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What is Dentistry?

A Dentist is a highly qualified health professional dedicated to oral health and hygiene. To be a fully qualified Dentist, you will need to undertake both undergraduate and postgraduate dental education at Dental School.

What Makes A Good Dentist?

A good Dentist needs to have the right physical abilities as well as personal skills. Take a look at our checklist to see if you're up to the challenge:

1. Good eyesight and colour vision. There is a lot of precision work involved in Dentistry.
2. Manual dexterity. Once you're a practising Dentist, you'll need to be able to confidently work with medical instruments in delicate areas.
3. An interest in and ability to acquire scientific knowledge, particularly about the human anatomy and oral disease.
4. Confidence in offering advice and educating patients about their oral health is a key part of the role.
5. Patience and compassion. Unfortunately, a lot of people are scared of the Dentist! It's your job to convince them there's nothing to worry about.

What Are The Entry Requirements For Dentistry?

There is intense competition for places at Dental School. Most ask for at least 3 As at A-Level, often in relevant sciences.

If you don't have the grades, you can look into doing a pre-dental foundation course. These are offered by some Dental Schools in order to widen access to the profession.

Each school will have its own entry requirements, so it is best to look at their website and prospectus to help you make your decision.

You can also look into other dental care professions that require less intensive training:

- Dental Nurse
- Dental Therapist
- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Technician

What is Being a Dentist Like?

Dentistry is a career unlike any other. It is a challenging career path in which you will be treating patients even during your degree training. What's more, for the right individuals, Dentistry can also be extremely rewarding.

To a certain degree, studying Dentistry ties you to the career path of being a Dentist. Whilst many Dentists work within the National Health Service (NHS), it is also possible to work privately at a later stage in your career.

It is vital to understand the realities of being a Dentist. These include how long you'll be studying for, the lifelong learning commitment of continual professional development and the practicalities of the work that Dentists do on a daily basis.

Similarly to Medicine, Dentistry combines scientific knowledge and problem solving with interacting with patients. In addition to this, Dentistry is a hands-on career that requires high levels of manual dexterity and perseverance to develop the required skills. Combining these skills allows Dentists to make an impact in people's lives; whether it's alleviating the pain of a carious tooth or giving a patient an aesthetic smile through orthodontic appliances.

On the flipside, Dentistry can be very stressful. It often involves working to tight deadlines, dealing with anxious patients and sometimes being unable to help patients.

One of the best ways to decide whether Dentistry is the career for you is by getting some Dentistry work experience!

What Skills does a Good Dentist Need?

There are certain skills and qualities that make a good Dentist, some of these are:

- Communication skills
- Academic knowledge
- Detail-oriented and artist approach
- Comfortable with close patient contact
- Time keeping skills
- Personable, have empathy for patients and can build a rapport
- Stress management
- Commitment and passion for the career
- Trustworthy and honest
- Ability to follow regulations.

First Steps

Once you have decided that you may want to pursue a career as a dentist, you need to put the foundations in place for a strong application. So what do you need to do?

You need to make sure you are doing the correct A Levels and advice regarding this can be found in the previous section.

At Dean Close the 'ring fenced' time for your dental applications is the Biochemistry and Medics club on Monday evenings, run in association with Chosen Hill School, Churchdown. Please sign up for this activity.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Dental schools require applicants to have an understanding of what a career in dentistry involves. It is therefore essential that applicants gain people-focused experience of providing care or service before submitting their application.

What do dental schools look for?

Some dental schools may specifically ask for a minimum number of weeks of work experience and specify the type of experience they desire, for example shadowing a dentist. Many do ask for experience to be based in a dental or healthcare setting, however they also consider the opportunities available to the applicant and recognise that other activities, such as paid or voluntary work, also allow applicants to develop the skills they need to become a dentist.

Dental schools are keen to see that you understand what it is like to work in a caring profession, and how concerns about various types of patients' needs to be appreciated. Volunteering in a hospice or charity can be used to show these attributes. Other useful activities might include reading dental journals or following news about the National Health Service. These activities will emphasise a candidate's interest in a dental career and their willingness to research aspects of dental and oral health.

Reflect on your experience

The important thing to remember is that work experience is only as valuable as the way you talk about it in your interview. While you will be expected to show

some understanding of what it is like to be a dentist, part of this will be showing that you know what it is like to work, particularly with the public. Just like in a normal job interview you may be asked things like, 'Can you provide an example of how you have worked as part of a team?'. If you have had a job in a restaurant, for instance, then you will be able to use this experience to answer the question.

Where to start

To get work experience, prepare a short CV and hand this in to places in your area which relate to healthcare, saying that you are willing to volunteer. These places could be care homes, hospices, dental practices and dental hospitals. The NHS, together with the Dental Schools Council, has developed a **toolkit for organisations** on providing dental work experience. You may wish to show this to any dental practices you would like to apply to.

If you have no luck with this then do not worry. Other useful activities might include reading dental journals or following news about the National Health Service. If you know any dentists then arranging time to speak with one will provide you with material to use in the interview, as well as demonstrate motivation and initiative. All dental professionals can be a valuable source of information and experience, not just dentists. After all, dentists work as part of large teams involving many different roles, so demonstrating that you have a sense of the members of the dental team and how they work together will help you in both your personal statement and interview.

Virtual Work Experience

There are many companies offering virtual work experience, if you cannot get face to face experience these can be quite good. If I get sent any details of such work experience I will forward the email to you so you can make your own mind up. In order for this to happen you have to give Mr Needs your name and what career you are interested in. Without this I cannot forward you the relevant emails.

Websites

There are some useful websites out there and I would recommend signing up for one of them. Examples are:

- www.themedicportal.com
- <https://www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk/making-an-application/>
- www.ucas.com

Background Reading

It is important that you read around the subject as this will give you something good to write in your personal statement. You also need a good knowledge of the way the NHS works/is funded and know the 4 pillars which ethical decisions are based upon.

Suggested reading:

- The British Dental Journal
- *Medical Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*
- *It's All in Your Mouth: Biological Dentistry and the Surprising Impact of Oral Health on Whole Body Wellness* by Dominik Nischwitz
- *The Smile Stealers: The Fine and Foul Art of Dentistry* by Richard Barnett
- *So You Want to Be a Dentist?: What You Must Know if You Want to Succeed in Dentistry* by Marcus Neff D.D.S.
- *Excruciating History of Dentistry: Toothsome Tales & Oral Oddities from Babylon to Braces* by James Wynbrandt
- *Where There is No Dentist* by Murray Dickson
- *Dentistry in a Nutshell: A Practical Guide to Clinical Dentistry* by Dr Nicola Z Gore, Dr Raabiha N Maan
- *A Dentist's Story - Curious People, Comical Happenings, Crowns of Glory* by Barrie Lawrence
- *How to Build the Dental Practice of Your Dreams: (without Killing Yourself!) in Less Than 60 Days* by Dr David Moffet Bds Fpfa

The Application Process

The application process is very similar to that of a Medic, so the web portals and lectures aimed at medics are relevant for Dentists as well.

Choosing a Course

The first point to consider is the nature of the course itself. It is the same as choosing a non-dentistry degree, you need to find the course that suits you, your style of learning or circumstances and not the perceived quality of the institution. For this you need to do lots of research, then when you think you have done it do some more research! The more research you can do the better your application will be and make sure you are likely to achieve the grade offer.

Where do I do my research?

Your first port of call should be www.UCAS.com, which has all of the up to date information regarding courses and links to university websites.

As mentioned above, you should then go through all the university websites, taking care that, if you used a google search, you have accessed the most up to date version of the website.

How many choices do I get?

If applying to Dentistry you have 4 Dentistry course options, then 1 non-dentistry option. So you have a total of 5 choices. The 5th choice could be one of the universities you applied for Dentistry at or a completely different institution.

Your 5th choice could be a course from an institution that acts as an entrance to a Dentistry degree such as Biochemistry, Medical Biology or Medical Science. In most cases they will accept you onto a medicine course with a 2 i or above in your 5th choice. It is up to you to do the research on this as there are other course options and some universities may not accept certain degrees as entrance to their Dentistry course. DO YOUR RESEARCH! You are looking for the institutions views on 'Graduate Entry'.

The following Universities offer GDC-approved undergraduate dental courses:

- Cardiff University
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Dundee
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Glasgow
- University of Liverpool
- Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry
- King's College London

- Plymouth University
Peninsula Schools of
Medicine and Dentistry
- University of Sheffield
- University of Leeds
- Aberdeen University

Some of these universities also offer Graduate Entry dentistry courses.

King's, UCLan and Aberdeen offer accelerated/fast-track Grad Entry courses which you can apply for if you already have a bachelor's degree in a relevant subject (e.g. a biomedical sciences related subject).

Manchester and Leeds both offer pre-dental courses for those who do not meet the normal entry requirements.

King's also offers an Enhanced Support Dentistry Programme for students from selected 'widening participation' schools.

UCAT AND BMAT

These are pre admissions tests, required by most universities as part of their selection process. Currently only Leeds requires the BMAT, with most of the others going down the UCAT route, though you should also check the relevant university websites to see if they have changed the requirements at all.

UCAT

Important Dates

Please note, these are only general deadlines and each year they will change slightly. Please contact Mr Needs for the specific dates.

Early May (9.30am BST)	Account registration opens Bursary and Access Arrangement applications open
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Late June (6am BST)	Booking opens
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Mid July	Testing starts
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Late September (12 noon BST)	Access Arrangement application deadline
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Late September (12 noon BST)	Booking deadline
Late September	Last test day
End of September (4pm BST)	Bursary Scheme application deadline
15 October	UCAS deadline
Early November	Results delivered to universities

What does it involve?

The UCAT test will be done in a local test centre (not school) and it is completed on a computer.

It will consist of the same five sections and is a test of general intelligence:

- UCAT Verbal Reasoning
- UCAT Abstract Reasoning
- UCAT Quantitative Reasoning
- UCAT Decision Making
- UCAT Situational Judgement

Practice questions can be found on the medical application portals (these are good for Dentistry as well), books or webinars though by the nature of the test, it is difficult to prepare for specifically.

In the past pupils have found that the following website: www.medify.co.uk is good for UCAT preparation.

When should I take it?

You can take it any time during the open testing period, though please remember that when you return to school in September there will be lots of other deadlines to meet such as UCAS application deadlines or coursework deadlines.

BMAT

The BMAT pre-admissions test is a set of papers sat at school in the first week of November. Please make sure that the school examinations officer has registered you to take the exam at Dean Close School.

What does it involve?

BMAT is split into three sections:

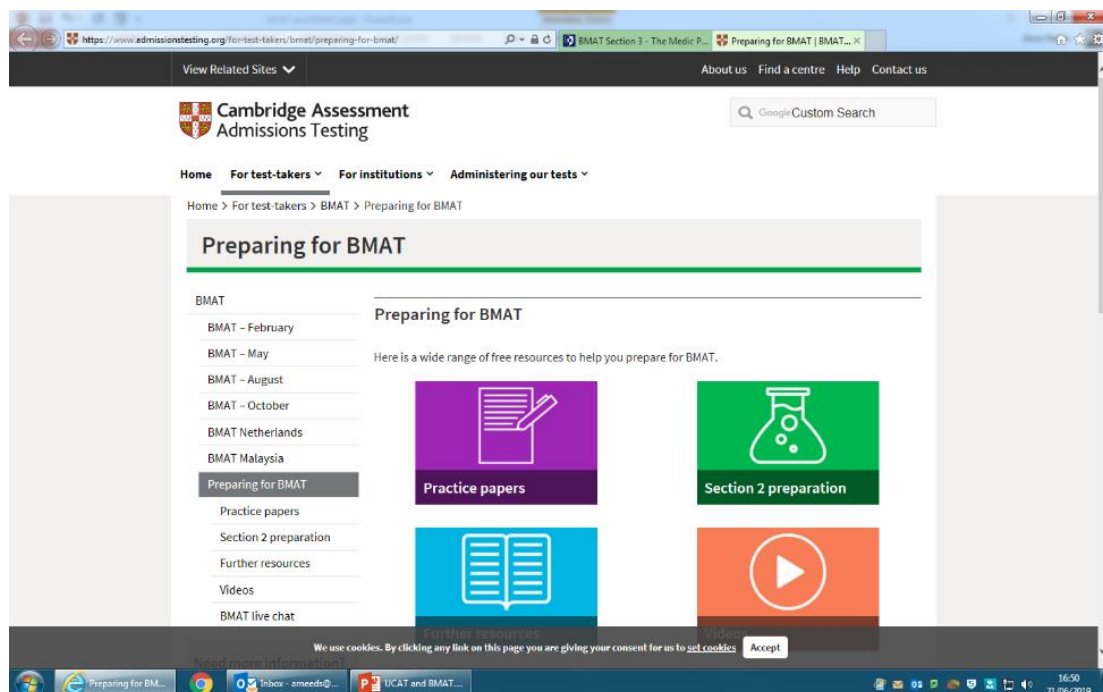
- BMAT Section 1 – verbal, mathematical, spatial
- BMAT Section 2 – scientific knowledge
- BMAT Section 3 – essay

Preparation

All the relevant preparation for the BMAT test can be found at this website:

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/bmat/>

This does include a syllabus, which you need to revise. Again, this can be downloaded from this website.



UCAT or BMAT?

Some Universities require the UCAT

- Scores are used differently by each University:
 - Cut off score for interview
 - Scores used as a decider between two applicants
- Aptitude Test on a computer for two hours
- ADVANTAGE – will know score before submitting application – can select Universities that you have a better chance of receiving an interview from
- DISADVANTAGE – not a great predictor to find candidates that will succeed Medical School

A few UK Universities require the BMAT

- Cut off score for interview
- More scientific and includes an essay
- ADVANTAGE – not an aptitude test, will also test scientific knowledge
- DISADVANTAGE – won't know score until three weeks later!

PERSONAL STATEMENT

*** Main thing that separates you from other candidates!! ***

Key Things to mention:

- Why you want to study Dentistry
- Awareness of the course and the job progression of being a dentist
- Why you think you're suited for it: teamwork, leadership, empathetic, listening skills, resilience etc
- What you have **learnt** from your Work Experience/Volunteering → skills gained or improved on

Guidance: GMC's Tomorrow's Doctors (2009), Universities' A100 webpage or document

Please check the university website for guidance on what they look for in a personal statement. This information can be a bit patchy, but some information can be excellent.

Example Layout of a Personal Statement:

Introduction – why you want to do Dentistry, what made you realise that you want to do Medicine

Academics

- Extra study – e.g. MMA, Bowden Essay, EPQ, MOOC.
- PathoPhys Research at Medlink, University of Nottingham

Work Experience

- Mention what you have learnt/observed – be reflective!

Extra Curricular

- Good way of showing that you are an 'all rounded' person
- Mention what skills/characteristics you have gained/improved on

(GAP YEAR)

Conclusion/Final Paragraph

INTERVIEWS

Interview Types

Traditional/Panel Interview

- Interview with a panel of at least three members of faculty
- Lasts about 15-20 minutes
- Traditional Questions, no questions involving role play/acting out the situation

Mini Multiple Interviews

- At least five short interviews for about five minutes each
- Questions can be traditional or involve acting out a scenario

We will practice the MMI style and panel interviews at school, this will usually occur around the end of November / beginning of December.

General Tips for the Interview Day

- Everyone is actually really friendly so be smiley as well, they want you to do the best that you can

- Talk to the other applicants, at my interviews one of my best things was speaking to the other people who were going through exactly the same thing as me and everyone is really nice! But after the interview don't be put off if people talk about answering questions differently because there's more than 1 right answer to most questions
- At some universities they will say that you are being assessed as soon as you get there so be prepared for that
- Practically get there early so you feel comfortable before you have to go into the interview
- The whole day goes really fast so enjoy it
- I found it really helpful to write notes about my interviews the evening afterwards so you can look back on them before other interviews

What type of Questions might I get?

- Asking about personal challenges in life that you have overcome and what you learnt from them. How do you bounce back from mistakes or hard times?
- Questions about your personal strengths and weaknesses particularly weaknesses and what you need to improve on.
- Ethics questions about your views on specific things, they might try to argue with you or ask follow up questions to find out why you think that
- There might be something about your inspiration and motivations or why you want to take on such a difficult profession.
- Speaking about what you have learnt from different work experience experiences. What you learnt about the profession and what you learnt about yourself.

RESULTS DAY

There are various things that can happen on results day:

Option 1

You get the grades stipulated in your offer from your 1st Choice University, the offer is confirmed and you go to that University.

Option 2

You don't get onto your 1st choice course, though you get accepted onto your insurance course, which is usually the 5th, non-Dentistry choice.

Now you can either accept the insurance offer and go to that university or you can withdraw your application and reapply next year (see note at the bottom regarding reapplication).

Option 3

You don't get the grades for any of the courses you are holding offers for. Now you can either reapply next year or go into the clearing process.

CLEARING

The following information is from www.UCAS.com which runs the clearing process.

What is Clearing?

Clearing is how universities and colleges fill any places they still have on their courses.

From 5 July – 18 October, you can apply for a course using Clearing if you're not already holding an offer from a university or college, and the course still has places.

You can use Clearing if:

- you're applying after 30 June
- you didn't receive any offers (or none you wanted to accept)
- you didn't meet the conditions of your offers
- you've paid the multiple choice application fee of £26.50
- you've declined your firm place using the 'decline my place' button in your application

How do I apply using Clearing?

1. Ask for advice

Talk to an adviser at your school, college, centre, or careers office – they can talk you through alternative courses/subjects. If you're applying

independently, you'll find everything you need to know about the Clearing process here, on ucas.com.

2. See what courses are available

Use our search tool to find courses – it's the only official vacancy list, so it's the most up-to-date. If you can't find the course you're looking for:

- consider different subjects – you don't have to stick with your original idea. You could also look at joint honours courses, so you can study a mix of subjects
- keep checking – unis update their course information regularly. You might not find the exact unis/colleges/courses you were looking for – some might be full, but some might get vacancies later on
- check the course details – how is it structured each year? What modules make up each year? What are the entry requirements?

3. Talk to any unis or colleges you're interested in

Before you add a Clearing choice in your application, you need to call the uni and give them your Clearing number (you can find this in your application), and Personal ID, so they can look it up.

- Ask if they'd accept you – they might reconsider you (maybe for the same course) even if you applied to them earlier in the year.
- Get informal offers over the phone – maybe from a variety of universities and colleges – then decide which one you want to accept.
- Ask about accommodation options – is there any on-campus?
- Take a look around the campus – if you have the time, it's the best way to see what a university/college is like – most will be happy to meet you and show you around. Alternatively, see if they have a [virtual tour](#) or a [virtual open day](#).

4. Add your Clearing choice in your application

Only add a Clearing choice once you have permission from the university or college.

- Click 'Add Clearing choice', and fill in the course details by the date the university/college gave you on the phone.
- This counts as you definitely accepting the offer, so if they confirm, it'll show as an acceptance on your 'Choices' page in your application.
- You can only add one choice at a time, but if the university/college doesn't confirm your place, you'll be able to add another.
- If the university/college confirms your place, find your student accommodation and then make sure you get everything ready to start your studies.

Note: *It is extremely rare that Dentistry Courses themselves appear on the Clearing system.*

Reapplying Next Year

If you decide to do this you need to remember the following points:

Do not submit the same application as the previous year, it wasn't good enough last year, so why would it be good enough the following year.

Your application needs to be better than your previous attempts. This can be the fact that actually obtained the high grades required for Dentistry (you didn't get any offers the previous year). It needs to have more work experience evidenced in the personal statement and you have to show that you didn't just sit and watch the tele for a year whilst waiting for the application to be processed.

CONCLUSION

Dentistry is a very competitive course to get on and in your application plus interview you must show a deep rooted passion for a career as a Dentist.

This is only a basic guide to the application process and get help from tutors at each step.

Finally – GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR APPLICATION.

Contact: arneeds@deanclose.org.uk



Work Experience



Reading



Pick a
Dental School



BMAT A-Levels



Volunteering



UCAT



Personal
Statement



Interviews

