

HEALTHCARE SCIENCE PRACTITIONER: AUDIOLOGIST

WHAT DOES A HEALTHCARE SCIENCE PRACTITIONER: AUDIOLOGIST DO?

Audiology is a healthcare science. Healthcare science staff working in Audiology investigate problems with hearing and balance function, and recommend/ provide ways to improve a patient's hearing.

An audiologist's role involves:

- deciding on the best way to test a patient's hearing
- adapting tests to suit the age and ability of the patient
- checking hearing, including sound level and frequency range
- investigating any related medical, physical and emotional symptoms
- after diagnosis, putting together a rehabilitation plan, which could involve:
 - assessing patients who are suitable for cochlear implants or hearing aids
 - producing an impression of the ear for an ear mould
 - fitting hearing aids and making modifications to ear moulds
 - reviewing progress and making changes to the fitting
 - teaching patients how to use the prescribed hearing aid
 - repairing faulty hearing aids
 - increasing hearing ability through lip-reading, or other communication skills
 - giving patients information and advice on how to manage their condition
 - managing patients with dual sensory loss (hearing and sight) or learning disabilities.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Healthcare Science (Audiology) courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- an interest and ability in science and technology
- clear speech and excellent written communication skills
- a caring and supportive approach
- counselling skills
- the ability to motivate patients to follow rehabilitation programmes
- practical skills to handle small devices like hearing aids and cochlear implants
- good problem solving skills
- the ability to analyse and deal with complex situations

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- An accredited BSc degree in Healthcare Science (Audiology) as part of the NHS Practitioner Training Programme (PTP).
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

There are BSc Healthcare Science courses in various specialisms, including Audiology: details of courses can be found on the NHS Networks website: <http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/msc-framework-curricula/ptp-1/accredited-bsc-hons-healthcare-science-programmes>

There are 2 relevant undergraduate degree courses in the West Midlands, both offered by Aston University (<http://www.aston.ac.uk/>)

Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology

- **Length of study:** 2 years part-time
- **Entry requirements - qualifications:** GCSE grades A*-B in Maths and English Language, plus 2 A-levels including one Science, or equivalent qualifications or work experience. Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in Science, or a *BTEC* in a relevant subject, will be considered for entry. Applicants without formal qualifications may be considered if they have appropriate work experience.
- **Entry requirements - work experience:** Applicants **must** be employed in an audiology role.

BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)

- **Length of study:** 3 years full-time, including clinical placements.
- **Entry requirements - qualifications:** all applicants need to have obtained GCSEs in English Language and Mathematics at A*-B. Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in a Science subject are considered on an individual basis and on the applicant's performance at a formal interview - the typical standard offer is to have passed the Access course including taking all available Biology credits at Level 3. All Level 3 credits (in all subjects) should be at Distinction. Applications from students studying for a *BTEC National Diploma* or an *Extended Diploma in Applied Science* are considered on an individual basis and subject to interview – the typical standard offer for an Extended Diploma is D*DD.
- **Entry requirements - work experience:** It can help to have some experience of working in a relevant environment: experience of working directly with the public can be advantageous.

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES

There are Masters degrees in Audiology or Audiological Science, accredited by the British Academy of Audiology (BAA): see <http://www.baaudiology.org/> for a list of course providers.

Graduates can also apply for a place on the NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP): successful applicants are employed in a fixed-term, salaried training post and study for a Masters degree in Clinical Science (Neurosensory Sciences): <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/not-studying-health-related-degree/nhs-scientist-training-programme>

For entry, you must have at least a 2:1 degree (or relevant postgraduate qualification if you have a 2:2 degree) in a pure or applied science or engineering subject that is relevant to your chosen specialism.

There is a lot of competition for places and it's helpful if you have some research experience. There is an annual application cycle.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Most healthcare science staff in audiology work in ear, nose and throat (ENT) clinics or audiology departments in an NHS or private hospital. Some audiologists work in universities, where their job is primarily concerned with teaching and research. There are limited openings for audiological scientists in industry e.g. working for companies who develop and manufacture hearing technology.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Audiologists typically work 37.5 hours a week. Part-time or flexible hours are often available.

They usually work in ear, nose and throat (ENT) clinics, or audiology departments in hospitals and would normally be based in a consultation room.

SALARY

In the NHS, Audiologists and Hearing Therapists earn £21,692 - £28,810 per year. A Trainee Healthcare Scientist, specialising in neurosensory sciences, earns approximately £25,000 per year.

Registered Healthcare Scientists specialising in audiology earn £26,041 - £34,876 per year.

Team Managers earn up to £40,964. Salaries in the private sector may be higher.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA

A national study of hearing showed that approximately 19% of the UK population has a significant hearing loss, indicating that working in this field is an important area of the NHS.

PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE (Figures are for the whole healthcare sector)

Full-time: 54%/ Part-time: 31%/ Self-employed: 15%

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP): <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/not-studying-health-related-degree/nhs-scientist-training-programme>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- The British Academy of Audiology: <http://www.baaudiology.org>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIP

<http://licould.com/videos/jody-bl>

ASSOCIATED ROLE: NEWBORN HEARING SCREENER

Role: Newborn Hearing Screeners work in neonatal units, postnatal wards, and in hospitals and clinics. They are involved in identifying which newborn babies need to undergo a hearing assessment and, after

gaining consent from the parent/ carer, undertake this assessment using screening equipment. They are responsible for making sure that the equipment is working correctly, and are expected to record all the results accurately using various computer systems - they then forward the results to appropriate healthcare staff.

Entry requirements: There are no set entry requirements for newborn hearing screeners. Employers expect a good standard of numeracy and literacy and may ask for GCSEs or equivalent. They may ask for a nursery nursing or child-care related qualification, such as NNEB, or a BTEC or other vocational qualification. However, each employer will indicate their requirements in the advertised job vacancy.

Further information: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/newborn-hearing-screener>

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