



# PASSPORT TO Dentistry

**What must I do to become  
a dentist, dental hygienist  
or dental therapist?**

# Did you know?

Dental schools are usually **part of a university**, although not all universities have dental schools.

You have to study at a **dental school** to become a dental professional.

Some UK students get their **dentistry degree abroad**. If you are considering this, remember that your qualification needs to be acceptable to the NHS.

There are lots of different options when it comes to a career in Dentistry. You could train to be a **Dentist, Dental Therapist or Dental Hygienist**.

You can also train to be a **Dental Nurse, an Orthodontic Therapist or a Dental Technician**.

At Cardiff University, we offer three different courses: **BDS Dental Surgery (A200), BSc Dental Therapy and Dental Hygiene (B752), and DipHE Dental Hygiene (B750)**.

# What are my options at Cardiff University?



## **BDS Dental Surgery (A200)**

This course is five years long and will teach you how to **become a Dentist.**

**Dentists lead the dental team,** and work with patients to treat dental diseases, repair dental and facial injuries, and provide advice on how to avoid developing dental disease (prevention).

## **DipHE Dental Hygiene (B750)**

This course is two years long and will teach you how to **become a Dental Hygienist.**

Dental hygienists can provide advice on how to avoid developing dental disease (prevention). They can take a history and carry out a clinical examination of patients if they are competent to do so. They can also treat gum disease, place temporary dressings on teeth, and carry out treatment directly to patients or after a Dentist has provided a plan. Dental Hygienists do not provide fillings or root treatments and don't take out teeth.

## **BSc Dental Therapy and Dental Hygiene (B752)**

This course is three years long and will teach you how to **become a Dental Hygienist and Dental Therapist.**

Dental Therapists can provide the same treatment as a Dental Hygienist. In addition to this, they can provide fillings, carry out root treatments on “baby” teeth, and take out “baby” teeth.



# Year 9

**Homework:** A dental professional takes pride in their efforts to develop good work habits, e.g. hand in your work on time and make it as good as you can.

**Choose your GCSEs:** Remember that most dental schools will want you to have good grades in English/Welsh, and either Double Science or Single Science Biology and Chemistry. Some dental schools may ask for other subjects too – be sure to check their website.

**Hobbies and interests:** Dental students are not all ‘work, work, work.’ The next few years will be challenging at times, so finding non-academic things that you enjoy is really important. These will help you to relax and build ‘resilience’, which means you can bounce back if you are finding your studies difficult. Dental professionals also need to be excellent team players and communicators. Hobbies can help you to build these essential skills.



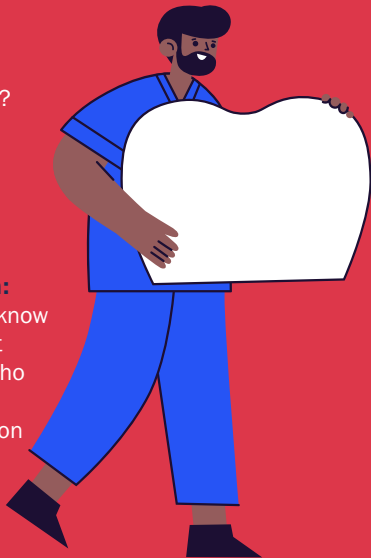
# Year 10

**Think:** A good dental professional reflects on what they do, to avoid making or repeating mistakes that might be dangerous for their patients.

**Practise reflecting with friends or family:** pick one thing that you have done or seen each day and discuss it in detail.

- > What happened?
- > Why did it happen that way?
- > What should have happened?
- > Could it have happened any other way?
- > What would you have done if you had been involved?

**Keep your eyes and ears open:** Start asking people what they know about a career in dentistry; but remember that some people who want to be helpful may be misinformed, or their information may be out-of-date.



# Year 11



## Dentistry

While most dental schools want **at least three A-levels for Dentistry**, they are not all the same when it comes to which subjects: some require Biology and Chemistry, but some will accept either Biology or Chemistry if you have another science and a third subject.

For some dental schools, a third A-level can often be anything you like but others may prefer particular subjects. Many dental schools will not accept Critical Thinking or General Studies, and some may not accept certain subject combinations.

Dental schools may also accept other courses such as BTEC, T levels or Access to Higher Education Diplomas. Remember to check the GCSE/Level 2 requirements too.

Confused? Check UCAS, the Dental Schools Council website and the websites of the dental schools you might consider applying to before you make your final A-level choices.

## Dental Hygiene/Dental Therapy

**Most dental schools will ask for A-levels.** Biology or Human Biology will usually be expected. The number of A-levels required may differ depending on the course you wish to study. For some dental schools, the other A-levels can often be anything you like, but others may prefer particular subjects. Many dental schools will not accept Critical Thinking and General Studies. Some may not accept certain subject combinations.

Dental schools may also accept other courses such as BTEC, T levels or Access to Higher Education Diplomas. Dental Nursing and Dental Technician qualifications may also be accepted. Remember to check the GCSE/Level 2 requirements too.

Confused? Check UCAS, the Dental Schools Council website and the websites of the dental schools you might consider applying to before you make your final A-level choices.





# Year 12

## Work Experience

It is important that you understand your chosen dental profession and what the role involves. Work experience is an excellent way to do this. However, there are also other ways if it is not possible for you to secure work experience.

Apply at the start of Year 12, by contacting your local dental surgery or hospital to ask about work experience. They will often have lengthy waiting lists for work experience so ensure you **APPLY EARLY** to avoid missing out. If work experience is not possible in person, you can always search for virtual opportunities instead.

If you cannot gain work experience in a dental setting, many dental professionals will be very willing to provide you with information over the phone.



To develop skills that are important for healthcare professionals, you can also try shadowing someone at a local doctor's surgery, hospital or care home, as it will all be good practice. You could also consider volunteering - perhaps you could mow the lawn or walk the dog for an elderly person who struggles to do it themselves. Do this consistently, not just occasionally, and use the time to reflect on what life must be like for them.

Consider whether or not you enjoy helping people: dental professionals have empathy (the ability to understand how someone is feeling), and they are altruistic (which means they help people in need and do not want anything in return). Does this sound like you?

Think about new skills and experiences and how these might make you a better dental professional.



## Think about your learning style



Think about your learning style and whether you are someone who likes to be hands-on and independent or more theoretical.

## Not all dental schools and courses are the same

Do you want to intercalate, taking a year longer but graduating with two degrees instead of one? How close to home do you want to be? Do you want a dental school that values both science and people equally or one that is more focussed on developing you as a researcher?

## Remember...



Most of the information you need is available free of charge: go to Open Days and Dentistry Taster Days, look at the Dental Schools Council website ([dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk](http://dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk)) and read university websites carefully.

Before going to Open Days, think about the sort of questions you would like to ask dental students, such as: where do you go on placement? When do you start treating patients?

Remember not to believe everything people say; your experience at university could be very different to other people's.



## Make a spreadsheet of dental schools

Note what each university wants from its students, what makes you want to study there, and what worries you (if anything). Focus on the ones you can get into.

- What do the ones you are interested in look for?
- GCSE grades/UCAT score?
- Is BMAT needed?
- Do you have the right A-levels or should you look for dental schools which offer a foundation/pre-dental year?
- How important are your personal statement or your predicted grades?

Remember that you must meet a dental school's minimum requirements or your application will automatically be rejected; different dental schools have different minimum criteria on GCSEs and other things. Most dental schools also need you to be 18 or older on your first day. Remember to note the UCAS code for each course.



## Arrange to volunteer



Focus on volunteering that includes a care element, e.g.

- Care home support groups or clubs for children with physical and or mental disabilities
- Play schemes
- Support groups and activity sessions for adults e.g. with dementia or MS
- Children's sports coaching
- Tutoring GCSE students
- Mentoring young people.



Try to do this over a significant period of time. Care home placements may take 3-4 months to arrange. Maintain your outside interests e.g. music, sport, drama etc. This shows that you are not just focussed on academic studies but are a 'well rounded' individual.

Try to keep up with current news topics and developments in science and dentistry. Read an online paper (not just Facebook news feeds). Explore scientific websites and those of the GDC and British Dental Association.

Does your school have a Dentistry Club? Could you start one? What opportunities to learn more about Dentistry and science are available through Seren or public lectures?

Dental schools often use selection tests such as UCAT or BMAT to help them decide who to interview. Not all of them require high scores, but they might still want you to have taken the test anyway.

## Sit your test before applying to dental school

All dental schools constantly review how and if they use tests such as UCAT, BMAT etc. To keep up-to-date with the changes you should always look at current information on university websites.

If you are considering applying to a dental school that uses UCAT, check well in advance the date you need to book by. Perhaps book a date after AS or mock exams and give yourself a month to prepare. Practice resources are available on the UCAT website.

Once you sit the selection test, use your spreadsheet to decide which universities to apply to. UCAS lets you apply to a maximum of five courses and up to four of these can be dental courses.

## Develop a Plan B

What if you do not get an offer next year? Would you be willing to accept a place on another degree and apply again to a dental course once you graduate?

Rather than leaving your 5th UCAS choice blank, think about applying to another course you would be happy to accept should you be unsuccessful in getting onto your chosen dental course.

Are you willing to have a gap year and apply again once you know your A-level grades? Do you want a gap year anyway? What could you do during that time that will help you to build transferable skills and make you a better dental student?

# Personal Statement


Remember to look at your spreadsheet as you write your personal statement, and make sure that you cover the qualities or experiences that your preferred dental schools look for in their students.

Explain what you learned from your work experience or volunteering opportunities, and how this will help you become a thoughtful, respectful dental professional.



# Year 13

## DECISION TIME...



The UCAS application deadline varies for different courses. The application deadline for Dentistry is in **October**, and for Dental Therapy and Hygiene it's in **January**.



## keep up your volunteering

This will give you interesting and useful experiences to discuss at interview and, if you end up reapplying during a gap year, it will show that you are serious about Dentistry, Dental Hygiene or Dental Therapy being your vocation.

Some dental schools are happy for their applicants to take a gap year, as you will apply with a year's more maturity and life experience but remember to request it when you apply. A dental school will not be impressed if you spring it on them after they have made you an offer.

## Did you know...

- > Panel interviews are not the same as Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) so practise the interview technique you will need for the dental schools you apply to.



- > Ask your school for advice and research online, but remember that not all advice on the internet is up to date or accurate.
- > Dental schools do not tell prospective students everything that will happen at an interview and they will not let private companies know either: these organisations may know what happened last year, but that does not mean a dental school will do the same thing this year.

## Applications

There are more good applicants than places at dental schools, and every year some students who will eventually have excellent careers in the dental professions walk away without offers.

Those who are resilient, as dental professionals need to be, will decide to use Year 13 as a learning experience and will reflect on what happened. A well-planned re-application during a gap year, with good A-levels, could be much stronger than the original UCAS application and may improve your odds of receiving an offer.

## Deadline

Decision time again: UCAS will have a deadline by when you need to:

1. Firm the offer you prefer (i.e. make it your first choice).
2. Make another offer, if you have one, your insurance choice (i.e. accept their offer if you do not get the grades for your firm choice).
3. Reject any other offers you were made.

No offers this year? Time for that Plan B.

**Want to know more? Go to [cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry](https://cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry)**

# key

**BDS Dentistry A200, BSc Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy B752 or Diploma in Dental Hygiene B750 etc:** Each degree has a UCAS code. Two degrees may have different codes but be similar. Others may share an identical code but not have much else in common.

**BMAT:** A selection test that some dental schools want students to take before applying for dentistry.

**Foundation Course/Pre-Dental Year:** Some dental schools offer students who did not take suitable A-level subjects the chance to apply to Dentistry via a Foundation Course. This is usually an extra year, before Year 1, where students are taught the science they did not study at A-level.

**GAMSAT:** A selection test that some dental schools want people who already have a degree, or who are in their last year of university, to take before applying for dentistry.

**GDC:** The General Dental Council. They set standards for your future education and career in dentistry.

**Minimum Requirements:** These are grades, skills or experiences that dental schools want from their applicants. They will be different for each dental school and checking these before you apply will increase your chances of receiving an offer.

**Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI's):** This type of interview lets you talk one-to-one with many different interviewers, so that the dental school can gain a fair and balanced overview of your strengths.

**Panel Interviews:** A traditional interview style, where you may be interviewed by a panel of two or more people.

**UCAT:** A selection test that some dental schools use to select applicants for their programmes.

**UCAS:** The website you use to apply to dental school. You will set up a UCAS account and use it to accept or reject offers, and dental schools will use UCAS to contact you.

## Remember...

Choose your A-levels **with care**.

Arrange volunteering that ideally includes a **care element**.

Try to **understand** what a dental professional does, through work experience for example.

**Keep track of your choices** with a spreadsheet.

Have a **Plan B**.

Do things that will **build your resilience**.

Practise **reflective thinking** with friends or family.

Study Dentistry  
Cardiff University

Once you apply, we look at your application **step-by-step**.



Dentistry  
AT  
*Cardiff*  
UNIVERSITY

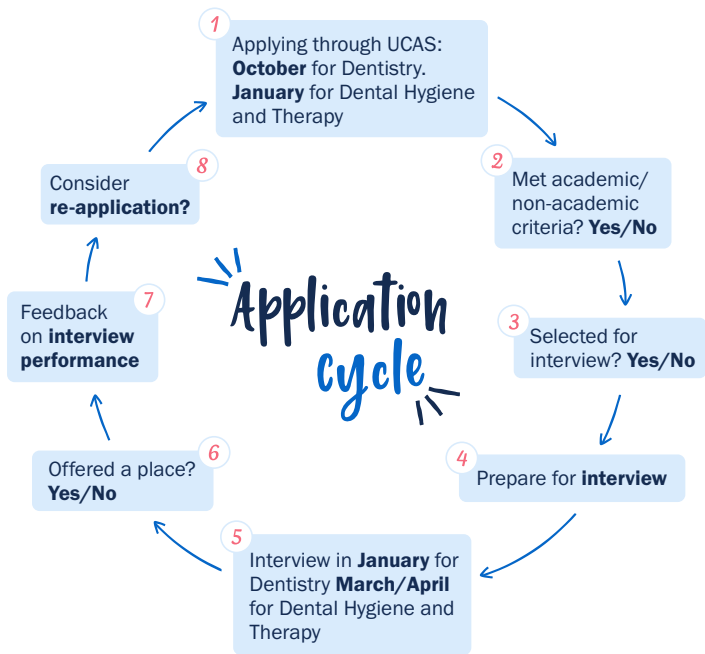
THE  
Application  
cycle



## DID YOU KNOW?

If you apply to us but do not get an interview or an offer, we will be happy to hear from you again next year: some of our best students tell us their gap year made all the difference when it came to strengthening their application.

Want to know more? Go to [cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry](http://cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry)



# What happens after I apply?

## Dentistry

### OCTOBER - Application Deadline

- The UCAS application deadline for Dentistry is in October.
- Once you've applied, we check whether you have the minimum grade requirements, review your UCAT score and read your personal statement and reference.
- We then rank all of our applications. Applicants who are a good fit for our course will be at the top of this list, and will be invited to interview. Meeting the minimum entry requirements does not guarantee you an interview.



## December - MMI invitations

- There is lots of free advice available to help you prepare for your interview. The Dental Schools Council, UCAS website and the website of the university you are applying to are a good place to start.

## January - interview with us

- MMIs (Multiple Mini Interviews) take place. After these are finished, all interview scores are ordered from high to low.

## February / March - check UCAS for an offer

- We make offers to successful interviewees.
- In some years, we may also use a reserve list.
- If you are unsuccessful, you can request feedback from us on your performance at interview. Remember that you can phone us for advice on A-level Results Day if your grades are very good.



# What happens after I apply?

## Dental Therapy & Dental Hygiene

### January - Application Deadline

- The UCAS application deadline for Dental Therapy and Hygiene is in January.
- Once you've applied, we check whether you have the minimum grade requirements, and read your personal statement and reference.
- We then rank all of our applications. Applicants who are a good fit for our course will be at the top of this list, and will be invited to interview. Meeting the minimum entry requirements does not guarantee you an interview.





## February - MMI invitations

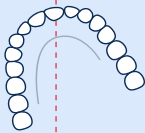
- There is lots of free advice available to help you prepare for your interview. The Dental Schools Council, UCAS website and the website of the university you are applying to are a good place to start.

## March - interview with us

- MMIs (Multiple Mini Interviews) take place. After these are finished, all interview scores are ordered from high to low.

## March / April - check UCAS for an offer

- We make offers to successful interviewees.
- In some years, we may also use a reserve list.
- If you are unsuccessful, you can request feedback from us on your performance at interview. Remember that you can phone us for advice on A-level Results Day if your grades are very good.





## April / May - Visit Us



- If you have an offer, join us for an (optional) offer holder session, where you can learn more about the course and what it's like to be a university student.
- If you have heard back from all of your choices, consider firming your offer.



## JUNE - IS YOUR CHOSEN COURSE RIGHT FOR YOU?

- The final date for offer holders to firm us, make us their insurance choice, or reject our offer is in June.



## AUGUST - A-LEVEL RESULTS DAY



- If you meet your offer requirements, congratulations! You will start receiving details of what happens next.
- If you have an offer but miss the necessary grades, you may be offered a place on another course. Some Dental Schools may accept resits for some courses, please check this with the Dental School you have applied for.
- Alternatively, most Dental Schools welcome applications from graduates with good A-level and degree qualifications. You may consider completing a degree in a different subject and reapplying to Dental School after completing this degree.



## September

- **Welcome to dental school!**
- Alternatively, if you are not starting university this year, finalise your UCAS reapplication and get ready for a great gap year, widening your range of transferable skills to make your application even stronger.

# Good Luck

[cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry](https://cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry)

A leading dental school that offers a vibrant student community, state-of-the-art facilities, exceptional teaching and a supportive learning environment.