

Dispensing Optician

Dispensing opticians make up prescriptions for spectacle lenses, which they get from the optometrists or ophthalmologist who have tested a patient's eyes. They also fit and adjust the spectacle frames to the patient's face.

The Work

You could be:

- using a computer to make up the prescription for lenses from information from the optometrists
- helping a patient choose a pair of spectacle frames and advising on frames which are suitable for the lenses prescribed
- measuring distances on the face, to make sure the spectacles will fit
- ordering the spectacles from a prescription house and checking the delivery when it arrives
- fitting the completed spectacles, adjusting them if need be, and carrying out minor repairs on spectacles
- liaising with optical, retail and lab teams
- after further training, fitting contact lenses and advising on their use and maintenance
- arranging further visits in case alterations are needed
- managing the general running of the shop or practice.

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for qualified dispensing opticians in private practice in the UK tend to be about £18,000 to £25,000 a year. With experience, and taking on a management role, this can rise to around £35,000.

Conditions

- You usually work in an optician's shop or practice, although a few dispensing opticians work in hospitals.
- Hours are normally regular, but in shops weekend work is common.

Getting In

You must be registered with the General Optical Council (GOC), first as a student, then as a professional, and there are two main entry routes.

- You can take a degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing, although there are currently no courses available in Scotland. Degrees are available at Anglia Ruskin University, Bradford College, and Canterbury Christchurch University. Entry is normally 3 Highers including a science subject. The degree is followed by one year of

supervised professional practice before applying for GOC professional registration.

- Most enter this profession as a trainee with a qualified dispensing optician, and complete a three year distance learning course with the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) College – entry requirements are 5 subjects at National 5 including English, Maths and a science subject. Some employers may ask for additional subjects at Higher.
- Glasgow Kelvin College offers an Access to Ophthalmics course, which gives entry to a degree course or a trainee position with a qualified dispensing optician. There are no formal entry requirements however you will need to have an interest in physics or maths.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact Disclosure Scotland for details on the type you would need.
- Relevant work experience is helpful.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- accurate and precise
- able to deal with scientific information
- prepared to pay attention to detail
- able to handle fine instruments
- able to get on well with people of all backgrounds and of all ages
- patient and caring.

You should have:

- a good eye for knowing which spectacles will suit customers
- good sales and communication skills
- a smart appearance.

Training

- After qualifying, Continuing Education and Training (CET) is a statutory requirement to retain GOC registration.
- Many dispensing opticians specialise in the fitting and supply of contact lenses.
- Once you have gained registration, training is on the job, with short courses to keep you up to date.
- You need to renew your registration every year.
- ABDO offer post-diploma honours level courses to help qualified dispensing opticians advance their knowledge.

Getting On

- If you gain high marks in second or third year on your Ophthalmic Dispensing degree course you may be able to transfer to the Optometry degree course.
- You might move into a senior post or into management.
- You might specialise in a particular area such as work with partially sighted people.
- You could become self-employed.

- You could go into teaching dispensing optics.

Contacts

Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO)

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Disclosure Scotland

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General Optical Council

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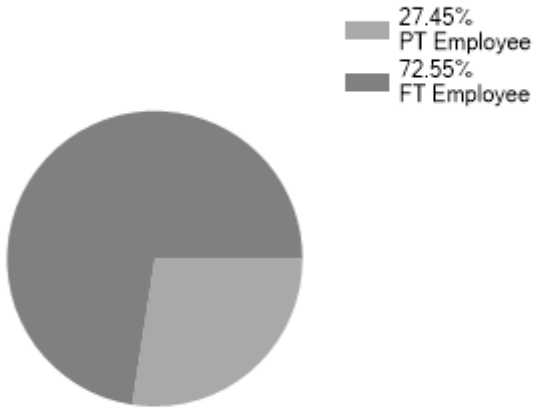
Email: goc@optical.org

Website: www.optical.org

Twitter: @GOC_UK

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

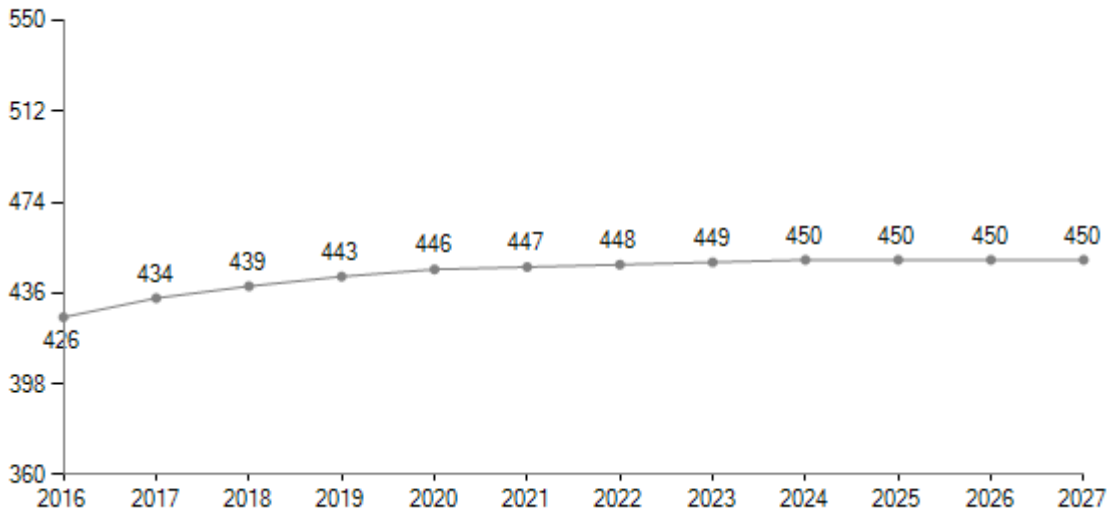


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)