

## Optical Field

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## A. Occupations

### 1) Optometrist

- Regulated health profession in Ontario - College of Optometrists of Ontario  
<http://www.collegeoptom.on.ca>

#### Role

Source: [http://www.opto.ca/en/public/03\\_optometry/03\\_00\\_what\\_is.asp](http://www.opto.ca/en/public/03_optometry/03_00_what_is.asp)

- An independent primary health care provider who specializes in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of disease and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures as well as the diagnosis of ocular manifestations of systemic conditions
- The examination of the human eye by any method (other than surgery), to diagnose, treat, and/or refer for treatment any abnormal condition of the eye, in cooperation with physicians and other health professionals
- The employment of instruments, procedures or agents to measure, examine or diagnose visual defects or abnormal conditions of the eye
- The prescribing, fitting and application of glasses, contact lenses or other devices to correct, relieve or treat the eye
- The prescription, supervision and management of therapy for the improvement/monitoring of visual health
- The referral of patients to other health practitioners as required

#### Educational Requirements

- 4 year degree program – Doctor of Optometry (University of Waterloo, School of Optometry)

#### Skills/Qualities

##### *Technical*

- Basic computer skills: word processing, internet, email; may require presentation programs, spreadsheet manipulation and database knowledge
- Ability to operate specialized instruments such as ophthalmoscopes and biomicroscopes to conduct eye examinations

##### *Communication*

- Superior oral and written communication skills

### *Other*

- The learning ability required to complete the academic requirements
- Spatial and form perception required to interpret test results and identify visual defects
- Compassionate personality
- Ability to educate and counsel patients on contact lens use and care, visual hygiene, lighting arrangements, working distance and other safety factors
- Ability to analyze data collected from eye examinations to determine the type of prescription required, and to refer patients to ophthalmologists and other physicians and surgeons for treatment of ocular or other diseases or conditions
- Good manual dexterity and visual acuity
- Enjoy operating specialized instruments, working with people and analyzing information to make decisions

### Typical Employers

- Often private practice
- Clinics
- Community health centers
- Public health i.e.;
  - advising parents about potential eye hazards for children
  - diagnosing perceptual handicaps which hinder learning in school-age children
  - consulting with industrial safety personnel on the selection and placement of employees
  - fitting low vision patients whose vision can only be improved through the use of special magnifying devices.

### Average Hourly Wage

Source: <http://www1.on.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ojf/ojf.jsp?section=Profile&noc=3121&lang=e>

\$75,659/year ( \$38.79/hour)

Source: <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo>

- For the first few years, income levels may be relatively low for optometrists who start private practices. However, after five years, their incomes often exceed the incomes of optometrists who are employed by others.

Salaries vary according to such factors such as experience, level of responsibility, seniority, size of company, size of city, etc.

## **2) Optometric Assistant**

- Not a regulated profession in Ontario
- Certification available through the Canadian Association of Optometrists

### Role

- Reception and telephone handling
- Preliminary testing of patients
- Advising patients on lens and frame selections
- Repairing and adjusting eyeglasses
- Training contact lens patients
- Helping children practice visual skills
- Assisting the optometrist chairside
- Teaching low vision patients how to use special devices

## Educational Requirements

- The Canadian Association of Optometrists offers an optometric assistant course [http://www.opto.ca/en/public/03\\_optometry/03\\_05\\_assistants.asp](http://www.opto.ca/en/public/03_optometry/03_05_assistants.asp)
- In order to enroll in the Optometric Assistant Course, the candidate must currently be employed by an optometrist in an optometric practice.

### *Internationally educated optometrists*

- The College of Optometrists of Ontario also recognizes any program accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE). All ACOE accredited schools are in North America.
- International optometric graduates (IOGs) are asked to complete an assessment process to determine if their academic background and experience are equivalent and comparable to that of a University of Waterloo School of Optometry (UWSO) graduate.

- A bridging program is available for individuals deemed to have a 'bridgeable' gap in their education and/or clinical skills.

Note: Internationally educated ophthalmologists may be eligible

for the bridging program. The College indicates that as Ophthalmology is usually a three or four year specialty, a general physician or surgeon in another field would not have the necessary background. More information about the bridging program at UWSO is available at [www.optometry.uwaterloo.ca/iog/](http://www.optometry.uwaterloo.ca/iog/) or by contacting [ioginfo@optometry.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ioginfo@optometry.uwaterloo.ca)

## Skills/Qualities

### *Technical*

- Basic computer skills: word processing, internet, email; may require spreadsheet manipulation and database knowledge
- Operate optometric equipment

### *Communication*

- Able to communicate clearly in oral and written language

### *Other*

- Strong interpersonal skills
- Enjoy educating others
- Organizational and time management skills
- Good manual dexterity and visual acuity
- Spatial ability

## Typical Employers

- Works with optometrist in office, clinic or community health centre setting

## Average Hourly Wage

Source: [labourmarketinformation.ca](http://labourmarketinformation.ca)

\$13.79/ hour (average)    \$20.35/ hour (high)    \$8.82/ hour (low)

Salaries vary according to such factors such as experience, level of responsibility, seniority, size of company, size of city, etc.

### **3) Optician**

- Regulated profession in Ontario - College of Opticians of Ontario <http://www.coptont.org>

#### Role

Source: <http://www.eyesite.ca/english/public-information/eye-care-team.htm#anchor744834>

- Non-medical practitioners who supply, prepare and dispense optical appliances, interpret prescriptions prepared by ophthalmologists and optometrists, and fit, adjust and adapt optical appliances
- Also known as ophthalmic dispensers or dispensing opticians

Source: <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo>

- Analyze and interpret prescriptions
- Help customers select frames of the most suitable size and shape based on prescription and anatomical considerations
- Advise customers regarding lens and frame types
- Provide basic eye health and vision screening, and referrals to appropriate health care professionals when necessary
- Take measurements to determine the size, shape and specifications for lenses, frames and lens forms
- Prepare work orders for optical technicians who grind lenses
- Assemble eye glasses
- Verify that completed eye glasses or lenses fit and are manufactured to the required specifications
- Make appropriate adjustments to ensure customer comfort
- Fit and dispense low vision appliances
- Promote eye health and the correct use of ophthalmic appliances by educating consumers
- Conduct or collaborate in optical related research.

May also:

- Arrange and maintain displays of optical merchandise
- Supervise the training of student opticians
- Purchase supplies or perform related accounting duties

#### Educational Requirements

- 2 year college diploma (Georgian and Seneca colleges)

#### Skills/Qualities

##### *Technical*

- Basic computer skills: word processing, internet, email; may require spreadsheet manipulation and database knowledge
- Operate optical devices

##### *Communication*

- Excellent oral and written communication skills

##### *Other*

- Customer service skills (courteous, pleasant manner)
- Critical thinking ability
- Business knowledge
- Ability to analyze and interpret customer issues
- Attention to details
- Management skills

- Finger dexterity required to manipulate small objects and instruments
- Visual acuity
- Good sense of spatial relationship
- Enjoy dealing with people, operating optical devices, and compiling and checking information

### Typical Employers

Source: <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo>

- Most opticians work in retail. Opticians may be employees or independent owners of retail optical services.
- Some opticians work in association with ophthalmologists, optometrists or a group of optical practitioners.

### Average Hourly Wage

Source: <http://www.jobfutures.ca/noc/323.shtml>

\$17.28/ hour (average)

Salaries vary according to such factors such as experience, level of responsibility, seniority, size of company, size of city, etc.

## **4) Ophthalmic Medical Personnel (OMP)**

- Not a regulated health profession in Ontario
- Certification available through the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) [www.jcahpo.org](http://www.jcahpo.org)

### Role

Source: <http://www.eyesite.ca/english/public-information/eye-care-team.htm#anchor744834>

A qualified individual who carries out diagnostic and therapeutic procedures under the direction and supervision of a qualified ophthalmologist i.e.;

- Operating testing and measuring instruments to assess patient vision (including peripheral fields of vision)
- Recording test results and case histories
- Assisting ophthalmologists in office surgery
- Maintaining sterile equipment in the office
- Administering eye drops, ointments and medications as directed by physicians
- Assisting in fitting contact lenses
- Conducting tests designed to detect eye diseases
- Educating patients by explaining physicians' instructions (i.e., about home care or contact lens use)

### Educational Requirements

- OMAs come from varied backgrounds and have different levels of proficiency
- The Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology recognizes the Ophthalmic Assistant, the Ophthalmic Technician and the Ophthalmic Technologist levels of training
- 2 yr Ophthalmic Medical Technologist training program - University of Ottawa Eye Institute [www.eyeinstitute.net/subfiles/deptoph/OT.htm](http://www.eyeinstitute.net/subfiles/deptoph/OT.htm)
- Home study course for Ophthalmic Assistants available through Centennial College [http://db2.centennialcollege.ca/ce/search/FMPro?-db=cecertificate.fp5&-format=recordcert\\_detail.htm&-lay=search&-max=1&-find=&-op=eq&Certificate+Code=7934](http://db2.centennialcollege.ca/ce/search/FMPro?-db=cecertificate.fp5&-format=recordcert_detail.htm&-lay=search&-max=1&-find=&-op=eq&Certificate+Code=7934)
- For more information on OMA training in Canada: <http://www.jcahpo.org/Cma.htm>

## Skills/Qualities

### *Technical*

- Basic computer skills: word processing, internet, email, spreadsheet manipulation and database knowledge
- Operate ophthalmic instruments

### *Communication*

- Excellent oral and written communication skills

### *Other*

- Good manual dexterity and visual acuity
- Patient, courteous, pleasant manner
- Ability to interact confidently and reassuringly with patients
- Ability to educate and counsel patients
- Ability to maintain patient confidentiality
- Organizational and time management skills
- Compassionate personality
- Spatial and form perception
- Attention to detail, accurate
- Enjoy operating specialized instruments and working with people

## Typical Employers

- OMP may work in private clinics, hospitals, medical centers, or university research and training centers

## Average Hourly Wage

Depending on level of responsibility:

\$25,000/ year - \$50,000/year (average)

\$12.82/ hour – \$25.64/ hour (average)

Salaries vary according to such factors such as experience, level of responsibility, seniority, size of company, size of city, etc.

## **5) Other Positions in the Field**

Orthoptist: assist ophthalmologists in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders by performing specialized eye tests to measure and assess defective binocular vision or abnormal eye movement in patients and prescribing treatment such as eye exercises or patching regimens

<http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/2001/e/groups/3123.shtml>

Ocularist: design, fabricate and fit ocular prostheses and conformers, and may design and fabricate implants; paint the iris and pupil of artificial eyes; clean and restore ocular prostheses; advise patients concerning the loss of depth perception and the care and use of ocular prostheses; repair and maintain fabrication and laboratory equipment; and consult with ophthalmologists concerning insertion of ocular prostheses. <http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/2001/e/groups/3219.shtml>

## Instructor of the Blind and Visually Impaired

<http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/calendar/instructorBlindRehab.html>

- Employment opportunities may be found with community and residential agencies, school boards and residential schools, and as private contractors.

Optical Technicians: work in optical laboratories where they cut, grind and polish lenses to precise measurements, assemble eyeglass frames, fit lenses into frames and make minor adjustments. Optical technicians are trained on the job in optical prescription laboratories.

## **B) Labour Market Prospects**

As the post second world war 'baby boomers' age, the percentage of the population needing the services of vision care professionals will increase. As well, more Canadians are expected to have insurance coverage that includes an eyewear allowance.

*Source: Health Personnel Trends in Health Care (Optometrists), CIHI*

The combination of an aging Canadian population, the advent of new, sophisticated eye health treatments and procedures and knowledgeable health care consumers will place considerable strain on the provision of eye health care services in Canada.

Other factors that may influence demand include increased scope of practice for optometrists and a shortage of ophthalmologists available for secondary and tertiary eye care.

## **C) ITPs in the Field**

Ophthalmologists, general practitioners, family physicians, pediatricians and internists are most prepared for work in this field. They have experience in examining patients' eyes, conducting ophthalmoscopy, determining visual acuity, visual fields and tonometry.

## **D) Links**

### *Educational Institutions*

- University of Ottawa Eye Institute [www.eyeinstitute.net/subfiles/deptoph/OT.htm](http://www.eyeinstitute.net/subfiles/deptoph/OT.htm)
- University of Waterloo School of Optometry <http://www.optometry.uwaterloo.ca>
- Centennial College [http://db2.centennialcollege.ca/ce/search/FMPro?-db=cecertificate.fp5&-format=recordcert\\_detail.htm&-lay=search&-max=1&-find=&-op=eq&Certificate+Code=7934](http://db2.centennialcollege.ca/ce/search/FMPro?-db=cecertificate.fp5&-format=recordcert_detail.htm&-lay=search&-max=1&-find=&-op=eq&Certificate+Code=7934)
- Listing of Ophthalmic Medical Personnel education programs <http://www.jcahpo.org/Cma.htm>

### *Professional Organizations*

- Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) <http://www.eyesite.ca>
- College of Optometrists of Ontario <http://www.collegeoptom.on.ca>
- College of Opticians of Ontario <http://www.coptont.org>
- Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) [www.jcahpo.org](http://www.jcahpo.org)
- Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) [www.opticians.ca](http://www.opticians.ca)
- Optometric Assistant <http://www.opto.ca/assistants>

### *Related Web Sites*

- Job Futures information – Optometrists: <http://www1.on.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ojf/ojf.jsp?section=Profile&noc=3121&lang=e>
- Optician career article [http://www.canoe.ca/CareerConnectionNews/040204\\_health.html](http://www.canoe.ca/CareerConnectionNews/040204_health.html)