

Optometrist

Optometrists, also known as opticians, examine and test eyes. They also look out for underlying health problems such as diabetes. They discuss the patient's needs to see what spectacles or contact lenses would suit them best. They then analyse the test results to prescribe spectacles or contact lenses to improve the patient's sight.

The Work

You could be:

- using a variety of tests and instruments to assess a patient's sight
- asking patients about their general health
- doing other tests such as glaucoma and colour vision
- supplying and fitting spectacles or contact lenses, or arranging for the patient to see a dispensing optician to have this done
- identifying other health problems which may be seen by examining the eyes
- managing a variety of eye conditions such as glaucoma and age related macular degeneration
- advising people on general care of the eyes and sight and, if need be, advising the patient to see a doctor for further examination
- discussing patients' needs with colleagues, keeping records and completing forms.

Pay

Pay rates can vary depending on whether the optometrist works with the National Health Service (NHS), with a private practice, or is self-employed.

During your year of supervised clinical practice you will earn around £15,000.

Qualified optometrists in private practice start on around £25,000 a year. With experience this can rise to £70,000 a year or more plus benefits.

For those working within the NHS, you will be on NHS Agenda for Change scale. Pre-registration optometrists during their supervised clinical practice year are on Band 4, £30,353 to £33,016 a year. Qualified optometrists are on Band 6, £41,608 to £50,702 a year. Specialist optometrist salaries are on Band 7, £50,861 to £59,159 a year. The current pay scales are from April 2025.

Conditions

- You would usually work in a treatment room in a shop or clinic.
- You might work in a hospital or a laboratory.
- You would be carrying out some of the eye examinations in a darkened room.
- You would normally work 37-40 hours a week, including some evenings and weekends.

Getting In

To work in the UK as an optometrist you must be registered with the General Optical Council (GOC). There is a specific route to this.

- You first need to complete a degree in Optometry. Glasgow Caledonian University offers this course. For entry you require 5 good Highers including English or an English based subject, Maths and two science subjects. A Foundation Apprenticeship is accepted in place of one non essential Higher.
- UHI Inverness College also offers this course in partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). For entry you require 4 good Highers including 2 maths or science subjects. English preferred. National 5 at B in English, Maths and Physics also required.
- This is followed by completion of the Scheme for Registration run by the College of Optometrists. This is one year of supervised clinical practice, with work based assessments and a final assessment, the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).
- For entry to the Scheme for Registration you must have a 2:2 Honours degree and a valid Certificate of Clinical Competency (awarded at graduation).
- If you fail to get a 2:2 Honours degree, you must successfully complete the GOC's Optometry Progression Scheme before entering the Scheme for Registration.
- 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.

You can find work in large optical chain stores, hospital departments or independent practices.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- accurate and precise
- interested in science, with a good understanding of mathematical principles
- able to pay close attention to detail
- able to concentrate when doing repetitive tasks
- able to handle fine instruments
- able to get on well with people from all backgrounds and of all ages
- patient and empathetic
- well organised
- willing to keep up to date with new techniques and instruments.

Training

- Once you have gained registration, training is on the job, with short courses to keep you up to date.
- You could work towards becoming a specialist practitioner. This requires extra study and clinical practice.
- Qualified optometrists must renew their registration with the General Optical Council every year. They do this by undertaking Continuing Education and Training (CET) over a 3-year cycle.

Getting On

- 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 and set up your own practice.
- You could go into teaching optometry or ophthalmic optics.
- There may be opportunities to work abroad.
- You could go into research, developing new products.

Contacts

Careers in Eyecare

Website: www.careersineyecare.org.uk

College of Optometrists

Tel: 020 7839 6000

Website: www.college-optometrists.org

X: @CollegeOptomUK

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CollegeOfOptometrists

General Optical Council

Tel: 020 7580 3898

Email: goc@optical.org

Website: www.optical.org

X: @GOC_UK

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

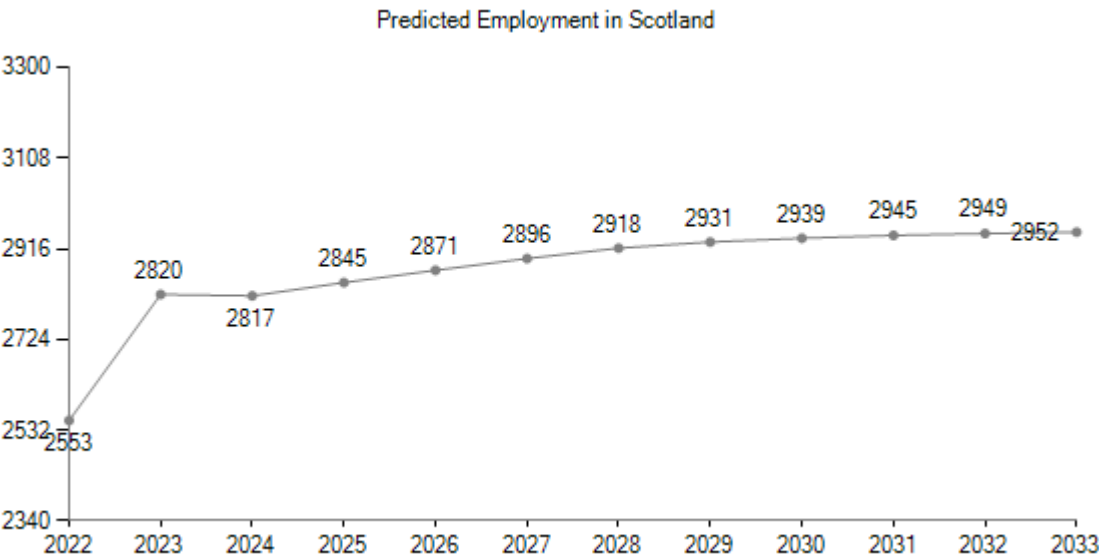
Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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