



Development of a Situational Judgement test for Dental Core Training

October 2014

Dental Core Training (DCT) encompasses the early years of training following completion of Dental Foundation Training and was previously known as Dental Foundation Year 2, Dental Career Development and Dental SHO Training. The previous (2006) UK dental foundation training curriculum encompassed the first two postgraduate years, and is now out of date. There has never been any consistent national approach taken to the requirements of training posts beyond the first year and given the changes in population oral health, and proposed new approaches to how services are commissioned and delivered to meet patients needs, it is timely to also consider a more structured approach to how the training programmes for dentists beyond foundation level are managed.

A UK wide dedicated curriculum and assessment framework for Dental Core Training and a standardised national recruitment process are both under discussion, to enable Dental Core Training to meet similar quality standards to those expected for other postgraduate dental training programmes. There is as yet no agreed timetable for this work, although Health Education England aspires to move to national recruitment for all postgraduate medical and dental training posts within the next few years.

Curriculum development and national recruitment will require a good understanding of the job roles currently carried out by Dental Core Trainees, to ensure that education and training programmes are fit for purpose and recruitment processes are appropriate and meaningful.

COPDEND has commissioned a leading UK organisation to carry out a job mapping exercise for Dental Core Training posts and to develop and support a pilot of a situational judgement test for recruitment. This approach has been successfully used in development of SJTs for medical foundation and specialty posts and we expect it to yield a large amount of information that has not previously been available and that will allow us to design improved systems for recruitment and training. We want to ensure we can identify the best applicants for Dental Core Training posts who have appropriate values and attributes and the SJT is a recognised and validated tool to enable this.

This project is being led by Karen Elley, Postgraduate Dental Dean and Ian Sharp, Associate Postgraduate Dental Dean, Health Education West Midlands, with support from Haj Purewal, Project Manager, on behalf of COPDEND. A stakeholder steering group has been established to oversee the work, which is planned to complete by mid 2015.

Almost 700 Dental Core Training posts exist in dental teaching hospitals, district general hospitals, community dental services and general dental practices. Whilst many posts are primarily concerned with developing competences related to oral surgery in hospital departments of oral and maxillo-facial surgery, there are considerable numbers of posts in restorative dentistry, paediatric dentistry, special care dentistry, dental public health, orthodontics, general duties posts, primary care general dental practice and combinations of these.

Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors have been asked to identify DCT trainers, trainees, training programme directors and other stakeholders from across the UK who have been invited to participate in the development work. So far over 40 individuals have agreed to take part.

The first phase of this project involves telephone interviews with a cross section of individuals who are currently involved in Dental Core Training in the workplace across the UK to clarify what the posts entail and to provide an initial overview for the Steering Group to consider. Once we are assured that the full range of activities undertaken by dental core trainees has been mapped, a second round of telephone interviews may be required to identify suitable "items" (questions and answers) to include in a situational judgement test that addresses an agreed person specification.

Occupational Psychologists, working with groups of subject matter experts, i.e. dental clinicians and educators involved with Dental Core Training; will refine the items. Next, a different group of subject matter experts will sit the test (This is called a concordance panel) and the items will then be subject to further refinement if required, or excluded if they are unsuitable.

The final stage will be to ask applicants for Dental Core Training posts commencing in August and September 2015 to sit the test alongside the normal local recruitment and assessment processes in Spring 2015. This will not affect their scoring or appointment at all, but is the most realistic way to ensure the test is fit for purpose.

It is our intention to try to ensure that as broad a range of subject matter experts as possible is included in this important piece of work.

Please engage with the process as we move forward so that we can be confident of developing a useful addition to DCT recruitment and improved quality of training for the future.

Helen Falcon
Chair COPDEND

Reference:

Patterson F, Ashworth V, Mehra S, Falcon H (2012), Could situational judgement tests be used for selection into Dental Foundation Training?, BDJ 213, 23-26