

Specsavers

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The vision to deliver exceptional training.

How Specsavers worked with Pearson to develop a bespoke training programme that will future-proof their business and motivate their people.

The Challenge

Specsavers, a famous name on the UK high street and a global eyecare leader, has been committed to delivering top-quality optometry, audiology, and healthcare services for 40 years.

With more than 46,000 employees across 2,293 stores and support functions worldwide, their dedication to staff development is unrivalled. Here in the UK, Specsavers require at least two trained Clinical Technicians in each of its 1,000 businesses. In 2023, it was clear that action was needed to increase the number of learners from 935 learners in a non-accredited training programme.

To meet their ambitious goals, Specsavers obtained board funding to offer 32,000 new qualifications over the next five years. They partnered with Pearson to create a customised qualification programme aimed at upskilling their staff.

The qualification includes units from the regulated Pearson BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Optometric Clinical Assistant and Dispensing Assistant. However, the unique aspect of the programme Pearson developed with them is its flexibility. Learners can choose units that best align with their roles and responsibilities, providing a tailored learning experience.

We spoke to Kirsteen Newman from Specsavers about this groundbreaking training programme and how they worked with Pearson to develop it.

1

Why did you develop this qualification?

Kirsteen Newman explains, "As the optics sector diversifies, the role of the Optical Assistant is diversifying with it. This qualification will support learners who want to develop a specialism in one or more services provided by the sector. Clinical Technicians are well placed to become instrumental in the provision of future developments and emerging services such as tele-optometry."

2

What sets this course apart?

Specsavers' new training programme is not offered by any other providers. It encourages optical assistants to specialise in one of three areas.

The qualification includes four core units and numerous additional units, allowing learners to create their own pathway based on their interests and skills. This unique role of Clinical Technician is a fresh addition to the sector, and this qualification ensures Specsavers' readiness for future industry developments.

The current Level 3 BTEC for Dispensing Assistants focuses on dispensing, which limits its applicability to the multifaceted role of optical colleagues. Specsavers wanted to offer accredited courses to all support staff, regardless of their role, formalising and standardising existing in-store processes. This standardised training leads to greater efficiency and supports the optometrist's role.

3

How does the course support career progression?

Specsavers encourages learners to advance to the regulated Level 4 BTEC, recognised by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, as a steppingstone to becoming a Dispensing Optician.

4

What impact will this qualification have on your business?

"In a rapidly evolving industry marked by technological advancements and evolving practices, we needed more flexibility for the expanding role of optical colleagues within Specsavers than existing Level 3 and 4 regulated BTECs could provide", explains Kirsteen. "Offering a suite of optional units allows learners to adapt their learning to their specific job roles. With an internal investment securing qualification access for 32,000 learners over the next five years, Specsavers is primed to meet the challenges of the future".