Trichologists work with people who have hair problems, such as thinning hair and scalp disorders. Although there are no set entry requirements to start training, you must be able to cope with the scientific study and have the right aptitude and attitude.

Trichology (from the Greek word 'trikhos', meaning 'hair') is the science of the hair and scalp. Clinical trichologists are concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of disorders and diseases of the hair and scalp.

Most trichologists work in private practice, dealing on a one-to-one basis with patients. The main skill of a trichologist is in making a diagnosis. There are so many reasons for hair and scalp problems, such as thinning hair, that the trichologist has to identify and isolate the cause before they can treat the condition.

Trichologists take a holistic approach to diagnosis, so need to be able to interpret blood tests, understand the effects of different medications, and look for genetic or lifestyle factors in order to identify the problem and recommend suitable treatment.

Patients may make an appointment with a trichologist directly, or be referred by their doctor or hairdresser.

Skills and personal qualities

To be a successful trichologist you must:

• have a good understanding of the basic sciences
• be a good communicator
• be tactful and sympathetic when dealing with people
• be able to judge when a patient should be referred to another specialist or medical doctor
• be prepared to continue to learn throughout your career, to keep up with new scientific research.

If you intend setting up your own practice or business, you will need to be good at managing your own business affairs and able to prepare a business plan, if you require financial backing.

Getting qualified

There are relatively few qualified practitioners in the UK. Trichologists come from many types of backgrounds – the hairdressing field being just one, but trichology is not an extension of hairdressing.

People with a healthcare background, such as nurses, do well because they already have the basic medical grounding needed.

By law, you don't have to be qualified to practise as a trichologist. Patients, of course, expect to have their problems treated only by someone with proper training and knowledge, and it is certainly advisable to become properly qualified. Members of The Institute of Trichologists and The Trichological Society both have to abide by codes of professional practice and ethics that are strictly enforced.

Training

The Institute of Trichologists is a professional and educational body that sets and oversees standards for the profession. It offers a two-year training course, which is mainly completed through distance learning. Students must also complete practical training sessions throughout the two years. These are normally held one day per month at the Institute's training centre. There are assessments and exams at the end of each year of training. Final year students have to pass an exam consisting of two written papers, a practical and a viva (oral exam).

Successful completion of the course qualifies you to apply to become a registered ‘associate member’ of the Institute. You are then entitled to go into practice under the supervision of a mentor. To become a ‘full member’ of the Institute, a period of professional practice and further study is needed, usually over two years.

The Trichological Society is an independent professional and educational body that also offers training in trichology. The Society offers a diploma in pure trichology, which is completed through distance learning.
Students must also undertake regular work placements with an approved trichologist. Assessment is through a number of written assignments, a practical exam, dissertation and a viva. The length of time it takes to complete the diploma varies; most students complete the course within two to three years. Students with considerable medical experience may be exempt from some assignments. Students who successfully complete the diploma are eligible for Licentiateship of the Society. Whichever training route is followed, subjects studied include:

- human biology
- anatomy, chemistry and physiology of the hair and scalp
- hair and scalp disorders and hair loss
- nutrition
- trichological procedures, preparations and treatments
- diagnosis and consultation.

Because the profession is not subject to government regulation, there are different ways of training. Before signing up for any course, it's important to find out what qualification the course leads to and how valid that qualification is, in the field you're interested in. Find out how past students have used their qualification.

**Entry requirements**

Applicants who wish to study with the Institute of Trichologists must attend an interview and are accepted subject to information given on their application and by referees. Applicants who wish to study with The Trichological Society are considered on an individual basis. Most applicants have higher education or professional qualifications.

Both training routes mentioned are academic and scientific, so you will need to have the ability to cope with the study. You must also have the right aptitude and attitude.

Trichology is often a second career. Suitable backgrounds include medical, paramedical or healthcare work, but students come from many different walks of life.

**Prospects**

Once qualified, most trichologists work in private practice. A few, very experienced, trichologists work in the law courts as expert witnesses.

**Further Information**

**The Institute of Trichologists** – tel: 0845 604 4657.
[www.trichologists.org.uk](http://www.trichologists.org.uk)

**The Trichological Society** – tel: 01708 728980.
[www.hairscientists.org](http://www.hairscientists.org)

A Professional and Career Development Loan could help you to finance your training. Telephone 0800 100 900 for more information, or see:
[www.direct.gov.uk/pcdl](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pcdl)

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