

Item 7
Education Committee
23 April 2009

**REPORT OF THE GDC INSPECTORS ON THE
BSc (Hons) & FOUNDATION DEGREE IN
DENTAL TECHNOLOGY DELIVERED AT
UNIVERSITY OF WALES INSTITUTE, CARDIFF
(UWIC)**

23 JANUARY 2008

REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS

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ACCOMPANIED BY:

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Overview

1. The main areas of strength were the quality of education being provided. Students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the course. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff was also apparent to the inspectors. All the facilities which the inspectors were shown were of a high standard both at the Llandaff Campus and at the Dental Hospital. The panel thought that student access to library and IT facilities at two sites was of great value. The panel were pleased to see that students on the full-time BSc (Hons) course were gaining clinical experience and patient contact through observing their custom-made devices being utilised by dental students and other members of the dental team. The students we met found it very inspiring to see their work being fitted and to gain an understanding of the importance of effective and appropriate interaction with patients and colleagues. The inspectors were pleased to note that this would be rolled out to include part-time students on the Foundation Degree (FD) course in the coming months.
2. The panel identified some areas in need of development. The inspectors believed there was a need to tighten up Fitness to Practise procedures and that students required a greater understanding of professionalism, law and ethics and the role the General Dental Council (GDC) plays in their careers. The panel felt students displayed a lack of understanding of which elements of the course had to be passed and where compensation rules apply and also found it difficult to determine how the curriculum was mapped out to achieve the GDC curricula learning outcomes.

Introduction

3. As part of its duty to protect patients and promote high standards, the GDC monitors the education of dental students 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 qualification would be suitable for registration with the GDC.
4. This report sets out the findings of a one-day inspection visit to UWIC, using the assessment principles and guidelines set out in *Developing the Dental Team: Curricula Frameworks for Registrable Qualifications for Professionals Complementary to Dentistry* (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 and samples of assessed students work.
5. The 3 year part-time Foundation Degree (FD) course has been running since 2005 after initial approval from the Education Committee of the GDC. The full-time BSc course has been offered since 1997. Part-Time students are able to top-up their Foundation Degree with a further 6 modules (60 credits) leading to the BSc award, then a further 6 modules to an Honours Degree. The full time BSc first year students undertake all study at the Llandaff Campus. In years two and three, study is split between the Llandaff Campus and the Dental Hospital. This provides two years education at Llandaff and 1 year at the dental hospital.

Centre for dental technology

6. A recent University restructure had seen 9 schools merged to 5. The School of Applied Science and School of Health Science had been combined. A diverse range of courses were on offer with dental technology holding the smallest academic team of staff. Despite concerns that provision of dental technology education may become 'lost' in the new structure, the panel were assured that staff felt they had a 'voice' and had strong representation on management groups. Vocational courses were viewed as an integral component of the University provision and the dental technology provision was deemed an important area. None of the staff felt any concern regarding the continuation of the provision of dental technology education, as they believed that the provision was strong and recruiting well.
7. It was reported to the inspectors that any requests for additional training or equipment had been met and staff were generally comfortable with budget levels. There was overall agreement that dental technology had received strong support in recent years. There was, however, a sense that staff did not have a great deal of knowledge regarding how the stated SIFT funding is shared and allocated between UWIC and the NHS Trust. Clarification is required on this matter and staff felt that renewing of the current memorandum of agreement would assist in this matter.
8. Student representatives are able to give feedback to senior staff and all students complete feedback questionnaires on modules. Students feel that staff are responsive to their opinions and suggestions for improvements to the running of the course. Small changes can often be made quickly on an ad-hoc basis. Strong channels of communication between team meetings, Heads of Centres, Heads of Department and School Management have been provided for raising concerns and providing constructive suggestions regarding the provision of this course.

Student issues

9. There is a clear admissions policy and a variety of academic qualifications that meet the HEI entry criteria are deemed acceptable, allowing for a range of routes to entry and a flexible approach to admissions. Preliminary interviews are also offered to students requiring additional advice and support. Further to this, candidates who do not meet the normal minimum requirements will also be considered for exceptional entry. Historically, recruitment to the course has not been a problem and, in some years, applications have exceeded available places. Typically, applicants apply from the South-West and South Wales regions of the UK and usually from within a reasonable commuting distance. The full-time programme receives applications from the whole of the UK, EU and international locations.
10. There are strong student support mechanisms in place. The UWIC requirement is for a personal tutor to be allocated to each student and for meetings to occur three times a year and to be formally recorded. However, an open door policy is run by the academic dental technology staff. Students were happy with this arrangement, though the inspectors did feel that the three set meetings should be adhered to in case any students were to 'slip through the net' or did not take advantage of the open door policy. There are advice centres for students dealing with issues such as finance and welfare, being available to the students by appointment in the nearby

student union area. Part-time students are on-site once a week and seem to have more limited access to facilities and support.

11. In discussions with employers, it was clear that there was little scope for them to input into the course and that communication between the School and employers could be expanded. This might be achieved through more regular visits by staff to the range of employers which, at present, were described as sporadic. Employers did, however, acknowledge the high standard of education on offer. The inspectors also believe that firmer methods of ensuring that work completed off-site can be confirmed as students' own work.
12. In relation to Fitness to Practise issues, the panel were informed that students each receive a Code of Conduct handbook (UWIC) which is similar in some respects to the GDCs own Standards Guidance for registrants. They are also encouraged to volunteer any information which might hinder their eventual registration. However, during discussions with students, the panel felt that the students displayed a lack of understanding of the role of the GDC as regulator and the possible impact of their behaviour and lifestyle choices. The panel felt knowledge and education around these issues should be developed as indicated in the GDC Curricula and related Standards Guidance.

Dental technology curriculum and delivery

13. There are 3 full-time members of teaching staff with an additional 2 located within the Dental Hospital. The possible loss of staff was viewed as a potential problem since succession planning was sometimes problematic. Part-time lecturers were being given additional training and would be able to fill any gaps created by the loss of staff. The Centre was also taking steps to increase its pool of available part-time lecturers. It was noted that there are similar staffing concerns among other health related training courses and a pragmatic approach was needed.
14. Most teaching is delivered through traditional methods such as lectures and seminars. Where programmes have similar subject topics, teaching is often shared as a means of reducing costs. It is recognised that where joint teaching occurs, students have differing learning requirements depending on their specific courses so lectures are followed by tailored seminars.
15. The oral health clinics at the Dental Hospital provide students with valuable experience of dental team working and prescribing to each other. Students on the full-time BSc programme are able to see their custom-made appliances being fitted which gives them a sense of achievement and a deeper understanding of the importance of their role. The panel would like to see this rolled out to students on the part-time course as planned. This would enable the part-time student dental technicians to work with other members of the dental team.
16. Although the panel were informed that students cover radiology through the anatomy, physiology and orthodontics modules, students commented that they would benefit from more coverage of this topic. Work to show where all elements of the curriculum are covered transparently would also be beneficial.

17. The panel were not provided with information that confirmed that all students on these programmes achieved competency in managing the manufacture of a range of custom-made dental devices within one of the treatment modalities as outlined in DDT. Records of achievement for individual students would rectify this.
18. Modules are assessed via written examinations and assignments, presentations and practical assessments. There was some confusion among students as to which modules were core to the course and must be passed in order to progress. Clear information on core components and compensation regulations could be provided in student handbooks. The inspectors also felt that mark schemes could be standardised across assessments to include descriptors for each grade. It was felt this would enable students to evaluate their progress with greater ease.
19. The inspectors were pleased to learn that all assessed work is double-marked anonymously between staff at both sites. Cases presented for consideration under the mitigating circumstances are also dealt with anonymously and on an individual basis.
20. A separate report will cover the Exam Board meeting for the dental technology provision at UWIC.

Educational environment

21. There are excellent facilities, including dedicated laboratories, with a range of current equipment such as 3D imaging machines. There appeared to be adequate provision of equipment and materials for the student cohorts. Students are required to provide their own hand tools and personal protective clothing; equipment kits may be purchased on-site for around £70.
22. The use of ICT for practical demonstrations enhances student learning and the centre is currently researching the opportunity to offer lectures via internet video conferencing and the UWIC Virtual Learning Environment. Two students are currently accessing this facility for one module on removable partial dentures. Feedback has been very positive. Early indications suggest a wider roll-out of this scheme would be costly, however, funding is being sought.
23. Students have access to libraries at both the Llandaff Campus and, for the full-time students, also at the Dental Hospital. At Llandaff, the library is well resourced with multiple copies of the most popular texts. Periodicals are available in hard copy and on-line (together with other valuable e-resources) and meet the needs of the students. Access to the library is provided seven days a week and students can access IT facilities between 21 and 24 hours a day. At the Dental Hospital, students have access to a range of major relevant texts. There is a dedicated IT support technician on hand and quiet study areas are available at both sites. Students are able to access library facilities off-campus through the Athens log-in system.

Conclusion

24. The Inspectors found this programme to meet the GDC requirements of DDT.

Requirements

- A more detailed mapping of how the curriculum is covered should be provided.
- Individual student records of competence achievement by the completion of the course in at least one of the work based treatment modalities (as required on Page 52 of DDT) should be considered.

Recommendations

- Fitness to Practise procedures need to be more clearly defined and related to students. Students also need additional training in professionalism and Law and Ethics.
- Clinical observations for part-time students should be developed as planned.
- Student handbooks should be updated to provide clear information regarding core modules and compensation regulations.
- More support should be provided for part-time FD students both in access to facilities and pastoral support. Part-time students should have an equal educational experience to full-time students as much as possible.
- Staff should consider undertaking regular visits to work placements to ensure and maintain teaching levels and to allow communication between the School and employers.

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Observations on inspection report 23.01.08

Sirs

The programme team and UWIC were more than happy to accommodate the inspectors. We were also very happy to read that the report acknowledged that our programmes met the GDC requirements of the DDT document.

The following are observations made on the inspection report of University of Wales Institute Cardiff following the GDC inspectors visit on 23rd January 2008. The programme team's comments immediately follow the relevant paragraph(s) as numbered in the report:

2. The panel identified some areas in need of development. The inspectors believed there was a need to tighten up Fitness to Practise procedures and that students required a greater understanding of professionalism, law and ethics and the role the General Dental Council (GDC) plays in their careers. The panel felt students displayed a lack of understanding of which elements of the course had to be passed and where compensation rules apply and also found it difficult to determine how the curriculum was mapped out to achieve the GDC curricula learning outcomes.

Observation: The programme team felt that this is quite a stern interpretation of the true situation. Students may be confused about compensation as a result of changes to assessment regulations introduced at short notice for last summer's exam boards in preparation for a QAA visit. The team felt that there is more than adequate information given to students regarding elements of the programme that must be passed.

11. In discussions with employers, it was clear that there was little scope for them to input into the course and that communication between the School and employers could be expanded. This might be achieved through more regular visits by staff to the range of employers which, at present, were described as sporadic. Employers did, however, acknowledge the high standard of education on offer.

The inspectors also believe that firmer methods of ensuring that work completed off-site can be confirmed as students' own work.

Observation: The team felt that there was little 'interest' from employers rather than 'scope' for input. The Centre holds biannual Programme Committee and Advisory Group meetings that the Laboratories are invited to attend via the DLA. UWIC also holds evening forums whereby mentor training and other ideas are discussed with employers. It does recognise that contact with this group is vital and intends investigating other means of improving communication without the need for inefficient laboratory visits.

16. Although the panel were informed that students cover radiology through the anatomy and physiology, and orthodontic modules, students commented that they would benefit from more coverage of this topic. Work to show where all elements of the curriculum are covered transparently would also be beneficial.

Observation: The programme team felt that students were not necessarily the best people to judge what should be included into a curriculum and at what level. The Team were not asked about the breadth of this topic in the curriculum and assume the data on which this topic stands has only been gleaned from students. The team is confident that teaching and assessment meet the requirements of the DDT document.

17. The panel were not provided with information that confirmed that all students on these programmes achieved competency in managing the manufacture of a range of custom-made dental devices within one of the treatment modalities as outlined in DDT. Records of achievement for individual students would rectify this

Observation: It was argued that successfully completing and passing all assessments within a module indicated competence. Educational learning outcomes must have been met to pass.

18. Modules are assessed via written assignments, written examinations, oral and poster presentations and practical assessments. There was some confusion among students as to which modules were core to the course and must be passed in order to progress. Clear information on core components and compensation regulations could be provided in student handbooks. The inspectors also felt that mark schemes could be standardised across assessments to include descriptors for each grade. It was felt this would enable students to evaluate their progress with greater ease.

Observation: Work was already underway on this resulting from regulatory changes within UWIC.

Requirements

- Individual student records of competence achievement by the completion of the course in at least one of the work based treatment modalities (as required on Page 52 of DDT) should be implemented.

The programme team would like to challenge this requirement. We are aware that other educational centres inspected have not been asked to provide, and do not provide, such a record. Our practical assessments and related transcripts provide evidence of competence, as defined on p. 50 of DDT. We believe there should be consistency in GDC requirements.

We would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to make these observations on the report.

Yours sincerely

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