

Ophthalmic and vision science

Ophthalmic and vision science is the study of disorders of vision, plus diseases of the eye and the visual pathway.

Working in ophthalmic and vision science, you'll assess the structure and function of the eye and the visual system.



Working life

You'll see people of all ages, who will have a range of abilities and needs from poor sight through to complications of diabetes.



You'll carry out a diverse range of tests and procedures that may include:

- measurement of the field of vision
- measurement of the pressure in a patient's eye
- taking images of the eye and its supporting structures
- taking measurements to determine the optical power of a lens to be inserted in the patient's eye during cataract surgery
- electrophysiological investigation of the eye and visual pathways

By assessing and monitoring these various visual functions and structural changes, you'll provide essential diagnostic, prognostic and surveillance information to help ophthalmologists manage conditions such as:

- glaucoma
- cataract
- diabetic retinopathy

'For me, this is the perfect mix of working with machines and people.' - Emerson Priola, ophthalmic technician

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Read Emerson's story ^[1]

Who will I work with?

Most healthcare scientists in this area work in an outpatient clinic alongside a wide range of other healthcare professionals, and in ophthalmic diagnostic units.

You'll work as part of a team which might include healthcare scientists working in neurophysiology ^[2] as well as specialist nurses ^[3], optometrists, ophthalmologists ^[4] and orthoptists ^[5].

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career in ophthalmic and vision science

- ^[6] Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career in ophthalmic and vision science ^[7]

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Pay and conditions

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) ^[8] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers.

As a healthcare science practitioner, you'd usually start on band 5, with opportunities to progress to more senior positions. Trainee clinical scientists train at band 6 level, and qualified clinical scientists are generally appointed at band 7. With experience and further qualifications, including Higher Specialist Scientist Training ^[9], you could apply for posts up to band 9.

Staff will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS.

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Where the role can lead

With further training or experience or both, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management or teaching.

There are also opportunities for research work, helping to improve existing techniques and develop new ones. For example, in ophthalmic and vision science, you might be:

- investigating genetic diseases and possible cures
- designing innovative retinal prosthetic implants to restore sight in retinal disease
- using and developing more detailed imaging techniques capable of imaging single cells with high resolution and using different types of light to build reflectance images of hidden structures.

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Job market and vacancies

Job market

In November 2018, there were 6,123 clinical scientists registered with the Health and Care Professions Council

[10].

The NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP) [11] and Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) [9] attract many more applicants than there are places, so there is considerable competition for places.

Finding and applying for jobs

When you're looking for job vacancies, there are a number of sources you can use, depending on the type of work you're seeking.

Check vacancies carefully to be sure you can meet the requirements of the person specification before applying and to find out what the application process is. You may need to apply online or send a CV for example.

For the STP [11] and HSST [9] there is an annual recruitment cycle. Applications usually open in early January for the intake in the following autumn, and should be made through the National School of Healthcare Science's website [12], where you can also find information about the programmes and the recruitment process.

Key sources relevant to vacancies in the health sector:

- vacancies in organisations delivering NHS healthcare can be found on the NHS Jobs website [13]
- vacancies in local government can be found on the Local Government Jobs website [14] and the Jobs Go Public website [15]

As well as these sources, you may find suitable vacancies in the health sector by contacting local employers directly, searching in local newspapers and by using the Universal Jobmatch tool [16].

Find out more about applications and interviews [17].

Volunteering is an excellent way of gaining experience (especially if you don't have enough for a specific paid job you're interested in) and also seeing whether you're suited to a particular type of work. It's also a great way to boost your confidence and you can give something back to the community.

Find out more about volunteering and gaining experience [18].

Further information

For further information about a career in ophthalmic and vision science, please contact:

- Academy for Healthcare Science [19]
- General Optical Council [20]
- Health and Care Professions Council [21]
- National School of Healthcare Science [12]

- Ophthalmic Imaging Association [22]
- UCAS [23]

Other roles that may interest you

- Neurophysiology [24]
- Ophthalmology [25]
- Orthoptist [26]
- Experienced paramedic [27]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science/real-life-story-emerson-priola>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/neurophysiology>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ophthalmology>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/orthoptist>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science/entry-requirements-skills-and>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science/training-development-and>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training>
- [10] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/not-studying-health-related-degree/nhs-scientist-training-programme>
- [12] <http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/>
- [13] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk>
- [14] <http://www.lgjobs.com/>
- [15] <http://www.jobsgopublic.com/>
- [16] <https://www.gov.uk/jobsearch>
- [17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/planning-your-career/applications-and-interviews>
- [18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience>
- [19] <http://www.ahcs.ac.uk>
- [20] <http://www.optical.org/>
- [21] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/>
- [22] <http://www.oia.org.uk>
- [23] <http://www.ucas.com>
- [24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physiological-sciences/neurophysiology>
- [25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/ophthalmology>
- [26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/roles-allied-health-professions/orthoptist/orthoptist>
- [27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic>