

What is a Dental Technician?

Dental Technicians construct and repair dentures (false teeth) and other dental appliances, including crowns and bridges (combining the expertise of a technician and practical dentistry).

Roles of a Dental Technician

- Translates two-dimensional design diagrams and written instructions (from Prosthesis or dentist) into three design programs and written instructions into three-dimensional products based on accepted principles.
- Make models of the mouth and teeth from impressions of the patient's mouth (taken by the dental prosthetist or dentist)
- Build up wax replicas of part or all of the mouth and/or teeth using the model
- Encase the wax in a mould material and melt away the wax
- Replace the wax with plastic, metal or ceramic materials to make the replacement appliance
- Polish and finish the appliance prior to being placed in the patient's mouth
- Make appliances for patients with cleft palates, braces and plates for correcting irregular teeth and mouth guards.
- Dental technicians may work independently, in hospitals, in dental laboratories or for dental group practices. They use a wide range of materials and techniques in their work, including plaster casting, electro-spot welding, laser welding, metal casting, sandblasting, metal polishing, electroplating, wax modelling, wire bending and ceramics.
- There is an increase in the use of small CAD/CAM units to assist in the design and manufacture of some dental products. Dental technicians usually have no direct contact with patients unless they undertake further study to qualify as dental prosthetists.

Career Opportunities

As private laboratories are currently contracted to provide technical services, SWSLHD Oral Health Services does not currently employ Dental Technicians for technical work.

It is a small occupation with good employment opportunities. Demand is growing for dental technicians working in specialised areas, such as crown and bridge, and work associated with the increasing occurrence of cosmetic dental surgery.

Qualifications Required

To become a dental technician you usually have to complete a two year diploma in dental technology. Entry to the diploma course usually requires Year 12. Applicants must also have employment in a dental laboratory for technical work training, which will commence after enrolment. As requirements may vary, you should contact the institution for full details-Randwick Institute of Technical and Further Education TAFE NSW Sydney Institute. Take high school courses in Health, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, English, Industrial arts and Computers to HSC level. Apply for work experience in a dental laboratory.

In order to practice as a dental technician, graduates must be registered with the Dental Technicians registration board or the Dental Registration board of the state or territory in which they intend to work.

Supervision Required

A Dental technician employed by SWSLHD Oral Health Services would be under the direct supervision of SWSLHD Oral Health Services– Specialist Prosthodontist, Senior Dental Officers and Denture Services Co-ordinator. A comprehensive orientation program is provided for all new staff members with ongoing support.

Specialisations

Dental technology may be divided into the following categories:

General prostheses

The largest field in dental technology, in which partial or full dentures (metal and non-metal) are constructed to replace the partial or total loss of natural teeth

Crown and bridge

Used in the restoration of teeth and fixtures in the patient's mouth

Maxillo-facial

Prostheses are made to replace missing facial and body tissues due to injury, disease or developmental abnormality

Orthodontics

The manufacture of fixed or removable appliances for the correction of dental irregularities in the mouths of patients.

What sort of person should I be?

- Enjoy interacting with people
- Have a high standard of ethics

Personal skills required for a Dental Technician

- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Good hand-eye coordination
- Good organisational ability, time management skills and able to do precise and detailed work
- An eye for form and design
- Able to concentrate, follow instructions and concentrate on specific tasks
- Working knowledge of computers
- Self-motivated, enjoy working independently and in a team