

# Dentistry

Obtaining a dental degree in the United Kingdom will guarantee you a qualification that is respected all over the world. You can be sure of top-quality teaching in institutions with an excellent worldwide reputation.

## Checklist: why study dentistry in the United Kingdom?

- UK institutions are renowned for their high standards, and your UK training will make you part of a leading world network.
- You will be surrounded by English speakers and will be able to improve your skills in the language – a passport to working in many different countries.
- Your UK qualification opens up a wealth of opportunities, such as working in practice, in hospitals, in community services, school services, research or university dental teaching.
- You can choose from a variety of connected careers in the same field.

## 1 Which career in dentistry should I choose?

In addition to dentistry, you can also study one of the related disciplines, such as dental therapy and dental hygiene. The table below describes the various options. The General Dental Council (GDC) website lists all programmes ([www.gdc-uk.org/Our+work/Education+and+qualiTrainingty+assurance/+course+providers/](http://www.gdc-uk.org/Our+work/Education+and+qualiTrainingty+assurance/+course+providers/)).

Career	What would I do?
<b>Dentist</b>	Prevent, identify and treat gum disease and tooth decay; design and fit dentures and plates; take corrective measures for teeth growing abnormally; perform mouth surgery.
<b>Dental hygienist</b>	Clean, polish and scale teeth; give preventative advice; prepare patients for oral operations; educate children and adults in dental care.
<b>Dental nurse</b>	Provide direct clinical assistance to dentist at the chair-side; handle all aspects of dental practice administration, from clerical tasks including patients' records, reception and keeping the books to care of dental instruments, preparation of fillings and processing X-rays.
<b>Dental technician and clinical dental technicians</b>	Design and fabricate crowns, dentures, metal plates, bridges, orthodontic braces and other appliances prescribed by dentists, using a wide variety of materials and equipment.
<b>Dental therapist</b>	Assist dentists by carrying out simple forms of treatment, such as fillings and taking out first teeth; give guidance on general dental care.

<b>Orthodontic therapist</b>	Assist dentists by carrying out simple forms of orthodontic treatment, such as taking impressions and adjusting orthodontic braces, and supporting dental work relating to teeth, jaws and face; give guidance on general dental care.
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## 2 What can I study?

### Undergraduate dentistry

Basic dental training consists of a full-time course leading to a Bachelor's degree (BDS or BChD). The degree course lasts for five years and includes an academic education supporting clinical practice of the care of patients. Graduates from UK dental schools must undertake a further year of vocational training (see [www.copdend.org.uk](http://www.copdend.org.uk) for further information of post-registration and vocational training), after registering with the GDC, before they can practise in the UK.

You can study undergraduate dentistry at 14 dental schools in the UK:

- Cardiff University
- King's College London (University of London)
- Newcastle University
- Peninsula Dental School (open from 2007)
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Dundee
- University of Glasgow
- University of Leeds
- University of Liverpool (including four-year graduate entry programme in collaboration with the University of Central Lancashire)
- University of Manchester
- University of Sheffield.


Some dental schools offer a 'pre-dental' year for students with high grades at A-level but lacking relevant science subjects. It is essential to check the entry requirements of the university to which you wish to apply.

Applicants with a degree can be considered for entry on to five-year standard degree courses. They will normally need to hold an upper-second class degree and must usually also have A-level grades close to an institution's standard requirements. There are also a few four-year accelerated degrees for graduates who hold a degree (at least at upper-second class level) in a degree with a large element of biology and chemistry. Graduates with a degree in biomedical science may also be considered.

### Undergraduate dental care professions

Undergraduate dental care professional programmes are offered by the schools listed above and, in addition, the following:

- Castle College, Nottingham
- City of Liverpool Community College
- Defence Dental Services Training Establishment (UK services personnel only)
- De Montfort University
- Eastman Dental Hospital, University College London
- Edinburgh Dental Institute
- NHS Education Scotland, Inverness
- Lambeth College
- Langside College, Glasgow
- University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham
- Salford Primary Care Trust
- School of Dental Technology, Royal Group of Hospitals, Belfast

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- The Sheffield College, Sheffield
  - Telford College, Edinburgh
  - University of Essex
  - University of Portsmouth
  - University of Warwick

Some professional associations produce excellent summary information for potential students, such as the Dental Laboratories Association's handbook for dental technologists ([www.dla.org.uk/education/](http://www.dla.org.uk/education/)).

## Postgraduate dental training

There are a variety of opportunities for postgraduate education and training in dentistry. Before you can undertake any form of clinical training, i.e. training involving hands-on contact with patients, you must register with the GDC.

Opportunities in hospital training programmes are generally awarded in open competition with applications from UK trainees. As a result there is very considerable competition for places. There are diploma courses available that can be taken as part of this hospital experience, but generally, completion of these programmes is dependent on obtaining at least part of the required clinical experience in a post obtained at a competitive interview for a UK training programme.

Dental schools/hospitals run postgraduate programmes that are available to international postgraduate students. There are a wide range of programmes available, including clinical and non-clinical courses, and research degree programmes.

Advice and guidance on postgraduate programmes, particularly for international students / workers, is available from the National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education (NACPDE): [www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde). There are a wide variety of postgraduate courses for dental care professionals offered by over 80 organisations, which are listed at Learndirect ([www.learndirect-advice.co.uk/findacourse/](http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk/findacourse/)).

Some schools offer postgraduate programmes via distance learning. Check the prospectuses of individual schools for up-to-date information.

## Specialist dental training

To enter specialist training, graduates first have to hold an MFDS Diploma (Member of Faculty of Dental Surgery). Details of this can be found on the Faculty of Dental Surgery website – [www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds). There is then competitive entry into Specialist Registrar training programmes.

### Checklist: choosing the right course

- Start your search on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) but always obtain prospectuses from all the institutions you are considering applying to.
- If you are a qualified dentist interested in pursuing postgraduate studies in the UK, your best source of advice is the National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education (NACPDE), [www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde).
- Dental training in the UK is tightly regulated and all dental schools will conform to the same high standards.
- Bear in mind other factors, such as prospective supervisors, the location and size of the institution and available facilities.

## Entrance

The table below gives a general indication of entry requirements. There are no national guidelines about the equivalence of international qualifications to UK ones. You should contact the institutions you are interested in to check the acceptability of your particular qualifications. Some information can be obtained from the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) – see [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk).

Career	Qualifications
<b>Dentist</b>	Competition for places is fierce and three good grades in appropriate A-levels or Scottish Highers or their equivalent will be needed. Some schools now offer graduate entry programmes for applicants completing appropriate (normally biomedically-related) degree courses. About half of UK schools will additionally require applicants to have achieved an appropriate score in the new UKCAT test.
<b>Dental hygienist</b>	A diploma in dental hygiene entails a full-time, two-year course at a dental hospital. To be accepted on a course you need at least five GCSE (Scottish CE) passes, including English and a biological science, plus either two years' experience as a dental nurse, with a nationally recognised qualification in dental nursing, or two A-levels, or equivalent.
<b>Dental nurse</b>	There are no academic qualifications needed to work as a dental nurse. You can train to be a dental nurse in several ways. Some dental hospitals and further education colleges run full-time, one-year or two-year courses leading either to the National Certificate or to the hospital's own examination. In addition, you must have completed two years' practical experience.  There are two national qualifications – the National Certificate and NVQ.
<b>Dental technician</b>	Edexcel (BTEC) diploma in dental technology: a full-time, three-year course, also available part-time. Entry requirements are five GCSEs (Scottish CEs) or equivalent, including English, mathematics, physics and chemistry. Foundation degrees and BSc (Hons) programmes are also available from several institutions.
<b>Dental therapist</b>	A full-time course lasting 27 months. Applicants should hold the national certificate for dental nurses, which requires at least two years' practical experience. A minimum of five GCSE passes (or equivalent) are also needed for entry, but as competition is fierce, you would probably be asked for higher qualifications.
<b>Orthodontic therapist</b>	As dental therapist, specialising in orthodontics.

### UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

From June 2006 onwards, for entrance to medicine or dentistry courses in September 2007 and later, nine dental and 27 medical schools in the UK will be using the UKCAT (registration opens in about May each year) to supplement traditional measures of achievement. It will form only one part of the selection process and each school will determine the weight given to results. Check individual university websites or UKCAT ([www.ukcat.ac.uk/home/aboutus/who-ukcat](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk/home/aboutus/who-ukcat)) to find out whether you will be required to sit the test.

### Health requirements

It is important that students, as far as possible, are protected from infectious diseases that could be contracted from their patients. Similarly, dental schools have a duty of care to the patients with whom dental students come into close contact during their studies. Consequently, dental schools require entrants to produce satisfactory evidence of immunisation against hepatitis B and non-infectivity for hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

## 3 How can I register as a professional?

Before you can work as a dentist, dental hygienist or dental technician or undertake any form of clinical training in the UK, you must be registered with the GDC. Registration may be full or temporary. For further information about registration, see [www.gdc-uk.org/Potential+registrant](http://www.gdc-uk.org/Potential+registrant).

From summer 2008 onwards, dental nurses, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians and dental technicians must be registered with the GDC in order to practise in the UK.

### Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

UK qualifications are widely recognised, but you should always check with the countries in which you want to work.



## 4 Next steps

### Checklist: your next steps

- Check the entrance requirements for the courses you are interested in. Do you need to sit the UKCAT [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk) admission test?
- Check that you have the necessary English language ability. For undergraduate courses this will usually be an IELTS (International English Language Testing System: [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)) score of 6.0 to 6.5 while for a postgraduate course an IELTS score of 6.5 to 7.0 may be required. Ask your local British Council office where and when you can take the test.
- Apply for Higher National Diploma and first degree courses through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). See [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) for more information. For other courses, apply to the institution direct.
- For first degree courses in dentistry you must apply through UCAS by 15 October the year before you wish to start the course. This is three months earlier than the UCAS deadline for other courses. You can apply to a maximum of four dental schools or courses.

## 5 What else do I need to know?

The regulations for entry into the UK are constantly changing and it is vital that you check the Home Office UK Border Agency website ([www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)) on a regular basis and check locally with your British Mission so you are aware of how UK immigration procedures will affect you.

With the introduction of the new Australian-style points based system you will need to keep even more up to date with the new immigration system changes when applying for a visa or work permit. For information on the points based system go to: [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/managingmigration/apointsbasedsystem/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/managingmigration/apointsbasedsystem/).

For advice on working in the UK: [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk).

For advice about visas: [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk).

For practical advice on living in the UK look at *Studying and living in the UK* at [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org).

## 6 Where can I find more information?

The British Council has produced the Education UK portfolio to provide international students with a wide range of information and guidance that will help them find out more about studying a UK course and other important issues, such as applying to study, entry clearance and living in the UK. The portfolio includes:

- the Education UK website and a number of country websites containing locally relevant information – [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)
- *Your guide to: UK Undergraduate and pre-university\**; *Postgraduate and MBA\**
- *Your guide to: UK universities, colleges and schools handbook\**
- *Club UK\** magazine, also available online at [www.educationuk.org/clubuk](http://www.educationuk.org/clubuk)
- *Postgraduate UK magazine\**.

\* The publications are available at a selected number of British Council offices for students to use.

The Education UK websites are a valuable source of information, with a database of over 450,000 courses and profiles of institutions that contain details of entry requirements and course fees; some offer a virtual tour of their campus.



**Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)**

PO Box 28  
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0)87 1486 046  
E-mail [enquiries@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucas.ac.uk)  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

**General Dental Council (GDC)**

37 Wimpole Street  
London W1G 8DQ

Telephone +44 (0)84 5222 4141  
Fax +44 (0)20 7224 3294  
E-mail [information@gdc-uk.org](mailto:information@gdc-uk.org)  
[www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)

**British Dental Association (BDA)**

64 Wimpole Street  
London W1G 8YS

Telephone +44 (0)20 7935 0875  
Fax +44 (0)20 7487 5232  
E-mail [enquiries@bda-dm.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bda-dm.org.uk)  
[www.bda-dentistry.org.uk](http://www.bda-dentistry.org.uk)

**National Advice Centre for Post Graduate Dental Education (NACPDE)**

Faculty of Dental Surgery  
Royal College of Surgeons of England  
35–43 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London WC2A 3PE

Telephone +44 (0)20 7869 6804  
Fax +44 (0)20 7869 6816  
E-mail [nacpde@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:nacpde@rcseng.ac.uk)  
[www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde)

**The British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT)**

3 Kestrel Court  
Waterwells Drive  
Waterwells Business Park  
Gloucester GL2 2AT

Telephone: + 44 (0)87 0243 0752  
Fax: + 44 (0)87 0243 0752  
[www.bsdht.org.uk](http://www.bsdht.org.uk)

**National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN)**

110 London Street  
Fleetwood  
Lancashire FY7 6EU

**British Association of Dental Nurses**

PO Box 4, Room 200  
Hillhouse International Business Centre  
Thornton Cleveleys  
Lancashire FY5 4QD

Telephone +44 (0)87 0211 0113  
E-mail [admin@badn.org.uk](mailto:admin@badn.org.uk)  
[www.badn.org.uk](http://www.badn.org.uk)

**British Association of Dental Therapists**

24 Boundary Street  
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Wales NP23 4EX

Telephone +44 (0)14 9531 0946  
E-mail [training@badt.org.uk](mailto:training@badt.org.uk)  
[www.badt.org.uk](http://www.badt.org.uk)

**British Institute of Dental and Surgical Technologists (BIDST)**

4 Thompson Green  
Shipley  
West Yorkshire BD17 7PR

Telephone +44 (0)84 5644 3726  
[www.bidst.org](http://www.bidst.org)

**The Dental Technologists Association (DTA)**

Waterwells Drive  
Waterwells Business Park  
Gloucester GL2 2AT

Telephone +44 (0)87 0243 0753  
E-mail [sueadams@dta-uk.org](mailto:sueadams@dta-uk.org)  
[www.dta-uk.org](http://www.dta-uk.org)

**British Dental Practice Managers' Association (BDPMA)**

3 Kestrel Court  
Waterwells Drive  
Waterwells Business Park  
Gloucester GL2 2AT

Telephone +44 (0)14 5288 6364  
Fax +44 (0)14 5288 6468  
E-mail [info@bdpma.org.uk](mailto:info@bdpma.org.uk)  
[www.bdpma.org.uk](http://www.bdpma.org.uk)

**Skills for Health**

2nd Floor, Goldsmiths House  
Broad Plain  
Bristol BS2 0JP



Telephone +44 (0)12 5377 8417  
Fax +44 (0)12 5377 7268  
E-mail [info@nebdn.org.uk](mailto:info@nebdn.org.uk)  
[www.nebdn.org.uk](http://www.nebdn.org.uk)

### **Learn Direct Careers Advice**

Dearing House  
1 Young Street  
Sheffield S1 4UP

Telephone +44 (0)80 0100 900  
[www.learn-direct-advice.co.uk](http://www.learn-direct-advice.co.uk)

Telephone +44 (0)11 7922 1155  
Fax +44 (0)11 7925 1800  
E-mail [office@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:office@skillsforhealth.org.uk)  
[www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

### **Unistats**

The official website to help you compare subjects at universities and colleges in the UK.

[www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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