

**INSPECTION OF THE CERTIFICATE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION DENTAL NURSE
PRACTICE**

TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY

10 MAY 2011

REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS

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OVERVIEW

The Certificate of Higher Education in Dental Nurse Practice programme offered by the School of Health and Social Care at Teesside University is a one year training programme. Students spend time at the University, where they have the use of excellent, modern facilities. Students also attend three clinical placements throughout the year where they gain experience working in a variety of settings within the local dental community and at the University clinic. The dental nursing students undertake much of their study alongside dental hygiene and therapy students and work with them on the University clinic.

We saw that the staff worked well as a team and were open to receiving feedback on the programme. Both the commitment of the staff and the systems they used meant that students were well supported and monitored in their placements. It was clear that the students in the first cohort were of a high standard and we noted that for success on this programme both dedication and good academic ability were necessary.

A variety of robust and auditable assessment methods are utilised throughout the programme. Students completed portfolios which were comprehensive and provided a solid record of a student's experience throughout the programme. The portfolios include the collection of feedback from a range of sources which input into a reflective assignment. Students gained good transferrable skills on the programme, which are included in addition to meeting the learning outcomes prescribed by the GDC.

We noted the number and various roles of the dental team members that students work with across clinical placements. The placements are arranged in different settings and it was clear that the School staff have worked hard to build strong links with the local dental community. The students share three of their four modules with students on a BSc hygiene and therapy training programme. In addition, the students will provide some support to the hygiene and therapy students on the School clinic.

Whilst the integration with hygiene and therapy students is excellent, the inspectors felt that it was important that the focus on the learning and development of the dental nursing students is not sacrificed for the purpose of providing chairside assistance to the hygiene and therapy students in future years. It is essential that the dental nursing students continue to gain a good variety of experience across the placements available working with dentists and qualified hygienists and therapists.

We noted that students were provided with some training in critical areas before they commenced their first clinical placement. We felt that it was important for patient safety that the students' knowledge and skills in these critical areas is also assessed before they are in contact with patients.

Introduction and background

1. As part of its duty to protect patients and promote high standards, the General Dental Council (GDC) monitors the education of student dentists and dental care professionals (DCPs) at institutions whose qualifications are approved by the GDC. The aim is to ensure that these institutions provide high-quality learning opportunities

and experiences and that students who obtain a dental qualification are safe to practise.

2. The purpose of this inspection was to assess whether the Certificate of Higher Education Dental Nurse Practice (CertHE) conforms to the GDC's requirements for the training of Dental Nurses and whether, on qualification, students would be acceptable for registration with the GDC.
3. This report sets out the findings of a one day programme inspection visit to Teesside University, using the assessment principles and guidelines set out in *Developing the Dental team – Second Edition (Interim) 2009* (DDT) as a benchmark. The report highlights many areas of good practice, but also draws attention to areas where issues of improvement and development need to be addressed. The report is based on the findings of the inspection and on a consideration of supporting documents prepared by the School.
4. The inspection took place on 10 May 2011. During the inspection, we met with academic and clinical staff of the School. We also met with senior staff and students on the CertHE programme. We would like to thank all concerned for their help, courtesy and co-operation during the inspection.
5. The CertHE programme is modular and there was no suitable final assessment for an inspection of a final examination. However, one inspector and the GDC QA team representative attended the final assessment board meeting on 5 July 2011, where there was the opportunity to review the summative assessments, individual portfolios of clinical experience and competence, and the external examiner feedback received on these assessments.
6. The report will be considered by the Education Committee, or other designated body of the GDC. The School will be given the opportunity to correct any factual errors and then submit observations on the content of the report. The report, together with the School's observations, will be published on the GDC website.
7. This programme was commissioned following research into dental need in the Teesside area, where a shortage of personnel was identified. Since 2010, Teesside University has also offered a BSc in dental hygiene and therapy. The CertHE is a one academic year (35 week) full time programme funded by the North-East Strategic Health Authority and local Primary Care Trusts. There are 12 students in each cohort. All students enter through the UCAS system and require A-levels (or equivalent) for admission.
8. The Cert HE programme is run by the School of Health and Social Care at the University and is based in a modern building containing several tutorial suites, lecture theatres in addition to a clinical skills laboratory, student treatment clinic and a two surgery dental practice. The facilities at the School are state of the art and are a significant asset of the programme.
9. Students of the programme are sent on placements within the local dental community. These are at a variety of NHS and private general and specialist clinics, as well as the dental practice at the School and the student clinic. Each student will spend their time across three of the placements, rotating every 10-12 weeks, with at

least one placement at the School. It is anticipated that as the number of hygiene and therapy students increases each year, the dental nursing students will spend more time at the School assisting them in the student clinic.

Programme content and delivery

10. Students are given a two week induction course at the University. This is undertaken alongside the students on the hygiene and therapy programme and based in the clinical skills laboratory. The purpose of the induction course is for the student to learn basic dental nursing skills to prepare the student for their first placement in Week 3. The course also includes elements of cross-infection control and health and safety.
11. Students spend four sessions (two days) per week working clinically on their placement, four sessions are spent at the School and one day is dedicated to self-directed learning. In the final term students have two days for self-directed learning with two fewer sessions at the School. This is due to the structure of one of the four modules delivered.
12. The programme is delivered across four modules: Introduction to Dentistry; Theoretical Concepts of Dentistry; Clinical Concepts of Dental Nursing; and Principles of Evidence Based Practice. All of the modules, aside from Clinical Concepts of Dental Nursing, are shared modules with the first year hygiene and therapy students. All learning outcomes for dental nursing are covered by these modules. The School felt that the good academic ability of the students meant that it was no different delivering the shared module to the dental nursing students to the hygiene and therapy students.
13. The students are taught through a variety of methods, including lectures, seminars, practical demonstrations and exercises. As indicated above students also have one day per week for self directed learning.
14. As the CertHE shares three modules with the hygiene and therapy programme, the students from these learn together. In future years the dental nursing students will increasingly work in clinic supporting the hygiene and therapy students. We noted that having three placements allowed the students to work alongside general and specialist dentists and trained hygienists and therapists. We feel that that for future years, the School should be conscious that providing nursing support to the hygiene and therapy students must not be undertaken at the expense of the dental nursing students' learning experience. It is important that these students spend a significant amount of their clinical time working with dentists and trained hygienists and therapists.
15. The students are supported in each placement by a Dental Practice Educator (DPE), who must be a dental nurse, registered with the GDC for a minimum of two years. The DPE is responsible for the student in the placement and for ensuring that the student treats patients safely and with appropriate care. The majority of a student's clinical competencies are assessed and signed off by a DPE.
16. The DPE is provided with a detailed handbook and we were told that the DPEs will undertake a University practice educators' course, provided by the University. We felt

that this was necessary and appropriate. During the inspection we were told that the training was not mandatory, though the first group of DPEs had all undertaken this. For the sake of consistency of both a student's experience and the assessment of that student, we felt strongly that training for the DPE role should not be optional. It was confirmed during the exam board inspection that this training was, in fact, compulsory and in the future there may also be the opportunity for DPEs to undertake a professional mentoring award through the University.

17. The programme leads told us that they endeavour to ensure that the students have comparable combinations of placement types, though we were told that two students in the first cohort did not have a placement in the University clinics. We understand that all students will have a placement at the University in all subsequent years.
18. In order to ensure students are receiving an appropriate and consistent experience across the placements and to keep track of student progress the School visits each placement twice per term. The School staff member observes the student working clinically. Also at these visits, there is a tripartite meeting between the School staff member, the student and the DPE.
19. Students complete a clinical portfolio which is assessed and the progress of this portfolio is considered during the tripartite placement meetings. The portfolio includes a log of clinical competencies, feedback received from patients and mentors and student self-reflection. We found the portfolios to be clear and thorough.
20. One of the placements initially agreed to take four students at one time, however, it was quickly realised that these students could only be offered limited chairside experience. This issue was quickly addressed and three of the students were relocated at other placements.

Staff issues

21. We noted that the School staff were highly motivated and enthusiastic and there had been input from staff across the School, with experience being drawn on from several areas.
22. We were told by a DPE that it had been an enjoyable experience, but there was much more paperwork than they had expected. We felt that it would be beneficial to the DPEs if there were opportunities for them to interact with each other and share what they had learnt and their experiences in the role.
23. We felt that the staff both at the School and within the local dental community were very supportive of the students. This support is necessary for the programme, as it is reliant on local dental practices for placements that provide students with the variety of clinical experience that might not be seen at the School. We were pleased that the School had established good links with the local dental community and was gathering a bank of local placements, which they intend to utilise as required over future cohorts.

Student issues

24. The students told us that they were very happy with the programme and felt that it gave them a good learning experience, particularly with the variety of placements offered. Some students would have liked increased time in clinic in the final term, but they told us that overall they felt the balance between theory and clinic was about right.
25. The students appeared to have a very good understanding of the GDC Student Fitness to Practise guidance document, the GDC Standards and what it is to be a registered professional. They were very communicative and we felt that the cohort was of a particularly high standard. We noted that the students had a variety of backgrounds with some joining the programme immediately after completing A-levels, some had significant work experience, and others had completed a degree or access course. For some it appeared to be the first step into the dental profession and we were told that one student had been accepted on a hygiene and therapy programme at another institution and another student had been accepted on a dentistry programme.
26. We noted that students with appropriate academic qualifications, such as an undergraduate degree, were given exemption from the research module of the CertHE through accreditation of prior learning.

Assessment

27. We noted that although there was an introductory course to prepare students for their first clinical placement, this did not include a formal assessment to check they were ready to begin their placement. We felt that although they will work with the support of a DPE, for the purposes of patient protection students should be assessed in critical areas such as basic health and safety, cross infection control and patient confidentiality before coming into contact with patients.
28. As the programme is modular, there are no traditional final examinations. In order for a student to be awarded the CertHE they are required to pass all of their module assessments. We scrutinised the marking guides provided and the assessment criteria used for summative module assessments and found it to be very clear and comprehensive.
29. Students are required to undertake a thorough practical assessment in week 25. We were able to review the marks achieved against video recordings of these assessments during the exam board inspection and were impressed with the robustness of the test, the marking scheme and the range of competencies tested. If this practical assessment is not passed within a maximum of two attempts, then that student will fail the entire CertHE and not be eligible for any further attempts.
30. The School assesses the students using a variety of methods for each module. They are encouraged to reflect on their work throughout the programme. This reflection is drawn together in a 3000 word assignment based on the feedback the student has received over the programme and how they have used this feedback to improve their practice.
31. Students receive summative assessment of their portfolio of experience for the Clinical Concepts of Dental Nursing module. As mentioned above, a student's clinical

competencies are individually signed off by the DPE (or appropriate School staff). The overall sign off of a student's log of competencies is undertaken by the University Senior Lecturer in Dental Care Education and forms part of the module assessment. The School aims for students to be trained and assessed in a wide range of areas and we noted that students were required to complete over 30 specific competencies for providing chairside support across a large range of procedures seen in the dental clinic. Should a student not be able to complete a task on a patient, the competency is assessed by simulation. We felt that this was an acceptable approach.

32. The external examiner provides feedback on all module assessments and normally attends the board meeting for the Clinical Concepts of Dental Nursing module, where the students' clinical performance is considered. End of module practical assessments are seen by the external examiner, either in person or a recording is sent to them. The external examiner provided detailed comments on the student assessments and also had the opportunity to review student portfolios.
33. We attended the final award board for the CertHE, which also incorporated the progression board for the BSc students. We were disappointed that the external examiner for the CertHE was unable to attend, but were assured that they had the opportunity to comment on all assessments, as we had seen these and we were satisfied that their comments had been taken on board by the School. In addition, the external examiner for the BSc programme attended this board.

Conclusion

34. We were satisfied that the curriculum is being delivered as proposed in the original submission to the GDC and that it conforms to the GDC's principles and guidance as published in DDT.
35. We recommend that this programme be granted 'sufficiency' and that holders of the CertHE in Dental Nurse Practice should be eligible to apply for registration as a dental nurse.

REQUIREMENTS

To the School

- That the GDC should be kept informed of the changes to the amount of time students will spend in the University clinics and the amount of time in local dental practices (14)
- Students should be assessed as to whether they are safe to be in contact with patients before they begin their first placement. This assessment should include health and safety, cross infection control and patient confidentiality. (27)

To the GDC

- That the changes to this programme, particularly to the students' clinical experience over the next three years, should be closely monitored through annual monitoring.

[NUMBERS IN BRACKETS REFER TO INDIVIDUAL PARAGRAPHS WITHIN THE MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT].

Appendix A



Certificate in Higher Education Dental Nurse Practice Response to GDC Report of Inspectors May 2011

Requirements

To the School

- **That the GDC should be kept informed of the changes to the amount of time students will spend in the University clinics and the amount of time in local dental practices (14)**

School response

The programme team has reviewed the clinical placement experience provided for dental nurse students. In light of students and employers feedback and the comment made by the Inspectors in point 14 of this report, the following changes have been made for students commencing the programme in the 2011/12 academic year:

- *Dental nurse students will continue to share theoretical content and some simulated practical sessions with hygiene and therapy students.*
- *Unfortunately placement capacity in the University dental clinic is reduced due to the limited number of patients. There will only be one dental nurse student allocated per term to this clinic, ie a total 3 students from the cohort of 12 students.*
- *The University have secured an increased pool of dental placements in the local dental community. Educational audits of these placements have been completed and all placements will provide comparable range of learning experiences to ensure students are able to achieve competencies for providing chairside support. In addition, all students will have a range of experience to enhance the core competencies.*
- *The programme team and Director of Placements will continue to closely monitor all placements via students and employers evaluations and educational audits and make any changes, as appropriate.*
- *An additional section has been included in the student portfolio for students to identify the total number of clinical hours worked. Attendance will continue to be closely monitored by the programme leader and any absences will be made up by the student.*

- **Students should be assessed as to whether they are safe to be in contact with patients before they begin their first placement. This assessment should include health and safety, cross infection control and patient confidentiality. (27)**

School response

A summative assessment will take place in week 2 in the Introduction to Dentistry module for dental nurse students to assess health and safety, cross infection control and patient confidentiality prior to the first clinical placement. This will be introduced in the 2011/12 academic year.

The programme team have provide additional observations/comments to points 9, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 27 in the Report of the Inspectors.

9 - Comment

Changes have been made to clinical placement experience for academic year 2011/12 (see response to requirement 1)

14 - Comment

Dental students will continue to share theoretical and some simulated practical skills with students studying the hygiene and therapy programme however they will not support these students in the university clinic. Dental students will have clinical placements working with dentists and trained hygienists and therapists (see detailed response to requirement 1)

16 - Comment

An initial DPE preparation course is a mandatory programme requirement with attendance at subsequent annual updates.

17 - Comment

All students will not have a placement at the university dental clinic as placement capacity is reduced due to the limited number of patients. There will only be one dental nurse student allocated per term to this clinic, i.e. a total 3 students from the cohort of 12 students. (see detailed response to requirement 1)

18 - Comment

It is the responsibility of the DPE to observe and assess the student's achievement of clinical competencies.

22 - Comment

All Dental Practice Co-ordinators were advised about the required documentation at the initial placement visit and educational audit meetings and Dental Practice Educators (DPE) were informed at the initial mandatory DPE preparation workshop. This will be reinforced during future preparation for DPEs new to the role supporting Teesside University (TU) dental nurse students and for existing DPEs at a mandatory annual update in September 2011.

DPEs will be encouraged to evaluate their experience supporting TU dental nurse students, collated evaluations will be discussed at the programme board and used as appropriate to enhance future programme development and support.

27 - Comment

A summative assessment has been included in week 2 in the Introduction to Dentistry module for dental nurse students to assess health and safety, cross infection control and

patient confidentiality prior to the first clinical placement. This will be introduced in the 2011/12 academic year.

Judith Porch, Assistant Dean, Quality Enhancement on behalf of the Dental Care Education Programme team.

5th August 2011