

Getting into Dentistry as a Graduate: Key Points

Entry requirements

- The usual entry requirements for a 5-year undergraduate degree in dentistry are a minimum of two, preferably three, science A-levels - or equivalent - at top grades (often AAA or AAB) including chemistry and at least one other from biology, physics and maths. Some dental schools offer science foundation courses (a pre-dental year) for suitable candidates with a non-science background. This preliminary course in chemistry, physics and biology precedes the 5 year degree course.
- Graduate entry onto 5-year dentistry courses is possible in most cases, usually with a high 2:1 minimum in a science based degree. Some dental schools may admit graduates from any degree discipline onto the 5-year course, as long as A-levels (or equivalent) in sciences, including chemistry, have been passed with high grades.
- Dental schools including Aberdeen, King's College London, Liverpool and UCLAN now offer a 4-year 'fast track' degree specifically for graduates with a good honours degree (usually high 2.1 minimum) in a biomedically related or health professional subject. Some fast-track courses are only open to UK/EU nationals due to the way in which they are funded so always check with the dental school first.
- A few dental schools might consider a graduate with a 2.2 if they have then successfully achieved a highly graded Masters or PhD, others won't. Always check with individual schools.
- Competition for places at dental schools in the UK is strong and entry requirements vary at each. For more information about individual courses and entry requirements, search UCAS: www.ucas.com.
- For other countries, start with en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dentistry_throughout_the_world. Also EUNICAS: www.eunicas.co.uk/, to search for dental schools. The FDI World Dental Federation member directory can be used to search for professional bodies in each country, which have links to dental schools: www.fdiworldental.org/members/members-directory/directory.aspx. Check validity to practice in the UK via the GDC page to view regulations on qualifying overseas and working in the UK: www.gdc-uk.org/Dentalprofessionals/ORE/Pages/default.aspx.

Application procedure

- Check out entrance requirements at the dental school(s) of your choice to make sure you are eligible before applying for entry. If you don't think you meet the requirements, contact the dental school to see if they will still consider you – or what you would need to do in order to be considered. Understand the demands of a dentistry degree – think carefully about why you want to do it and weigh up all the pros and cons.
- All UK applications must be made online via the UCAS website: www.ucas.com. If you have questions about the UCAS process, post a question on Facebook ([ucasonline](https://www.facebook.com/ucasonline)), Twitter ([@ucas_online](https://twitter.com/ucas_online)) or call them on 0371 468 0 468. The deadline for applications is 15th October in the year before the intended start date. Applications received after 15th October but before 30th June will be considered as late applications (and, given competition for places, it is likely that the dental school will not accept it). Applications received after 30th June will be subject to clearing although it is extremely rare for this to happen.
- For dentistry, applicants are restricted to 4 choices of institution on the UCAS form. Some candidates are tempted to include a different degree course in their choices as 'insurance' (eg, physiotherapy) but think VERY carefully about this. Although admissions teams cannot see your other choices, your personal statement would have to try to cover both courses – what might this imply about your commitment to dentistry? Seek help from a Careers Adviser to discuss your options.
- When applying, you will need to demonstrate clear evidence of: sound motivation; realism in your idea of what work as a dentist involves and possession of the personal qualities required (e.g. people skills, resourcefulness, dexterity, stamina and perseverance). Selectors will be particularly interested to know about any relevant and recent work experience, including voluntary work, work-shadowing, etc. For more details about writing an effective personal statement, pick up a copy of the Careers Service information sheet **UCAS Personal Statements for Medicine or Dentistry**.



- A good academic reference is expected. Talk to your tutor or someone else who knows you from your academic department, explaining what you think are your key selling points. Do this well in advance of the UCAS deadline - contact potential referees before the summer vacation.
- You may wish selectors to see relevant supporting materials, such as a portfolio of your observational work, your CV, or additional references if and only if these will add real strength to your application. These cannot be included with the UCAS form but can be sent separately to admissions staff in individual dental schools once you have your UCAS application number. Don't overwhelm admissions teams with additional materials.
- Many institutions require you to sit an admissions test (usually UKCAT). This will need to be undertaken before the UCAS application deadline – check the dental school's website for more information. For further information about admissions tests, see the Career Service information sheet **Admissions Tests for Medical and Dental Schools**.
- Dental schools will interview candidates if they are sufficiently impressed by their UCAS form. For help with preparing for interviews, see the Careers Service information sheet **Preparing for Interviews at Medical or Dental School**.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria vary between institutions although the UCAS form, interview and admissions test (if required) are all very important. Contact admissions teams before you apply to find out what selection criteria they use and how much emphasis they place on the UCAS form, your performance at interview and your admissions test results.

Financial support for dental training

You should give careful consideration to how you will fund your studies. Keep abreast of any changes to the funding system via NHS Student Bursaries www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students; Tel: 0300 330 1345; Facebook (NHSstudentbursaries) or Twitter (NHSBSA_Students). Information is also available on the NHS Healthcare Careers website: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/dental-team/dentist/entry-requirements-and-training-dentistry. You can also seek advice from the Students' Union Advice Centre: su.sheffield.ac.uk/advice-support.

By way of example, the following information applies to 2015-entry for English domiciled students (2016-entry details not yet available) and is based on current tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year:

- **4-year graduate-entry courses - 4-year graduate-entry courses** - students will have to self-fund the first £3,465 towards their tuition fees in year one but can apply for a tuition fee loan via Student Finance England (student loans company) to cover the balance. For years two to four, the NHS will pay £3,465 each year towards tuition fees. Any fee charge above the £3,465 level must be met by the student, although they can apply for a tuition fee loan from the Student Finance England to cover this. Students may also be able to apply for a loan to help meet living costs through Student Finance England for all four years but they can also apply for an NHS bursary in years two to four (£1,000 non-means tested award plus a possible means-tested award). Graduates don't start paying back Student Finance England loans until they are earning over £21,000 a year. No other government grants are available for the duration of the course.
- **5 or 6-year undergraduate courses** - students will be responsible for their own tuition fees and living costs until the 5th year of study, although loans to cover living costs may be possible via Student Finance England for eligible students (but there's no tuition fee help). From the 5th year of study onwards, the NHS will pay your tuition fees. Eligible students from 5th year onwards will receive a £1,000 non means tested NHS award and can also apply for a means-tested NHS bursary. They can also apply for a reduced maintenance loan from Student Finance England to top this up. Student Finance England loans do not need to be repaid until the graduate is earning over £21,000 a year. No other government grants are available for the duration of the course.

For advice on alternative sources of funding, some good starting points are:

www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm; targetpostgrad.com/funding and www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/study. Make enquiries at the medical schools themselves in case they have bursaries or other sponsorship available.

Further information

- The Careers Service runs talks about 'Applying for Medicine or Dentistry as a Graduate', which provides a good overview of issues to consider. Also look out for events around working in healthcare: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events. You can also view introductory briefings via the Careers Service website, see: www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/gettingmedicine/player.html and www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/medicinetests/player.html
- Also see 'Getting into Dental school', available from the Careers Service at 388 Glossop Road, Sheffield.
- **British Dental Association** www.bda.org
- **General Dental Council** www.gdc-uk.org