

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

Updated: 1 September 2020

Version 2: previous version dated 23 March 2020

The control measures in place to suppress the spread of COVID-19 will continue to affect students and trainees in the dental professions across the UK for the foreseeable future. We are issuing this revised statement to address the concerns arising from the ongoing situation. Of course, our primary concern is the safety the public and of students, trainees, educators, and other staff. The situation remains uncertain and we must 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 restrictions in place across the UK to control the spread of COVID-19 mean that currently, clinical teaching cannot always take place in the normal way. However, some clinical teaching will be possible, and lectures, tutorials and assessments can be conducted with the appropriate social distancing and other controls in place.

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 situation remains fluid, and these arrangements may be subject to change, if further control measures are imposed.

As the situation continues to evolve, the GDC has requested that all education providers and awarding bodies delivering awards leading to GDC registration, continue to provide details of any changes to their programmes on a regular basis. This includes arrangements for ensuring sufficient clinical experience to ensure that students and trainees achieve the learning outcomes of the relevant curricula.

Students on undergraduate dental programmes

Those completing undergraduate dental programmes in the UK in 2020 were able to graduate, with dental schools establishing online systems to enable the sitting of assessments. Graduates in 2020 were provided with a clear personal development plan (PDP) that must be shared with foundation trainers and educational supervisors. This is to help the new dentist gain the appropriate experience across all areas of practice.

Dental students undertaking undergraduate programmes are now able to return. Dental schools and universities are able to reopen for lectures and tutorials if the appropriate COVID-19 control measures are in place. However, there continue to be restrictions on, or changes in, clinical practice, which are likely to affect how clinical training is delivered. The Dental Schools Council, the GDC and other key stakeholders are currently discussing scenarios and options to help ensure the timely graduation of students scheduled to

complete their programme in 2021. Further announcements will be made once these discussions have progressed, and more is known about the impact of COVID-19 on dental practice and healthcare in the UK.

Our overall aim is to ensure that those who are competent qualify and are able to continue to enter the dental workforce, without unnecessary delay. However, this must be balanced with patient safety considerations. **Therefore, students will continue to need to have met all of the learning outcomes for their chosen dental profession.**

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. Many education and training providers and dental care settings are beginning to welcome students and trainees back, but the way that teaching and assessments are delivered will be very different in many cases.

For dental hygiene and dental therapy programmes, most issues are shared with programmes that train dentists, and joint discussions between stakeholders continue to take place to understand how missed clinical experience can be gained.

For dental nursing programmes, some providers have introduced online assessments. Others have adopted technological solutions to amend how they assess students in the workplace.

For dental technology programmes, while there may be less impact on the completion and assessment of technical work, the reduction of face-to-face dentistry has meant fewer referrals to dental laboratories, which is having an effect on the experience gained by trainees.

For orthodontic therapy and clinical dental technology programmes, a delay to the completion of training programmes has been put in place, to help ensure trainees have acquired the experience needed, and to allow time for arrangements to be put in place for final assessments to be conducted safely.

The GDC will maintain 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 meet all of the learning outcomes for their chosen dental profession.**

Dental Foundation Training and Dental Vocational Training for 2020/21

Recruitment to these posts was completed on schedule and all graduates of UK dental schools secured a training post unless they 'preferenced' themselves out. The training programme across the UK will commence on 1 September.

All trainees will be expected to complete a clinical skills session under the supervision of their trainer, or training programme team, before starting clinical practice. In addition, trainees will be asked to share a clinical portfolio, which summarises the clinical experience gained in dental school, and a PDP, with trainers and training programme teams. These measures are intended to ensure that graduates recognise the priority areas for their professional development as they enter the workforce.

It is anticipated that clinical activity in general dental practice will be reduced over the coming months and training programmes will be 'front loaded' with an increased number of study sessions utilising a blended learning approach.

For further information please contact your local Postgraduate Dental Dean.

Dental specialty training

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

Postgraduate Dental Deans will continue to inform trainees of the arrangements for teaching and assessment. Arrangements will differ depending on the area of specialty 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 resumption 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 Autumn 2020 diets will progress as currently advertised.

The forthcoming diets of all six Speciality Fellowship Examinations will be delivered as advertised for this year, following the current examination format. The mode of delivery will be online for all components of the examinations. All prospective candidates, along with examiners, have been kept updated on the timelines and logistics of these examinations. No decision has yet been made in relation to the approach to delivery beyond the Autumn 2020 diets, but the Dental Faculties of the Royal Colleges will provide regular updates. 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 1000 on 1 September 2020), but is subject to amendment, as the situation develops. This is the second iteration of this statement; the previous version was issued at 1700 on 23 March 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)