

Have you just qualified as a *dental nurse*?



By Julia
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Congratulations

You have successfully completed a training programme and/or examination that is required for registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) in the dental nursing category.

Your tutors have provided the theoretical knowledge and dental colleagues have supported you to achieve clinical experience and develop high standards of patient care.

Now what?

It's time to venture into the unknown and embark upon your professional career ... but how do you structure this? What are the rules? Who can help?

First things first

You have to register with the GDC. This organisation regulates the dental profession by setting standards, quality assuring education and ensuring patients are protected. For those of you who haven't already done so, you need to complete the application form to go on the 'register'. This register allows you to practise as a dental nurse. As well as the application form, you will need:

- Certified copy of photo identity – ie passport or driving licence
- Certified copy of your qualification
- Certified copy of name change (if different from qualification).

An initial payment of £140 is required by the GDC to enter your name on the register. Every July the GDC will request an Annual Retention Fee (ARF), currently £120, which you must pay, otherwise they will remove your name and you will not be able to legally work. Setting up a direct debit is the easiest way to ensure your payment is made. Do not rely on others to pay your fee. If your employer kindly offers to contribute, claim it from them but avoid relying on others to sort it out. You are now a professional!

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Once registered you must have professional indemnity to work.¹ This is stipulated in the *Standards* at 1.8, which state: ‘*You must have appropriate arrangements in place for patients to seek compensation if they suffer harm.*’¹ So, what’s this all about? Indemnity is an insurance that covers you if someone complains about your professional competence. You can obtain this insurance either through the NHS/Crown (if you work in a hospital or community setting), a defence organisation (eg Dental Protection, Dental Defence Union), through joining the British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN), or as a named person on an employer professional indemnity policy. Do not make assumptions that you are covered; you need to see your name on a current, valid policy that is renewed every year. Yes, there is a cost for this too! Research your options and make sure you are protected. Remember that both the ARF and indemnity are a requirement for your job; therefore, you can claim tax allowance (contact your local tax office to discuss how to adjust your tax code).

Now I’m registered with the GDC

Being regulated by the GDC means adhering to nine core, ethical principles of practice. An updated document called the *Standards*¹ was published in September 2013 and clearly informs individuals about their responsibilities to behave professionally at all times. The *Standards* set out what you must do as a registrant and failure to follow the guidance could result in you being removed from the register. The nine principles are:

1. Put patients’ interest first
2. Communicate effectively with patients
3. Obtain valid consent
4. Maintain and protect patients’ information
5. Have a clear and effective complaints procedure
6. Work with colleagues in a way which is in patients’ best interest
7. Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills
8. Raise concerns if patients are at risk
9. Make sure your personal behaviour maintains patients’ confidence in you and the dental profession.

CPD

In order to remain on the GDC register you have to be able to demonstrate that your knowledge and skills are up to date. This is known as continuing professional development (CPD) and is defined in law as an activity which contributes to your professional development and is relevant to your practice or intended practice.² Where do you start?

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YOU SHOULD DO IT.’

Well, it’s a compulsory requirement so you have to embrace this lifelong learning in order to provide patients with the best possible treatments and care. There are a minimum number of hours that you must do within a five-year cycle. A cycle begins on 1 August after you register and currently expects you to undertake a total of 150 hours: 50 verifiable hours and 100 non-verifiable hours (dentists must do 250 hours). What does verifiable mean? Just that there is documentary evidence that you attended a learning event (sign-in sheet and certificate) and that it had concise aims and objectives, clear anticipated learning outcomes and appropriate quality controls. The type of event could be a lecture, course, seminar, and even an online training session. Point to note: you are responsible for checking the criteria of any training session and keeping appropriate documentary proof. Copies of certificates should be provided for the employer, not originals! So, what counts as non-verifiable CPD? This is any activity such as reading journals, peer meetings, clinical audits etc that advances your development and is relevant to your practice or intended practice. The GDC invite you to log your hours every year; however, you *must* provide all your CPD information at the end of the five-year cycle. Unless you are audited by the GDC, you don’t need to send all your certificates, just stated hours. This is easily completed online through the GDC website (www.egdc-uk.org). Beware: if you have not undertaken enough hours, you could be removed from the register!

How do I structure what I need for CPD?

The GDC use the term ‘highly recommended’ throughout their CPD requirements. This implies that, unless you have a justified reason not to do something, you should do it. A personal development plan (PDP) is tagged with ‘highly recommended’ and is used to

assist in planning a learning need and helps to prioritise CPD.

Another ‘highly recommended’ is the topics you need to cover in your CPD cycle:

- Medical emergencies – at least ten hours; recommended two hours a year
- Disinfection and decontamination – at least five hours
- Radiography and radiation protection – at least five hours.

Other specified CPD topics (either verifiable or non-verifiable) are: complaints handling, legal and ethical, and oral cancer: early detection.

Point to note: CPD must still continue by law, even if you have time off for personal reasons such as maternity leave.

That’s all there is to it! Of course there is lots of helpful information on the GDC website (visit www.gdc-uk.org) and don’t forget your local postgraduate deanery; most have DCP tutors who will be able to provide support with the world of professionalism.

1. General Dental Council. *Standards for the dental team*. Effective from 30 September 2013. Available at: www.gdc-uk.org/Dentalprofessionals/Standards/Documents/Standards%20for%20the%20Dental%20Team.pdf (accessed 3 April 2014).
2. General Dental Council. *Continuing professional development for dental professionals*. Effective from 30 September 2013. Available at: <http://gdc-uk.org/Dentalprofessionals/CPD/Documents/GDC%20CPD%20booklet.pdf> (accessed 3 April 2014).

BDJ Team is offering ten FREE hours of CPD for dental care professionals this year! Visit www.bdjteam.co.uk/cpd.

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