DFT in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

This chapter answers your questions about DFT in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It outlines the curriculum, the recruitment process, your contract, how you will be assessed and much more.

Double check dates and deadlines
The dates and deadlines in this booklet for England, Wales and Northern Ireland DFT recruitment must be checked on copdend.org.uk

What is Dental Foundation Training?
A year of dental foundation training (or DF1 as it is often referred to) is mandatory if you want to work in the NHS. In the NHS, across the UK, Foundation Dentists (FDs) spend a year in approved practices, working on standard contracts whilst undertaking training. Dental Foundation Training aims to provide new graduates with a broad overview of career choices and a good understanding of the NHS system.

DFT introduces new graduates to general practice, giving them a protected environment to work in for a year. Each FD has a trainer dentist, officially known as an ‘educational supervisor’ (ES), in their practice. In some practices, two dentists may share the ES role. The ES provides the FD with supervision and help whenever it is needed, as well as meeting with the FD for regular tutorials. The ES takes responsibility for the acts and omissions of the FD in NHS terms, but the FD, as a registered dentist, will be liable for their conduct and for patient wellbeing.

The dental foundation training programme is based on a centralised document, the DFT Curriculum. The latest version was published in 2015 and is now the basis for training and for future initiatives linked to DFT. View the updated curriculum at copdend.org.uk.

Participants on the scheme work with an online portfolio. Formative assessment is extensively used as part of this. A system of ‘satisfactory completion of DFT’ also called ‘review of competence progression’ or ‘RCP’ is also in place.

What is Dental Core Training?
After you have completed DFT, there is also the option to continue training in ‘dental core training’ posts (DCT) which is useful for extended learning. Dental core training is required for specialty training. Those interested in future specialisation need three years in total to get on to SrR training. (FD + DCT1 + DCT2).

How does dental training compare to medical training?
Medical training is different to dental training. Medical Foundation Training is two years, compared to one year for dental graduates; and dental graduates are fully registered from graduation, whereas doctors have provisional registration for the first year. Medical Core Training forms part of specialty training, i.e. StR1-3 is equivalent to Dental Core Training. StR4-x is equivalent to ‘Registrar’ level.

Who runs DFT?
DFT and VT schemes are the local responsibility of the postgraduate dental dean/director. DFT/VT study day courses are organised by DFT/VT training programme directors who report to the deans/directors. In Scotland these are known as the Director of Postgraduate General Dental Practice Education and General Practice Vocational Training Adviser.

Terminology often changes and in England deaneries are now under the auspices of Health Education England and referred to as ‘HEE offices’. Deaneries continue to exist in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Therefore throughout the remainder of this guide deaneries in England will now be referred to as HEE offices, while the term ‘deanery’ is used for the devolved countries.

DFT and DCT
DFT is available in all HEE offices/deaneries and, while there is a centralised curriculum, its delivery is based on the organisations’ own systems and procedures.

In most areas it will consist of a year’s DFT in general dental practice, which UK graduates have to complete in order to work in an NHS general dental practice. Additional training years are now referred to as ‘Dental Core Training’ (DCT) and are optional. These posts are aimed at developing elements of primary and secondary care in a variety of settings. Some HEE offices/deaneries may also use schemes which alternate between a practice and hospital setting on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. If this is completed during foundation training then these programmes are generally two-year programmes often referred to as ‘longitudinal training’ which covers DFT and DCT1.

DFT application process
DFT places are allocated through a centralised process (more information on this is available below). You must check the COPDEND and HEE London and South East’s websites for information and formal guidance (their applicant guidance is published after this guide is printed).

DCT application process
Since 2017, DCT recruitment is also being undertaken through a national process which mirrors that of DFT to a large extent. Applications usually open in January, with assessments in March and place allocations in May.

To find out more visit copdend.org.uk

We lobby the Department of Health intensively for appropriate funding of DFT places.
Dental Vocational Training in Scotland

Dental Vocational Training in Scotland operates under a separately organised scheme from that in the rest of the UK. It is organised and administered on a Scotland-wide basis by NHS Education Scotland (NES). Full details of the recruitment process, including application deadlines, are made available on the NES website prior to the launch of recruitment at nes.scot.nhs.uk.

New or recent graduates from UK dental schools must complete a one year programme of Dental Vocational Training (often known as Vocational Training) in order to be eligible to hold a Health Board list number in Scotland. The list number allows dentists to work as Health Board contractors in NHS General Dental Practice.

In Scotland, new graduates on training programmes are known as Vocational Dental Practitioners (VDPs). Training is centred on approved training practices with a complementary educational support programme of normally 25 study days.

Training practices are visited to ensure that high standards are maintained and a dentist in each training practice is identified as the trainer and employer of the VDP.

Longitudinal two-year scheme
There are no longer any longitudinal schemes in Scotland at the time of writing. The former schemes have now ended.

Rosemary Cunning, a Glasgow dental school graduate, gives her advice on applying for VT in Scotland.

When applying for a VT position in Scotland it is important that you are yourself. The application process is slightly different to England, Wales and NI and it gives you more opportunity to interact with your trainer as part of the interview. In your VT interview it is important to give a true impression of who you are and what interests you. You will be working closely with the people in your VT practice and you don’t want to have to keep up a charade for a whole year! You want to show the interviewer your best qualities, but make sure you are genuine – you don’t want to come across as too forward or false.

When looking for a VT job it is a two-way process. It is essential that you feel you can work with the person who could potentially be training you. Do not just choose a position based on location or hearsay – you want to enjoy working with your trainer and the whole team on a daily basis. VT is a year when you enhance your skills greatly and it is vital you make the most of it.

VT recruitment process
Applications are made through an online recruitment process via the NES Portal (portal.scot.nhs.uk) and must be made by the stated deadline. You must contact NES directly for the 2019/20 deadlines.

At this stage the information required is very basic and captures personal and university information such as contact details, university attended and expected date of graduation. They require a non-dental school email (but preferably not a Hotmail account).

Visitation period – interviews
Each training practice will have a practice prospectus within the NES Portal; these are usually uploaded in the spring. Candidates can use this information to plan which training practices they wish to visit during the visitation period. Since 2017/18, the allocation process has been undertaken after the results of finals are known. This leaves little time to sort out health board numbers and make other arrangements, so do take early advice and ensure you know what you need to do.

There will be detailed information about the practice and staff, as well as information on how the prospective trainer prefers to be contacted by applicants. It is important to look at all practices before deciding which ones to apply to, then visit those that you are interested in. Some travel expenses might be paid in some regions, subject to prior agreement from NES.

It is also important to make sure your CV is up to date, as you will need to provide it to the practices in which you are interested. Please see the ‘CV writing’ chapter of this guide for advice on writing a compelling CV.

Matching
Scotland operates a ‘matching’ scheme in which applicants and training practices are put together based on preferences given to NES. This means the students rank the practices in the order they want to work for them, and the practices rank the students in order of preference.

Applicants rank the practices at the end of the visitation period. This is done by completing a preference form via the NES Portal and must be completed by the stated deadline. You can rank up to five practices and trainers list up to seven students. It is important that you don’t rank any in which you are not prepared to train, as you may be matched with them.

As in the rest of the UK, this process is highly competitive. Limiting your choices will limit your chances of being matched.
Interview skills

In this section, Helen Falcon MBE gives her advice on how to prepare for your DFT selection centre. This includes what to expect on the day, example assessment scenarios and Situational Judgement Test questions.

The assessment process in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is not an interview in the traditional sense and comprises three separate elements:

- Observed Clinical Communication station with a role player
- Professionalism, Management and Leadership (PML) station with two interviewers
- Situational Judgement Test (SJT).

For the third year running, the SJT will be delivered online at local Driving Test Centres around the UK. This will happen a few weeks in advance of the interviews - which are held between 31 October and 8 November 2019. You will be expected to book your own slot with the local centre, plus take ID documents and a reference number allocated by the Oriel system with you to the centre.

National Recruitment Process

Foundation Dentists were recruited nationally for the first time in 2011 and the process is refined each year. Stage 1 of the process (selection centre) is held in November and Stage 2 (allocation to training practices by HEE offices/deaneries) takes place in June 2020, following publication of results of BDS finals.

- Information on schemes and the person specification is available on the COPDEND website copdend.org and the recruitment website oriel.nhs.uk
- The COPDEND website copdend.org.uk should in due course have a practice SJT paper with detailed rationale to the answers.

Interviews – selection centres

The selection centre exercises are not a test of your academic or clinical knowledge – they are designed to assess how you will approach your working day with real people.

The basis for all the exercises is found in the person specification for the DFT role. All exercises are based entirely on real life scenarios and situations that you might encounter as a FD.

Use your common sense and don’t try to be too clever. The key is to apply the knowledge you have learnt over your student years to real-life scenarios.

It would be surprising if you didn’t find this a stressful experience, but remember there are no tricks or deliberate traps and the exercises have been designed to ensure that every applicant is given the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

The purpose of the process is to gain information so that applicants for DFT jobs can be fairly ranked. Most applicants cross the threshold. It’s rarely about pass or fail – it is about your performance when compared with other applicants. Those who rank highest have more choice at the next stage. You will be nervous – that’s a normal response to a difficult situation – expect it and work with it.

Probably one of the most difficult aspects to manage is the restricted time available to complete the tasks. It can really help to practise with friends and become familiar with the format.

What is being assessed?

Assessors will be looking for evidence of your application of clinical knowledge and sound clinical judgement to problems and an ability to:

- Prioritise clinical need
- Understand clinical risk management
- Demonstrate clear logical thinking, showing an analytical approach
- Demonstrate understanding of evidence-informed practice
- Show awareness of your own limitations
- Show initiative/drive/enthusiasm (be a self-starter, motivated, show curiosity, communicate with others)
- Take in others’ perspectives and treat others with understanding.

Communication skills

You will be assessed on your:

- Capacity to adapt language as appropriate to the situation
- Use a non-judgmental approach to patients and colleagues (regardless of their sexuality, ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religious beliefs or financial status).

Management skills

Your capacity and ability for organisation and planning will be assessed.

- Managing/prioritising time and information effectively
Clinical Communications station (with actor)

Here are five indicative scenarios that you can practise, together with some suggested answers and strategies.

1. Jude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting the scene (You have five minutes to read this section)</th>
<th>What the assessor(s) is looking for</th>
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<td>A 25-year-old, Jude, attends for an emergency appointment on Monday morning, complaining of pain from broken front teeth sustained in a trip and fall accident into the fireplace on Saturday. The patient is an office worker and occasional attender at the practice, having last attended for a check-up and hygiene appointment two years previously. There is no previous relevant medical history. On examination, they are found to have purple bruises above the right eye and below the left eye. There is no obvious bony fracture and they have a mild Class 2 Division 1 occlusion. All teeth are present other than LL8, LL4, LR4, LR8, UR8, UR4, UL4 and UL8. BPE is 2 in all sextants. There are no obvious caries but both the upper central incisors are fractured, with UL1 fractured diagonally into dentine and UR1 appears to have possible pulp involvement.</td>
<td>The basics – introduce yourself. Check how the patient wishes to be addressed. You have assumed nothing. Your task is to establish the facts by listening and then effectively communicate the appropriate advice. You should: • Provide reassurance and empathise. Speak slowly and don’t use clinical jargon • Show that you are aware that the patient has suffered a traumatic injury, ask about how they are feeling and what they would like you to do. Ask if they have consulted a doctor or dentist or A&amp;E for advice over the weekend • Check the facts • You should ask them to explain exactly what has happened, when and where. Allow the patient to tell the story in their own words and practise active listening • Do not interrupt • Summarise what you have just been told and then explain what you are going to do next • Establish any critical facts and carry out any tests needed to enable the best outcome.</td>
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<th>The task (You have ten minutes)</th>
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<td>Using appropriate language and communication techniques, discuss the issue with the patient and advise about suitable care.</td>
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The interview
## SJT question 2

### Setting the scene

A mother comes in with her daughter who is 16-years-old. The daughter has marked erosion of her palatal surfaces and is experiencing sensitivity from her teeth. The daughter has in the past shared with you that she is bulimic but does not want her mother to know. The mother wants to know what has caused the situation. What will you do?

### Select the three most appropriate responses

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<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Treat the condition and tell the mother you cannot discuss the issue with her due to patient confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Treat the condition and advise the mother that these things happen and not to worry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Treat the condition and talk in general terms about possible causes of erosion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Treat the condition and tell the mother the cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Advise the mother to ask her daughter about it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Tell them both that you would like to see the daughter on her own now that she is 16.</td>
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<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>Suggest the daughter should go to see her GP and offer to refer her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>Suggest to the daughter she tell her mother about the bulimia.</td>
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### Expected response

**Rationale for response:**

- **C.** This allows you to act in the patient’s best interests while maintaining confidentiality and giving information that is true.
- **F.** As a young adult it is appropriate to see the patient alone if she wishes and maintain confidentiality.
- **G.** This is a patient safety issue. There is an underlying medical issue that should be investigated and treated.
- **A.** This option allows you to explain your reasons for not fully answering the mother’s questions but may compromise your relationship with the patient.
- **B.** This is not acceptable because it’s untrue and misleading.
- **D.** This is not appropriate because you are not abiding by GDC guidance about maintaining patient confidentiality.
- **E.** This action would imply that the daughter is hiding something, which would compromise your relationship and may not ultimately be in her best interest.
- **H.** Whilst this would allow the patient to decide how much information she wants to share with her mother, it may not promote her access to medical treatment as quickly as a GP referral.
Scotlan

Preparing for your interview

To stand out from the crowd it is important that you properly prepare for your interview. This section outlines the research you need to carry out prior to your interview.

Research the practice

Prior to your practice visits:
- Make sure you read and save the information for each practice you apply to
- Visit the practice website, or if it is close to you, go and have a look at the practice from the outside.

Research the role

Carefully read the person and job specification for the role. This is provided on the NES website. In the interview it is important that you show that you are able to match the person and job specification.

Skills that trainers are looking for include:
- Team working
- Communicating aspects of dentistry to different people
- Your approach to keeping up to date professionally and clinically
- Working within your competency and knowing when to ask for help.

Interview questions

Before your interview you should think about the kind of questions you may be asked. You should also think about the questions you would like to ask the interviewer.

Your strengths and weaknesses

Think about your own strengths and weaknesses. This is a popular interview question, so it is wise to consider it before going into the pressure of an interview. It is important that you give an example to demonstrate each of your strengths.

STAR method

The STAR method is a useful tool to help you prepare your answers. This helps you to structure the example or scenario that you talk about to demonstrate your strengths.

S – Set the scene
T – What was the task/problem?
A – What action did you take?
R – What was the result?

Weaknesses

People are generally very good at talking about their strengths, but less so about their weaknesses. Weaknesses however don’t always have to be negative; they can often be turned into positives, providing the opportunity for further training or professional and/or personal development.

Amit Patel gives his advice on things to consider when researching potential practices.

- Geographical location and the surrounding area – could you see yourself living close by?
- Number of years as a trainer – if they have done it for a long time, there is a reason
- Number of years qualified – new school versus old school: there are pros and cons for each.
- Personality – choose a trainer that makes you feel comfortable, as this will help to make VT an enjoyable year
- The trainer’s special interests and social interests – do they match yours?
- Don’t be put off by unappealing types of work. Your VT year is about experience and the more you do, the better you’ll be
- Large practice versus small practice – some people like the idea of always having someone around to bounce ideas off, however, some may not like the busy nature of a large practice
- Check facilities – from rotary endo to car parking availability.
Getting your first job
2019–20
The BDA guide to Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training recruitment

Updated for 2019-20, this guide is designed to help with the next step on your dental career path – securing your first job.

Dr Helen Falcon MBE, former Postgraduate Dental Dean and former Chair of COPDEND, gives guidance on preparing for your Dental Foundation Training assessment. This includes practice scenarios and essential information about how to succeed in the Situational Judgement Tests.

Dr Alasdair Miller, former Postgraduate Dean for the South-West and former member of COPDEND, delivers a useful framework for approaching the interactive stations.

Jeff Ellis, a Vocational Trainer from Scotland, gives interview tips for Scottish Vocational Training candidates. The guide also contains examples of potential questions you may be asked in Scottish interviews, plus helpful guidance on choosing a practice.