

# Dental Radiography

## online study

**Justine Sparkes** was named as an Outstanding Student after passing the BDA Education Radiography exam. Following the presentation of her award at the British Dental Association Honours and Awards Celebration she described what the award meant and why online learning worked for her.

*Q. How long have you been a dental nurse for?*

Since 2010 with the last 3 of those years being at my current practice.

*Q. What inspired you to become a dental nurse?*

I always had an interest in medical related subjects. I wanted more from my job and to have more job satisfaction so I started to consider dental nursing and I love it. It was a great decision.

*Q. What is your favourite part of the job?*

The patient interaction. In my job you really get to know the patient and their history. I work in a practice where they perform a lot of implant procedures so you meet patients who may have no teeth for example and see them transform and have brilliant smiles. You

hear their stories and have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made their lives better.

*Q. What inspired you to complete the course?*

It was something that I suggested as I wanted to progress in my career. I went from working for an NHS dental practice to a practice that deals with a lot of implant procedures. This qualification was a great way to be more involved with patients and improve my confidence.

*Q. How did you feel about completing the course and exam online as opposed to in a classroom?*

This worked so well. I have a 6-year-old so working online gave me a chance to work the course into my life and around time spent with my child. For the exam it was nice to be able to sit it where I chose to, I sat it at work



when the practice was not open for patients so it was quiet. Obviously, I was nervous as taking an exam is still a big thing but I could cut out other factors that may have caused stress. If I had needed to go into London, for example, I would have had to commute for about an hour and I would have spent all that time before worrying about the exam or worrying about the reliability of the trains. I had experienced this while studying for my nursing qualification as I was a good hour and a half away which caused some stress. Having this flexibility in location meant I could get to work in a familiar environment and just get on with it.

*Q. What advice would you give to any potential new students?*

Make sure that you put time aside as of course it is time consuming, you will also need the motivation to do so. It can be so hard after you have worked a full day and you are tired. The course is short but very intense which works for some people such as myself but other students definitely need to be aware of this so they give themselves enough time to complete it.

## FEATURE

*Q. How has completing the course helped you in your job since passing?*

I feel like a much more helpful and valued member of staff thanks to my radiography qualification. That is not to say that I didn't before because I did but this qualification makes it even more true. Being able to take x-rays on my own, for example, while the dentist is seeing other patients makes me feel like I am really helping. I have a sense of achievement being able to do this and it has allowed me to do what I love which is to interact with patients more.



*Q. Do you think you will do anymore courses to progress in your career?*

Oh definitely, after doing this course it has made me realise that I can do this, I am capable so I have started looking into doing other courses. I am interested in studying the practice of how to take impressions as this is something we do at our practice however we are starting to move over to a more digital method of taking impressions as opposed to using materials so it may be a case of waiting for any courses offered to catch up with this technology change.

*Q. Do you think that completing this course has made you more confident?*

Definitely. It is very nice to have a piece of paper to highlight you can do something. You know after doing the course that you are qualified and able to do this and this makes you more confident when putting the learnt skills into practice.

*Q. How did it feel the first time you took a radiograph since passing the course?*

It felt fine actually, obviously with learning I had already taken quite a lot of radiographs under supervision. I was lucky enough to x-ray a patient who was familiar to me as she had come to the practice before. I was able to have a chat with her and she was asking me about my qualification as she knew I was studying before but did not yet know that I had passed. She was happy for me and it was just a really nice experience.

*Q. What are you most looking forward to now that you are qualified?*

Before I was qualified I would only experience parts of the process of seeing patients and treating them. Now I get to follow treatment from start to finish. I am there when they

explain to my daughter that I was working. I want to set her an example and also for her to understand that I have put in effort to work at something and be proud of me.

*Q. How did it feel to be presented with the award?*

I was really proud. I did not have a graduation or ceremony for my dental nursing qualification so it was lovely to be recognised for all the hours of revision and hard work I put in.



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have those initial x-rays and then when they are x-rayed again as their treatment continues. I get to watch them transform.

*Q. What does obtaining this qualification mean to you personally?*

It shows me that my brain still works! It has been a while since I had really studied intensively or taken a big exam. The last time was when I was studying to become a dental nurse so this has given me a big confidence boost. Also, I want to be a good role model for my daughter. While I was studying and revising there were times when I had to

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To find out more about BDA courses, go to the CPD Hub <https://cpd.bda.org> The next radiography course is in January.

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