

Optical Technician

Optical technicians make optical parts for scientific instruments such as microscopes and telescopes, lenses for spectacles and contact lenses.

The Work

You could be:

- preparing customer prescriptions to the highest standard using the latest computer-controlled equipment
- shaping moulded glass or plastic for various lenses including spectacle lenses and contact lenses
- using lathes and other hand or machine tools to grind, smooth and polish the lenses
- making up complex lenses by hand – most simple lenses are made by machine
- making spectacle lenses the right shape for the frame and fitting them into the frame
- finishing spectacle lenses by glazing, or applying tints and polishes
- assembling and testing the instrument or pair of spectacles
- cleaning and maintaining equipment and machinery
- ordering stock.

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

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

Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour.

The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026).

Qualified optical technicians can earn up to £28,000 a year.

Conditions

- You would work in a factory, workshop or laboratory.
- You usually work around 37-40 hours a week.
- It may be noisy.
- You'd wear a white coat and sometimes eye protection.

Getting In

- You do not always need formal qualifications but most employers will ask for subjects at National 4 or 5 including English, Maths and science or technological subjects.
- You would apply for a position with a company that offers on the job training within their optical laboratory.

You could work for a manufacturing company, a large prescription company, an optical firm or a small optician's practice.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- able to organise your workload
- interested in science and maths
- eager and willing to learn
- patient
- able to concentrate for long periods
- able to work as part of a team.

You should have:

- good communication skills
- a good eye for detail
- good practical skills
- numeracy skills
- good hand to eye coordination
- a steady hand.

Training

- Training is on the job.
- It takes around 15-18 months to become a fully qualified optical technician.

Getting On

- You may be able to move into a supervisory job.
- You may move into designing instruments.
- You could take further qualifications to become a dispensing optician.

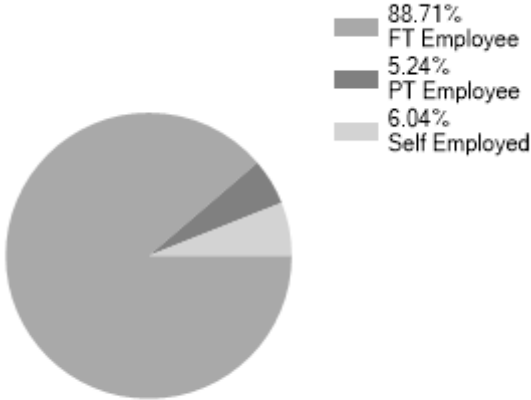
Contacts

Careers in Eyecare

Website: www.careersineyecare.org.uk

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

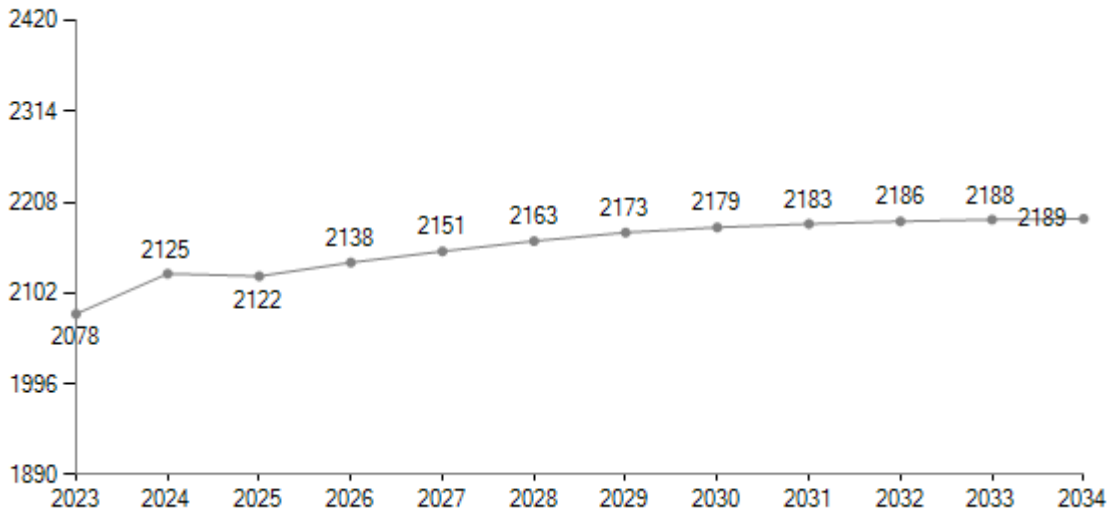


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)