

**INSPECTION OF THE LEEDS DENTAL  
INSTITUTE DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN DENTAL TECHNOLOGY AWARDED BY THE  
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**16 APRIL & 10 JUNE 2010**

**REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS**

**MR P BUTLER**

**PROF B CHADWICK**

**PROF D HERBERT (CHAIR)**

**MR J LEWIS**

## Overview

This is an impressive programme on many levels, benefitting from both excellent facilities and leadership. The Institute has a clear plan for the inclusion of all dental team members and delivery of dental training has been well thought out. Documentation we saw prior to, and during, the inspection was of a very high standard and this made our task more straightforward. The examples of students' work we saw were also of an extremely high standard and helped demonstrate that the course provides good coverage of the Dental Technology curriculum.

Whilst we are aware of the associated logistical difficulties, we would welcome steps to improve students' ability to see their work being fitted on clinic. We identified other areas with potential for development. Improved training and information relating to the completion of logbooks would be beneficial. Students could be given clearer information regarding facilities and support available to them. We would like to see continued development of plans to introduce regular visits to students in the work place.

## Purpose & GDC process

1. As part of its duty to protect patients and promote high standards, the General Dental Council (GDC) monitors the education of dental students and student 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 the inspection was to assess whether the diploma of higher education in dental technology awarded by the University of Leeds conforms to the GDC's requirements for the training of dental technicians and whether, on qualification, students with the diploma would be suitable for registration with the GDC.
3. This report sets out the findings of two, one-day inspections using the 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 inspections and on a consideration of supporting documents prepared prior to, and made available during, the inspections.

## The Diploma programme

4. The Diploma of Higher Education in Dental Technology is open to full- and part-time students running for three and four years respectively. All students begin by completing a one-year Access course which has been designed specifically for this programme. It provides a good grounding in the general skills required, such as manual dexterity, study skills and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It therefore gives students a feel for what will be involved during their course of study. The annual intake is agreed on an annual basis. There are currently 10 full-time and 5 part-time students enrolled on the course.

5. There has been a recent period of transition as the programme moved from a BTEC qualification to a Leeds University Diploma in line with the Leeds Dental Institute long term strategy to be inclusive of all members of the dental team. The move has been extremely well handled, with strong support for staff as they move to the University from NHS employment who all receive a full induction into University procedures. The new Diploma programme has a modularised format which complies with University of Leeds requirements. It is expected that the current assessment methodology will be reviewed and brought into line with the changes made to the Undergraduate BChD programme and other dental training at the Institute.
6. The refurbishment of the Leeds Dental Institute is nearing full completion. Although there has been an unavoidable impact on all training programmes running at the Institute, we felt the update to facilities has been very well managed. Every effort has been undertaken to lessen the impact felt by staff and students alike. For the Dental Technology programme, careful planning has meant that the focus of the refurbishment has not concentrated solely on the BChD requirements, particularly in terms of space.
7. It was reported that the organisation of dental team working can be challenging. However, we felt that all staff and students we met with demonstrated a genuine commitment to making working with other dental team members a real plus point of the programme. Students are inducted together and there are moves towards as much joint delivery of teaching as possible whilst being mindful of the educational needs and required learning outcomes for each student group. This may include experience of clinical audit alongside dental students. We hope experience of team working continues to develop and strengthen over time.
8. All students on the programme are given University status and, therefore, receive full access to University facilities and support. Students we met with appeared to be making use of what was available to them and were enthusiastic about being part of the University structure. We did feel, however, that the students would benefit from clearer information regarding the facilities and support available to them, especially financial and housing support. In addition to the induction, study skills assistance is available via the Library where students can undertake workshops. There are plans to utilise additional University mechanisms in future. There is a need to increase awareness amongst workplace mentors of students' academic and study skills needs rather than solely focusing on their practical skills. A proposal to introduce an e-learning package on study skills for use in the work place should help to alleviate such difficulties.
9. It was clear that staff are impressed with the high standard of work being produced by students and that they feel the students are hard-working, quick to adapt and demonstrate a wide variety of individual skills.

### **Student issues**

10. We were interested to learn that many of the students came from an Arts background, and their practical art skills had been invaluable for training in Dental Technology. We found the students we met to be enthusiastic, personable and extremely positive about the Diploma programme and the supportive staff involved in its delivery.

11. Each student has a nominated personal tutor with whom they meet every eight weeks. At these meetings, students may discuss both personal and academic issues. The small cohort size allows for good interaction between year groups.
12. The students would welcome the opportunity for more practical work to be included in the course. They also wanted to have more clinical time in order to see their work being fitted in the mouth. We were informed by staff that this was an aspiration but difficult to achieve due to the constraints of the timetable. The inspectors felt, where possible, students should have this opportunity and that further investigation into how to achieve this aspiration would be beneficial.
13. Most students felt that, initially, the quantity of assessments was a daunting prospect. At times, there could be some bunching of assessment although flexible timetabling had alleviated the problem. They like that the course implements on-going assessment as they feel this makes them focus more during their course of study.
14. The students we met told us that they felt the course adequately covered all the different Dental Technology disciplines. This had helped them to identify their own areas of particular interest for specialisation.

### **Quality Assurance**

15. The Diploma shares the same framework of structures (such as for mitigating circumstances) as other DCP programmes within the Institute. There are shared discussions between staff and any issue identified will feed into the Institute Learning & Teaching Committee and, eventually, the Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee. It was reported that no major issues had so far come to light via this route.
16. Student logbooks we had access to in the base room appeared to simply record work undertaken by students; they lack quality checking by mentors and employers. We were told that it was often difficult to get workplace mentors to comment on the quality of work completed and that differing standards between laboratories made ensuring consistency problematic. We had been expecting to meet some of the workplace employers during our inspection; however, they were not able to attend. Work will need to be carried out to improve the logbook to include additional scope for reflective learning.
17. Ways of increasing the understanding of the need for consistency throughout work placements should be sought. It was clear that good relationships have been built up with local laboratories and this should enable easier facilitation of training where needed. Linked with this, it was apparent to us that there is a lack of procedural guidance on how to deal with a student who is failing or falling behind in some way. This will need to be addressed so that should such a situation arise, appropriate action is swiftly taken.
18. Advances have been made in the process for the selection of appropriate laboratories for work placements. A member of staff attends with the student in the first instance to see the facilities and meet the team they will potentially work with. We were pleased with the attention given to selecting the right environment for each

student. Where there had been problems or a student had not been comfortable at their work placement, we were told that issues were quickly resolved and alternative arrangements made.

19. We were informed that mentors in the workplace were typically the owner of the laboratory and that, in every instance, they were GDC registrants. However, some first year students told us that they were being mentored by third year students.
20. There are two student representatives from each cohort of students. They attend monthly Programme Committee meetings and are also involved with the Student Forum alongside dental students. Students told us they had not needed to raise major issues via these mechanisms.
21. Regular visits by staff to work placements are under development. It is anticipated that these will be short but frequent. The visits will concentrate entirely on the progress of the students and will not be a mechanism to check up on the laboratory. Visits will tie in with weekly and six-monthly reports from mentors which cover attendance, attitude and aptitude.
22. We did feel that there was a lack of guidance for those mentoring students in the workplace. There was a general lack of understanding of logbook requirements and whether these should include constructive criticism. Also lacking in detail were procedures for dealing with failing students. Work could be done to fully define the role of mentors and the use of logbooks.

### **Assessment**

23. This is a modular programme so students are assessed throughout their course of study. There is no "Final Examination". The perception of a heavy amount of assessment throughout the programme (see paragraph 13) is an historical issue and due for review inline with other current BChD and DCP programmes.
24. Each module within the course employs a variety of formative assessments, such as poster presentations and essays, in order to monitor progress and to provide guidance to students as they progress with their training. Each module concludes with a summative assessment which may include written examinations and/or practical tests. Module leads are responsible for setting questions for end of module assessments; these are then agreed and endorsed by the External Examiner.
25. We attended the practical assessment for the module covering Orthodontic Fixed and Functional Appliances. The internal examiners mark the completed work independently and then agree a final mark. There was good discussion between the internal examiners when agreeing final marks and this was overseen by the External Examiner who was in attendance. Each internal examiner records their individual grades on their own marksheet and this is then amended in light of the discussions regarding an agreed final mark. It may be useful, in future, to consider the inclusion of an additional final mark column to avoid any confusion or errors in the recording of grades. It was clear, however, that the examiners were comfortable with the current system.

26. Given the small cohort size, we were impressed with the efforts made to ensure that candidate anonymity is maintained during assessments and in subsequent grading discussions.
27. Coversheets for assessments are returned to students and provide feedback in the form of a written summary of their overall performance. The coversheet also includes space for the student to reflect and comment on the grade they have achieved.
28. We had the opportunity to meet briefly with the External Examiner. They were extremely satisfied with their level of involvement with the in-course assessment and had no concerns regarding the overall assessment system for this programme.

### **Conclusion**

29. We were satisfied with our findings during our inspections and recommend that the Diploma is granted sufficiency for the purpose of registration with the GDC.

## **Requirements**

### **To the Leeds Dental Institute**

- Improvements need to be made to student logbooks in terms of scope for reflective learning (16).
- Additional training and guidance in the use of logbooks needs to be provided to workplace mentors (16, 22).
- The development of regular visits by staff to work placements needs to continue in order to improve the consistency of students' overall experience (17).
- There is a need to put in place clear procedures for dealing with failing students (22).

## **Recommendations**

### **To the Leeds Dental Institute**

- Further opportunities for team working could be investigated (7).
- Clearer information could be made available to students regarding facilities and support available to them (8).
- Ways to ensure that mentors have a fuller awareness of students' academic needs could be investigated (8).
- The possibility of including more practical work and opportunities to see work fitted on clinic could be investigated (12).

### **To the General Dental Council**

- The Diploma programme should be granted sufficiency for the purpose of registration with the GDC (29)

*(Numbers in brackets refer to individual paragraphs within the main body of the report)*



## UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Mr Peter Butler,  
Quality Assurance,  
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37 Wimpole Street,  
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25th August 2010

Dear Mr Butler,

**Inspection report of the Leeds Dental Institute Diploma of Higher Education in Dental Technology awarded by the University of Leeds, 16 April & 10 June 2010: Observations on the report, requirements and recommendations.**

Thank you for your extremely informative and helpful recent GDC inspectors' report, which I have had the opportunity to consider for observations on content, requirements and recommendations.

**Requirements**

- **Improvements need to be made to student logbooks in terms of scope for reflective learning (16).**

The student logbook is being revised so as to emulate the logbook system presently being utilised by the Dental Undergraduate programme at the Leeds Dental Institute. This system will allow for more student reflection and specific mentor feedback. The entries in the logbook will be collated by the programme administrative staff and stored on a database to allow regular monitoring of student progress.

- **Additional training and guidance in the use of logbooks needs to be provided to workplace mentors (16, 22).**

Students will be given training on the use of the revised logbook, prior to its introduction in September 2010. As outlined in the report (18) members of staff attend each laboratory at the start of the students' placements, at this time instruction and advice will be given to the mentor on completion of the new logbook entries. Written guidance on use of the new logbook has also been produced for both students and mentors.

- **The development of regular visits by staff to work placements needs to continue in order to improve the consistency of students' overall experience (17).**



New advice has been written for workplace mentors, outlining more clearly their role in student training and the mechanisms for monitoring student progress. A schedule for regular visiting by programme staff of work placements has been drawn up to both help support the students' mentors and to quality ensure the placement process. During the first visit two members of staff will visit each placement, with one of these members of staff attending subsequent visits for consistency.

- **There is a need to put in place clear procedures for dealing with failing students (22).**

Student progress is monitored on a 6 weekly basis, as reserve business at programme management meetings, mechanisms have been put into place to ensure that information from the revised logbook (outlined above) and mentor feedback along with any recent assessments are available for all students. Following the review of a student's case individual and appropriate support is made available to the student. The student's personal tutor is advised of the situation so they can provide any additional support and the students progress is reviewed at subsequent meetings.

### **Recommendations**

- **Further opportunities for team working could be investigated (7).**

As the report outlines in the Overview, the Leeds Dental Institute believes in "*inclusion of all dental team members*" and we are planning to expand the opportunities for team working within the course.

- **Clearer information could be made available to students regarding facilities and support available to them (8).**

The student induction process is being revised so as to improve the quality of information made available to them, and more closely follow the processes of other programmes within the institute.

- **Ways to ensure that mentors have a fuller awareness of students' academic needs could be investigated (8).**

The revised guidance for mentors and the schedule for work placement visits (outlined above) will improve the communication between the students' mentors and the programme teaching staff.

- **The possibility of including more practical work and opportunities to see work fitted on clinic could be investigated (12).**

The completion of the Leeds Dental Institute refurbishment will provide a greater opportunity for the Dental Technician students to spend time on clinic and see more of their own practical work fitted. The students spend a high proportion of their time participating in practical work both within the Institute and on placement. The changes to clinical log books and reporting mechanisms will allow the tutor staff to ensure that the students' practical sessions are appropriate for their stage of study and allow them to make maximum use of their laboratory time.

*Yours Sincerely*

Stuart Boomer

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