



**EXPLORING  
A CAREER IN  
DENTISTRY**



**EVER WONDERED  
WHAT IT COULD  
BE LIKE TO WORK  
AS A DENTIST?**

Maybe, you're already considering it and want to know more?

**You're in the right place.**

The focus of dental care is prevention; educating and supporting people to help them look after their mouths and teeth. Dentistry provides an opportunity to work in a career that is challenging, provides a service to society and holds a respected place in the community.

Essential qualities for someone considering dentistry include a liking for people and an interest in their welfare, being able to work with a team, and manual dexterity.





# DENTAL



## ***STUDYING TO BECOME A DENTIST***



Dentistry is a popular degree course and competition is extremely high.

There are many entry points into study, as well as various entry requirements, depending on which route you choose to start your career.

Open the fold out page to read more on entry to university straight after school, as well as maybe a little later in life.

You can also visit the Dental Schools Council page to read more:

[dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk](http://dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk)

## Key entry methods into study

# OPTION 1

## Undergraduate dental school

You may consider going straight to university to study when you finish school.

### DEGREE

#### FIVE YEARS

**Bachelor in Dental Surgery**  
(BDS or BChD)

### WHERE TO STUDY

There are 12 dental schools in the UK that offer the five-year course.

### STUDY STRUCTURE

Dental schools vary their approach but generally:

**Years 1 and 2** are to study dental theory.

**Year 3** onward, students commence clinical learning under supervision.

(Some dental schools offer supervised clinical contact in first year).

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Each dental school sets their entry grades and requirements.

Generally, biology and chemistry are essential. Some dental schools will require other sciences, and others will also stipulate requirements at AS and GCSE level.

All dental schools want to see a minimum of two weeks work experience in dental practice, and preferably more – this is a self-propelled initiative, so get cracking!

Some candidates may be asked to sit the UKCAT, a computer-based clinical aptitude test.

Find out more about studying dentistry, at the UCAS website:



## OPTION 2

### Graduate-entry dental school

An alternate route is to complete a related bachelor's degree before going into dentistry as a mature student. Someone may choose to study another degree prior to dentistry, if their grades do not meet entry requirements, or they don't get into their chosen dental school. (Competition is extremely high to study dentistry!)

#### DEGREE

##### FOUR OR FIVE YEARS

##### Bachelor in Dental Surgery

(BDS or BChD)

(Following a relevant bachelor's degree, which is approximately 3-4 years).

#### WHERE TO STUDY

There are four, competitive dental schools in the UK that offer the four-year, graduate-entry course.

Another option is to complete the five-year graduate entry course at one of the other universities.

#### STUDY STRUCTURE

Generally, students will complete **Year 1** of dental theory.

**Year 2** onward, students commence clinical learning under supervision.

(Some dental schools offer supervised clinical contact in first year).

#### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Each dental school sets their entry requirements.

A bachelor's degree in a relevant field of study for example, biomedical sciences, is required to get into the graduate-entry course.

All dental schools want to see a minimum of two weeks work experience in dental practice, and preferably more – this is a self-propelled initiative, so get cracking!

Some candidates may be asked to sit the UKCAT, a computer-based clinical aptitude test.

Find out more about studying dentistry, at the UCAS website:





## **TRAINING AFTER QUALIFYING AS A DENTIST**

There are a few things you'll have to do before becoming an independent practitioner:



### **After graduation**

You'll need to register with the General Dental Council, the regulatory body of dentistry that offers guidance on a variety of issues and sets regulations you must adhere to when you're all official as a dentist. This is an important step in getting your professional license to practice dentistry in the UK.



### **Foundation training**

As a newly qualified dentist, you'll be required to undertake one year of foundation training (or vocational training in Scotland). This year will set you up to understand how practices work and are run, with emphasis on NHS regulations, clinical governance and business administration. You'll also get the opportunity to practice your clinical skills and learn on the job, under the supervision of others.



It's all about



teeth

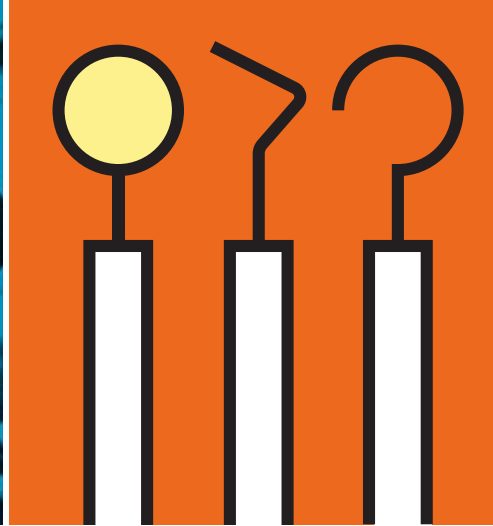


### Dental core training

There is an increasingly popular option of a second year of foundation training, called dental core training. At least part of this year is spent in hospital, and it is there to give dentists exposure to the different environments, so you could also be working in a community clinic or a variety of other settings. The second year is also preparation for those who wish to specialise in any area of dentistry.



While you're in training and interviewing for roles, the BDA will check your employment contract (which outlines your pay rates and responsibilities) to make sure it's fair. Getting a contract checked can be costly but with our student membership, it's free!



## BEING A DENTIST

Once training is complete, you can choose the dental environment you would most like to work in.

Providing dental care is a team responsibility, and each member of the dental team has a vital role to play in the promotion and maintenance of dental health. The life of a dentist is one working alongside dental nurses and hygienists to dental technicians and therapists, receptionists, and managers.

### Life in general practice

The majority of dentists work in general practice. This can either be NHS or private, or more often a mix of both. To work in general practice, you'll need to be registered on a local list called a performers list, and abide by NHS rules and regulations.

### Working privately

There is a growing number of practices outside of the NHS. They set their own fees and can perform the full range of treatments. Sometimes practices specialise in a certain area of dentistry, see to the right.

### Hospital dentistry

Hospital dentists treat patients with more complex dental problems, often undertaking operations or looking after patients who have other medical problems which aren't easily treated in practice.

### Community dentistry

Dentists in this area focus on treating patients that can not necessarily access general practice, for example those with phobias, learning difficulties or physical disabilities. Community dentists are usually employed rather than running their own business.





There are various areas you can specialise in:

- **General dentistry** (handle a wide range of complaints and treatments)
- **Cosmetic dentistry** (work on enhancing facial appearance, eg teeth whitening)
- **Endodontics** (focus on internal workings of the teeth, eg root canal)
- **Orthodontics** (deal with fixing misalignments of teeth and/or jaw with corrective devices, eg braces)
- **Prosthodontics** (carry out restorative work to fix missing teeth or a congenital defect, eg fitting implants, veneers, and crowns)
- **Periodontics** (focus on the diagnosis and treatment of gum disease)
- **Oral and maxillofacial surgery** (explore both dentistry and medicine through surgical procedures).



Even after you're qualified, dentists must keep their knowledge and skills up to date through continuing professional development (CPD). The BDA offers an extensive range of courses in person and online, making it easier to clock these hours up.

Dentistry is an interesting and challenging vocation and offers a range of opportunities and a commitment to life-long learning. The diagnostic, clinical and social skills required help to influence the future of oral and dental health is highly valued. Everyone would agree that the ability to smile, eat and talk without pain, discomfort or embarrassment contributes greatly to a sense of well-being.

You can play a part in that story.



# BDA

British Dental Association

## ABOUT US

The BDA is the voice of dentists and dental students in the UK. We have been protecting dentists since 1880 and support our members every step of their professional lives. We influence UK governments, promote standards for dentistry and champion oral health.

As a trade union and professional body, we represent all fields of dentistry including general practice, community dental services, the armed forces, hospitals, academia, public health, and research.

We're also a membership organisation offering advice, training hours, indemnity insurance and more for practicing dentists. We're owned and run by our members, and all our income is reinvested for the benefit of the profession.

[bda.org/careers](https://bda.org/careers)

Check out our dental careers podcast that dives further into careers in dentistry; Search for BDA Chairside® on your chosen podcast platform.

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