

Orthoptist

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

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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 [3]. You'll also have the opportunity to work in a variety of places, from hospitals to schools.

Real-life story -Teniola Ibrahim

Orthoptist

My role is a daily challenge and I love that because it makes every day interesting.

Read Teniola's story [4]

Entry requirements

To become an orthoptist, you must first successfully complete an approved degree in orthoptics from one of the four universities in the UK which offer the course. The undergraduate course takes three to four years to complete and involves a lot of practical work with patients, as well as theoretical knowledge. There is also a postgraduate option which takes 2 years. Once you've completed your degree, you'll need to register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC [5]) 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 [6]), including English language, maths and science.

Or the equivalent qualifications:

- a BTEC, HND or HNC, including science.
- a relevant T level.
- 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.

Annual payments

If you're eligible, you'll receive at least £6,000 a year to help fund your studies while at university. Your personal circumstances may mean you could receive more. And the good news? You'll never have to pay it back. Find out more. [7]

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 [8], 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.

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MSc Orthoptics (pre-registration)

University of Liverpool

View course [9] Opens in a new window

- Study mode

 - Full-time

- Duration of the course

 - 2 years

- Leading to a career in

 - Orthoptics (eye care)

- Contact details

 - shs@liverpool.ac.uk [10]

 - +44(0)151 795 6000

- Region

 - North West

- Admissions address

 - University of Liverpool

 - Liverpool

 - L69 3BX

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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.

Sign up [11]

Other roles that may interest you

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

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