

Career Info

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- [Click here to download the Prosthetics and Orthotics FAQ Document](#)Career Prospects

There is a National and indeed International shortage of Prothetists and Orthotists, career prospects throughout the UK and the rest of the world, particularly the USA is excellent. Most prosthetic and orthotic graduates will start their careers working for commercial companies. However, an increasing number of opportunities are arising within the health service. As skills and experience develop you will be able to assume positions with increased responsibility. Eventually this may lead to towards a managerial role or you may become an acknowledged specialist in a particular area of clinical work. Teaching is another option and these posts offer opportunities for research. The UK training programme is recognised to be of exceptionally high standard and many opportunities exist for graduates to work aboard. Prosthetic and orthotic work is especially important in areas of the world where development programmes are working with communities traumatised by war. The Role of the Orthotist

As an Orthotist you may be required to work in one or several hospitals, often this will be as part of an outpatient's service. You may also be required to visit schools and centres to provide a service to people with special needs. Usually the Orthotist has direct contact with a workshop that manufactures the orthoses to their specification.

People who require orthoses vary greatly. A few examples are; many older people need specially prescribed footwear and insoles to treat deformities. Children with cerebral palsy require individually prescribed orthoses to aid them to walk. People who have chronic back problems may benefit from a special brace.

Any part of the human skeleton can, if damaged, require some form of orthoses. The orthosis may be needed to reposition the body or to provide relief from discomfort. An Orthotist is trained to understand and respond to all these conditions.

The essential part of the Orthotist's work is assessment of the patient's problem. A prescription is formulated in conjunction with colleagues from other disciplines. They include doctors, physiotherapists and chiropodists. The Orthotist then designs an orthosis to suit the individual needs of the patient. An understanding of the clinical problem must be matched with the knowledge of what is the most suitable device. The measurement, casting, fitting and adjustment of the orthosis is the responsibility of the Orthotist. The Orthotist oversees the manufacture of the device. Educating patients on the use and fitting of their orthosis is vital. The Role of the Prosthetist

A Prosthetist works as a member of a clinical team, usually based in a specialised centre for the rehabilitation of amputees of all ages. Disability may be the result of an accident or following a disease, such as diabetes; alternatively some patients have been born without a limb. The Prosthetist uses clinical skill and knowledge to design and select the most suitable prosthesis for each patient. Your training will enable you to make these decisions with confidence and communicate your reasoning to patients and clinical colleagues.

As a Prosthetist you work closely with doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Together you work to provide the best possible rehabilitation for the people under your care. The team concentrates on helping patients to carry on leading a normal life at work and leisure.

The first step in making the prosthesis is assessment of the patient, then making a model of the area onto which the prosthesis is to be fitted. The Prosthetist takes a plaster cast or digital image, which is then modeled to produce a safe, comfortable fit. Trained prosthetic technicians assemble the prosthesis. During the fitting of the prosthesis the Prosthetist aligns the componentry, ensures the prosthesis is comfortable and obtains the optimum performance of the device for the individual patient.

The patient is always given advice on the operation of the prosthesis and new wearers always attend physiotherapy to learn how to use their prosthesis and gait re-education. Training

Training is centred at two UK universities, University of Salford and University of Strathclyde. (Addresses below)

Prosthetic/Orthotic education is currently a four-year honours degree course, which contains a final year of clinical experience. Although the courses vary, they both consist of three years of academic learning mixed with clinical tuition. The final year involves two six month clinical placements, one orthotic and one prosthetic. Subjects within the course include:

- Anatomy - the structure of the body
- Physiology - the functions of the body
- Pathology - causes and nature of disease
- Biomechanics - forces in/on the body
- Material Science - how materials perform

- Orthotic/Prosthetic Science - practical solutions to problems

For further information on courses and/ or to apply you may contact the Universities directly. Where To Apply National Centre for Training and Education in Prosthetics and Orthotics

University of Strathclyde
131 St. James' Road
Glasgow
G4 0LS
Scotland UK

Directorate of Prosthetics and Orthotics
University of Salford
Brian Blatchford Building
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