Cardiac Physiologist

Cardiac physiologists are involved in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with heart disease. They set up equipment, carry out procedures and record and analyse the results.

The Work

You could be:

- monitoring blood pressure and heartbeat rate to decide if it is safe for a patient to undergo tests
- carrying out procedures such as echocardiographs (ECG) (using ultrasound to obtain pictures of the heart's structure or valves) and cardiac catheterisation (passing a rod, or catheter, through blood vessels or heart chambers and injecting them with dye to show on an x-ray)
- using specialised and complex equipment, such as cardiac ultrasound scanners and intra aortic balloon pumps
- carrying out exercise tolerance tests on patients, using ECG equipment to monitor heart rate while they exercise on a treadmill
- during exercise tolerance testing, advising if it is safe for patients to continue with the test
- selecting a suitable pacemaker for a surgeon to insert in a patient
- adjusting and fine-tuning the pacemaker once it has been inserted
- analysing and interpreting data and supplying physiological reports to the cardiologist or surgeon who has to make decisions about treatment
- working as part of a team with cardiographers, doctors and nurses.

Pay

Clinical physiologists (Cardiac) who work for the NHS are on Agenda for Change pay scales. The current pay scales are from April 2026. They generally start on Band 5, £34,494 to £42,977 a year.

Specialist cardiac physiologists are paid on Band 6, £43,169 to £52,603 a year. Team managers are on Band 7, £52,769 to £61,377 a year.

Experienced cardiac physiologists can earn over £40,000 in private healthcare establishments.

Conditions

- You would work in the cardiology department of a hospital, in the outpatient clinics, wards or operating theatre.
- Working hours are normally regular, but you may have to work some weekends and evenings, or be on call for emergencies.
- You would usually wear a uniform.
- There might be some lifting of heavy equipment.
- You would work with patients of all ages.

Getting In

- You should look for a position as an NHS employed practitioner trainee in Cardiac Physiology, where you would study for a relevant degree such as Physiology, Sports Science or Biomedical Science. Look out for trainee positions on NHS Scotland Recruitment.
- You require 3 or 4 Highers at BBC or BCCC with at least 2 from Biology, Chemistry, Maths or Physics. You would also need National 5 Maths or Physics.
- Both trainee and qualified posts are advertised in local press, the NHS jobs websites, or the Society for Cardiological Science and Technology (SCST) website.
- 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.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- interested in anatomy and physiology
- good at science and maths
- able to concentrate for long periods
- good at analysing information
- good at following instructions.

You should have:

- high levels of accuracy and attention to detail
- good hand to eye co-ordination and manual dexterity
- good communication skills
- a calm, confident and caring manner
- good skills with technology.

Training

- The training programme lasts 4 years and involves distance learning and block release while employed as a practitioner-level trainee with the NHS.
- Under the supervision of senior staff, trainees gain experience in more complex procedures while keeping a logbook. They can join the SCST as student members and become associate members when they graduate.
- The RCCP runs a voluntary register for cardiac physiologists. It is recommended that you do register. Check the RCCP website for up to date information.

Getting On

- Job prospects are good as there is a shortage of qualified staff in the UK.
- Qualified cardiac physiologists can move on to supervisory or managerial posts.
- There are also openings in research.
- You can study at postgraduate level. Promotion is easier with postgraduate qualifications.

Contacts

Association for Laboratory Medicine
Website: www.acb.org.uk

NHS Scotland Careers
Website: www.careers.nhs.scot
Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Physiological Society
Tel: 020 7269 5710
Email: contactus@physoc.org
Website: www.physoc.org
X: @ThePhySoc
Facebook: www.facebook.com/physoc

Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists
Tel: 01905 885350
Email: rccpadmin@rccp.co.uk
Website: www.rccp.co.uk

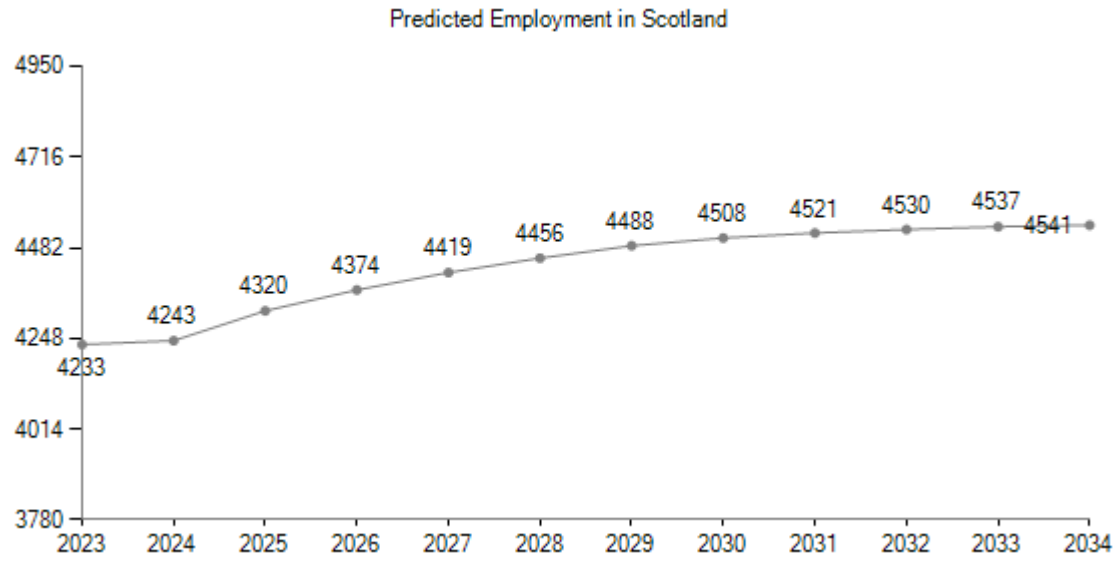
Society for Cardiological Science and Technology (SCST)
Tel: 0845 838 6037
Email: admin@scst.org.uk
Website: www.scst.org.uk
X: @SCSTcouncil

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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