

Prosthetist or Orthotist

Prosthetists and orthotists provide care and support for those in need of artificial limbs, or a device to support or control part of the body. They are also involved in rehabilitation work with their patients.

The Work

Prosthetists design and fit artificial limbs (protheses) for patients who have either lost a limb or were born missing a limb. Modern protheses sometimes have a pneumatic, hydraulic or electronic mechanism to allow the limb to move.

Orthotists design and fit items (orthoses) such as wrist supports, neck collars, braces and special footwear, to support a patient's limbs or spine or to relieve pain caused by illness or injury.

In either case you could be:

- assessing the needs of patients who have amputations or conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, cerebral palsy, diabetes and stroke
- working with doctors and physiotherapists to plan what prosthesis or orthosis is suitable for a patient
- measuring the part of the patient's body to which you are going to fit the prosthesis or orthosis, or taking a plaster cast or using shape sensing tracings to produce a cast
- talking to the patient about his or her lifestyle so that any adjustments can be made to the item
- designing the item, using your knowledge of anatomy and physiology, biomechanics, materials and technology
- giving details to the technician who will make it or, perhaps, making the prosthesis or orthosis yourself
- fitting the item to the patient, checking it is comfortable and working properly, and making any necessary adjustments or repairs
- showing the patient, and perhaps carers, how to attach and remove the item
- working with the physiotherapist who helps the patient to exercise, and with the occupational therapist who trains the patient how to use the limb in everyday activities.

Pay

There is no nationally agreed pay scale for qualified prosthetists or orthotists, as most of them work for commercial companies. However, most prosthetists and orthotists are paid under healthcare scientist pay bands.

Under NHS Agenda for Change, salaries for healthcare scientist practitioners start at Band 5, £34,494 to £42,977 a year. With experience this rises to Band 6, £43,169 to £52,603 a year.

Senior practitioners are on Band 7, £52,769 to £61,377 a year. The current pay scales are from April 2025.

Conditions

- As an orthotist you work in various clinics or in the out-patients' department of a hospital.
- As a prosthetist you generally work in a specialised centre within a large hospital.

- You may sometimes be in a workshop with the technician.
- You have to travel to visit patients.
- Working hours are regular, possibly with some occasional evenings or weekends.
- You may have to wear a uniform.

Getting In

- You need a degree in prosthetics and orthotics approved by the British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO). This leads to state registration, which you need to practise in the UK.
- In Scotland the only degree course is at the University of Strathclyde. Entry requirements are 4 or 5 Highers at AAAB or AABBB including Maths at B and National 5 Physics or Engineering Science at B plus National 5 English. Advanced Higher Maths, Physics or Biology is recommended. Contact the institution for widening access entry.
- The only other degree course in the UK is at Salford University – entry requirements 120 UCAS tariff points at Higher level (equivalent to AABB) including Maths or Physics plus another science subject at B.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.
- You must register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to be allowed to use the title 'prosthetist' or 'orthotist'.
- It is recommended that you are a member of The British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics (BAPO), and may even be essential for some employers.

Prospects for prosthetists and orthotists are currently good. Some work in the National Health Service (NHS) but most jobs are either with manufacturing companies who contract out to the NHS or else in private practice.

You will find vacancies advertised on the [NHS Scotland Recruitment](#), [NHS Jobs](#), and [BAPO](#) websites.

What Does It Take

You should be able to:

- get on well with people of all backgrounds and ages
- reassure and encourage patients
- explain things clearly
- design items, many of which are made to individual requirements
- work alone and as part of a team.

You should have:

- technical and practical skills
- patience and understanding
- excellent communication skills
- strong IT skills.

Training

- Training is on the job.

Getting On

- You can work as an orthotist or a prosthetist, or both.
- With experience you may be able to become a team leader.
- You may move into management.
- You may choose to move into sales or servicing with a manufacturing company.
- You would be expected to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) to keep up to date with the latest developments and technology.
- CPD courses are usually provided by the British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO).
- UK courses are well thought of throughout the world so there are opportunities to work abroad.

More Information

According to the BAPO website, there are over 1,000 registered prosthetists and orthotists in the UK - the smallest AHP workforce in the NHS.

You can also visit this great resource [NHS Education Scotland Virtual Tour](#) to learn more about this job.

Contacts

British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO)

Tel: 0141 561 7217

Email: enquiries@bapo.com

Website: www.bapo.com

X: @BAPO2

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BAPO.org

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Tel: 0300 500 6184

Email: education@hcpc-uk.org

Website: www.hcpc-uk.org

X: @The_HCPC

Facebook: www.facebook.com/hcpcuk

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.