to one or more of the patients below, in that you failed to undertake and / or record:*
- a. *visual fields for Patient A4,*
 - b. *in relation to Patient A12:*
 - i. *measurements of intraocular pressure,*
 - ii. *visual fields,*
 - c. *visual fields for Patient A18;*

- 5) *On 27 July 2019, you failed to reach an adequate standard in performing and/or recording eye examinations in relation to one or more of the patients below, in that you failed to undertake and / or record:*
 - a. *the measurement of intraocular pressure in relation to Patient B8,*
 - b. *visual fields in relation to Patient B6;*
- 6) *On 14 September 2019, you failed to reach an adequate standard in performing and/or recording eye examinations in relation to one or more of the patients below, in that you failed to undertake and/or record:*
 - a. *measurement of the intraocular pressure in relation to Patient C2,*
 - b. *measurement of the intraocular pressure in relation to Patient C9;*
- 7) *Between 20 July 2019 and 21 September 2019 you failed to adequately undertake the measurement of and / or accurately record the measurement of basic binocular vision in relation to:*
 - a. *one or more of the patients listed in Schedule A,*
 - b. *one or more of the patients listed in Schedule B,*
 - c. *one or more of the following patients in Schedule C:*
 - i. C1,
 - ii. C2,
 - iii. C3,
 - iv. C4,
 - v. C5,
 - vi. C6,
 - vii. C7,
 - viii. C10,
 - ix. C11,
 - x. C12,
 - xi. C13
 - xii. C14,
 - xiii. C15,
 - xiv. C18,
 - xv. C19,
 - xvi. C20,
 - xvii. C21,
 - xviii. C22,
 - xix. C23,
 - d. *one or more of the patients listed in Schedule D;*

8) *Between 20 July 2019 and 21 September 2019 on more than one occasion you failed to keep patient-tailored records in that you used the same entries across multiple records, including but not limited to:*

- a. cover testing,*
- b. pupil reactions,*
- c. internal eye examinations,*
- d. flashes and floaters,*
- e. symptoms,*
- f. reasons for visit.*

And by virtue of the facts set out above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

Background

1. The Registrant is an Optometrist, who registered in March 2015. At the time of the events set out in the Allegation, the Registrant was working in two branches of Specsavers in [redacted], [Branch 1] and [Branch 2].
2. It is alleged, in summary, that the Registrant took insufficient time to perform eye examinations on a number of patients, seen on four dates between 20 July 2019 and 21 September 2019. The Council's case is that for example, a routine eye examination should take in the region of 20 - 30 minutes, whereas for the patients listed, the Registrant completed their eye examinations in less than 12 minutes.
3. Following an audit and the instruction of an expert witness, Professor Harper, concerns were raised in respect of over 80 patients that the Registrant had examined on the four dates in question. The concerns in essence are that a number of the examinations were inadequate and/or incomplete, as set out in the Allegation, and the Registrant's record keeping was deficient.
4. At a substantive hearing, which took place between 5-12 August 2024, the Registrant admitted the Allegation in full and the Committee made findings of misconduct and current impairment. In relation to sanction, the Registrant's registration was made subject to conditions for a period of two years with a review to take place after nine months so that the Registrant's progress could be closely monitored. The order of conditions is due to expire on 8 September 2026.
5. At the substantive hearing, the Committee considered that the Review Committee would be assisted by:
 - (i) Evidence of further reflection in an updated reflective statement, including reflections on the motivations behind his misconduct occurring and the impact upon patients of receiving inadequate sight tests;
 - (ii) A timely and up to date PDP, with any evidence of further relevant CPR or remediation undertaken;
 - (iii) Any evidence of how the Registrant has addressed the concerns outlined in Professor Harper's report, including how any learning has been implemented by the Registrant into his clinical practice, with tangible examples.

The Review hearing

6. At the hearing the Committee had before it two bundles of documents produced by the Council, which included documents from the substantive hearing, the substantive hearing decision, correspondence with the Registrant regarding compliance with the conditions (including documents from the Registrant's workplace supervisor and auditor) and the Council's Statement of Facts for the Review hearing, dated 29 April 2025.
7. The Committee also had before it a Registrant's bundle, which included the Registrant's reflective statement, two references (one from his workplace supervisor and one from his records auditor), CPD Statements covering the period from 2022 – 2025 and a Personal Development Plan (PDP). In addition, the Committee was provided with an email chain from the Registrant's records auditor clarifying an issue regarding how he had recorded in the audits when visual field tests were not required.
8. The Committee heard submissions from Mr Rokad on behalf of the Council and from Ms Vanstone on behalf of the Registrant in relation to current impairment. The Registrant did not give evidence.
9. Mr Rokad adopted the Council's Statement of Facts, which outlined the background of the case, the findings of the substantive Committee and the law and procedure on review hearings. Mr Rokad reminded the Committee that there was a burden upon the Registrant to show that his fitness to practise was no longer impaired.
10. Mr Rokad submitted that the Council had had the opportunity to liaise with Ms Vanstone, who represented the Registrant, and there was an agreed position between the parties. Mr Rokad explained that it was understood that the Registrant was conceding that his fitness to practise remains currently impaired and that the conditions should be extended for a period of three months, in order for the Registrant to have a short further period to be able to demonstrate compliance with his conditions and that he is no longer impaired.
11. The Chair of the Committee sought clarification regarding how this position related to the original period of conditions which was for two years. Mr Rokad submitted that the Council's primary position was that the Registrant should remain under conditions for the two year duration of the substantive order, but if the Committee were of the view that it should be for a shorter length then the Council agreed with the three month period.
12. Ms Vanstone, on behalf of the Registrant, outlined that the Registrant's position is that he accepts that his fitness to practise remains impaired and that the conditions should continue. She invited the Committee to make the conditions for a shorter period, or alternatively to direct a further review hearing in three months time.
13. Ms Vanstone submitted that the misconduct concerned four separate dates over a number of months, whereas the conditions demonstrate a much greater oversight of the Registrant's practice. She submitted that the Registrant had undertaken substantial remediation and reminded the Committee when considering the supervisor reports, that records are never 100% accurate and perfection was not required. Ms Vanstone submitted that the question was whether the risk has been mitigated and she submitted that the Registrant had made considerable progress and the risk was much less than before.
14. In relation to the public interest, Ms Vanstone submitted that this had been upheld by the Registrant's compliance with the conditions over the past nine months and

a member of the public would be reassured by the remediation of the Registrant that standards had been upheld. In particular, Ms Vanstone highlighted positive comments from the reports of the Registrant's supervisor and auditor, who were both content with the Registrant's practice and neither had any concerns. Whilst there may be some work still to be done, the auditor was happy with the progress made and there was no risk to patients.

15. Ms Vanstone referred the Committee to the email chain with the auditor of the Registrant's records, which confirmed that in most cases when the Registrant had not conducted a visual fields test one had not been considered necessary. Ms Vanstone submitted that because of the way this had been recorded on the audits, perhaps they did not give the clearest picture but this could be clarified in the next audit. Ms Vanstone highlighted that one of the main areas of concern in this case was related to the length of time that the Registrant's tests took, which were found to be less than 12 minutes. Now the vast majority of his tests lasted between 20-30 minutes, as recommended by Professor Harper, which was a significant improvement. Ms Vanstone submitted that this showed that the Registrant has addressed and was continuing to address the concerns.
16. Additionally, the Registrant had prepared a PDP and updated it, which was clearly structured to meet the concerns in the case. In terms of CPD, the Registrant had already completed 19 points and was way ahead of his targets. Ms Vanstone referred the Committee to the Registrant's reflective statement, parts of which she highlighted.
17. Ms Vanstone further submitted that although conditions for a period of two years had been imposed by the substantive Committee, it had also ordered a review hearing after nine months to give the Registrant an opportunity to demonstrate that he had undertaken remediation. Ms Vanstone invited the Committee to give consideration to reducing the length of the period of conditions or to direct a review in a shorter period of time, such as three months.
18. The Committee received advice from the Legal Adviser, who referred the Committee to the relevant sections of the Hearings and Indicative Sanctions Guidance 2021. The Committee was advised that it will need to satisfy itself that the Registrant has fully appreciated the gravity of the offence, has not re-offended and has maintained his skills and knowledge, and that the Registrant's patients will not be placed at risk by resumption of unrestricted practice. The Committee was advised that at a Review hearing, there is in effect a persuasive burden upon a registrant to demonstrate that they are fit to resume unrestricted practice.
19. The Legal Adviser advised that its powers were set out at section 13F(13) of the Opticians Act 1989 and should the Committee find current impairment, all sanctions are available to the Committee at a substantive review but the reasons for sanction must reflect the current situation. It was also up to the Committee to consider directing a further review hearing, if it considers that conditions ought to be maintained.
20. The Committee went into private session to start to deliberate, during which in answer to queries raised by the Committee, the Legal Adviser gave further advice regarding the powers of the Committee under section 13F(13). As this advice had not been given in the presence of the parties, the hearing was reconvened so that the advice could be reiterated in the presence of the parties and so that they had the opportunity to respond to it. In the hearing, the Legal Adviser advised that having considered the wording of section 13F(13), which was outlined, there was a

power to extend but no express provision or power to shorten the period of conditional registration.

21. Whilst there is a power under section 13F(13)(d) to revoke, or vary, any of the conditions, this goes on to state “for the remainder of the current period of conditional registration.” Therefore, it did not appear that it was possible to maintain but shorten the period of conditions that had been imposed. The Legal Adviser advised that the Committee could direct a further review hearing at any time period it considered appropriate and the future review Committee could consider at that stage whether the Registrant’s fitness to practise remained impaired.
22. The parties were given the opportunity to consider that advice and respond to it. Ms Vanstone accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser that there was no power to shorten the existing period of conditions, but asked the Committee to direct a review hearing take place within a short period of time, so that the Registrant could invite the Committee to revoke the conditions at that time.
23. Mr Rokad, on behalf of the Council, also confirmed that the legal advice was accepted and that the period of conditions could not be shortened under section 13F(13). The Committee then retired to continue to deliberate.

The Committee’s findings regarding impairment

24. The Committee took account of the substantive hearing determination and the findings of the previous Committee, as well as the steps which it recommended may assist at a Review hearing, as set out above.
25. The Committee was mindful that at a review hearing, the onus was on the Registrant to discharge the persuasive burden upon him that he was no longer impaired and that he was fit to practise unrestricted.
26. The Committee was impressed with the efforts of the Registrant to date and considered that he had taken steps to remediate, including preparing a PDP and undertaking relevant and targeted CPD. The Committee considered that the Registrant was developing his clinical skills and knowledge, for example pursuing a glaucoma qualification. However, it was accepted by the Registrant that he still had more work to do and that he had not yet fully remediated, and further that he should remain under the conditions of practice order at this time. The Committee also considered that the period of time was still relatively short that the Registrant had been practising under the conditions imposed at the substantive hearing (with this review being listed at the nine month stage into the two year original order).
27. On the evidence before the Committee, it was not satisfied that the Registrant had discharged the persuasive burden upon him to show that he is currently fit to practise unrestricted. Indeed, he expressly concedes that his fitness to practise is currently impaired. Accordingly, the Committee found that the fitness of Ateeq Ashraf to practise as an Optometrist remains impaired.

Sanction

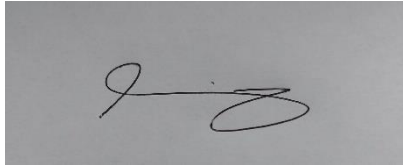
28. Having considered that the Registrant’s fitness to practise is impaired, the Committee next considered what direction it should make pursuant to section 13F(13) of the Act. The Committee was mindful of the legal advice that it had received, which was accepted by the parties, that it could not shorten the period of conditions. Effectively, it had the power to maintain the existing conditions, vary

them (for the remaining length of the order) or to change the type of order, for example, to one of suspension. Both parties were inviting the Committee to maintain the order of conditions, with a review hearing to be directed in three months time.

29. Having regard to the options open to the Committee, it considered that it was appropriate to maintain the two year order of conditions, without variation. The Committee was satisfied that the Registrant was adhering to the conditions and that they were workable, and a proportionate and appropriate sanction to the risks identified in the case. The Committee considered that there was no basis to revoke, vary or extend the conditions.
30. The Committee considered that it would be appropriate for a review hearing to take place prior to the Registrant's return to unrestricted practice, so that a future review Committee can be reassured that the Registrant is fit in due course to resume unrestricted practice. However, the Committee was not of the view that such a review should take place in three months time as the parties had suggested. The Committee noted that the substantive Committee made findings of impairment on the grounds of both the public component and the wider public interest, with a period of two years being the minimum period necessary to be a proportionate sanction in this case.
31. Whilst the Registrant, at this review, has shown that he is making good progress in terms of developing his insight and remediation, which is lowering the risk of repetition, it remains necessary in the Committee's view that conditions remain in place for the original period of two years in order to meet the public interest concerns that arise in this case, in order to maintain confidence in the profession and maintain and uphold standards in the profession.
32. The Committee therefore maintained the conditions as originally imposed, which are due to expire in September 2026. A review hearing will be held between four and six weeks prior to the expiration of this order.
33. The Committee considers that it would assist the review Committee if the Registrant was able to provide the following:
 - (i) Evidence of further reflection in an updated reflective statement, including reflections on the motivations behind his misconduct occurring and the impact upon patients of receiving inadequate sight tests. Whilst the Registrant is not obliged to give evidence, the Committee considered that hearing directly from the Registrant would be helpful;
 - (ii) A timely and up to date PDP, with any evidence of further relevant CPD or remediation undertaken;
 - (iii) Any evidence of how the Registrant has addressed the concerns outlined in Professor Harper's report, including how any learning has been implemented by the Registrant into his clinical practice, with tangible examples;
 - (iv) Clear written reports from the Registrant's workplace supervisor, which clearly outline how the Registrant has complied with his conditions, in particular conditions A1.3 (e), (f) and (g).

Chairman of the Committee: Sarah Hamilton

Signature

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'S. Hamilton'.

Date: 3 June 2025

Registrant: Ateeq Ashraf

Signature present and received via email

Date: 3 June 2025

List of conditions

<p>A1.1</p> <p>Informing others</p>	<p>You must inform the following parties that your registration is subject to conditions. You should do this within two weeks of the date this order takes effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Any organisation or person employing or contracting with you to provide paid or unpaid optical services, whether or not in the UK (to include any locum agency). b. Any prospective employer or contractor where you have applied to provide optical services, whether or not in the UK. c. Chairman of the Local Optometric Committee for the area where you provide optometric services. <p>The NHS body in whose ophthalmic performer or contractor list you are included or are seeking inclusion.</p>
<p>A1.2</p> <p>Employment and work</p>	<p>You must inform the GOC if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. You accept any paid or unpaid employment or contract, whether or not in the UK, to provide optical services. b. You apply for any paid or unpaid employment or contract to provide optical services outside the UK. c. You cease working. <p>This information must include the contact details of your prospective employer/ contractor and (if the role includes providing NHS ophthalmic services) the relevant NHS body.</p>
<p>A1.3</p> <p>Supervision of Conditions</p>	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify a workplace supervisor who would be prepared to monitor your compliance with numbers A1.3, A4.1, A4.4, and A4.5 of these conditions. b. Ask the GOC to approve your workplace supervisor within two weeks of the date this order takes effect. If you are not employed, you must ask the GOC to approve your workplace supervisor before you start work. c. Identify another supervisor if the GOC does not agree to your being monitored by the proposed supervisor. d. Place yourself under the supervision of the supervisor and remain under his/her supervision for the duration of these conditions. e. Arrange for your supervisor to directly observe you performing sight tests on at least five randomly selected patients, each week, and to complete a log for each one. Their logs must include information relating to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The duration of each sight test observed; (ii) Each patient's age; (iii) Your supervisor's comments regarding the adequacy of your sight test and patient record cards, paying particular attention to the specific areas highlighted in condition A4.5 a) i) – vii) (see

	<p>below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Arrange for your supervisor to keep a log of all patients seen by you with the exact clinical testing times and their age. g. At least once a month meet your supervisor face to face to review your compliance with these conditions, with a particular focus upon f) and to discuss your progress under your personal development plan. h. At least every three months or upon request of the GOC, request a written report from your supervisor to be provided to the GOC, detailing how you have complied with the conditions he/she is monitoring including the logs referred to at e) and f) above. i. Inform the GOC of any proposed change to your supervisor and again place yourself under the supervision of someone who has been agreed by the GOC.
A1.4 Other proceedings	You must inform the GOC within 14 days if you become aware of any criminal investigation or formal disciplinary investigation against you.
A1.5 Registration requirements	<p>You must continue to comply with all legal and professional requirements of registration with the GOC.</p> <p>A review hearing will be arranged at the earliest opportunity if you fail to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fulfil all CPD requirements; or b. Renew your registration annually.
A4.1 Restriction on practice	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not undertake any supervision of pre-registration Optometrists for the duration of these conditions.
A4.4 Assessment of records	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In consultation with the Chairman of your Local Optometric Committee or your workplace supervisor, identify an independent assessor (not your workplace supervisor) who is willing to review a randomised selection of your most recent patient records, selected by them. b. Provide the assessor with a copy of Professor Harper's reports and arrange for the assessor to review 20 of your most recent patient records, selected at random by the assessor, within one month of these conditions taking effect, and on a monthly basis thereafter. c. Every three months and at least two weeks before any review hearing, provide the GOC and your workplace supervisor, with a written report from the independent assessor, setting out his/her views on the adequacy and completeness of the records reviewed, including his/her views on the deficiencies identified in the reports

	of Professor Harper as set out in A4.5 a) (i)- (vii).
A4.5 Personal development plan	<p>a. You must work with your workplace supervisor to formulate a personal development plan, which should be specifically designed to address the deficiencies identified in the reports of Professor Harper, namely in the following area(s) of your clinical practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Visual field testing; ii) Measurement of intraocular pressures; iii) Assessment of basic binocular vision using appropriate cover tests; iv) Pupil assessments; v) Tailoring your records to individual patients; vi) The duration of your sight tests; vii) Record-keeping. <p>b. Submit a copy of your personal development plan to the GOC for approval within one month of these conditions taking effect. Your personal development plan should be kept under review and updated as required following discussions with your workplace supervisor. Any updated personal development plan must be submitted promptly to the GOC.</p>

NOTICE TO REGISTRANT:

- The GOC will enter these conditions against your name in the register save for any conditions that disclose information about your health.
- In accordance with Section 13C(3) of the Opticians Act 1989, the GOC may disclose to any person any information relating to your fitness to practise in the public interest.
- In accordance with Section 13B(1) of the Opticians Act 1989, the GOC may require any person, including your learning/workplace supervisor or professional colleague, to supply any information or document relevant to its statutory functions.

FURTHER INFORMATION	
Transcript	
A full transcript of the hearing will be made available for purchase in due course.	
Appeal	
Any appeal against an order of the Committee must be lodged with the relevant court within 28 days of the service of this notification. If no appeal is lodged, the order will take effect at the end of that period. The relevant court is shown at section 23G(4)(a)-(c) of the Opticians Act 1989 (as amended).	
Professional Standards Authority	
<p>This decision will be reported to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) under the provisions of section 29 of the NHS Reform and Healthcare Professions Act 2002. PSA may refer this case to the High Court of Justice in England and Wales, the Court of Session in Scotland or the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland as appropriate if they decide that a decision has been insufficient to protect the public and/or should not have been made, and if they consider that referral is desirable for the protection of the public.</p> <p>Where a registrant can appeal against a decision, the Authority has 40 days beginning with the day which is the last day in which you can appeal. Where a registrant cannot appeal against the outcome of a hearing, the Authority's appeal period is 56 days beginning with the day in which notification of the decision was served on you. PSA will notify you promptly of a decision to refer. A letter will be sent by recorded delivery to your registered address (unless PSA has been notified by the GOC of a change of address).</p> <p>Further information about the PSA can be obtained from its website at www.professionalstandards.org.uk or by telephone on 020 7389 8030.</p>	
Effect of orders for suspension or erasure	
To practise or carry on business as an optometrist or dispensing optician, to take or use a description which implies registration or entitlement to undertake any activity which the law restricts to a registered person, may amount to a criminal offence once an entry in the register has been suspended or erased.	
Contact	
If you require any further information, please contact the Council's Hearings Manager at Level 29, One Canada Square, London, E14 5AA or by telephone, on 020 7580 3898.	