

Chemical Plant Process Operative

Chemical plant process operatives work with the equipment and machinery that convert raw chemicals into useful products, such as dyes, fertilisers, fuels, petrochemicals and medicines.

The Work

You could be:

- cleaning and preparing complex equipment before production starts
- measuring and adding chemical ingredients and controlling the heating and cooling systems
- monitoring the process by checking and recording meter, gauge and other instrument readings and taking samples for analysis
- checking equipment to make sure it is working properly, and reporting any faults to maintenance staff
- closing down equipment once the process is complete
- running the finished product into various containers and tanks
- in some cases packaging products and moving them by forklift truck
- working from a control room, using computers to operate, control and monitor the process
- ensuring that health and safety regulations are strictly followed.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for chemical plant process operatives range from £15,000 to £18,000 a year, rising to around £25,000 a year. You can often earn extra through working overtime and shifts. Operatives working on more complex processes may earn higher rates of pay.

Conditions

- You may spend time in the control room of the plant, which is normally clean, dry and well ventilated.
- At other times you may be patrolling the plant and checking the machinery.
- You will need to bend, stretch and lift while carrying out this job.
- In large plants with extensive pipework, you may have to spend time outdoors.
- Hours can vary depending on the process. Shift work is common and some workers must be on call at short notice. Most plants operate 365 days a year.
- There may be dust, dirt and fumes.
- You will have to wear protective clothing and safety glasses.
- If you work in the oil and gas industry you might have to work away from home for a few weeks or months at a time, possibly abroad.

Getting In

- You usually enter directly as a trainee or apprentice.
- There are no set entry requirements, but employers expect a good general education and ability in English and numeracy. Some require 3-5 subjects at National 4 or 5 including Maths and science or technological subjects.
- You may have to take a general aptitude test to see if you are suited to this work.
- You should be reasonably fit.
- Certain colour vision conditions may affect entry to careers in this branch of engineering.
- Employers in the industry range from large international companies to smaller and more specialised local firms.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- interested in science and engineering
- very safety conscious
- accurate and methodical
- numerate, for measuring materials
- good at written and spoken communication.

You need to be able to:

- concentrate for long periods doing routine work
- pay close attention to detail
- take responsibility
- react quickly to solve problems
- stay calm under pressure
- work as part of a team.

Training

- Training is normally on the job through an employer's training scheme or a Modern Apprenticeship.
- You would work towards SVQs at SCQF Levels 4 to 6.
- You will probably also do company training in health and safety, first aid and basic chemical processes.
- You might train to become a qualified forklift operator.

Getting On

- With qualifications and experience, you could be promoted to jobs such as plant controller and shift supervisor.
- You may move into quality control work.

More Information

An increasing number of jobs are now in the areas of renewable energy and waste management.

Contacts

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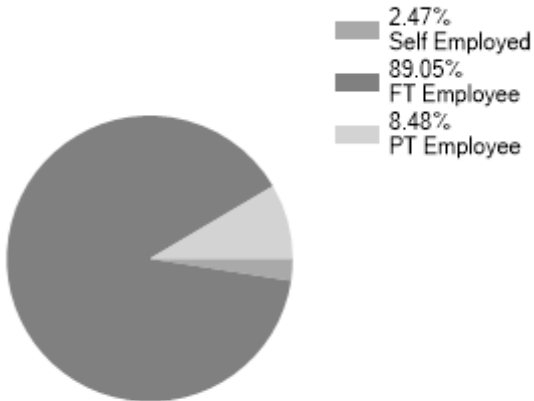
Website (2): www.sciencecareerpathways.com

Twitter: @cogent_skills

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

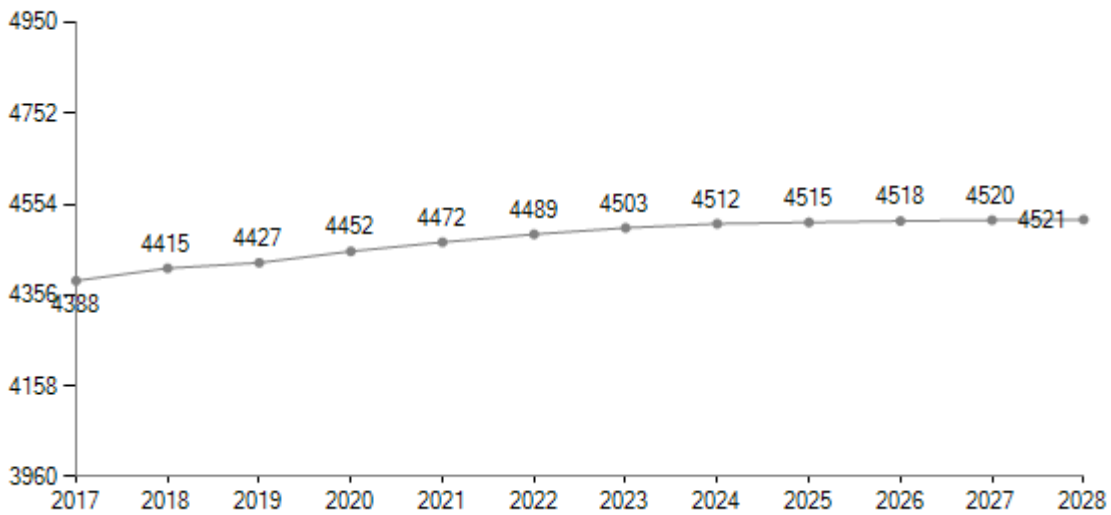


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)