

Virology (healthcare scientist)

Virology is the study of viral infections, such as rubella, herpes, hepatitis and HIV.

If you work in this area of healthcare science, you'll usually be part of a larger clinical microbiology service specialising in the identification and characterisation of viruses that cause infection.



You may be directly involved in the screening of selected populations at risk from specific viral diseases

Working life

Your investigations will involve highly specialised serological and molecular techniques, such as antigen, antibody detection, Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and sequencing.

In some instances you may be directly involved in the screening of selected populations at risk from specific

viral diseases.

Aside from dealing with patients, you might also investigate how infections have spread through the environment by taking a particular interest in (for example):

- the design and maintenance of operating theatres and other clinical areas
- food preparation and hygiene
- cleaning and waste disposal
- sterilisation and disinfection

Public Health England [1] is also an employer of healthcare science staff specialising in virology whose main aim is to protect the community (or any part of the community) against infectious diseases and other dangers to health. The work focuses on disease diagnosis, treatment and surveillance.

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career in virology [2].
- Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career in virology [3].

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Pay and conditions

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) [4] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. Your salary working in virology will typically be between AfC [5] bands 6 and 9, depending on your precise role and level of responsibility. Trainee clinical scientists train at band 6 level, and qualified clinical scientists are generally appointed at band 7. With experience and further qualifications, including Higher Specialist Scientist Training [6], you could apply for posts up to band 9.

Staff will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS.

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Where the role can lead

With further training or experience or both, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, research, or teaching.

Healthcare science staff often work at the forefront of research and innovation, so that patients are continually receiving the very best healthcare. For example, in clinical microbiology departments with virology specialists, healthcare science staff may investigate ways of minimising hospital-acquired infections, an example being, norovirus outbreaks and control in the spread of infection.

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Job market and vacancies

Job market

In November 2018, there were 6,123 clinical scientists registered with the Health and Care Professions Council [7].

The NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP) [8] and Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) [6] attract many more applicants than there are places and so there is considerable competition for places.

Finding and applying for jobs

Check vacancies carefully to be sure you can meet the requirements of the person specification before applying and to find out what the application process is. You may need to apply online or send a CV for example.

For the STP [8] and HSST [6], there is an annual recruitment cycle. Applications should be made through the National School of Healthcare Science website [9], where you can also find information about the programmes and the recruitment process.

Key sources relevant to vacancies in the health sector:

- Vacancies in organisations delivering NHS healthcare can be found on the NHS Jobs website [10]
- Opportunities in the Civil Service can be found on the Civil Service Jobs website [11]
- Vacancies in local government can be found on the Local Government Jobs website and the Jobs Go Public website [12]

As well as these sources, you may find suitable vacancies in the health sector by contacting local employers directly, searching in local newspapers and by using the Universal Jobmatch tool [13].

Find out more about applications and interviews [14].

Volunteering is an excellent way of gaining experience (especially if you don't have enough for a specific paid job you're interested in) and also seeing whether you're suited to a particular type of work. It's also a great way to boost your confidence and you can give something back to the community.

Find out more about volunteering and gaining experience [15].

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Further information

For further information about training and working in virology, please contact:

- Academy for Healthcare Science [16]
- Health and Care Professions Council [17]

- National School of Healthcare Science [9]
- Public Health England [1]
- Association of Clinical Pathologists [18]

Other roles that may interest you

- Biomedical science [19]
- Blood sciences [20]
- Cellular sciences [21]
- Infection sciences [22]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/life-sciences/virology-healthcare-scientist>

Links

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
 [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/virology-healthcare-scientist/entry-requirements-skills-and-interests> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/virology-healthcare-scientist/training-development-and-registration> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
 [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training> [7] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org>
 [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/not-studying-health-related-degree/nhs-scientist-training-programme> [9] <http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/> [10] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk>
 [11] <https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi> [12] <http://www.jobsgopublic.com/>
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