Obtaining a dental degree in the United Kingdom will guarantee you a qualification 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career</th>
<th>What would I do?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygienist</td>
<td>Clean, polish and scale teeth; give preventative advice; prepare patients for oral operations; educate children and adults in dental care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental nurse</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental technician</td>
<td>Design and fabricate crowns, dentures, metal plates, bridges, orthodontic braces and other appliances prescribed by dentists, using a wide variety of materials and equipment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental therapist</td>
<td>Assist dentists by carrying out simple forms of treatment, such as fillings and taking out first teeth. Also give guidance on general dental care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental practice management</td>
<td>Manage a dental practice.</td>
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2 What can I study?

Undergraduate
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, after registering with the General Dental Council (GDC), before they can practise in the UK.

You can study an undergraduate dental course at thirteen dental schools in the UK:

- King’s College London (University of London)
- Lambeth College (London) – foundation degree in dental technology
- 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
- Newcastle upon Tyne University
- University of Sheffield
- University of Manchester

In addition, the Peninsula Dental School in south-west England is due to open in 2007. Some dental schools offer a ‘pre-dental’ year for students with high grades at A-level but lacking relevant science subjects.

Applicants with a degree can be considered for entry onto 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.

It is essential to check the entry requirements of the university to which you wish to apply.

Postgraduate 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 General Dental Council (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 in 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 are available from the National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education (NACPDE). Information on postgraduate courses can be found on the NACPDE website www.rcseng.ac.uk/fds/nacpde

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

Dentistry

www.educationuk.org
Specialist 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. There is then competitive entry into Specialist Registrar training programmes.

Checklist: Choosing the right course

- Start your search on www.educationuk.org but always obtain prospectuses from all the institutions you are considering.
- 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
- 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 overseas 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

<table>
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<th>Career</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>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. A number of UK schools will additionally require applicants to have achieved an appropriate score in the new UKCAT test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygienist</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental nurse</td>
<td>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 exam. In addition, you must have completed two years’ practical experience. There are two national qualifications – the National Certificate and NVQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental technician</td>
<td>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, maths, physics and chemistry. Foundation degrees and BSc (Hons) programmes are also available from several institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental therapist</td>
<td>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.</td>
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UK Clinical Aptitude Test

From June 2006 onwards, for entrance to medicine or dentistry courses in September 2007 and later, 8 dental and 24 medical schools and in the UK will be using the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) to supplement traditional measures of achievement. It will only form one part of the selection process and each school will determine the weight given to results. Check individual university websites 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 General Dental Council (GDC). Registration may be full or temporary. For further information about registration see www.gdc-uk.org/Potential+registrant

From summer 2006 onwards, dental nurses, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians and dental technicians will also have to register with the GDC 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.

5 Next steps

Checklist: Your next steps

1. Check the entrance requirements for the courses you are interested in. Do you need to sit the UKCAT admission test?
2. Check that you have the necessary English language ability. For undergraduate courses this will usually be an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) 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.
3. Apply for Higher National Diploma and first degree courses through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). See www.ucas.com for more information. For other courses, apply to the institution direct.
4. 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.

6 What else do I need to know?

You should bear in mind immigration requirements when considering whether to study in the UK. Requirements vary according to your nationality or citizenship and the length of time you want to study. You will not be allowed to extend your permission to stay in the UK for more than two years on courses that are below degree level and are of less than one year’s duration. The UKCOSA website will give you further information on this topic – www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm

Note in particular that you will not be given permission to enter the UK as a student if the school, college or university that you want to study at does not appear on the UK Department for Education and Skills Register of Education and Training Providers. You can check the register by clicking on ‘Browse the Register’ at www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/

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www.educationuk.org
7 Where can I find more information?

British Council Education information
Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.


Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
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