

Anaesthesia

Anaesthetists are the largest group of hospital-based specialists and give anaesthetics for surgical, medical and psychiatric procedures.

They facilitate pain-free childbirth, resuscitate acutely unwell patients, run chronic pain services and lead [intensive care](#) ^[1] units.

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Life as an anaesthetist

It's your responsibility to choose the appropriate anaesthetic for your patient. Typically, you'll offer four stages of patient care for a routine anaesthetic:

- preparation – you'll assess your patient's fitness for anaesthesia and agree on an anaesthetic plan
- induction – you'll initiate the anaesthesia
- maintenance – you'll continue the anaesthesia while monitoring your patient's condition, including checking the activity of the heart, blood pressure, oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, breathing, body temperature, depth of anaesthesia and the body fluid balance
- recovery – you'll reverse the anaesthesia and support the patient's recovery

Most of your time will be spent in operating theatres, but anaesthetists perform numerous roles in many different areas of a hospital. On any given day, you'll facilitate pain free childbirth, resuscitate acutely unwell patients, run chronic pain services and lead [intensive care](#) ^[1] units.

You can expect to work in areas such as:

- obstetric units
- critical care services for [intensive care](#) ^[1] and high dependency patients
- resuscitation services
- emergency departments
- chronic pain management

- acute pain teams
- dentistry
- perioperative ^[4] clinics
- research
- psychiatry – for patients receiving electro-convulsive therapy ^[5] (ECT)
- radiology – anaesthesia for CT scans ^[6] and MRI ^[7], especially in children
- inter-hospital transfers of critically ill patients

You'll also work closely with patients, understanding their condition and treatment. It's your responsibility to care for a patient for the duration of their operation. Being prepared for the unexpected can be exciting but also challenging at times.

Dr Sarah Plummer

Consultant anaesthetist

Seeing patients wake up safely and with good pain relief after any surgery always makes my job worthwhile.

[Read Sarah's story.](#) ^[8]

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training ^[9] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[10] and consultants on the ['Pay for doctors'](#) ^[11] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families

- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

What are my chances of starting a career as an anaesthetist?

In 2020, there were 1,479 applications for 569 places for anaesthetic specialty training.

How to become an anaesthetist

- After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year [foundation programme](#)^[12] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.?
- After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid [specialty training](#)^[13] to become an anaesthetist which will take a minimum of 7 or 8 years.
- You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as an anaesthetist can take you

You could:

- specialise or conduct research in areas such as pain medicine

- teach medical students or postgraduate students in training
- get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector?

• Find your degree in medicine

Region

- Any - ▼

Type of qualification

- Any - ▼

Full or part time

Search ▼

Displaying 61 - 65 of 77 matches

Medicine (Graduate Entry)

University of Worcester

[View course](#) ^[14] Opens in a new window

- Qualification

Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB ChB

Study mode

Full-time

Duration of the course

4 Years

Leading to a career in

Medicine

- Contact details

admissions@worc.ac.uk ^[15]

01905 855111

- Region

West Midlands

Admissions address

Henwick Grove

Worcester

WR2 6AJ

United Kingdom

Medicine

University of Oxford

[View course](#) ^[16] Opens in a new window

- Qualification

Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - BMBCh

Study mode

Full-time

Duration of the course

6 Years

Leading to a career in

- Medicine
 - Contact details
 - study@ox.ac.uk ^[17]
 - +44 (0)1865 288000
 - Region
 - South East
- Admissions address
 - High Street
 - Oxford
 - OX1 4AU
 - United Kingdom

Medicine

University of Plymouth

[View course](#) ^[18] Opens in a new window

- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - BMBS
 - Study mode
 - Full-time
 - Duration of the course
 - 5 Years
 - Leading to a career in
 - Medicine
 - Contact details
 - meddent-admissions@plymouth.ac.uk ^[19]
 - +44 (0)1752 437333
 - Region
 - South West
- Admissions address
 - Drake Circus
 - Plymouth
 - PL4 8AA
 - United Kingdom

Medicine (Graduate Entry) (4 years)

University of Birmingham

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- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB ChB
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 4 Years
- Leading to a career in
 - Medicine

- Region
 - West Midlands
- Admissions address
 - Academic and Student Division
 - Birmingham
 - B15 2TT
 - United Kingdom

Medicine (5 years)

University of Birmingham

[View course](#) ^[21] Opens in a new window

- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB ChB
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 5 Years
- Leading to a career in
 - Medicine
- Region
 - West Midlands
- Admissions address
 - Academic and Student Division
 - Birmingham
 - B15 2TT
 - United Kingdom
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• Live vacancies

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

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• Further information

These organisations have further information about being an anaesthetist, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[The Royal College of Anaesthetists](#) [23]

[The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland](#) [24]

[Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthetists](#) [25]

[The National Institute of Academic Anaesthesia](#) [26]

And hear from people already working as an anaesthetist:

[Starting in anaesthetics \(BMJ\)](#) [27]

[The secret life of an anaesthetist \(The Guardian\)](#) [28]

[About anaesthesia \(HEWM\)](#) [29]

[Dr Zulfi Sadiq, anaesthesia \(HEEM\)](#) [30]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Emergency medicine](#) [31]
- [Acute internal medicine](#) [32]
- [General surgery](#) [33]
- [General practitioner](#) [34]

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Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care [2]
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