Orthoptist

You’ll help improve the quality of people’s lives by treating eye disorders and spotting serious neurological conditions.

Working life

As an orthoptist, you’ll diagnose and treat eye movement disorders, as well as visual impairments related to the way the eyes interact with the brain. This means you’ll also spot serious neurological conditions, such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease.

Collaborating with a team of eye specialists, you’ll be with patients every day, directly seeing the change in their quality of life when you treat their double vision or manage their squint. Your role could involve assessing the vision of babies or helping patients who have suffered a stroke [1]. You’ll also have the opportunity to work in a variety of places, from hospitals to schools.

Entry requirements

To become an orthoptist, you must first successfully complete an approved degree in orthoptics from one of the three universities in the UK which offer the course. The course takes three to four years to complete and involves a lot of practical work with patients, as well as theoretical knowledge. Once you’ve completed your degree, you’ll need to register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC [2]) before you can start practicing.

Entry requirements for an undergraduate course are typically:

- two or three A levels, including a science.
- five GCSEs (grades A-C [3]), including English language, maths and science.

Or the equivalent qualifications:

- a BTEC, HND or HNC, including science.
- a relevant NVQ.
- a science-based access course.
- equivalent Scottish or Irish qualifications.

Each university sets its own entry requirements, so it’s important to check with them directly. Wherever you study, you’ll need to show that you have a good understanding of orthoptics. It is also a good idea to spend some time with a registered orthoptist to get some firsthand experience of what the role’s really like. You’ll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

New annual payments
You’ll receive at least £5,000 a year to help fund your studies, through the NHS Learning Support Fund. And because orthoptics is a shortage specialism you’ll receive an additional £1,000 a year. The best part? You won’t have to pay a penny back.

**Must-have skills**

Don’t forget – academic qualifications aren’t everything. As an orthoptist, you’ll need to feel comfortable working with adults and children and have great communication skills to explain different conditions and treatments to your patients. You’ll also need to be organised, have good decision-making skills and attention for details.

**Training and career development**

Once you’ve qualified, you’ll have annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) check-ins, where we’ll discuss your career aspirations and plan how we can help you to achieve them, so you’re always moving forward. You’ll be encouraged to join the British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) where you can keep your knowledge and skills up to date by attending courses, conferences and seminars.

Working for the NHS, you could become a specialist orthoptist and later, a senior or head orthoptist. As a head of orthoptic service, you’d be responsible for a team and manage budgets. Teaching and research are other career options, as well as working in a private practice.

**Pay and benefits**

Your standard working week will be around 37.5 hours and may include evenings and weekends. As an orthoptist, you’ll be paid on the Agenda for Change (AFC) pay system [4], typically starting on band 5.

You’ll also have access to our generous pension scheme and health service discounts, as well as 27 days of annual leave plus bank holidays.

- Live vacancies [Expand / collapse]
  - View Vacancy [5]

**Lead Orthoptist**

Medway, ME7 5NY

- **Salary:**
  
  £38890.00 to £44503.00 a year

- **Type:**

  Permanent
**Head Orthoptist**

Sutton-In-Ashfield, NG17 4JL

- **Salary:**
  
  £38890.00 to £44503.00 a year

- **Type:**
  
  Permanent

**Lead Orthoptist**

Portsmouth, PO6 3LY

- **Salary:**
  
  £45,753 to £51,668 per annum

- **Type:**
  
  Permanent

**Employer:**

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

- View Vacancy
  
  View Vacancy [6]

Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

- View Vacancy
  
  View Vacancy [7]

Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust

- View Vacancy
  
  View Vacancy [8]
Orthoptist - Band 6
Ashford, Surrey, TW15 3AA

- **Salary:**
  - £32,933 to £39,681 p.a. inc. HCAS

- **Type:**
  - Permanent

- **Employer:**
  - Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

  View Vacancy
  View Vacancy [9]

Orthoptist (with extended role)
Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow, CM20 1QX

- **Salary:**
  - £38,890 - £44,503 per annum + 5% HCAS

- **Type:**
  - Permanent

- **Employer:**
  - The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust

  View Vacancy
  View Vacancy [10]

Bank Orthoptist
Royal Hampshire County ospital, Winchester, SO22 5DG
Salary:
£12.74+

Type:
Bank

Employer:
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

View Vacancy

Register for more details about becoming an orthoptist

We’ll email you a step-by-step guide to help you on your way to joining us.

Let’s go [11]

Other roles that may interest you

- Ophthalmology [12]
- Ophthalmic and vision science [13]
- Optometrist [14]
- Prosthetist/orthotist [15]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/orthoptist

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke
[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#HCPC
[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Grades_A-C