Training to be an educator at UHI

By **Linda Gunn**, Programme Director of the School of Oral Health Science, University of the Highlands and Islands.

Introduction

Based in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) comprises 13 independent colleges and research institutions, locally based and rooted in communities, but with national and international reach. UHI's curriculum portfolio is designed to meet current and future local and regional needs and to attract students to the Highlands and Islands to study.

This article will detail some of the clinical teaching modules available for dental tutors at UHI, and the MSc Oral Health Science.

Postgraduate Certificate in Clinical Pedagogy (UHI M Ed)

Educators in dental schools and schools of oral health science tend to come from the professionals qualified in that area, dentistry and dental therapy respectively, and this is likely also true for all medical training establishments. These clinicians tend to be considered the 'experts' in their fields. However, they do not often arrive in post as educators. Recently there has been a move to recommend that all those teaching in clinical environments have or undertake clinical teacher training; 'a drive to

improve the quality of medical training has led to increasing opportunities in medical education' (<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk>) and the benefits of such qualifications have been identified by accrediting bodies such as the Higher Education Academy (<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk>) and the Academy of Medical Educators (<https://www.medicaleducators.org>). This is true for dental therapy programmes, as it is for dental programmes.

The BSc Oral Health Science is delivered by the University of Highlands and Islands. The course has been running since 2008.

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The tutors in the university's School of Oral Health Science are all now highly qualified educators having been awarded qualifications in education including PG Cert Ed, M Ed, MSc etc.

When the university's School of Oral Health Science first started, the tutors were experienced clinicians, therapists, hygienists and dentists, but few had teaching experience. It is clear that, while clinicians have the clinical skills, skills in education need to be developed to ensure the quality of course delivery meets expected standards. To this end, tutors were provided with funded places on the University of the Highlands and Islands M Ed Tertiary and Higher Education course so that they could become qualified to a minimum of PG Cert level.

One of the issues arising from generic education qualifications, such as the M Ed, is the lack of discussion about clinical teaching

and the specific requirements of tutors to teach in this area. As new tutors arrived to work in the school, an induction focused on clinical pedagogy was introduced.

The two clinical teaching modules which were developed for this induction were developed and approved to be included in the University's M Ed course and a student (new tutor) undertaking these modules, plus one other from the M Ed course, now qualify with PG Cert in Clinical Pedagogy. Having completed this, the students also have the option to continue their educational learning up to Masters level.

Throughout their education, the students are mentored by the programme director of the school.

undertake these roles on completion. This structured formal approach to longitudinal induction to post works well. On successful completion of the longitudinal induction and PG Cert, tutors are in a position to undertake full module leader responsibilities as well as tutoring and assessing. These roles include the additional responsibility of module and curriculum development and fulfil their full university requirements in support of students. The university has been supportive in providing a recognised fully-funded qualification which they could undertake during their first year in post. This promotes confidence and focused personal development. The University of the Highlands and Islands is at the forefront of enabling

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The two clinical modules are 'Teaching in the Clinical Environment' and 'Assessment in the Clinical Environment'. Each module is worth 20 credits at postgraduate level and, with a third core module, makes up the 60 credits required for the PG Cert.

New tutors who join the school embark on the longitudinal induction to teaching on the BSc Oral Health Science as soon as they take up employment. In addition, for support, they are allocated a 'tutor mentor' who looks after them through their first year.

Topics included in the first module are learning styles, clinical aims and learning outcomes, clinical skills, peer review, small, large and online teaching, and mentorship. During the module, the students put into practice the skills they are learning and participate in peer review of their own teaching. In the second module, topics include problem based learning, self-analysis and reflection, peer review, assessment, preparing assessment, delivery of assessment, mentorship and feedback.

The assessment for each module is a case report based on their own teaching/assessment during the semester.

Tutors who have undertaken the modules state that they better understand teaching and the assessment process and feel confident to

dental clinicians to develop teaching skills and to enhance their CVs, and it has retained its tutor staff well over the years the course has been running. This approach of supporting NHS staff in their personal development shows a commitment to education at post graduate level as well as providing high quality education for their undergraduate courses. Occasionally, when tutors do leave to take up posts in other schools of oral health science, the tutors take their expertise with them to the benefit of other courses and students.

These modules are all delivered remotely online through the virtual learning environment and with access to the module leader. This allows students to access the modules wherever they are geographically and the asynchronous aspect of teaching allows students to undertake the learning at a time most suitable to them given their work and home life commitments. The modules have been designed to be generic for medical and dental education, nursing, physiotherapy and optometry - anything with a clinical and clinical skills component. It may be that there is opportunity for other educators in the NHS to take these modules which, until now, have really been delivered to in-house dental tutors. Students on the modules would have

to be in teaching posts to benefit from the clinical experience discussions and practical exercises.

UHI MSc Oral Health Science

It is important that all dental professionals have access to continuing professional development and to participate in personal development as well as remaining current in their approach to clinical treatment. It is also a requirement for registration with the General Dental Council.

In the UK there are a number of postgraduate courses which can be undertaken by dental professionals, but none are focused solely on the remit of the dental therapist/dental hygienist.

The newly developed MSc Oral Health Science (provided by UHI) is designed to reflect the clinical activity undertaken by dental therapists and dental hygienists. Each are able to undertake bespoke modules aligning with their clinical practice.

Dental hygienists focus on periodontal treatment and prevention and dental therapists have, in addition to this, direct restorative dentistry for patients of all ages.

This Masters programme is completely online and has four clinically-based modules: Periodontology in Practice; Paediatric dentistry: a team approach; Developing Preventive Practice; and Direct Restorations in Practice. The additional optional modules are made up from a selection of relevant modules from the university's postgraduate menu of modules. Each is relevant to the four domains of education required by the GDC: for example, Communication, Leadership, Management in the Healthcare Setting and Quality Improvement. The students will also undertake a Masters Dissertation and for this they would be required to incorporate a Research Methods module. This course is very flexible, allowing students to exit at a number of levels, Continuing Professional Development (CPD level for each module), PG Cert, PG Dip and MSc.

It appears to be the nature of dental professionals to be inquisitive, questioning treatment options with critical analysis of evidence-informed approaches, discussing new materials and reflecting on the successes they have with patients. Many join their own and often other professional associations to ensure they remain up to date. During research for this course the outcome of the market demand analysis demonstrated a need and an appetite for a course such as this in the therapy and hygiene group.

The modules enable the student to analyse in depth the clinical work they undertake on a

daily basis and review improvement strategies. The aim of the course is not to learn new clinical skills but to investigate further the treatment they provide and critically reflect upon this.

On completion of this programme

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participants will be able to demonstrate a Masters level of education and be in a position to apply for posts which require evidence of this level of academic study as applied to their clinical practice in the healthcare setting and particularly in the NHS.

This course is aimed at dental therapists and dental hygienists and dentists interested in the areas which are the focus of these modules. Requirements for the course are that the student either be in practice at present or has been so within the last three years and that they are a registrant with the GDC. This is because much of the assessment is reflective and based on their clinical experience and professional standing which is paramount to this. As the course is totally online and part-time, students can continue with their clinical work. This benefits their work-life balance and enables earning while studying.

Students are allocated a personal academic tutor and, in addition, the module tutor meets the students frequently during the course online and in discussion boards throughout the semester. No changes to the course have been required during the pandemic but it may be this has given students opportunity to study during quiet clinic times.

Reasons for coming to the University of the Highlands and Islands include a reputation for quality courses and two decades of experience delivering education using technology. In addition to the undergraduate course, well received refresher continuing professional development courses have been available to refresh participants' clinical skills, also provided by the University's School of Oral Health Science.

Application is through the university's

admissions process and applications should be received before the start of the semester. Applications are reviewed for appropriate qualification and GDC registration prior to acceptance. There are 20 places on each module, but this is flexible depending on demand.

Useful links

Opportunities for working in

medical education: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/career-opportunities-doctors/alternative-roles-doctors/medical-education>

MSc Oral Health Science: <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/courses/msc-oral-health-science/>

There is no deadline date for applications, this is open all year.

PG Cert in Clinical Pedagogy/ MSc Clinical Pedagogy: <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/courses/med-tertiary-and-higher-education/>

Applications are accepted for either September or January starts. There is no deadline, as such. If an application comes in too late for the next start, it is automatically rolled over for the following start. All applications are made online and are for the M.Ed. Tertiary & Higher Education, the PgCert Clinical Pedagogy being an exit point on that programme.

Also in this issue of BDJ Team, Rachel Jackson recounts her experience of becoming a clinical teacher and the benefits her teaching experience have had on her clinical practice and career development.

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