

Joint statement on arrangements for dental and dental care professional students and recent graduates, while restrictions are in place to control the spread of COVID-19

The strict control measures relating to COVID-19 will affect many students and recent graduates in the dental and dental care professions across the UK over the coming months. We are issuing this statement to try to address some of the concerns arising from this situation, but of course our primary concern at this time, is the safety of students, trainees, educators and the public.

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

The restrictions now in place across the UK to control the spread of COVID-19 mean that clinical teaching, lectures, tutorials and final exams for students can no longer take place in the normal way.

For those currently undertaking dental education or training courses in the UK, the alternative arrangements being put in place and who to contact are outlined below. These arrangements are suitable for the award of qualifications for the purposes of registration with the General Dental Council (GDC). However, please note that arrangements may be subject to change, if further restrictions are imposed.

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

The GDC has requested that all education providers and awarding bodies provide details of changes to arrangements for exams being put in place to ensure students can complete their programme.

Undergraduate dental courses

While most undergraduate courses in the UK are not due to finish for another two to three months, many, if not most, students have completed the necessary education, training and assessment to enable them to sit final exams. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, face to face final exams will not take place as scheduled.

Dental schools and universities are now establishing online systems to enable final exams to be sat for undergraduate students in their final year of study. Arrangements are also being made by some schools to enable more than one sitting of final exams. This is so that those who are ill or self-isolating, on the date of the final exam, will be able to sit their exam on an alternative date.

The small number of students who are fit to practise as 'safe beginners', but who have a potential area of weakness or lack of experience identified by their school, will be provided with a development plan by the relevant dental school.

Those who are not ready to sit final exams will be informed by their school.

Some dental schools have advised that there may be the facility for further assessments, including resits in November. However, this is subject to need and the necessary arrangements being put in place.

Foundation and vocational training places for 2020/21

With the alternative arrangements for final exams for BDS courses established, we expect that foundation and vocational training places for graduating BDS students will be announced as normal on 12 June. For the time being, foundation and vocational training will start as normal in September, or in August, for those in Scotland.

There is a possibility that some students may only have a couple of weeks following their final assessments to complete their GDC registration, which they will need before taking up their foundation or vocational training place. However, we do not expect that this will cause any delays, at this stage. The GDC has established remote working arrangements for its staff so that registration applications can continue to be processed in a timely manner.

We are currently seeking assurance from national health services that NHS performer numbers will be available in time for foundation and vocational training.

Each foundation and vocational dentist will also be asked to complete a clinical skills session under the supervision of their trainer, or training programme team, before starting clinical practice. This is normal practice for many training programmes, but we have agreed that this will be mandatory for all programmes in 2020.

Further, as a basis for future professional development, graduating students will be issued with a summary clinical portfolio to take with them when they take up their first role as a dental professional. We will be asking students to share their portfolio with trainers and programme teams.

These measures are intended to ensure that graduates are ready for practice and to identify any gaps in experience they may have. Dental Schools and the Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEND) are considering how they may support vocational and dental foundation trainees starting in August or September respectively, who require some additional upskilling, above that which would normally be required. Where available, this will be provided to foundation and vocational trainees, including those from other schools, who are undertaking training in their region.

Foundation and vocational trainees

For those currently undertaking foundation or vocational training in the UK, we have been assured that measures are being put in place to ensure that trainees will be able to complete their training with minimal, if any, disruption to timescales.

For further information please contact your local Postgraduate Dental Dean.

Students on dental care professional (DCP) programmes

Face to face clinical teaching, lectures and tutorials have now been suspended in the UK and we recognise that this will have an impact on how programmes leading to registration as a dental care professional (DCP) will be run and qualifications awarded.

For those students who are due to sit their final assessments in the coming months, the GDC has asked education providers and awarding bodies to submit details of the arrangements being put in place to ensure that studies can be completed. As the GDC approves education and training programmes that are delivered and assessed in a range of ways using a variety of methods, these will be considered on a case by case basis.

We understand that many awarding bodies are being asked to complete exams online or to postpone and reschedule these with the minimum disruption or impact on individuals.

Dental specialty training

Arrangements are being 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. The dental faculties of the Royal Colleges have paused all examinations. However, there are ongoing discussions to explore the option of delivering these examinations in a different way.

Postgraduate Dental Deans will be informing trainees of the arrangements for teaching and assessment when the details are known. Arrangements will differ depending on the area of specialty and the education provider.

For details relating to your own individual circumstances, please get in touch directly with your education or training provider. Contact details are provided below.

NB: The information here was correct at the time of publication (17.00 23 March 2020), but is subject to amendment, as the situation develops.

Signed by:

General Dental Council
Dental Schools Council
Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEND)
Faculty of Dental Surgery, The Royal College of Surgeons of England
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
Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

The content of this statement is endorsed by the four Statutory Education Bodies (HEE, NES, HEIW and NIMDTA).

Contact details

General Dental Council

communications@gdc-uk.org

Dental Schools Council

admin@dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

MFDS- mfds@rcpsg.ac.uk

ISFE- isferestdent@rcpsg.ac.uk ; isfedph@rcpsg.ac.uk; isfeos@rcpsg.ac.uk; isfeom@rcpsg.ac.uk; isfedent@rcpsg.ac.uk; isfeortho@rcpsg.ac.uk

MOrth- morth@rcpsg.ac.uk

General exam enquiries - exams@rcpsg.ac.uk

Educational events - educationdept@rcpsg.ac.uk

Membership- membership@rcpsg.ac.uk

General dental enquiries - dental@rcpsg.ac.uk

Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors

Dr DH Felix, Chair, Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors

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Joint Committee for Postgraduate Training in Dentistry

Professor M Escudier, Chair Joint Committee for Postgraduate Training in Dentistry

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Faculty of Dental Surgery at The Royal College of Surgeons of England

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MFDS - mfdsexam@rcseng.ac.uk

MJDF - mjdf@rcseng.a.cuk

LDS - dentalexams@rcseng.ac.uk

Specialty membership exams (MOrth and Restorative) - dentalexams@rcseng.ac.uk

Diploma exams (DSCD, DDPH, DipOT) - dentalexams@rcseng.ac.uk

General exam enquiries - dentalexams@rcseng.ac.uk

Educational events - FDS-Education@rcseng.ac.uk

Membership - membershipmail@rcseng.ac.uk

General dental enquires - fds@rcseng.ac.uk

Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)

MJDF@rcseng.ac.uk for all matters relating to the MJDF

fgdp-education@rcseng.ac.uk for all other queries related to our qualifications

Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Dean, Professor Fraser McDonald

Contact details: mail@rcsed.ac.uk (please include the examination in the subject line)

Contact details for assessment queries are:

E.McKinney-Bennett@rcsed.ac.uk

J.Wheelhouse@rcsed.ac.uk