

## THERAPEUTIC RADIOGRAPHER

### WHAT DOES A THERAPEUTIC RADIOGRAPHER DO?

Therapeutic Radiographers are part of a team that treats patients who have cancer, and deliver radiation treatment when required. Some cancers are best treated with drugs, some with surgery and others respond well to precisely targeted doses of radiation, and often these treatments are combined to improve their effect. Using a wide range of technical equipment, the Therapeutic Radiographer delivers accurate doses of radiation to the tumour to destroy the diseased tissue, while minimising the amount of radiation to surrounding healthy tissue.

There are different stages to their work:

- When a patient's tumour has been located, and its size assessed, the Therapeutic Radiographer works closely with a Medical Physicist and Doctor to plan the treatment.
- Having explained the treatment to the patient, and discussed possible side effects, the Therapeutic Radiographer positions the patient and equipment ready for treatment.
- The Therapeutic Radiographer then uses ionising radiation, such as high energy x-rays, to deliver accurate doses of radiation to the tumour.
- They assess and monitor the patient throughout the course of treatment and follow-up.

### SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Therapeutic 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

- A recognised undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification in Radiotherapy.
- Registration with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- 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 one BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy degree in the West Midlands.

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

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

**Entry requirements - qualifications:** An 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 Language at Grade C or above. Applicants with a *BTEC National Diploma in Science* need to obtain a minimum grade of DDM (320 tariff points) and have GCSE at Grade C or above in 5 subjects, which must include English Language, Mathematics and either Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Double Science. (GCSE equivalents are not accepted).

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

**NB** Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

### POSTGRADUATE COURSES

There are no approved postgraduate Radiotherapy 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 in Therapeutic Radiotherapy:** London South Bank University  
(<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 2 years full-time

**Entry requirements - qualifications:** A Bachelor degree with a 2:1 classification in a subject related to science or health, e.g. Physics, Biology, Health Sciences. Consideration is also given to other relevant qualifications recognised as equivalent to the above.

**Entry requirements - work experience:** Applicants need to have obtained a satisfactory clinical visit report.

**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**

Therapeutic Radiographers are generally employed by specially equipped radiotherapy or oncology centres, within the NHS and in private hospitals. Therapeutic Radiographers also work in outpatient departments and some undertake work in the community: for example, working for Macmillan Cancer Relief. Therapeutic Radiographers may also work in research establishments, or within education, conducting research and training radiographers. There are a few independent sector radiotherapy service providers in the UK, and the number is expected to rise.

Therapeutic Radiographers are also employed in management posts in the NHS, within education or in agencies or charities, looking at such issues as quality assurance or patient care, information and support services. There are also opportunities to work for equipment manufacturers as application specialists providing training and support for staff when new equipment is introduced in hospital departments.

Approximately 90% of radiographers are employed by the NHS. Self-employment or freelance work is unlikely, although there are some opportunities for agency work.

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

Most NHS Radiographers work 35 hours a week, and Therapeutic Radiographers tend to work more regular hours than is the case for Diagnostic Radiographers. Part-time work and job sharing are possible. The job may be physically strenuous. It demands responsibility and may be stressful at times.

Resilience is needed to cope with the demands of dealing with patients who have been diagnosed with life-threatening conditions. Although many patients will have a good prognosis, some will be in the latter stages of life.

### **SALARY**

Therapeutic 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 31,122 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%

### **INFORMATION SOURCES**

- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- 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 CLIP**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99-UBedNd6c>

**ASSOCIATED ROLE: RADIOGRAPHY ASSISTANT/ IMAGING SUPPORT WORKER**

**Role:** Radiography Assistants and Imaging Support Workers assist qualified Diagnostic and Therapeutic Radiographers. 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:** You may not need specific qualifications to get a job as a Radiography Assistant. However, many employers may ask for 4 GCSEs at A\*-C in subjects such as Maths, English and Science or a healthcare qualification, such as a BTEC. Apprenticeships may also be available.

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