

DENTAL TECHNICIAN

WHAT DOES A DENTAL TECHNICIAN DO?

Dental Technicians design, build, repair and adjust dental devices for people who have lost teeth or who need help to correct the appearance and performance of their teeth. They specialise in one of 4 areas:

- orthodontics: creating plastic or metal devices, such as braces, to straighten teeth
- crown and bridge work: creating items that can be cemented in place within a mouth
- prosthetics: producing plastic dentures or implants, some of which have metal inserts to help keep them straight
- maxillo-facial prosthetics: helping to reconstruct faces that have been damaged by accidents or by disease.

They work with materials such as gold, porcelain and plastic to design and make specialist devices to suit patients' needs.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Dental Technician courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- an ability to concentrate and work accurately for long periods of time
- good practical skills and a steady hand
- an ability to follow complex technical instructions.
- an interest in science
- an ability to understand and interpret complex, technical instructions
- good communication skills
- good eyesight and colour vision
- a degree of artistic flair
- the ability to prioritise work and meet deadlines

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

Registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) is required to work as a Dental Technician. To get onto the register, applicants need to have one of the following dental technology qualifications:

- a Pearson BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma: you usually need 4 GCSEs (A*-C) in English, maths and a science to access this course;
- a Foundation Degree: participants are usually working as a Trainee Dental Technician to access this course;
- an undergraduate degree: providers usually require 5 GCSEs (A*-C) plus an Access to Higher Education qualification with a specified number of credits at Merit and Distinction level.
- See the General Dental Council website for a list of course providers: <http://www.gdc-uk.org/Dentalprofessionals/Education/Pages/Dental-technician-qualifications.aspx>
- Some people work as a trainee within a commercial laboratory or dental practice and study part-time for an approved qualification.
- 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 currently no undergraduate courses in the West Midlands. However, Birmingham Metropolitan College (<http://www.bmetc.ac.uk/>) is hoping to run a Foundation Degree in Dental Technology from September 2017. See the General Dental Council website for a list of course providers: <http://www.gdc-uk.org/Dentalprofessionals/Education/Pages/Dental-technician-qualifications.aspx>

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Dental Technicians work in a variety of settings, including private dental laboratories, the NHS and the armed forces: it is possible to join the RAF and Royal Army Dental Corps as a qualified and registered civilian Dental Technician.

Private dental laboratories usually create devices and appliances for a range of dental practices over a wide geographical area - these laboratories range in size from sole traders to large companies with several branches.

Some Dental Technicians are self-employed.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Dental Technicians usually work around 40 hours a week, although hours may be longer in a commercial laboratory. They are usually laboratory based although, if working in a hospital setting, they will also have direct contact with Dental and Oral Surgeons, and occasionally patients.

SALARY

Dental Technicians earning £21,692 - £28,180 per year. With experience, as a Dental Technician Specialist, this could rise to £26,041 - £34,876 per year. Dental Laboratory Managers can earn £39,632 - £67,805 per year. Private sector salaries are roughly comparable to NHS salaries.

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

LABOUR MARKET DATA

It is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 Dental Technicians working in the UK: 8,000 employed within the commercial sector and 2,000 employed within the hospital service and within salaried primary care dental services. There are 6,620 Dental Technicians registered with the General Dental Council.

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

Full-time: 58%; Part-time: 33%; Self-employed: 9%

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Dental Technologists Association: <http://www.dta-uk.org/>
- General Dental Council: <http://www.gdc-uk.org>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIP

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-Rjmm9nA>

Updated: March 2016