Dental Technician

Introduction
Dental technicians make and repair crowns, bridges, false teeth (dentures) and other dental appliances, using impressions (moulds) and instructions usually prepared by a dentist. They are skilled at working with plastics, metal alloys, ceramics and moulding techniques.

Work Activities
As a Dental Technician, you will make and repair crowns, bridges and other dental appliances. You'll carefully follow instructions from a Dentist or Doctor, and use an impression (mould) of the patient's teeth and gums to make a cast or model from which to make the device.

You'll use a wide range of materials such as waxes, gold, porcelain, plastics, titanium, stainless steel and plaster of Paris. You will need a detailed knowledge of these materials, to design and make the most appropriate device.

You will use hand and powered tools, fine-tuning each piece to exact requirements. No two devices are the same, so you'll have to work with a very high degree of accuracy - matching devices exactly to each individual patient's teeth.

Once qualified and experienced, Dental Technicians can specialise in:

- orthodontics
- conservation (also called crown and bridge technology)
- prosthodontics
- maxillo-facial work

You also be involved in making orthodontic appliances, including braces, to correct irregularities in the position of teeth within the jaws, improve the patient's appearance and prevent problems later in life.

In conservation work, you will use materials such as cast metals and ceramics to make crowns that restore natural teeth, and bridges to replace missing ones.

In prosthodontics, you'll design and make complete or partial dentures. A patient might need these if they have lost several teeth in the same part of the mouth, so the Dentist is unable to use a bridge.

Technicians working in this area must take great care to make sure that the dentures fit precisely and look attractive.

Technicians who specialise in maxillo-facial work are based in hospitals. Working under the direct supervision of a Maxillo-facial Surgeon, you'll design and make appliances that restore the faces of patients who have been badly injured, burnt or undergone major surgery.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills
To become a Dental Technician, you'll need:

- the ability to use your hands skilfully, in detailed work
- concentration and close attention to detail
- the ability to use a range of hand and power tools
- some artistic ability and the imagination to adapt techniques to solve problems
Machinery used in welding, grinding and polishing can create dust: this could be an issue if you suffer from asthma or another breathing-related condition.

This job would suit you if you are happy to work as part of a team but also enjoy doing a lot of your work without close supervision.

**Pay and Opportunities**

**Pay**

NHS employees are paid on a rising scale within defined pay bands, according to their skills and responsibilities. The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: Band 5 pay of £23,023 - £29,608
- With experience: Band 6 pay of £28,050 - £36,644
- Senior Dental Technicians earn Band 7 pay of £33,222 - £43,041

**Hours of work**

Working hours vary. In commercial laboratories, they are often 9:00 am - 5:30 pm. In hospitals, working hours can be irregular and include 'on-call' nights and weekends. Overtime may be available.

**Where could I work?**

Employers include commercial dental laboratories, the NHS (in hospitals, general practice and in the community) and the armed forces.

Opportunities for Dental Technicians occur in dental laboratories in towns and cities throughout the UK.

**Where are vacancies advertised?**

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

**Entry Routes and Training**

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Dental Technicians must be registered with the General Dental Council. This means that to work as a Dental Technician, your name must be on the GDC's Dental Care Professionals Register.

You will only be able to enter the Register if you have completed one of the following qualifications:

- BTEC level 3 qualification in dental technology
- recognised degree course in dental technology
- diploma of higher education (DipHE) in dental technology at Leeds University
- recognised foundation degree in dental technology

Recognised degree courses are available at Manchester Metropolitan University and Cardiff Metropolitan University. De Montfort University runs a recognised foundation degree course, which is available at South Nottingham College.
Foundation degrees are also available at Cardiff Metropolitan University and Birmingham Metropolitan College (awarded by Manchester Metropolitan University).

For a full list of approved courses, please see the GDC website.

You can either take a recognised course full-time and then start working in a laboratory, or find a trainee position and complete a recognised qualification part-time.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

**Progression**

After further qualifications and experience, you could become a Senior Dental Technician. It's also possible to progress into a quality control, teaching or sales role.

You might find that you have to move to a larger laboratory to increase your chances of promotion. You can specialise in a particular area, such as orthodontics, conservation, prosthodontics or maxillo-facial work.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act**

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

**Work Experience**

Previous experience within a caring role such as in a care home or a hospital will be really useful for this career.

**Qualifications**

While there are no minimum academic entry requirements to start work as a Dental Technician, you are likely to need qualifications to enter training towards a recognised qualification.

Usual entry to a BTEC level 3 qualification in dental technology is with 4 GCSEs (A*-C or 9 - 4). Course providers might specify English, maths and science, or equivalent.

Entry to a degree course in dental technology is usually with:

- 2/3 A levels, preferably including at least one science subject
- GCSEs at grade C/4 and above in your A level subjects
- a further 2/3 GCSEs at grade C/4 and above, including English and maths

Manchester Metropolitan University runs an extra 'foundation year' for people who don't have the qualifications usually needed for entry to its degree in dental technology.

Equivalent qualifications, such as BTEC level 3 qualifications and the International Baccalaureate Diploma, might be acceptable for entry - please check college/university websites carefully.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.
Courses

Colleges will usually consider applications from adults who don't meet their usual entry requirements. You should check the admissions policy of individual colleges.

Entry to relevant courses can be possible by Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL).

A part-time degree course is available at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Part-time foundation degrees in dental technology are available from De Montfort University and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Funding

Funding would usually come from an employer, such as a health authority or commercial laboratory.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Health Careers**

- **NHS Wales Careers**
  Publisher: National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare
  Email: abm.wedsteam@wales.nhs.uk
  Website: [www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090)

- **NHS Jobs**
  Website: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

- **Step into the NHS**
  NHS careers
  Tel: 0345 6060655
  Website: [www.stepintothensh.uk](http://www.stepintothensh.uk)

- **Skills for Health**
  Skills for the health sector
  Address: Goldsmiths House, Broad Plain, Bristol BS2 0JP
  Tel: 0117 9221155
  Email: office@skillsforhealth.org.uk
  Website: [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

- **British Dental Association (BDA)**
  Address: 64 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8YS
  Tel: 020 7935 0875
  Email: enquiries@bda.org
  Website: [www.bda.org](http://www.bda.org)

- **General Dental Council (GDC)**
  Address: 37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ
  Tel: 0845 2224141
  Website: [www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)

- **British Dental Association (BDA) Scotland**
  Scottish enquiries
  Address: Forsyth House, Lomond Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TU
  Tel: 01786 476040
  Email: enquiries@bda.org
  Website: [scotland.bda.org](http://scotland.bda.org)
• Dental Technologists Association (DTA)
  Address: 3 Kestrel Court, Waterwells Drive, Waterwells Business Park, Gloucester GL2 2AT
  Tel: 01452 886366
  Email: info@dta-uk.org
  Website: www.dta-uk.org

• Dental Laboratories Association (DLA)
  Address: 44-46 Wollaton Road, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2NR
  Tel: 0115 9254888
  Email: info@dla.org.uk
  Website: www.dla.org.uk

Related Careers

• Dental Nurse
• Dentist
• Dental Hygienist
• Dental Therapist
• Orthodontist
• Periodontist