Getting your first job

The BDA guide to Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training recruitment

2015–16

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Dental Foundation Training / Dental Vocational Training

It is important you have a solid understanding of Dental Foundation Training (DFT) and Vocational Training (VT) prior to applying for your first job.

This chapter gives you a detailed insight into the DFT and VT training schemes, telling you what you should expect from the training and most importantly, what you need to do to make sure you get a place.

It also covers the following:

- What is DFT/VT?
- The recruitment process – England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The recruitment process – Scotland.
- Allocation of places.
- The curriculum.
- The salary and contract.
- The assessment.

Terminology

England, Wales and Northern Ireland now mainly use “Dental Foundation Training” (DFT), “Dental Vocational Training” or “Vocational Training” (VT) is mainly used in Scotland, although “DFT” is also used, usually in relation to a second training year or a two-year integrated scheme.

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; in some practices, two dentists may share the role of the trainer. 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.

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 (http://www.lpmde.ac.uk), as they were not finalised at the time of writing.

The dental foundation training programme is based on a centralised document, the DFT Curriculum. The latest version was published in 2014 and is now the basis for training and for future initiatives linked to DFT. View the updated curriculum at http://www.copende.org/content.aspx?Group=foundation&Page=foundation_programme

Participants on the scheme work with an online portfolio. Formatative assessment is extensively used as part of this. A more summative approach to assessment will be piloted from September 2015 and is likely to become part of the system from 2016, the year you will start.

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 has been 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.
Dental Vocational Training in Scotland

Dental Vocational Training in Scotland operates under a separately organised scheme from that in the rest of the UK. It is organised and administered on a Scotland-wide basis by NHS Education Scotland (NES). Full details of the recruitment process, including application deadlines, are made available on the NES website prior to the launch of recruitment – www.nes.scot.nhs.uk.

New or recent graduates from UK dental schools must complete a one year programme of Dental Vocational Training (often known as Vocational Training) in order to be eligible to hold a Health Board list number in Scotland. The list number allows dentists to work as Health Board contractors in NHS General Dental Practice.

In Scotland, new graduates on training programmes are known as Vocational Dental Practitioners (VDPs). Training is centred on approved training practices with a complementary educational support programme of normally 25 study days. Training practices are visited to ensure that high standards are maintained and a dentist in each training practice is identified as the Trainer and employer of the VDP.

Longitudinal two-year scheme
There are a number of places available on a longitudinal two-year scheme, in which participants alternate between practice and hospital jobs. The terms Dental Foundation Training (DFT) or Longitudinal Dental Foundation Training (LDFT) are sometimes used here.

VT recruitment process
Applications are made through an online recruitment process via the NES Portal (www.portal.scot.nhs.uk) and must be made by the stated deadline. You must contact NES directly for the 2015/2016 deadlines.

At this stage the information required is very basic and captures personal and university information such as contact details, university attended and expected date of graduation. They require a non-dental school email (but preferably not a Hotmail account).

The interview process for the longitudinal scheme is slightly longer as candidates must attend a 20 minute panel interview. If they are successful at the interview, they then complete practice visits.

Niall McGoldrick, a Dundee Dental School graduate, gives a detailed insight into the Scottish LDFT interviews in chapter three.

Visitation period – interviews
Each training practice will have a practice prospectus within the NES Portal; these are usually uploaded in the spring. Candidates can use this information to plan which training practices they wish to visit during the visitation period. This takes place around March-April, but could be earlier (please check with NES for deadlines). There will be detailed information about the practice and staff, as well as information on how the prospective trainer prefers to be contacted by applicants. It is important to look at all practices before deciding which ones to apply to, then visit those that you are interested in. Some travel expenses might be paid in some regions, subject to prior agreement from NES.

It is also important to make sure your CV is up to date, as you will need to provide it to the practices in which you are interested. Please see the ‘CV writing’ chapter of this guide for advice on writing a compelling CV.

Matching
Scotland operates a ‘matching’ scheme in which applicants and training practices are put together based on preferences given to the organisers, NES. This means the students rank the practices in the order they want to work for them, and the practices rank the students in order of preference.

Applicants rank the practices at the end of the visitation period. This is done by completing a preference form via the NES Portal and must be done by the stated deadline. You can rank up to five practices and trainers list up to seven students. It is important that you don’t rank any in which you are not prepared to train, as you may be matched with them.

As in the rest of the UK, this process is highly competitive. Limiting your choices on the preference scheme will limit your chances of being matched.

Rosemary Cunning, a graduate of Glasgow dental school, gives her advice on applying for VT in Scotland.

“When applying for a VT position in Scotland it is important that you are yourself. The application process is slightly different to England, Wales and NI and it gives you more opportunity to interact with your trainer as part of the interview. In your VT interview it is important to give a true impression of who you are and what interests you. You will be working closely with the people in your VT practice and you don’t want to have to keep up a charade for a whole year! You want to show the interviewer your best qualities, but make sure you are genuine – you don’t want to come across as too forward or false.

When looking for a VT job it is a two-way process. It is essential that you feel you can work with the person who could potentially be training you. Do not just choose a position based on location or hearsay – you want to enjoy working with your trainer and the whole team on a daily basis. VT is a year when you enhance your skills greatly and it is vital you make the most of it.”
Preparation for interview

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.

Harshini Pindolia and Simran Chana, recent graduates of Kings Dental Institute, give a personal account of their DFT interview and Neil Goldrick, 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 organiser 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 ORIEL system:

http://www.oriel.nhs.uk

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:

1. DFT application form guidance. This provides specific detail on completing the form. It may be included in the documents below
2. The DFT National Applicant Guide 2016. This provides a detailed overview of the whole process
3. The person specification which contains the attributes against which you will be assessed.

You must ensure that you fully complete the application process. There are two stages online. Firstly you need to register with the Oriel system, then secondly you need to fill out the application form and submit it. The initial registration with the Oriel system is not enough to be included in the application process for DFT. The application form must be complete before it is submitted.
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 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 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, talk about 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. Complaints

Setting the scene
A 47-year-old female patient comes to see you. She is a regular patient of the practice although this is the first time you have seen her. She wants to discuss the bleeding she has noticed when brushing her teeth. She has had the problem for a while, the previous dentist said it was not important. She finds it upsetting and is worried she may lose teeth as she has a horror of wearing false teeth.

The task/question
Outline the discussion you will have and in particular what advice you will give to the patient.

What the interviewer(s) is looking for
Empathy with the patient. Needs a full investigation and diagnostic charting. Discussions about gingival and periodontal disease, including progression. Discussions about oral hygiene, what she can do, how the dental team can help. Role of dental hygienist.

Could be other causes – trauma, e.g. too vigorous tooth brushing, systemic disease, may need to consider non-dental causes, underlying medical conditions.

Possibility of complaint if patient feels they have been neglected at previous dental recalls.

GDC principles
Put patients’ interests first. Communicate effectively with patients. Have a clear and effective complaints procedure.

GDC domain(s)
Clinical | Communication | Professionalism Management and Leadership.
**Example SJT questions**

1. **Social media**

   **Setting the scene**
   One of the trainee dental nurses at the practice where you work invites you to be friends with them on Facebook. You accept. A few weeks later you notice that they have posted about work. The post is dismissive of the practice and also the training day they have recently attended. They also make fun of a patient who has special needs.

   **Possible responses**
   1. Do nothing, it’s none of your business.
   2. Speak to the trainee dental nurse.
   3. Speak to the practice manager and ask her to talk with the trainee dental nurse.
   4. Contact the college where the trainee dental nurse is studying.
   5. Contact the General Dental Council.

   **Choose the two most appropriate responses**
   3 and 4

2. **Confidentiality**

   **Setting the scene**
   You are studying for a Master’s Degree in Restorative Dentistry. You have an assignment coming up and you need to work on it over the weekend. You decide to download some patient records onto a data stick so you can finish your case study. On Sunday you go out to lunch and your bag is stolen. The data stick is in the bag. What should you do?

   **Possible responses**
   1. Nothing, no one will be interested in the information on the stick.
   2. Report the loss to the practice on Monday morning and tell them the stick contained confidential patient information.
   3. Report the loss to the police.
   4. Ensure all the patients whose data was stolen are made aware of the loss.
   5. Report your bag as stolen, but tell no one about the data stick.

   **Choose the two most appropriate responses**
   2 and 4
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:
• Make sure you read and save the information for each practice you apply to
• Visit the practice website, or if it is close to you, go and have a look at the practice from the outside.

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.

Amit Patel gives his advice on things to consider when researching potential practices.
1. Geographical location. The surrounding area. Could you see yourself living close by? Although this is important, given it is where you are going to live, it is also important to consider other factors, particularly 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 pros and cons 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 trainer’s special interests and social interests. Do they match yours?
6. Don’t be put off by unappealing types of work. Your VT year is about experience and the more you do, the better you’ll be.
7. 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.
8. Check facilities. From rotary endo to car parking availability.

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 your 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 nine 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!”

Longitudinal Dental Foundation Training in Scotland (LDFT)

Niall McGoldrick, a Dundee Dental School graduate, gives an insight into the Scottish LDFT interviews.

“Longitudinal Dental Foundation Training (LDFT) is a two year training scheme in Scotland that includes rotations in General Practice, Salaried Service and Hospital. Recruitment starts earlier than VT so have your CV, referees and interview preparations started early. It is a competitive process but don’t let that put you off, if you have the determination and drive required for the scheme, it will shine through.

Interview components

I went through the interview process for LDFT in Scotland. The process has three components; an initial application form to complete online, a central interview by a panel made up of a salaried service dentist, a general practitioner and a hospital dentist. If you are successful at the central interview you will then be interviewed at the general practices involved in the scheme; they have the final say in who is selected.

Top tips

- Read recent and past BDJs looking out for hot topics and innovative new techniques and research. www.nature.com/bdj

- Be aware of what is topical in dentistry at present, consult the GDC website, BDA website, new guideline documents and speak to current practicing dentists. www.bda.org

- There will always be an opportunity to ask questions, usually near the end of the interview. Appear enthusiastic! Make sure to prepare questions to ask. Make your questions relevant and applied, for example you may ask ‘Will there be an opportunity to get involved in conscious sedation in the salaried service?’ www.gdc-uk.org

- Visit the GDC website and look at their new advice sheets which relate to the standards for the dental team. They include great points that can be applied when given scenarios to deal with at interview.

- Practise answering questions in the weeks running up to your interviews. Ask a friend to fire questions at you.

- Polished shoes, neat hair and a clean pressed suit are key.
Getting your first job | 2015–16

The BDA guide to Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training recruitment

Updated for 2015–16, 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 practise scenarios and essential information about how to succeed in the new Situational Judgement Tests, with even more new example questions added to this year’s guide.

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.

NEW DFT interview scenarios and Situational Judgement Test example questions

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This BDA Getting your First Job guide has been supported by