

EDITORIAL

CLOSING A CHAPTER



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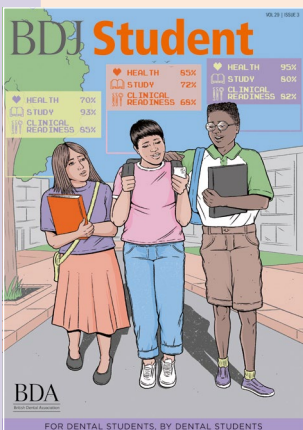


As we begin to close the chapter on 2022, it's often worth reflecting about what's gone before, and what's to come.

In 2020 and 2021, our thoughts were understandably about the chaos COVID-19 was causing. Lectures and clinics were being disrupted, years were being re-sat, and there was an overriding feeling of not being in control of what was going on. I know from experience simple things like Christmas arrangements were heavily impacted, and so it is worth taking a moment to look back on that particular hurricane. Yes, there is still debris in our way to ensuring smooth sailing for current dental students – access is a buzzword in all areas of the profession – and COVID-19's impact will continue to ripple for some time yet, but the worst of it is behind us. For those preparing to graduate next year to those wrapping up their first term as dental students, the future is brighter than it has been since March 2020.



What the turn of the year does not allow for is the closing of a chapter on the cost of living crisis, inflation and the stress brought about by these external factors, let alone the stress of successfully training to be a dentist. We have heard throughout the year from the BDA Benevolent Fund about student stress, and it is crucial to know and/or remember you can access support. A survey of more than 4,500 UK university students, carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS), found that 96% are making cutbacks, with over half spending less on food, another half heating their homes less regularly, and one in ten cutting back on sanitary products.



Three quarters also report socialising less to save money. Earlier in 2022, a report by the BDA Benevolent Fund revealed high proportions of students experienced wellbeing challenges, most notably stress or burnout (90%) and performance anxiety (77%). Around half of students were also impacted to some degree by severe wellbeing issues such as depression (55%) and bereavement (50%).



These numbers are worryingly high, but rest assured, the BDA is working for you on this. The BDA Student Committee manifesto calls on government to provide a package of financial support that covers both the living costs of dental students and their tuition fees, as well as calling for access to the NHS bursary for all dental students. To help the BDA fight for more support for student wellbeing and finances, the BDA is currently conducting primary research to quantify levels of student debt and its impact on educational outcomes and wellbeing. We will of course report back as soon as findings are released.

2022 also draws to a close the first year *BDJ Student* has been operating as an online-only publication. By the end of the year we'll have published 100 articles for our student members, ranging from book reviews designed to aid your further reading and development, to careers advice and clinical tips and insights. You can expect 2023 will be the same, with some exciting developments in the pipeline.

There's never been a better – or more important – time to be a BDA student member. And with that, from everyone at *BDJ Student*, I wish you all the very best and prosperity for the New Year and beyond.

David Westgarth ■

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9 IN 10 STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTED BY COST OF LIVING

A quarter of students who experience mental health issues are having a hard time on their cost of living, according to a new research. A survey of more than 4,500 UK university students, carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS), found that 96% are making cutbacks, with over half spending less on food, another half heating their homes less regularly, and one in ten cutting back on sanitary products. These figures are worrying, as they show that the cost of living crisis is having a significant impact on the mental health of students.

The survey found that 90% of students reported stress or burnout, 77% reported performance anxiety, 55% reported depression, and 50% reported bereavement. The research also found that 45% of students were struggling to pay their bills, and 35% were struggling to pay their rent.

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NUS has also called for a cap on spending on student loans, a freeze on tuition fees, and a freeze on university fees. The union also wants to see a freeze on university fees, a freeze on university fees, and a freeze on university fees.

Chris Cook, NUS Vice President Higher Education, said: "The Government must do more to support students who are struggling to pay their bills and rent. We need to see a cap on spending on student loans, a freeze on tuition fees, and a freeze on university fees. We need to see a cap on spending on student loans, a freeze on tuition fees, and a freeze on university fees."

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