

So you want to be an Orthodontist?

What is Orthodontics?

Orthodontics is a specialised branch of dentistry. Orthodontic treatment corrects irregularities of the teeth or developing jaws and can improve the function and appearance of the mouth and face. Orthodontic appliances (braces) are used to straighten the teeth.



Is orthodontics the career for me?

A career in orthodontics can be challenging, intellectually stimulating, creative and rewarding. You will need to be able to relate well to patients, who will mostly be children and teenagers. One of the attractions of a career in orthodontics is where and when you can work. You may wish to work in a specialist high street practice and run your own small business. Alternatively you may wish to work in a Hospital, a Community clinic or become a teacher of Orthodontics in a University. There are plenty of opportunities for full-time or part-time work and career breaks are possible.

If you are interested in becoming an orthodontist then you possibly already have some idea of what the job entails. Maybe you attend an orthodontist yourself or know someone who does. If you are seriously considering working in this branch of dentistry, do spend some time with an orthodontist to find out if this could be the career you are looking for.

How can I become a specialist in orthodontics?

There are a number of stages to becoming an orthodontist. These are:

- Obtain good A level grades, generally ABB or higher in order to secure a place at University to study dentistry (in Scotland this will be ABBBB or higher).
- At University, train for 5 years to obtain a degree in Dentistry (the Bachelor of Dental Surgery or BDS degree). There are also new 4-year graduate entry courses at Preston and Plymouth.
- After qualifying, work as a dentist and at the same time study for the Diploma of Membership of the Joint Dental Faculties (MJDF RCS Eng) or the MFDS/MFD examination. This takes a minimum of 2 years to complete. Though the MJDF/MFDS/MFD is no longer an entry requirement for specialist training, it is desirable as it signifies the acquisition of broad-based knowledge and understanding, which provides evidence of your suitability and commitment to continuing professional development.
- Once you have your BDS and MJDF/MFDS/MFD, apply for a place on an orthodontic training scheme. This training takes a further 3 years of full time study and consists of both academic training (at a university) and clinical training (in a hospital). At the end, if you are successful in the Membership in Orthodontics examination (M.Orth) you will become a specialist in orthodontics. You will also study for a higher degree - Master of Science (M.Sc) or Doctorate of Dental Surgery (DDS).
- For a primary care dentist with a special interest (DwSI) in Orthodontics in an area which does not have a population to sustain a specialist practice, there is a three year part-time BOS/FGDP(UK) training programme in Orthodontics leading to a diploma in Primary Care Orthodontics RCS(Eng). See www.fgdp.org.uk/education/

Where can I study dentistry and then orthodontics?

The Universities of Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Dundee, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Plymouth (Peninsula), Preston and Sheffield have dental schools where you can study to become a dentist. Applications are made via U.C.A.S. All these schools, with the exception of Plymouth and Preston, also train dentists to become specialists in orthodontics.

Do I need to do any further study after becoming a specialist?

If you want to work in a Hospital and become a Consultant, you will have to train for a further 2 years in a hospital to gain a Fellowship of Dental Surgery in Orthodontics (FDS Orth). If you then want to work full-time in a University Department to teach and carry out research, you would need to study for another degree (Doctor of Philosophy or PhD). In some cases, it may also be appropriate to study for a teaching qualification. All dentists or orthodontists need to keep up to date by studying and attending courses for as long as they are working.

Where can I find out more?

Start by talking to your own dentist and your local orthodontist. Your careers teacher may also be able to give you some advice. You may find it useful to contact the following organisations:

- The University & Colleges Admissions Service (www.ucas.ac.uk)
- British Dental Association (www.bda-dentistry.org.uk)
- General Dental Council (www.gdc-uk.org)
- British Orthodontic Society (www.bos.org.uk)

Steps to becoming an Orthodontist

