Undergraduate Dental Hygiene
Dental hygienists work as part of a dental team playing a pivotal role in the prevention, treatment and management of oral disease. Specialising in the treatment and monitoring of periodontal (gum) health, they are responsible for developing patients’ oral hygiene practices. Undertaking detailed clinical procedures and using a variety of instruments to remove deposits from the teeth, the dental hygienist ensures that patients are educated and motivated to maintain their periodontal and oral health.

Dental hygienists are also able to undertake a number of other clinical procedures which include applying fissure sealants, applying fluoride preparations, taking dental radiographs, placing temporary fillings and taking dental impressions.

The full scope of practice of a dental hygienist can be found on the General Dental Council website www.gdc-uk.org.

Why study dental hygiene at Bristol?

There is an excellent student-to-staff teaching ratio and all training is delivered in newly refurbished clinics and teaching laboratories. Teaching is primarily delivered via lectures and small-group seminars, principally by DCP School tutorial staff and undergraduate University staff.

£15m invested in 2006/07 in refurbishing state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities.

The Dental Care Professional (DCP) School at Bristol has its own dedicated clinical environment, which is adjacent to dental undergraduate clinics, and facilitates an integrated team approach to patient care.

The supportive and enthusiastic staff really help to make this challenging course rewarding and enjoyable.

Stephanie
DCP student

The programme is well organised and delivered by dedicated and supportive staff in facilities that are second to none.

Rhiannon
DCP Student
What will I study?

Dip Dental Hygiene, two years Direct entry
The first three months of training are pre-clinically based in the Clinical Skills Laboratory within the dental hospital and school. Intensive academic lectures and seminars are taught alongside practical teaching on manikin heads. You will learn general and regional (head and neck) anatomy and physiology, and will be introduced to oral and systemic diseases.

At the end of the pre-clinical training you will have sufficient knowledge to start treating patients on the periodontal clinic at Bristol Dental Hospital. For clinical procedures, your competency will be assessed in the Clinical Skills Laboratory prior to treating patients.

At the end of year one you will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of general dentistry. You will be able to communicate accurately on clinical matters and exercise personal responsibility for basic clinical decision making.

To learn about the oral health needs of the local community, you will be asked to attend community-based teaching clinics and oral health promotion sessions at South Bristol Community Hospital in Hengrove. This will provide you with valuable clinical experience working with patients from diverse backgrounds and a variety of ages, cultures and languages.

At the end of year two you will have developed a thorough understanding of the field of periodontology and will be able to apply theoretical knowledge to clinical situations. You will be able to carry out treatment for patients who present with a range of medical and social histories, requiring individual assessment and careful treatment planning. Some of these patients include those who are medically compromised, those with physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems, and those who require domiciliary care. You will also have completed a small research project or simple audit and presented your findings to colleagues and peers within the DCP School.

The marks awarded for this will go towards your final diploma examination.

Assessment
We use varied methods of assessment throughout your training, with regular formative assessments set throughout the course to encourage reflection and feedback. There are two summative assessments; the first at three months which comprises an electronic short answer paper, Observed Clinical Structures Examinations (OSCE’s) and practical skill competency tests.

The end-of-year-one assessment comprises written essay papers and a practical examination on the Periodontal Clinic. These are progression examinations which allow you to complete the full Diploma in Dental Hygiene.

The final examination comprises written essay papers and case presentation of a patient you have been treating throughout your training programme.

With regards to clinical sessions, all contact with patients are recorded and graded as a continuous clinical assessment, with reflection statements documented by both staff and students. Clinical sessions are recorded in a log book which provides documented evidence of your clinical portfolio on completion of the course.
What are my career prospects?

People who study dental hygiene like to work with the general public, have a good level of manual dexterity and have an interest in and commitment to delivering effective oral health care and advice.

Daily interactions with patients to motivate and inspire behaviour change, together with the provision of advanced clinical treatments to prevent gum disease and tooth loss, make dental hygiene a rewarding career. On qualification, students register with the General Dental Council and are able to work in various areas of the dental sector: in general practice; community dental clinics; hospitals; specialist practices; teaching hospitals and dental schools; research and industry or the armed forces.

Post-qualification, a dental hygienist can further develop their skills to include tooth whitening and inhalation sedation. They may also choose to apply to programmes such as Orthodontic Therapy or Dental Therapy.

Making your application

Please apply directly to the DCP School by completing an application form (available online or from the school administrator). In order to enhance your application we advise you to gain experience of working/observing in a dental practice setting and to be familiar with the work and remit of a dental hygienist. Your application form asks you to complete a personal statement; you can use this opportunity to outline your personal attributes and skills and reflect on your experiences gained in a dental setting, together with any other information that you feel will enhance your application.

We will invite approximately 50 successful applicants to interview, which takes the format a series of Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs). We will offer a place on the course to the eight candidates who deliver the best performance at the MMIs.

Further information

Find out more about the Diploma and Bristol School of Dental Care Professionals:

bristol.ac.uk/dental/dcp/hygiene
Contacts

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bristol.ac.uk/studentfunding

University guide to the city of Bristol
bristol.ac.uk/citybristol

Undergraduate study website
bristol.ac.uk/ug-study

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The information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of printing (June 2014). Courses and facilities are liable to alter or be withdrawn at the University's discretion.