

DIAGNOSTIC RADIOGRAPHER

WHAT DOES A DIAGNOSTIC RADIOGRAPHER DO?

Diagnostic Radiographers use a range of sophisticated equipment to produce high quality images to diagnose an injury or disease. They deal with patients with a variety of injuries and illnesses assessing their needs, both emotional and physical, before using techniques to create images of certain parts of their body. They are increasingly responsible for the analysis and interpretation of these images.

Techniques used include:

- X-rays: looking through tissue to examine bones, cavities and foreign objects.
- Computed topography (CT): providing cross-sectional views (or slices) of the body.
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI): building a 2D or 3D map of different tissue types.
- Ultrasound: using high frequency sound to produce images.
- Fluoroscopy: producing live x-ray motion images of the digestive system.
- Nuclear medicine (NM): using radioactive tracers to examine how the body and organs function.
- Angiography: investigating blood vessels.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Diagnostic Radiography courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- an interest and ability in science, especially biology, anatomy, physiology and physics
- accuracy and attention to detail
- the ability to think quickly and make decisions
- a willingness to keep up to date with new techniques and treatments
- the ability to use highly technical, computerised equipment
- excellent communication and 'people' skills
- empathy, and a caring approach to patients who are very ill
- physical fitness and emotional strength

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- An undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification in Diagnostic Radiography that has been approved by the Health & Care Professions Council.
- Registration with the Health & Care Professions Council.
- 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 is 1 approved BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography degree in the West Midlands.

BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography: Birmingham City University (<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time; 6 years part-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: GCSE at Grade C or above in five subjects, which must include English Language, Mathematics and either Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Double Science. (GCSE equivalents are not accepted, e. g. Key Skills Level 2, Adult Numeracy, Adult Literacy). A particularly high standard of spoken and written English is necessary to cope with the clinical work on the Diagnostic Radiography and Radiotherapy courses. However, there is a great need for Radiography students who are fluent in more than one language and graduates with such skills would be a valuable addition to the profession; such candidates are therefore encouraged to apply. Applicants who have not received their secondary school education in English will require an overall IELTS score of 7, with no subtest below 6.5

Access to HE Diploma in Radiography or Science: Full award (60 credits) of which a minimum of 45 must be at Level 3 including 30 at Merit or Distinction with a minimum of 18 in a Science subject with 6 credits at level 3 in Physics and 15 ungraded credits at either Level 2 or 3. Must possess GCSE Mathematics and English at Grade C or above.

BTEC National Diploma in Science: Minimum Grade DDM required (320 tariff points).

Entry requirements - work experience: An experience visit to a clinical department is mandatory and a condition of a place being offered. Clinical visit evidence forms (available on the BCU website) are required as part of this process.

NB Please check entry requirements with the course provider.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES

There are no approved postgraduate Radiography courses in the West Midlands. For details of approved courses in other regions, visit the HCPC website: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/> One course example is shown below.

Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Diagnostic Radiography: Teesside University (<http://www.tees.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 21 months full-time (PgDip); 25 months full-time (MSc)

Entry requirements - qualifications: An Honours degree in Science with at least a 2:2 classification, and evidence of study within the past 3 years.

Entry requirements - work experience: None specified.

Applicants must also be eligible for a Department of Health bursary (see <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/>)

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING

Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority:

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Approximately 90% of Radiographers are employed by the NHS, working within hospitals, clinics and radiotherapy or oncology centres. Radiographers also work in primary healthcare (particularly GP surgeries) and occasionally at sports clubs, where they use ultrasound to assess injuries.

Other possible employment routes exist with private hospitals and with manufacturers and distributors of medical imaging equipment as applications specialists (training people to use the specialist equipment) or as sales representatives. It is possible to move into research posts in industry or to become a university lecturer. Opportunities also exist in veterinary practice, customs and excise, prisons and the armed forces. Diagnostic Radiographers tend to work in radiology departments, accident and emergency, operating theatres and wards. Sometimes they use mobile equipment on wards or in operating theatres.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Most NHS Radiographers work 35 hours a week. Diagnostic Radiographers often work nights and weekends, as departments are staffed 24 hours a day. Part-time work and job sharing are possible. Self-employment or freelance work is unlikely, although there are some opportunities for agency work. The work involves standing and bending and can be physically demanding. Diagnostic Radiographers normally wear a uniform, and wear protective clothing when carrying out certain procedures.

SALARY

Diagnostic Radiographers earn from £21,692 to £41,000 per year. Consultants can earn up to £68,000 per year.

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

LABOUR MARKET DATA

There are 31,109 registered Radiographers, with Diagnostic Radiographers outnumbering Therapeutic Radiographers by a ratio of around 10 to 1. Although their number has grown steadily, there is a shortage of Radiographers in the UK, particularly in London and SE England.

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

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

The majority of Diagnostic Radiographers are female, but the number of males is increasing.

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Business Services Authority: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- Radiography Careers: <http://radiographycareers.co.uk/>
- Society and College of Radiographers: <http://www.sor.org/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/radiographer-diagnostic>
- <http://radiographycareers.co.uk/>

ASSOCIATED ROLE: RADIOGRAPHY ASSISTANT/ IMAGING SUPPORT WORKER

Role: Radiography Assistants and Imaging Support Workers assist qualified Radiographers (Diagnostic and Therapeutic). Their work often includes:

- providing reassurance to patients using the department
- giving information to patients about their treatment
- transporting patients to and from other wards and departments
- helping to maintain image processing systems and accessory equipment
- reporting any faults with equipment
- providing emotional and physical support to patients during treatment
- assisting the radiographer with procedures, such as biopsies
- clerical tasks, such as booking appointments

Entry requirements: There are no set entry requirements for radiography assistants and imaging support workers. Employers expect good numeracy, literacy and IT skills. They may ask for GCSEs or equivalent. Employers may ask for a healthcare qualification, such as BTEC or NVQ.

Further information:

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/radiography-assistants-and-imaging-support-workers>

Updated: March 2016