

Home > Explore roles > Doctors > Roles for doctors > Surgery > Oral and maxillofacial surgery > Entry requirements, skills and interests

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## Entry requirements, skills and interests (OMFS)

This page provides useful information about the entry requirements needed for this specialty up to and including foundation training [1]. It also includes information on the skills and interests you will need.

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons must be qualified in medicine and dentistry. Many people (around 75%) first train as a dentist and subsequently train as doctor. However there are also accelerated dental degrees that last three years, which are open to those with a medical degree. The latter route is becoming increasingly common. In the same way there are also three year intensive graduate courses in medicine that are open to those with an approved dental degree.

Find out more information about:

- entry to dentistry
- entry to medicine
- entering OMFS training from a medicine background
- entering OMFS training from a dentistry first background
- applying for a second degree (and shortened courses)
- skills and interests

### Entry to dentistry

To become a dentist you will need a bachelor's degree (either a BDS or BChD) from an approved dental school. Entry to dentistry is competitive – you will normally need A levels or equivalent in chemistry and biology at very high grades. If you also have physics or maths you will have the widest choice of dental courses open to you. One-year pre-dental courses are also available for those without the necessary science subjects. If you already have a degree, there are graduate entry programmes.

Find out which dental schools/universities are approved to run degrees in dentistry by using our coursefinder [2]

### Entry to medicine

Before you train as a surgeon you must complete a degree in medicine and have obtained a MBBS or equivalent qualification.

Find out about getting into medical school [3]. [4]

Find out which medical schools/universities are approved to run degrees in medicine by using our coursefinder. [2]

You then need to complete a two-year foundation programme [5]. After successfully completing your first

year of foundation training [1] you become eligible for registration as a doctor with the General Medical Council (GMC).

Foundation training [1] includes undertaking rotations in a range of specialties including surgery.

In order to become an oral and maxillofacial surgeon from a dentistry first background, you will have completed between 8 and 10 years of undergraduate training before you start your foundation programme.

## **Entering OMFS training from a medicine first background**

If you are aiming for OMFS training from a medicine first background there are two different options as to when to return to university to complete your dental degree. Once you are certain that you want an OMFS career, you should consider applying for dental school, as this is a difficult step.

**Option one** is to return to university for a dental degree after the completion of medical foundation training [1] (F1 and F2). This would then be followed by core surgical training, which can sometimes only take one year in this case (if you complete the necessary competencies during this time). One year core surgical training for future OMFS trainees is not currently an option in London.

The alternative to core surgery training is to apply straight for an OMFS ST1 run-through position. This is currently a pilot available in four areas – Mersey, NorthWest, North East and Kent Sussex, Surrey (KSS).

The disadvantages of going straight back into dental school from foundation training [1] are that you have less overall surgical training and therefore will have reduced opportunities for part-time work in medicine to support yourself during your studies. Often OMFS units make special arrangements to support trainees studying for second degrees and ad hoc OMFS locum work is also possible. Another drawback is that foundation training [1] may not have exposed you to enough surgery in general or OMFS in particular to make a reliable decision about your career.

**Option two** is to return to dental school after completion of two years core surgical training. The advantage of this is that you will have more surgical experience and have a wider range of part-time/locum work available to you. Again OMFS units often make special arrangements to support second degree trainees. Completing core surgical training will help you decide if you have the interest and the potential skills for a career in surgery and about your specialty choice.

The disadvantage of waiting is that the number of opportunities to apply to dental school whilst in a recognised training post are much reduced.

There are also other training opportunities at many points along the road to higher training. Although it is not currently an 'essential requirement' at ST3, some medicine-first trainees may choose to complete dental foundation/core training for a broader dental grounding.

## **Entering OMFS training from a dentistry first background**

After completing your dentistry degree you will usually spend one-year in dental foundation training [1]. After this you will need to apply for dental core training posts which are based in an oral and maxillofacial unit. These last for between one and two years.

As soon as you decide on a career in OMFS, the next stage of your training is a medical degree, potentially a four-year graduate entry course. After this you apply for your medical foundation training [1] which lasts for two years. The GMC advises potential OMFS trainees to request a surgically-themed rotation. After this you can apply for either ST1 run-through training or a core surgical training post. Core training will either last for one or two years, depending on your existing surgical competencies and location.

## Applying for a second degree (and shortened courses)

As OMFS is a dual degree specialty, at some point in your training you have to apply for a second degree. Some courses attract NHS bursaries in the latter years, but shortened ones may not and it is vital to explore all the options in detail.

In some cases applications are made directly to the university, but others require applications through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). A 3 year dental course for medically qualified OMFS trainees is available at Kings College in London. Shortened medical courses are available for dentally qualified OMFS trainees in Barts & The London, Birmingham, Liverpool and others. There are also graduate entry courses in medicine and dentistry available to any graduates, including doctors and dentists.

There is an annual workshop run in Liverpool giving practical advice to those aiming for second degree studies.

## Skills and interests

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons need a blend of skills and personal qualities which include:

- drive and enthusiasm (the key requirements for all surgeons)
- good organisational ability and good communication skills (key for all doctors)
- the ability to lead and manage a team effectively (key to all consultants)
- a high degree of manual dexterity
- good hand-eye co-ordination, excellent vision and visuo-spatial awareness
- the ability to think in three dimensions
- the ability and interest to manage a wide spectrum of conditions
- physical stamina to cope with the demands of surgery

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you're applying for a university course funded by the NHS.

Find out more about NHS values. [6]

Go to top

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### Links

[1] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation\\_training](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training)

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/looking-course>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-medicine/applying-medical-school>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school>

[5] <http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>