Getting your first job

The BDA guide to Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training recruitment

2014–15 NEW DFT interview scenarios and Situational Judgement Test example questions
Contents

Introducing the British Dental Association

Your trade union ........................................................................................................... 06
Your professional association ....................................................................................... 09

Dental Foundation Training / Dental Vocational Training

DFT in England, Wales and Northern Ireland ................................................................. 13
VT in Scotland ............................................................................................................... 24
Curriculum – UK ........................................................................................................... 27
Salary and contract – UK .............................................................................................. 29
Assessment – UK .......................................................................................................... 31

Securing your first job

Completing application forms ....................................................................................... 35
Interview skills – England, Wales and Northern Ireland ............................................... 40
  Example scenarios ........................................................................................................ 45
  Example Situational Judgement Tests ......................................................................... 67
  The interview – a personal account ............................................................................ 82
Interview skills – Scotland .............................................................................................. 90
  Example interview questions ....................................................................................... 91
  Advice from a Scottish VT Trainer ............................................................................... 95
  The LDFT interview – a personal account ................................................................... 96
General interview advice .............................................................................................. 98
CV writing ..................................................................................................................... 100

Your final year studies

Tips for your final year .................................................................................................. 104

After graduation

What next? Useful checklist .......................................................................................... 107
Alternative options to DFT/VT ...................................................................................... 108
Postgraduate qualifications ......................................................................................... 114
Useful contacts ............................................................................................................. 118
Abbreviations .............................................................................................................. 119
England, Wales and Northern Ireland

This chapter answers your questions about DFT in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It outlines the curriculum, the recruitment process, your contract, how you will be assessed and much more.

Double check dates and deadlines

The dates and deadlines in this booklet for England, Wales and Northern Ireland DFT recruitment must be checked on the London Recruitment website, as they were not finalised at the time of writing.

www.londondeanery.ac.uk

What is Dental Foundation Training?

In the NHS, across the UK, Foundation Dentists (FDs) spend a year in approved practices, working on standard contracts whilst undertaking training. Dental Foundation Training can provide new graduates with a broad overview of career choices and a good understanding of the NHS system.

DFT introduces new graduates to general practice and gives them a protected environment to work in for a year. Each FD has a trainer dentist in the same practice. The trainer provides the FD with supervision and help whenever it is needed, as well as meeting with the FD for regular tutorials. The trainer takes responsibility for the acts and omissions of the FD in NHS terms, but the FD, as a registered dentist, will be liable for their conduct and for patient wellbeing.

The dental foundation training programme is based on a centralised document, the DFT Curriculum (currently being revised).

Participants on the scheme work with an online portfolio. Formative assessment is extensively used as part of this.

A year of Dental Foundation Training (or DF1 as it is often referred to) is mandatory if you want to work in the NHS. After you have completed DF1, there is also the option to continue training in ‘dental core training’ posts (DCT) which is useful for extended learning. Those interested in future specialisation need to do a second year before they can apply for formal specialist training.

Recent changes in the organisation of dental training have meant that the curriculum is being reviewed to reflect the fact that DF1 has remained a one-year programme rather than moving towards two years. The second year has been renamed as dental core training (DCT1) and additional years in training posts are now referred to as DCT2 etc.
Securing your first job

This chapter helps you to prepare for your DFT/VT interviews, ensuring that you come across as a consummate professional.

Dr Janine Brooks MBE, gives her advice on how to prepare for DFT interviews and Jeff Ellis, a Vocational Trainer from Scotland, gives tips for Scottish VT candidates.

This section gives advice on the UK and Scottish recruitment processes including:

- Completing application forms
- Preparing for your interview
- Example interview questions / scenarios
- Example Situational Judgement Test questions
- Questions you may wish to ask
- The day of the interview
- After your interview.

Fiona Barrow, a recent graduate and former Dental Society President from UCLan gives a personal account of her DF1 interview last year and Neil McGoldrick, a Dundee Dental School graduate, outlines his experiences in the Scottish longitudinal scheme interviews.

If you are requested to submit a Curriculum Vitae (CV), a guide to CV writing is also given at the end of this chapter.

Application forms

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

There is one single application process for DFT places in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The process is overseen by COPDEND, managed by a DFT Board, and carried out by London Recruitment.

Here is some information on filling in the application form. It is written on the basis of last year’s application process and is therefore intended as guidance only, as there could be changes to this year’s process and form (which haven’t been published at the time of writing this guide). You must read all the relevant information provided by the organisers before submitting your application.

Before you apply

There are a few things you need to do in order to have access to the application system. Applications can only be made online, through the e-recruitment system of London Recruitment, www.londondeanery.ac.uk/var/recruitment

You must:

- Register with their recruitment system
- Ensure you provide an email address to which you have continuous access. Preferably, do not use your university email address, and also avoid ‘rediffmail.com’ addresses as they sometimes do not communicate well with the system
- Log on
- Search for the relevant vacancy reference – a code will be provided in the information literature from London Recruitment
- Read the information provided in relation to the application process
- Download the following documents:
  - DFT application form guidance, which provides specific detail on completing the form
  - The DFT National Applicant Guide 2015, which provides a detailed overview of the whole process
  - The person specification which contains the attributes against which you will be assessed.

Filling in the application form

Once the application process has opened, you will have access to the form. Much of the form is straightforward and unsurprising, for example the provision of personal details. But there are also areas where you will be asked to make legally-binding statements,
Do not make assumptions and do not presume to know what your patient’s life is like. You are the clinical expert. Your patients need your expertise when they are deciding how to improve their oral health and in choosing the right treatment option for them. Interviewers will be interested in how you incorporate the GDC standards into your responses to the scenarios. The key is to show how you can apply professionalism to clinical situations.

Example scenarios

Here are some example scenarios for the two assessment stations. The scenarios are not designed to catch you out but to see if you can use common sense. The key is application. They are usually simple clinical issues, not highly technical ones. You need to show that you have the maturity and stability to cope when things get complicated. Stay calm, simple things first, and do not automatically go for the most obscure answer just to show how clever you are. The scenarios combine the GDC principles with the domains in preparing for practice.

Communications station (with actor)

1. Competence and consent

| Setting the scene | A 93-year-old male patient has arrived at the practice for an appointment with you. He is accompanied by a care assistant from the nursing home where he resides. She tells you the patient has suffered with dementia for the last six years and has deteriorated markedly in the last few months. Last week the patient bit another member of staff whilst they were trying to clean their teeth. The care assistant requests you extract the patients’ teeth, this was decided at his last case conference in the nursing home. She says she is able to consent for the patient. |
| The task/question | Outline the conversation you will have with the care assistant. |
| GDC principles | Put patients’ interests first. Communicate effectively with patients. Obtain valid consent. Work with colleagues in a way that is in patients’ best interests. Make sure your personal behaviour maintains patients’ confidence in you and the dental profession. |
| GDC Domain | Communication | Professionalism | Management and leadership | Clinical |

Thomas Hughes, recent graduate and former Dentsoc President for Manchester Dental School, gives advice on preparing for your interview.

“The date of the interview seemed to come round much quicker than I expected. Ensure that you are thoroughly prepared by practising OSCE-type examination stations, or by using revision books like the PasTest revision guides. Practising with your colleagues is a great method for testing your depth of understanding and how accurate your time keeping is. Furthermore, ensure that you know the Standards for the Dental Team documents published by the GDC. These aspects are the underlying themes for all of the interview stations.”
Example SJT questions

1. Patient-centred care

You are a busy performer working in an NHS practice. The practice manager has given you a cap on your quarterly NHS laboratory expenses and you have already exceeded that cap.

Your patient, in your clinical judgement, needs a crown rather than an extraction. The patient also wants to have a crown and wishes to have the treatment sooner rather than later as they are getting married in the next few weeks.

What would be the most appropriate action to take from the options below?

A) You ask your patient to make an appointment at the beginning of the next quarter.
B) You try to persuade your patient that an extraction would be better.
C) You ignore the cap and proceed with the crown.
D) You refer your patient to a colleague who has not exceeded their cap quota.

Correct response: C

2. Confidentiality

A good friend of yours is a patient at the surgery where you work. They are not a patient of yours. Recently they have been referred to the oral surgery department at the local hospital for a surgical extraction. They have asked you to check in their notes when the referral letter was sent.

What should you do?

A) Access the electronic record system, check when the referral was made and tell your friend.
B) Talk to your colleague (the dentist who treats your friend) and ask them to check and let your friend know.
C) Tell your friend you cannot access the information of other colleagues’ patient’s and suggest they contact the surgery.
D) Talk to the receptionist, ask her to access the information and contact your friend.
E) Tell your friend to contact the hospital he was referred to.

Correct response: C

3. Dealing with patient requests

Your patient, a 48 year old maths professor, tells you that they want a bridge replacing. Their periodontal condition is poor and you explain replacing the bridge would be detrimental to their oral health. The patient tells you to forget about their gums and do the bridge, that’s what they’re paying you for.

What should you do?

A) Refuse to do the treatment.
B) Refuse to do the treatment, offer to refer the patient to a specialist.
C) Replace the bridge.
D) Replace the bridge and write in the notes this was on the patient’s insistence and against your advice.

Correct response: B
Scotland

Preparing for your interview
To stand out from the crowd it is important that you properly prepare for your interview. This section outlines the research you need to carry out prior to your interview.

Research the practice
Prior to your practice visits:
• Find out a bit about the practice. Practices will provide a prospectus on the NES website during the application process.
• Make sure you read and save the information for each practice you apply to.
• Try and locate the practice website, or if it is close to you, go and have a look at the practice from the outside.

Amit Patel gives his advice on things to consider when researching potential practices.
1. Geographical location. Although this is important for where you are going to live, it is also important to consider other factors, for example your rapport with the trainer, before you make your final decision.
2. Number of years as a trainer. If they have done it for a long time, there is a reason.
3. Number of years qualified. New school versus old school: there are pro’s and con’s for each. Choose someone you know you will gel with.
4. Personality. First impressions are everything; choose a trainer that makes you feel comfortable, as this will help to make VT an enjoyable year.
5. The surrounding area. Could you see yourself living close by?
6. The trainer’s special interests and social interests. Do they match yours?
7. Don’t be put off by ‘unappealing areas’. Your VT year is about experience and the more you do, the better you’ll be.
8. Large practice versus small practice. Some people like the idea of always having someone around to bounce ideas off, however some may not like the ‘busy nature’ of a large practice.
9. Check facilities. From rotary endo to car parking availability.

Research the role
Carefully read the person and job specification for the role. This is provided in booklet form on the NES website. In the interview it is important that you show that you are able to match the person and job specification.

Skills that trainers are looking for include:
• Team working
• Communicating aspects of dentistry to different people
• Your approach to keeping up to date professionally and clinically
• Working within your competency and knowing when to ask for help.

Interview questions
Before your interview you should think about the kind of questions you may be asked. You should also think about the questions you would like to ask the interviewer.

Your strengths and weaknesses
Think about your own strengths and weaknesses. This is a popular interview question, so it is wise to consider it before going into the pressure of an interview. It is important that you give an example to demonstrate each of your strengths.

STAR method
The STAR method is a useful tool to help you prepare your answers. This helps you to structure the example or scenario that you talk about to demonstrate your strengths.

S – Set the scene
T – What was the task/problem?
A – What action did you take?
R – What was the result?

Weaknesses
People are generally very good at talking about their strengths, but less so about their weaknesses. Weaknesses however don’t always have to be negative; they can often be turned into positives, providing the opportunity for further training or professional and/or personal development.

Potential questions
Think about some potential questions that you may be asked.
Practise answering questions like these with your friends – it will help boost your confidence and alleviate nerves. You could even give each other mock interviews.
• Talk in the first person, for example ‘I have treated a range of patients requiring that treatment’. Make sure you answer the question.
• Demonstrate that you review and critically analyse your work.
• Use the questions to illustrate your ability to work as part of a team, to communicate and to know when to ask for help.

Remember, a major part of VT is knowing when to ask for help, so it is essential to demonstrate that whilst you will think a problem through, you are comfortable to ask for help when this is the best option. Remember, help in the first instance comes from the trainer or practice staff, and help with a trainer or practice-based issue comes from the VT adviser.

Common mistakes
Common mistakes at VDP interviews include:
• Being unresponsive to open questions
• Arrogance and ignoring the rest of the team
• Lack of understanding of VT
• Misleading the trainer about career intentions
• Misleading the trainer about clinical experience.

As with the contents of your application form or CV, it is important to be truthful and not to mislead during your interview. Lying to get the position can be grounds for dismissal or a report to the GDC.

Remember to smile, be positive, and be aware of your body language.

General advice
Remember, the practice interview is a two-way process. It is as much a chance for you to assess whether you think you would like to work for a particular practice, as it is for the trainer to decide whether you are compatible with the practice and dental team. Make sure you take this opportunity to ask the trainer any questions you may have.

As you will most likely be spending the next twelve months of your life working closely with your trainer, not only do you need to convince the trainer that you will fit in with the practice’s environment, but you also need to ensure that this is an environment in which you will feel comfortable working.

Practise answering questions like these with your friends – it will help boost your confidence and alleviate nerves. You could even give each other mock interviews.

Advice from a trainer
Jeff Ellis, a Vocational Trainer from Coupar Angus, gives his top tips for Scottish Vocational Training (VT) interview candidates.

“I have been a VT trainer for eight years so have interviewed lots of students. I look for something different and professional, so it is important that you make your CV stand out and sound interesting.

Make sure you pay attention to what the trainer says on the web portal. You are not going to get an interview if you don’t follow the specific practice instructions. For example, don’t phone the practice manager if the practice profile says to email your CV! People will often use this to whittle down numbers.

If you have been asked to email your CV to the trainer try to show in the email or an accompanying letter that you have read the practice profile by commenting on something it includes. This makes you look interested in the practice and doesn’t look like you are just sending your CV to everyone.

Be aware of interview open days and keep your diary clear. Trainers generally clear their book for a specific session so won’t have space to accommodate students on a different day. If you can’t make the interview date, you simply won’t get a job there. It is also important to make sure that you turn up at the right place, at the right time, on the right day – not 24 hours later, as has happened to the odd candidate in the past! Make sure you double-check the address and timing.

In terms of the interview itself, most trainers now use a formal interview format, seeing all of the candidates in one session. Make sure you are prepared before the interview for the potential questions that may come up. There are some practice questions earlier in this guide. It is also vital to be aware of your body language; for example, even if you are nervous, try to keep your hands in one place.

It is really important that you don’t try to do a deal. Every year a few students and trainers try to do this and are then disappointed. Trainers are allowed to advise people whether they have made the preference short list. You can email to find out if this is the case if you have not heard back yet, as you don’t want to waste one of your choices.

The interview process is not rocket science – if you are well prepared and don’t let your nerves get the better of you, you should fly through the process. Good luck!”
Getting your first job | 2014–15

The BDA guide to Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training recruitment

Updated for 2014–15, this guide has been written specifically for final year BDA student members to help with the next step on your dental career path – securing your first job.

To give you the low-down on what interviewers are really looking for, Dr Janine Brooks MBE, Dentalia Coaching and Training Consultancy, gives guidance on preparing for your Dental Foundation Training interview. Her advice includes practice scenarios and essential information about how to succeed in the new Situational Judgement Tests.

Jeff Ellis, a Vocational Trainer from Scotland gives interview tips for Scottish Vocational Training candidates. Potential questions you may be asked in your interview, plus helpful guidance on choosing a practice is also included.

This guide also contains information about:

- Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training
- Preparing for the national DFT interviews
- Preparing for practice interviews in Scotland.

NEW DFT interview scenarios and Situational Judgement Test example questions