

Joint statement on arrangements for dental education and training, while measures are in place to control the spread of COVID-19

Updated: 10 May 2021

Version 3: previous version dated 23 September 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on students and trainees in dental education and presented major challenges over the last twelve months. Each education provider has experienced a different mixture of challenges to overcome and deployed different measures to address them.

Due to the restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19, some students have faced significant challenges in gaining the required clinical experience. We are issuing this revised statement to update on the situation and to address the concerns arising from the ongoing situation. Of course, our primary concern is the safety of the public and of students, trainees, educators, and other staff. The situation is slowly becoming clearer, but we will continue to be flexible and to react as and when required.

This statement is primarily for dental and dental care professional (DCP) students and those in training posts in the UK, who are understandably concerned about completing their studies or training.

The varied restrictions in place across the UK to control the spread of COVID-19 has meant that it has been challenging for clinical teaching to take place in the normal way. However, some clinical teaching has been possible in a reduced capacity, and lectures, tutorials and assessments have been conducted with the appropriate social distancing and other controls in place. A number of Schools have introduced additional clinical sessions moving to three session days and/or Saturday mornings, as well as extending term time into July and August.

For those undertaking dental education or training courses in the UK, the current situation is outlined below. Our organisations are working together to ensure that the arrangements in place are suitable for the award of qualifications for the purposes of registration with the General Dental Council (GDC). However, please be aware that the situation remains fluid, and these arrangements may be subject to change.

Education providers and awarding bodies delivering awards leading to GDC registration have continued to provide the GDC with details of any changes to their programmes. This has included arrangements for ensuring sufficient clinical experience to ensure that students and trainees achieve the required learning outcomes to be of safe beginner level at the point of graduation.

Education providers have been impacted to a varying extent by the pandemic and some have chosen to extend their programmes in order to ensure that students have the necessary experience to fulfil the expected requirements to ensure they are of the same standard as any other graduating year. The GDC will continue to quality assure these programmes.

Students on undergraduate dental programmes

Some dental schools and universities were able to reopen for lectures and tutorials if the appropriate COVID-19 control measures were in place and the environment was suitable. However, there continue to be restrictions on, or changes in, clinical practice, which are likely to affect how clinical training is delivered. The Scottish dental schools have announced that none of their students will graduate in summer 2021.

Students will continue to need to have met all of the learning outcomes for dentistry and be competent to qualify as 'safe beginners' in order to enter the dental workforce.

Students and trainees on DCP programmes

We recognise that there are a range of issues that affect the training of the different DCP professions. Many of these are common with the issues for the training of dentists. Further, we recognise that DCP training programmes are delivered and assessed in a number of ways using a variety of methods, which are being affected differently by the impact of COVID-19.

For dental hygiene and dental therapy programmes, most issues are shared with programmes that train dentists, and similar quality assurance activities are being carried out for these education providers as for dental schools. This commenced in March 2021. A number of providers have chosen to extend training to ensure the necessary clinical experience has been gained.

As routine dentistry continues to operate in the UK, trainee dental nurses are able to gain the experience they need to qualify. All national dental nursing providers have adapted their assessment systems to be delivered with COVID restrictions in place. The adaptations that have been made have been discussed and agreed with the GDC.

The impact of COVID-19 on dental technology training has been different from the impact on the other professions. Although it does not involve direct patient contact, a reduction in the work being sent to dental laboratories has had an impact on the availability of placements.

Orthodontic therapy training has also been affected to a lesser degree than dentist and hygiene therapy, as the practice of orthodontics involves fewer aerosol-generating procedures than general dentistry. However, the present uncertainties have led some providers to elect not to have a new cohort in 2021.

The GDC has maintained close contact with individual providers of all DCP programmes about their plans for completing courses in 2021. **The GDC will work with providers to ensure students continue to meet all of the learning outcomes for their chosen dental profession.**

Dental Foundation Training and Dental Vocational Training for 2020/21

All trainees were expected to complete a simulated clinical skills session under the supervision of their trainer, or training programme team, before starting clinical practice. In

addition, trainees were asked to share a clinical portfolio, which summarises the clinical experience gained in dental school with trainers and training programme teams. These measures were intended to ensure that graduates recognise the priority areas for their professional development as they enter the workforce.

Clinical activity in general dental practice was significantly reduced at the beginning of training in September 2020. Therefore, training programmes were designed to be 'front loaded' with an increased number of study sessions utilising a blended learning approach (e.g. virtual and practical skills based training).

The 2021 Dental Foundation Training Interim Review of Competence Progression confirmed that most trainees were able to access clinical experience, which is encouraging for future progression at 2021 Annual Review of Competence Progression, where regular requirements will be used.

In Scotland the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted clinical care available within dental vocational training practices. This has not allowed the trainees to develop curriculum competencies. Therefore, trainees have been offered a contract extension to 31 July 2022 to allow demonstration of the relevant competencies and ensure that they are safe for independent practice.

Dental Foundation Recruitment

The Dental Schools Council (DSC), Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEND) and the General Dental Council (GDC) are working closely together to ascertain numbers who are expected to graduate in summer 2021 to commence foundation training in September 2021. COPDEND and MDRS have agreed possible mitigation options to support dental schools and DFT applicants. There is the option to offer two entry points (September 2021 and early 2022) into DFT for eligible applicants within the current national recruitment, supported by two separate preference and offer processes. This will support those where graduation will be extended by a number of months past the mid-August deadline. NHS Education for Scotland has decided that there will be no intake into dental vocational training in 2021.

Graduates entering DFT in 2021 will be expected to share an Educational Transition Document with their educational supervisors and training team. This document will provide graduates and their educational supervisors with the opportunity to discuss the individual graduate's reflections on and confidence across the full range of domains of the safe beginner capabilities. These discussions should be used to inform tailored action plans for the first few weeks of DFT.

For any enquiries relating to Dental Foundation Training recruitment please contact the applicant support portal: [DFT Recruitment – COPDEND](#)

Dental specialty training

Arrangements have been put in place to ensure dental specialty training programmes can continue and be completed. The overall aim is to support specialty trainees and not unnecessarily delay their progression.

Postgraduate Dental Deans will continue to inform trainees of the arrangements for teaching and assessment. Arrangements will differ depending on the area of specialty training and the education provider.

For details relating to your individual circumstances, please get in touch directly with your Training Programme Director.

Assessments provided by the Royal Colleges

A significant amount of work has been undertaken, and continues to progress, around the delivery of all Royal College examinations. This is being carried out to ensure there are no unnecessary delays to career development and/or progression.

Examinations for MFDS/MJDF Part 1 and MFDS Part 2 will be delivered as advertised. However, the delivery method may vary.

The Royal Colleges continue to support the specialty membership examinations and the 2021 diets will progress as currently advertised.

The forthcoming diets of all six Speciality Fellowship Examinations will be delivered as advertised. For details relating to your individual circumstances, please get in touch directly with the relevant Royal College.

NB: The information here was correct at the time of publication (at 10:00 on 10 May 2021), but is subject to amendment, as the situation develops. This is the third iteration of this statement; the previous versions were issued at 17:00 on 23 March 2020 and 10:00 on 1 September 2020).

Signed by:

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Dental Schools Council
Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEND)
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Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)
Joint Committee for Postgraduate Training in Dentistry (JCPTD)
Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
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The content of this statement is endorsed by the four Statutory Education Bodies (HEE, NES, HEIW and NIMDTA).

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(please include the examination in the subject line)