

Dispensing optician

Dispensing opticians dispense and fit spectacles and other optical aids, working from prescriptions written by optometrists and ophthalmologists, and offer advice and guidance to patients around matters relating to eye health.

You'll advise patients on various types of spectacle lenses, including different designs and materials to suit the individual patient's visual requirements. This tailored advice will also cover spectacle frames, including style, fit, weight and colour. You'll also advise on how they should wear and care for their spectacles and, with further training as a contact lens optician, prescribe contact lenses and undertake follow-up appointments.



Skills:

You'll need to show:

- an aptitude for science and maths
- the ability to handle ophthalmic instruments
- a strong commitment to customer care and a customer-focused approach to work
- empathy and understanding of patients' eye health needs
- confidence in dealing with people
- communication skills, to give clear advice to customers
- listening skills, to ensure you're giving the customer the best advice
- sales skills, and the ability to inspire customer loyalty

Qualifications:

University - To qualify as a dispensing optician, you can do a course approved by the General Optical Council. There are 3 different types of course to choose from. You can do a: full-time diploma which takes 2 years followed by working under supervision for a year/day release training course combined with working which takes 3 years/distance learning course which includes on the job training and takes 3 years. You'll also need to pass the professional qualifying examinations from the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO). You'll usually need: 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, including English, maths and science/1 or 2 A levels, or equivalent, including a science.

Apprenticeship - You may be able to apply for a place on a Dispensing Optician Level 6 Apprenticeship, with an opticians company. This can take 3 years to complete. To get onto an apprenticeship, you'll find it useful to have: 4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C) and A levels, or equivalent, for a degree apprenticeship.

Working hours:

Working hours are usually 9am to 6pm, although large multiple-chain stores are sometimes open during the evenings. You'll typically work between 35 and 40 hours a week, Mondays to Saturdays, with two days off in a week. Many practices are also open on Sundays and bank holidays.

Salary:

- Starting salaries for qualified dispensing opticians typically range from around £18,000 to £25,000, depending on your experience. Contact lens opticians may earn more.
- With experience you can earn up to around £30,000. Contact lens opticians can typically earn between £28,000 and £40,000.
- Salaries for practice managers can range from £30,000 to in excess of £40,000.

