BRIEFING NOTE

College of
Opticians
of Ontario

TO:	**Board of Directors**
FROM:	**Fazal Khan, Registrar/CEO**
DATE:	**October 4, 2021**
SUBJECT:	**11.0 Relational Audit 2020 Results**

☐ For Decision ☒ For Information ☐ Monitoring Report

Purpose:

This item is for your information and general discussion. No action required at this point.

Background:

In 2015, the College, along with its regulatory counterparts in Alberta and British Columbia did an extensive "Relational Audit" of their respective registrant base to set a baseline score and set strategic goals to improve its relationship with major stakeholders, particularly its registrants.

The concept of Relational Leadership speaks to a leader/regulatory authority achieving its ends through a focus on relationships and values such as inclusion, transparency, clarity and ethical behaviour.

For years, not specific to the COO, regulators were perceived to be aloof, dictatorial, aggressive and not transparent. The Relational Audit of 2015 sought registrant feedback and then the College undertook training in relational leadership including relational communication. Examples of efforts made over the past 5 years include:

- All major registrant and public facing communications were rewritten and focus was given on tone, clarity and reduction of visual clutter.
- A 'Service Commitment' was implemented to advise registrants when to expect a response to their queries.
- A shift to the use of a live operator as opposed to the automated call attendant.
- A complete revamping of the College website, URL and email addresses from 'name@coptont.org' to 'name@collegeofopticians.ca'
- Regular email updates that were optimized for mobile devices and were less text heavy with more hyper link usage for ease of use.
- 2 Practice Advisors on staff

- Workshops, focus groups and live and remote seminars to regularly update the registrants on updates to Standards and the QA program
- Streamlining processes such as renewals, managing receipts and address changes and QA Portfolio management through the launch of the Registrant Portal.

For Consideration and Information:

In the fall of 2020, the College commissioned the consultant from 2015 to once again conduct a Relational Audit of the registrants to compare if the actions implemented over the past 5 years were having a positive impact. The full report has been appended to this report.

The College saw a 25% improvement in 'Relational Score' including several positive comments about registrant interaction with the COO.

While the College received considerable positive feedback in regard to its guidance given during the Pandemic, areas for further growth in clarifying our role as a regulator and not an association still exist.

Public Interest Considerations:

The relational approach adopted by the College has benefits that extend to all stakeholders who interact with the College including the public. Public facing services such as locating an optician or lodging a complaint have been brought to the forefront of the website and are extremely easy to access. Public facing documents have been re-written to ensure a relational approach of clarity and ease of understanding.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations:

From a DEI perspective, the relational approach to communication and interaction is in line with our equity and inclusion efforts. Communications are focused on the use of plain language to ensure an understanding by the majority. Significant content has been translated to French.

Recommendations/Action Required:

No action is required. Currently staff are analyzing the results of the survey and are creating Action Item lists including opportunities for growth at the administration and organization level. Some items have already been acted upon including further refinements to the website. Future opportunities for growth will be presented next spring as the College begins its 2023-2025 Strategic Planning.

College of Opticians of Ontario
Relational research results

2020

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Outsidein Communications conducted benchmark research with the College. The goal was to assess how relational the College was. This research has the same goal. Many of the 2015 questions were repurposed for comparison. We added three new questions about diversity and inclusion.

Outsidein has since dissolved and Arrow Brand and Communications has continued its work. As Arrow's sole proprietor, I will represent myself in first person in this report.

Research was conducted as follows:

- ***4 one-on-one interviews***
  The aim of the interviews was to explore certain trends from the online survey. Hence, the questions differed from the online survey. Some interview responses are aggregated with the rest of the survey data, where appropriate.

- ***Online survey***
  - 119 Registrants responded. The two spikes in survey participation correlated directly with the emails from you. So reminders are effective.
  - There was a 94% completion rate with an average of 7.5 minutes spent on the survey.

CAVEATS

Low participation rate-to-registrant base impacts the certainty of what is a "trend"
The number of responses seems low in relation to the size of your registrant base. In 2015 we had a similar response rate (119 in 2020 vs. 132 in 2015). In my experience, trends are established early in surveys. My view is these trends would likely persist even if there were more participants. I do believe that the survey trends are a good indicator.

Recommendations are given in the light of past and not current experience
In 2015, Outsidein was actively involved with the College. This afforded greater confidence in our insights, observations and interpretation of the research. Though I am familiar with the College, I am not up to speed on your current activity or your progress or challenges. Bear this in mind when I make my inferences from the data, and my recommendations.

WHO RESPONDED
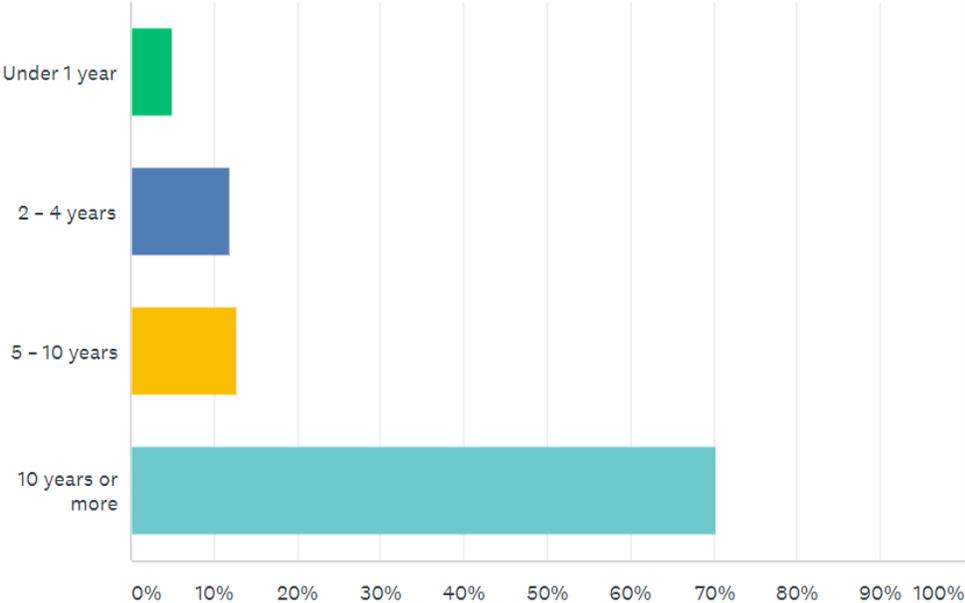
ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Under 1 year		5.08%	6
▼ 2 – 4 years		11.86%	14
▼ 5 – 10 years		12.71%	15
▼ 10 years or more		70.34%	83
TOTAL			118

FINDINGS

I've grouped the findings by theme rather than by question asked in the survey. The themes are as follows:

- How relational you are
- Brand perceptions
- Diversity and Inclusion
- What you do well
- Where you can improve

Wherever possible, I show a comparison with the results from the 2015 research. Also, the number of responses are reflected in brackets throughout this report.

Actual responses are included in green italics for you to get a sense of the "flavour" of the input.

How relational you are

Overall relational score for 2020

<p style="text-align:center">3.5</p>

This score marks a 25% improvement over 2015 (when you scored 2.8). This rating is out of 5 and is equivalent to 70% (vs 56% in 2015). Congratulations! This is a good range to be in, in terms of being a relational regulator. But of course, you can always be better!

The rationale for this score is based on an overall positive tone to the responses – there were more positive responses (roughly 76%) than negative responses (roughly 65%). Rating scales showed a 25 – 30% improvement.

In terms of your writing – although Outsidein did not yet have it's Relational Writing Matrix in 2015, qualitative commentary made then, compared to now reflects a big improvement in the tone of your writing (in 2015 we found it to be quite authoritarian). Readability was found to be an issue in 2015 and remains an issue with average readability grading at a College or graduate reading level (the target is Grade 12 or lower). A College reading level is tough for your immigrant registrants, but also for your English-first language registrants.

Relational rating scores

There were several questions that asked registrants about their relationship with the College. The responses are compared with registrants' responses from 2015.

Overall relationship quality

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
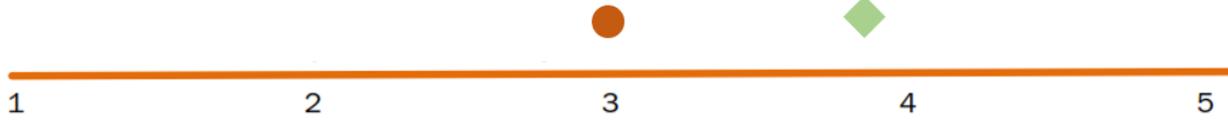
There is a good upward shift in the overall relationship between registrant and College. The improvement is almost 1 whole point (2020 rating is 3.9, up from 3.0 in 2015).

Experience interacting with COO whether via website, phone, email, license renewal, etc.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
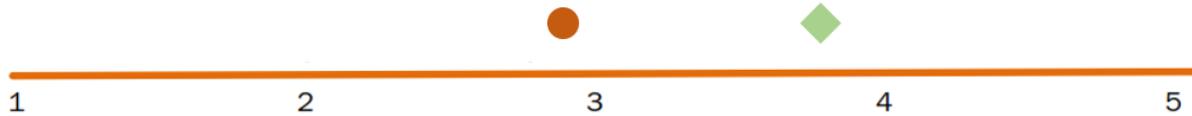
This has increased almost 1 point (2.9 in 2015 to 3.8 in 2020). This is commendable progress.

How responsive COO is to registrant's needs

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
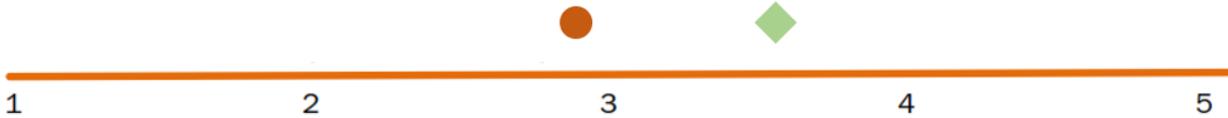
This has increased just half a point (3.0 in 2015 to 3.6 in 2020) and the upward direction is encouraging.

How approachable COO is

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
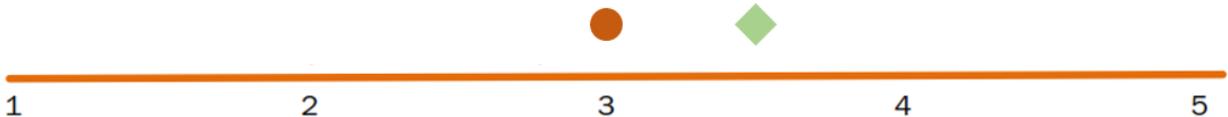
This has increased just half a point (3.0 in 2015 to 3.5 in 2020). This is a surprisingly small increase given COO has done a lot of work in this area. Also, responses throughout the research reflect that many respondents find you approachable/friendly/accessible.

Brand perceptions

What you are known for

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Having deep knowledge and readily sharing it	34.48%	40
Collecting license fees	84.48%	98
Having strong and positive relationships with registrants and stakeholders	31.03%	36
Being accessible, helpful and responsive	36.21%	42
Regulating effectively to protect the public	63.79%	74
Being fair and transparent	32.76%	38
Setting standards for the profession	77.59%	90
Disciplinary action	63.79%	74
Communicating well	40.52%	47
Diversity and inclusion	31.90%	37
Other (please specify) Responses	6.03%	7
Total Respondents: 116		

What you should be known for

Answered: 116   Skipped: 3

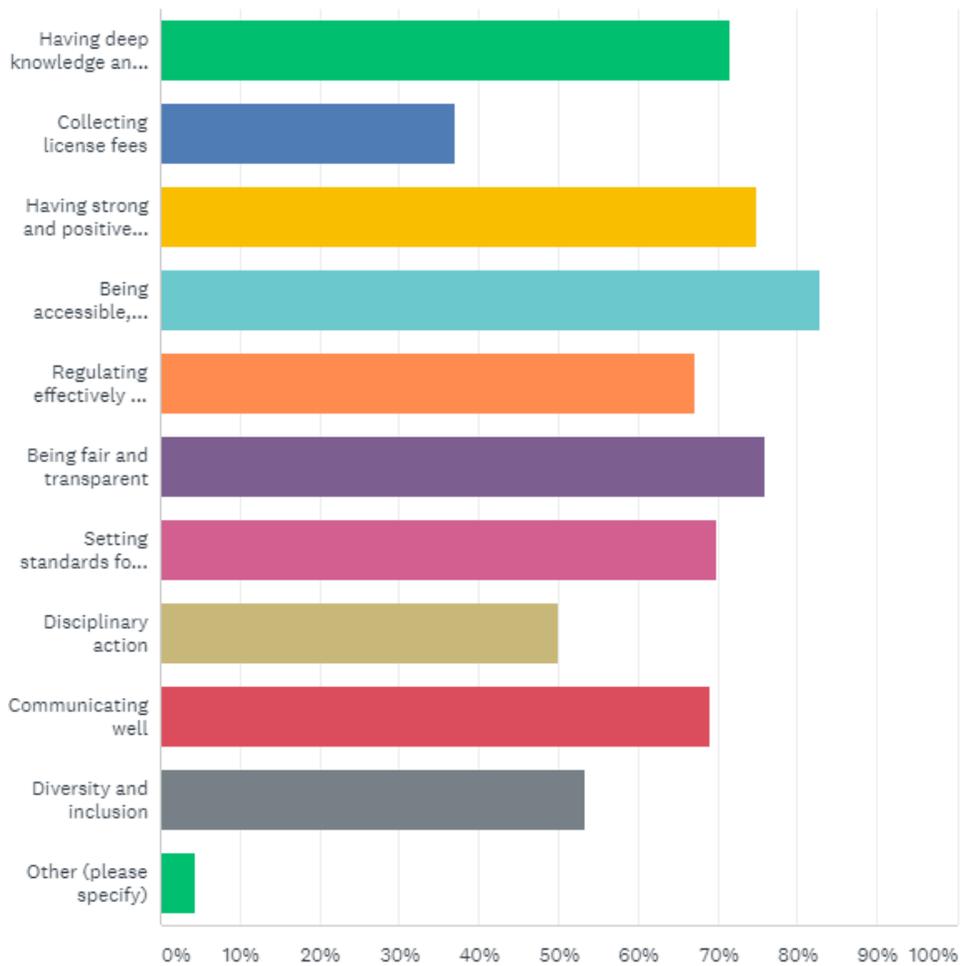| ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
▼ Having deep knowledge and readily sharing it		71.55%	83
▼ Collecting license fees		37.07%	43
▼ Having strong and positive relationships with registrants and stakeholders		75.00%	87
▼ Being accessible, helpful and responsive		82.76%	96
▼ Regulating effectively to protect the public		67.24%	78
▼ Being fair and transparent		75.86%	88
▼ Setting standards for the profession		69.83%	81
▼ Disciplinary action		50.00%	58
▼ Communicating well		68.97%	80
▼ Diversity and inclusion		53.45%	62
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses	4.31%	5
Total Respondents: 116			

The top three characteristics that best describe your brand personality

I'm pleased to report a positive shift in perceptions of the College since 2015. At that time, registrants' responses reflected more negative traits than positive. Commonly listed negative traits then included: dictatorial, distant, self-protective and arrogant.

In 2015 we did not reflect the numbers of negative vs. positive characteristics. This year, positive characteristics (255) outnumbered negative (91) by a good margin.

The top three characteristics (4 were listed in 2015) show some consistency:

2020	2015
Friendly/accessible/approachable (26)	Friendly
Responsive (21)	Knowledgeable
Knowledgeable (15)	Organized
	Professional

You're professional and uphold professionalism (19)

Being seen as professional is an important part of your brand. Although "professional" did not surface as one of your top three brand characteristics, there were 32 mentions of it across the research.

> *"Encourages professional development for the purpose of expanding the scope of practise for optician"*

> *"Upholds an atmosphere of professionalism"*

Diversity and inclusion

The following three questions are new to the survey this year.

Accommodating and recognizing the diversity of all registrants is a priority for the College. This includes but is not limited to racial, cultural, religious, sexual and socio-economic differences. The way registrants identify may impact how they practice. Have you/do you feel supported by the College from a diversity perspective?

Answered: 110   Skipped: 9
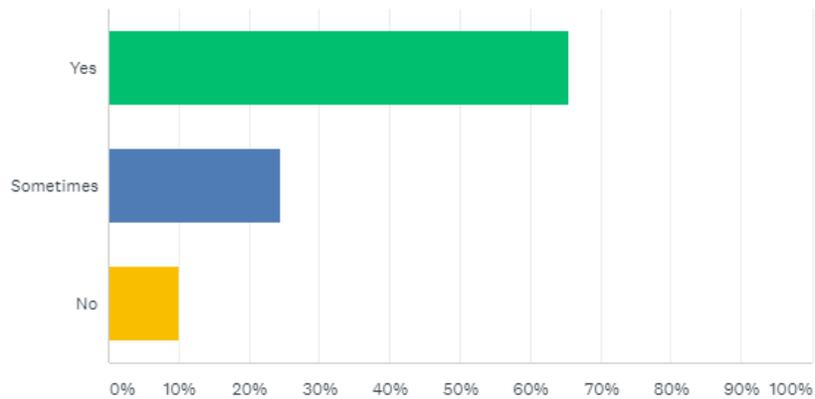
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.45%	72
Sometimes	24.55%	27
No	10.00%	11
TOTAL		110

Other responses:

"I didn't realize the college had a diversity mandate"

"I think it's doing quite well with diversity"

Not everyone is supportive of diversity and inclusion:

"There are plenty of issues to fix before tackling this one"

"Diversity has nothing to do with being an optician"

"Focus on merit over diversity"

The College aims to provide registrants equitable opportunities to contribute to College policies and processes, recognizing that everyone has faced unique challenges and brings unique experiences and perspectives. Have you/do you feel encouraged and empowered to run for elections, get involved in College processes and engage openly overall?

Answered: 113   Skipped: 6
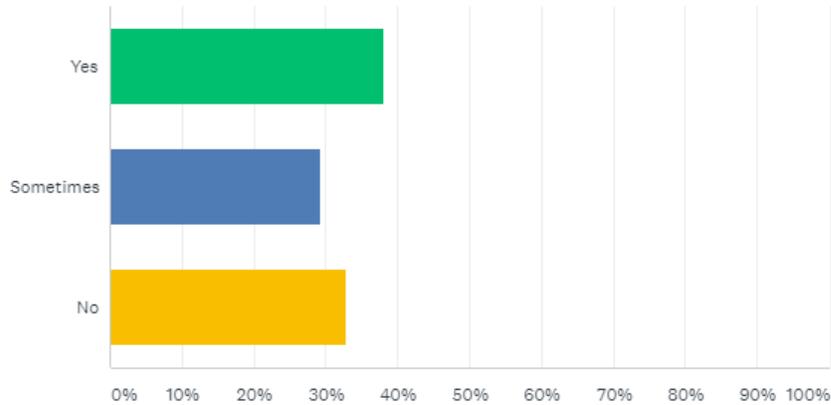
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38.05%	43
Sometimes	29.20%	33
No	32.74%	37
TOTAL		113

Other responses:

"I live too far away from the City, to even think about running for a position" (there were three responses of this nature in the survey)

"Provide a larger sense of openness with regards to applying towards a position of such nature"

"How can I run for office if [my] work schedule is not flexible?"

Each optician has regulatory obligations to meet. Have you/are you facing any diversity, equity or inclusion-related challenges which are preventing you from meeting your obligations?

Answered: 115   Skipped: 4
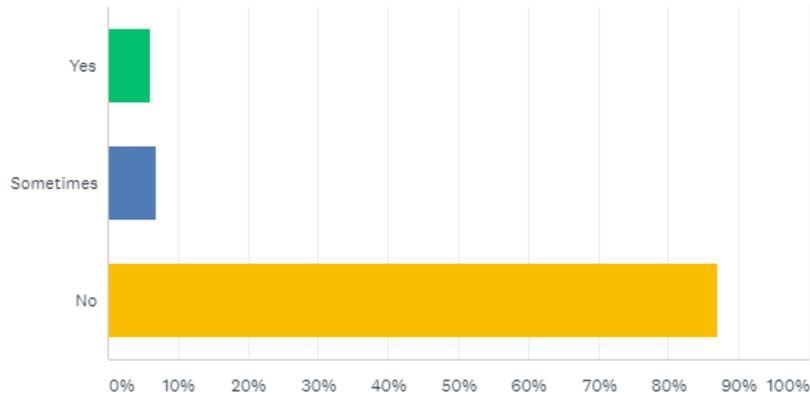
ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Yes		6.09%	7
▼ Sometimes		6.96%	8
▼ No		86.96%	100
TOTAL			115

Other responses:

"Better policies and support surrounding mental health struggles. We are the members, sometimes we struggle. Seminars for all around mental health in the workplace to know how to support ourselves, our employees, and our customers. Policies to encourage openness and transparency around this matter between members and the college as well as between each other"

"Reduce requirement, most are mothers with very busy lifestyles, help us"

"Make it easier to find courses and clarify descriptions of requirements in SIMPLE, straight forward language"

"Have an open complaints without prejudice"

"Make CE credit more available, not just GTA or Ottawa"

What you do well

Answered: 91   Skipped: 28

Your communication is appreciated and well regarded (49)
The strongest trend is undoubtedly your communication. In 2015, it was also noted as a strength. Email in particular, is the vehicle that is most frequently referenced as appreciated.

The most common themes were quality, frequency, relevance, timeliness, and regularity.

> *"Provides timely and up to date information"*
>
> *"Information is always forthcoming and complete"*
>
> *"Informative, keeps us informed at all times- highly professional – uses an education approach for registrants to learn and keep up to date"*
>
> *"Their emails are very helpful. I read every single one. They're timely with what's going on"*
>
> *"…not inundated with useless information"*
>
> *"They don't bombard you which is why I read it"*
>
> *"Usually you don't get junk from them"*

Registrants commended you on your communication about Covid-19. Overall, there were 14 specific mentions of it in the research.

> *"Email communications and guidance during COVID has been exemplary"*
>
> *"In the past 7 months the COO did an amazing job of updating us"*
>
> *"Their communication about Covid was a guiding light. I could continue with my business and didn't have to stop because of fear. I could teach people how to fit contacts safely and they could keep their job That [communication] alone was worth my fees. Without them I couldn't have functioned. They gave me the proper precautions and confidence and carried me through. They also had a Zoom meeting and every single word was relevant. I saw what the Optometrists' college was communicating and I had so much more information"*

The following (and only such) response is worth noting since Covid-19 is such a critical public health issue:

> *"We need more specific direction surrounding COVID-19 policies so everyone is on the same page knowing what to allow or not, be comfortable with or not. 'At our own discretion' can lead to differences of opinions between employers and employees about expectations"*

The College displays relational behaviours (40)
Registrants see evidence of several relational characteristics. They are ranked order of the number of mentions per characteristic.

- *Responsive: Timely, helpful and supportive (17)*
  Survey responses reflect a quick turnaround when a registrant has a question or problem. In 2015, we heard that response times were slow but improving.

  > *"I have never had to wait for too long before I would get a call back. And more amazing is, you answer your phones when I have called"*

  > *"Response time to questions is now excellent"*

  > *"Answers questions helpfully"*

  > *"Always assisting whatever the case may be"*

- *Relationship and accessibility (11)*
  An important relational aspiration was for the College to not be seen as aloof and inaccessible. Though only 6 respondents mentioned these traits in as many words, the fact that registrants feel they can contact you for help, that you're helpful, and that you seek their input, all speak to a shift their perceptions that you are more approachable.

  > *"Accessible and willing to help"*

  > *"There when we need them"*

  > *"Accommodates our questions and finds a way to assist"*

  Making information easily accessible was also included in the definition of a "relational regulator". n this regard, there were some positive responses about the usability (i.e. accessibility) of the website.

  > *"I find registration online much easier and more convenient"*

  > *"The convenience of online portfolio management"*

  > *"The website is really good. You can actually find stuff"*

  While the College still seems to struggle to engage registrants, it's not for lack of trying. There are registrants who appreciate your efforts to connect in a two-way relationship.

  > *"Respectful mutual communication"*

  > *"Very thorough, listens to suggestions to make processes simplified"*

  > *"Communicates and seeks feedback"*

  > *"They're on the right path to communicating better"*

- *Openness, transparency (8)*
  Transparency is another important facet of a relational, regulator. While there were a few references to you being transparent, there is room to improve. For example: Registrants

still want to know what their fees are used for, or what the College is doing to address threats to the profession.

> *"COO maintains transparency in its relationship with registered opticians"*

> *"Open communication"*

> *"Show us what our fees are being used for"*

5 Registrants noted your progress with communication and specifically encourage you to continue the path.

> *"Continue the good work of your communication and openness"*

> *"I think continuing to keep communication strong will help to build confidence in registrants"*

> *"Push the envelope even further – you're making good progress"*

- *You're human (3)*
  - **You can be caring.** It's good to see that the College can be seen as looking out for the profession and its practitioners

    > *"They take care of our needs"*

    > *"I feel they are there for us for anything and everything – like big brother"*

  - **You humanize the College** through small gestures like Fazal signing his name on communications.

Other kudos (12)
Some registrants are contented with the College. Although details for their comments were lacking, it's good to know.

> *"I think you're doing a great job"*

> *"Well organized"*

Where you can improve

Answered: 78   Skipped:41 (this was the most skipped question)

It was heartening to find that positive responses outweigh negative ones. It's interesting to note that the question: "Where can COO improve in order to enhance its relationship with registrants?" was the most skipped question in the survey and impossible to infer why.

Response time is too slow and responding back is sometimes lacking (17)
17 Registrants believe responsiveness can improve vs. 10 who feel it's timely. In particular, response time to phone calls can be a pain point (10) but less so to email (4).

> *"Less bureaucratic and faster at returning phone calls and other interactions"*

> *"Quicker response time when answering registrants' emails"*

> *"Most of the time no one answers, and they will call back after 1 or 2 days"*

Responsiveness is not only about timeliness. It's also about acknowledgment. 4 Registrants mentioned not hearing back from you. Or that the College does not acknowledge receipt of their request/information.

> *"Some people have made complaints, but they never hear back. The College should acknowledge they are working on it"*

> *"Confirm receipt of continuing ed portfolios as I submitted mine but never heard back to confirm it was received and all good"*

> *"Respond back. Many occasions I have left messages and no reply"*

Fees (12)
There is a continued belief that fees are too much and value too little. This echoes what we found in 2015. A few registrants mentioned fees are the highest in the country. Only one registrant connected fees to perceived value, and that value directly related to the quality of the Covid communications.

> *"Offer more bang for your buck. Other colleges are half the registration fee and offer the same services. Do better"*

> *"Keep fees affordable"*

> *"Registration rates are very high – why do they have a fancy office downtown and so many staff? We have the highest fees in the country"*

> *"Do more for your registrants. Show us what our fees are being used for"*

Be more supportive

Do more to support for the profession as a whole (11)
Registrants know your mandate is protect the public. They believe that if you protect them too, you are thereby also protecting the public. There is still a desire to have the College do more to protect Opticians. One interviewee thought the College should educate registrants more about what you can and cannot do.

> *"Educate people more about their mandate and the regulatory system. When it comes to unauthorized practice, they need to give people assurance that they are protected in terms of anonymity and that something is being done"*

> *"Help protect us from the public as much as you protect the public from us"*

The interviews revealed that feeling unsupported is partly due to a belief that you are not doing enough to protect the profession from online dispensing and the encroachment of unlicensed practitioners. This was prevalent in 2015 too.

> *"COO should protect the rights for all members. We are group of opticians seeking advancement and improvement [of how we are] treated by other professions"*

> *"The ministry doesn't support Opticians to fight the online competition. The College took to long to act on this"*

> *"Educate the public on the consequences of buying prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses online, and more importantly, where the liability lies"*

> *"Why does the College come after Opticians and not the people infringing online? The college doesn't enforce as they should"*

Feeling unsupported might be broader than protection against internet sales (5)
A few registrants feel either overlooked or that you could be doing more for them. Unfortunately, there were no details provided as to what that "more" looks like.

> *"Remember that the province spans beyond Toronto"*

> *"I participate in ongoing professional development and education. Greater credit should be given to members who work in a related teaching or training capacity"*

> *"Be more supportive of opticians"*

> *"Opticians want to know they are being looked out for, and any information that can be communicated to them in this regard would be helpful"*

Continuing Education (11)

The main theme about CE was the volume of work required to complete a high number of requirements.

> *"8 credits were more than enough"*

> *"We have no time for all these requirements"*

> *"Setting new harder rules and requirements every year. Portfolios are not necessary, 16 credit?? Crazy too much"*

Problems with the website (7)

Although the website received kudos, some Opticians still find it difficult to navigate. Unfortunately, no details were provided. This may be an area to explore for specifics.

> *"Website is still challenging to navigate, especially with regards to Continuing Education"*

> *"Sometimes its not easy to understand where I need to go on the website to access what I'm looking for"*

> *"I almost always have problems navigating your site or finding the appropriate area I need"*

There remain traces of a belief that you sit in judgement of Opticians (5)

There is still a degree of fear around being assessed. This is natural under any circumstances. However, I did not get the sense that there is generalized fear as Outsidein encountered when it first started working with the Opticianry colleges.

> *"When there is a complaint look at it and don't assume the registrant is wrong because they have a complaint against them"*

> *"The College is still perceived as the police. People don't want to stand out believing that the College is looking for those who do wrong"*

> *"[They] collect data on registrants"*

> *"[They] communicate registrants' faults"*

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

This section provides the results of a review of 10 samples of your written materials. These were written by different authors and came from different areas of the organization:

- Communications Department
- Professional Conduct
- Registration
- Quality Assurance
- Patient Relations & Governance

Measurement and scoring of writing samples
Each piece of writing was evaluated using three different tools:

1. Hemingwayapp – an online tool that reflects visually where complex language is used.

2. Flesch Kincaid ease of reading tool which calculates the reading grade level, and also an ease-of-reading score. (Flesch Kincaid is the most widely recognized reading grade standard and is also used by MS Word).

3. Relational Writing Matrix (developed by Outsidein). The Relational Writing Matrix provides a subjective measure against key "relational writing markers". These mirror the relational writing best practices. Each marker has several sub-categories each of which is scored. The broad categories of markers include:

   - Makes content easy to understand
   - Uses plain language to facilitate ease of reading
   - Uses lots of informative headings, white space and bulleted lists to lighten the "eyeload" of text and make it easier and more attractive to read
   - Looks at content from both the reader's and writer's perspective to ensure it resonates and is relevant
   - Uses key messages strategically to influence perceptions
   - Makes appropriate calls to action that are visually accessible
   - Displays an appropriately relational tone and approach to the content

Scoring
Each document is evaluated separately in the Relational Marker Matrix.

Each marker and its subcategories are scored and then scores are aggregated to reflect a total percentage of how relational the document is.

An overall Relational Writing Score is calculated by averaging the scores for all the documents.

In addition, each document was assigned a Flesch Kincaid reading level grade and ease-of-reading score. Note that the "ease of reading" scores should be considered in conjunction with the relational scores to form a holistic understanding of the relationality of the writing. There is a detailed breakdown of the scores of each document in Appendix A.

Snapshot of how each document scored

This table provides an overview of the relational score for each writing sample, as well as overall score of how relational the College's writing is (on average).

Documents reviewed	Individual scores
Document Title: https://collegeofopticians.ca/public/stakeholder-feedback	54.17
Document Title: https://collegeofopticians.ca/public/complaints-and-conduct/understanding-the-complaints-pro	66.67
Document Title: https://collegeofopticians.ca/registrants/registered-opticians/reinstatement	45.45
Document Title: Recommendation Doc 1 ICRC.doc	62.50
Document Title: Recommendation Doc 2 ICRC.doc	69.23
Document Title: Recommendation QA Exit Letter - Acceptable.doc	23.8%
Document Title: Recommendation QA Post-Assessment Letter.doc	28.89
Document Title: Recommendation QA Stream 1.doc	51.11
Document title: collegeofopticians.ca..../resources-for-opticians/jurisprudence	51.52
Document Title: Recommendation GC-PR.doc	23.81
OVERALL SCORE	**45.36**

60 Percent of the writing samples scored over 50%. 50 Percent is the minimum relational score for any piece of writing and reflects an acceptable level.

The Flesh Kincaid reading standard is grade 12 or lower. Judging by the level of English in several of the survey responses, I would advise that the target grade level is 10 or lower.

General observations about how relational your writing is

The level of relational was adapted appropriately to the content

Content regarding complaints, for example, was appropriately less relational than say, content from Continuing Education. These authors deserve kudos as it is important to adapt the relational tone situationally, and it's not always easy to do.

There even more room to be more relational

While the level of relational is within an acceptable range (i.e. there was nothing authoritarian about the tone of any piece), there is opportunity to make writing more readable and even more relational.

Many opportunities for highlighting key messages are missed

Headings should be informative. That means they should carry meaty content like a key message or action item. The best practice is to include many headings. There are very few headings in the documents.

Headings are more frequently used on the website. However, I found the font size of the sub-headings on the site to be distractingly large and occupying far more real estate than benefit. The web content I reviewed was adequate, and the site, generally user friendly.

Language used is not always so plain

There is a tendency to use long sentences which generally become complex for the reader.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purposefully educate registrants about what you can and cannot do

Communicate the scope of your mandate
This may seem redundant but it's particularly important that registrants understand what you cannot do. There are some expectations of what the College should be doing that may not be within what you are able to do.

> *"Educate the public on the consequences of buying prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses online, and more importantly, where the liability lies."*

Educate Opticians about the greater regulatory system so that people understand that you have parameters in which you have to operate – that some of your practices and decisions are not randomly generated by yourselves, but that you are complying with what's required of you.

> *"Registrants don't realize the hierarchy of rules and regulations – where the ministry comes in, where the Opticianry Act comes in, and where the College fits (what they college can do and can't do)"*

There are issues such as online competition, among possible others that Opticians would like the College to take action on. Some of these may be outside the scope of influence of the College, Since there wasn't much opportunity in this project to explore the extent of this opinion or the details, but it may be worth exploring further for you to understand what they are.

> *"Take a definitive stand on key issues, not sidestep them."*

Keep registrants informed about what you are doing
You may already do this, but tell Opticians as much as you are able, what your priority focus areas are, what you are working on, what's coming up. They are especially interested to know what efforts you make to protect and enhance the profession.

Spell out the value you bring to Opticians, even if it seems obvious

In every College I've worked with, registrants do not seem to connect the dots for themselves between fees and value for fees. It was again apparent in this research. Of course, there are benefits to be had.

This may be uncomfortable for you but the College needs to help Opticians understand the value by spelling it out. At renewal is a good time (and you may already do this) to include the benefits fees bring in a way that is educational and not self-promoting. There is merit in doing it each year. At other opportunities, highlight any value you add to Opticians and the profession.

For example:

> "Continuing Education develops Opticians' knowledge in a way that distinguishes you from unlicensed practitioners and assures your clients they're in safe hands."

> "Another year has passed, and we commend you for upholding the regulations. Together we build the professionalism that sets Licensed Opticians apart."

Be even more open and transparent

There are several specific topics that Opticians would like more insight into. It's not always possible to share details, but communicate whatever you are able to, on these topics.

Besides regulations, what you do to ensure a safe profession
The following list includes some examples of opportunities to communicate the activities you are involved in (again, you may already do some/all of these):

- These could be discussions or collaborations with government or other stakeholders that ultimately shore up the profession.
- Communicate whatever you can, about investigations. Opticians have an acute sense of fairness. They want to see the playing field levelled by you taking action against registrants who are not compliant. If there are small ways to do this without jeopardizing investigations or compromising anyone's privacy it would be helpful.
- Anything you do about the intrusion of unlicensed practitioners. If you cannot pursue this kind of activity tell them you cannot and share why.

  When it comes to unauthorized practice assure registrants that their anonymity is protected and communicate to them that something is being done.

  "There should be a process that encourages registrants to report illegal dispensing and, then the College should communicate that something is being done even if they can't go into detail. Registrants don't realize that there's a process. They don't appreciate the process – perhaps the College should communicate the process more clearly."

Why you're in "a fancy and expensive office downtown"
This is a source of puzzlement if not resentment for some. If you have good rationale (which you most likely do), share it with registrants.

Your rationale for decisions or actions, wherever possible
This is important particularly where there is a potential impact on registrants. I have worked with many different organizations, many of them regulators/authorities. Trust and a spirit of cooperation is at times hard earned. When leaders provide the rationale for decisions it demonstrates a level of trust and transparency. It also helps with buy-in when action is required.

Leverage your relationship with other organizations

Extend your reach to reinforce messages and get buy in
The College should continue to reach out to the Association for input and for disseminating information. It's a great way to extend your reach and to provide additional ways to communicate a given message.

Consider creative ways to bring partners in to help with your thinking, when appropriate. Working in partnership with stakeholders helps strengthen the perception that you are trying to help the profession, not just the public.

Write even more relationally

Write for grade 10 or lower
I strongly recommend that COO adopts the Flesch Kincaid reading level of 10 or lower for registrant communication, and 12 or lower for external stakeholders. MS Word can be set up to reflect the reading grade level as follows:

Open a Word document, then select:

1. File

2. Options

3. Proofing

4. Ensure Spelling and Grammar are checked

5. Check Show Readability Statistics

6. OK

7. Run a spell check – select "no" to spell check the rest of the document. Grade level is displayed near the end of the pop-up dialog that provides the spell check results.

Refresh yourselves on the Relational Writing principles. You can use the handbook provided in the course to do this.

Use technology to advance your communication
There are several options of free tools to help you achieve this:

- www.hemingwayapp.com – a great tool for visual feedback on where written language is complex. Its grade level rating is unreliable, however. It can be used in conjunction with MS Word's spelling and grammar check to get the Flesch Kincaid reading level.
- https://app.readable.com/text/ - this tool uses the Flesch Kincaid reading level but is not as easy to use as hemingwayapp.

- In this new Zoom era, consider running virtual events or meetings so that people from all over the province can participate. Make these interactive where you can, to foster a greater connection between you and the registrants.

Explore further how you can further improve accessibility and responsiveness

Website accessibility
It is possible that some of the difficulties with the website may be experienced by registrants who are used to/prefer paper or phone processes rather than helping themselves online. However, it may be helpful at some stage to conduct a website usability survey could uncover where registrants are still experiencing difficulty.

Continue to improve your response times
This is an area that would also benefit from closer examination so that you can pinpoint where the weakness is and address it. Already we know that responsiveness to phone calls is a weaker area than email.

Quick fixes on the website

- There is a broken link from https://collegeofopticians.ca/public/about-us if I click on "Board" from the sub menu.
- I would expect to see a link to "management" of the College in About Us. It's hard to know where to look to see who the Registrar is, for example.
- I recommend you reduce the font size of the subheadings in your web style sheet so that they do not occupy so much space and are not a reading distraction.

Miscellaneous recommendations from registrants

License renewal and Continuing Education
It appears there may be room for improvement within the renewal process or getting help with renewal, or the CE process in terms of process/execution:

- *Provide more access to more people to help with renewal, CE, re-instatement, etc.*
- *Less work for renewal*
- *Having online CE credits instead of attending in person if someone can't attend*
- *Fix the CE policy*
- *Less complicated homework*
- *Offer info for free activities to aide with accreditation credits*
- *At the end of each year, evaluate the CE topics with the intention of replacing some of them with topics that are very current and very important to the industry at that time, e.g. PPE preparedness, blue light, etc. There need only be a few of these topical subjects included.*

Recommendations about diversity and inclusion

- *Multiculturalism should be taken into account in policy making*
- *I'm using my company's resources of videos and talks seminars about diversity, I think it's important to have discussions, and continue to have these videos about all the aspects - maybe college could have videos as well*
- *Remove barriers to participating for registrants, particularly in CE offerings and their accessibility*
- *Try to encourage and assist the ethnic minorities to get involve in the College*

Recommendations for getting involved in the College

- *Give more information to all members of what is expected in these [volunteer] roles and how it impacts a member's hours and relationships to their own coworkers and bosses*
- *I think the move towards online meetings will make access greater*

Miscellaneous recommendations

- *Find more ways to save money... drop the office downtown for remote work*
- *Keep adopting and using new technologies*
- *More blog posts will be helpful*
- *Humanize your council members – show that they some are peers. Spotlight them in the newsletter*
- *Send registrants e-mails with posters*