

Radiographer

Join the team and
make a difference

Radiography is one of the most important tools in modern medicine. The use of X-rays, imaging and ultrasound enables diagnosis and assessment that would otherwise be impossible. High-energy radiation also provides life-saving treatment in cancers and tissue disease. Radiographers have the technical expertise and understanding to use these advancing technologies to best effect.



What will you do?

As a **diagnostic radiographer** you will use a range of techniques to provide the images and information needed to diagnose and treat patients. Examples are the use of ultrasound to monitor development of a foetus in the womb, or an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan to detect a blood clot on the brain. Usually, you will take images requested by doctors or other healthcare staff and return the results for viewing.

You'll have important interaction with patients, putting them at their ease and preparing them for the X-ray or scan. You may also need to discuss the images with the other healthcare professionals to assist in diagnosis. Although you will mainly be based in a hospital's imaging department, imaging may be performed on wards, in surgery, with mobile screening services in the community, as well as in A&E, where the speed and clarity of results can save lives.

As a **therapeutic radiographer** you will work with doctors, nurses and other clinicians in planning and delivering

radiation treatment, targeting the site of disease. The medical team will look to you for your specialist knowledge on how best to provide the radiation treatment. Patients will need clear explanations and reassurance during a course of radiotherapy. Your work combines technical expertise with the ability to show understanding and warmth to people who may be worried or distressed.

You will also play an important part in assessing progress and the results of the treatment. You will usually be working as part of a team of radiographers attached to the hospital radiotherapy department where the equipment is installed.

What entry routes are available?

To become a qualified radiographer working in the NHS you will need to complete a course of study and training recognised by the Health Professions Council (HPC) – a BSc degree in diagnostic or therapeutic radiography, or a postgraduate diploma or MSc if you already have a relevant science degree.

Most degree programmes take three years full time, combining study with work

Where will you work?	What skills and qualities will you need?
Therapeutic radiographers will usually work as part of a team of radiographers attached to the hospital radiotherapy department or cancer treatment centre where the equipment is installed.	• confidence in managing advanced equipment
Diagnostic radiographers work in A&E, x-ray departments, operating theatres and on wards, as well as with mobile scanning units in the community.	• a sympathetic, reassuring manner • good communication skills • willingness to keep updating your knowledge as technology, diagnosis and treatment advance and develop • care and accuracy in your work • a responsible, professional approach

placements. For graduates, the diploma course takes two years. Part-time and in-service courses leading to degree qualification are also available for assistant practitioners (see below). The NHS provides financial support to eligible students on NHS-funded courses. For more information, visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students. Once you have qualified, you will need to register with the HPC to practice as a radiographer.

There are opportunities for radiography assistants and support workers who assist radiographers with a range of activities such as preparing patients for treatment, assisting with procedures, and handling equipment and films. There are no formal requirements for these roles but a good general education will be needed. With further experience and in-service training, support staff can qualify as assistant practitioners, with higher levels of responsibility and pay. Assistants may have the chance to work and study part time for qualification as a radiographer. For further information, see the *Clinical support worker* factsheet.

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications. This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

How can you develop your career?

Radiography is a significant and developing area of healthcare, and as your clinical experience increases you might move into more senior posts, perhaps specialising in an area such as trauma, treatment planning or palliative care, or taking on management responsibilities within the radiography team.

As well as moving to more senior and specialised roles within this area, you will also have the chance to take on additional responsibilities and progress within the organisation, as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative please see the *Careers in the allied health professions* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: radiographer – diagnostic and therapeutic (Band 5); radiographer – specialist (Band 6); radiographer – advanced (Band 7).

To find out more about pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

To find out more about careers in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working
For more information on the professional bodies relevant to the allied health professions, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts