

Compare roles in health

Not sure where to start with the hundreds of NHS careers? Use our compare roles section to get bite-size information on the entry requirements and training, pay and conditions, prospects and skills needed of up to three roles. If there is something that you think you could do, then get more in-depth information on the role.

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• Optometrist [1]

Optometrists are at the frontline of eye care. By carrying out detailed examinations, they are helping to improve eye health across the country.

Training and qualifications required

All optometrists practising in the UK must be registered with the General Optical Council (GOC). To be able to register with the GOC you'll need to study a GOC-approved degree in optometry at university and complete the College of Optometrists' Scheme for Registration. Several UK universities which offer approved degree courses and you will typically need a minimum of AAB at A-level, or equivalent, with at least two science subjects. If you are already working as a dispensing optician, you could retrain in optometry.

Expected working hours and salary range

As a trainee optometrist in a hospital, you would typically start on Agenda for Change band 4. As a qualified and registered optometrist, you would start on band 6. With further training, education and experience, you could apply for more senior posts such as specialist optometrist at band 7 or principal optometrist at bands 8a-8b. As a consultant optometrist or head of service, you could be on band 8d. Staff in the NHS will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern. The starting salary for newly qualified optometrists in high street practice is typically around £25,000 (2016), but this depends upon supply and demand, so you can expect to earn more in areas where there are fewer optometrists.

Desirable skills and values

To work as an optometrist, you'll need excellent communication skills; an interest in health and a desire to improve people's quality of life; able to work with precision; an ability to put nervous patients at ease; able to concentrate while doing repetitive tasks; able to adapt to new equipment and techniques; and be well organised. If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

Prospects

With further training and/or experience, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for

vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, teaching (e.g. students studying for optometry at university) or research (for example, you could be involved in developing cutting-edge contact lenses or spectacle lenses). If you have the right skills, you could be running your own business or your department one day.

Related roles

- Ophthalmic and vision science [2]
- Orthoptist [3]
- Ophthalmology [4]
- Audiology [5]

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