

‘One day I hope to start *my own lab*’



Orthodontic dental technician Chetan Geisel tells **Kate Maynard** about his journey from student to award-winner.

It is a really enjoyable job as it requires creativity as well as skill. It can be very rewarding to see the results of often many months of treatment,’ says Chetan Geisel of being a ‘floating dental technician’ (one that moves between labs at Bristol Dental Hospital).

This year ambitious Chetan’s fine handiwork was recognised by the British Orthodontic Society (BOS) when they presented him with the Student Technician Award 2009. David Bearn, one of the judges, commented that ‘Chetan’s entries were outstanding pieces of work showing that the skill of the orthodontic technician is alive and well.’

Chetan, 24, moved with his parents and brother to Cardiff from Harare in Zimbabwe in 2001. As a sixth former he decided that he wanted to work in the dental industry and, after doing some research into dental-related courses on the UCAS website, was drawn to the strong practical element of dental technology. After applying, with two offers on the table, he chose to study for a BSc in Dental Technology at the nearby University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC).

‘The practical, hands-on side of the course was much more fun than the reading and studying side!’ says Chetan of his three-year full-time course. He found short stints at Heath Hospital

in Cardiff very enjoyable, particularly as ‘the patient environment was very different to the course modules.’

Chetan heard about the BOS competition while studying at UWIC: ‘one of the lecturers is a member of the Orthodontic Technicians Association (OTA). I entered the competition two years in a row and this year I was lucky enough to actually win.’

The BOS Student Technician Award is open to any UK student dental technician on a recognised dental technology course and to technicians who have been qualified for less than two years at the time of the competition closing date.

Entrants to the competition were required to make two removable appliances and submit a brief explanatory account on the design and construction for one of the appliances. Chetan was supplied with models to use; one set had a prescription and one set did not. Chetan’s winning models are pictured here (below).

‘I didn’t expect to win,’ says Chetan, ‘so I was pleased that my time and effort were rewarded!’ He won a cheque for £700 which was awarded to him at the Orthodontic Technicians Association’s annual conference in Milton Keynes.

Chetan graduated with a 2.1 in Dental Technology in 2007 and is now studying for an MSc. After graduation from his undergraduate degree he found employment at Bristol Dental Hospital and relocated to the city with his fiancée Rebecca.

‘Having a full-time job felt strange to begin with after being a student for so long,’ says Chetan, ‘but I was keen to apply what I had learnt in university.’ He is enjoying working in a hospital and being able to gain experience in all disciplines of dental technology, but admits that ‘I am still learning and there are often cases that require an extra bit of guidance and support.’

‘Hopefully I can stay in a learning environment like the hospital for as long possible. With so many technologies being introduced to the industry all the time, it is important to keep abreast of these developments. I hope to build my experience as

much as possible, and one day be in a position to start my own lab.’

For more information on studying Dental Technology at UWIC, visit www.uwic.ac.uk/courses/health/dental_technology.asp

An updated DCP course directory will appear in Vital in 2010.

Studying dental technology

According to the course curriculum, dental technology undergraduates at UWIC learn to fabricate dental restorations, prostheses and appliances (such as unique, individually made crowns and bridges or orthodontic appliances) to a high standard of precision. The course also ‘seeks to enlarge understanding of new and developing areas of dental technology and enhance relationships within the dental team’. Students work together with trainee dentists and consultants in the second and third years of the course and undertake periods of work placements. Through these placements they can gain the necessary experience in producing appliances, restorations and prostheses for patients.

Graduates from a degree in dental technology can be employed by the NHS, commercial laboratories, private practices and dental schools. Within the commercial sector and with some years of experience, it is possible to become a commercial laboratory owner or manager.

Cardiff and Bristol Dental Hospitals offer employment schemes to successful graduates for a period of one or two years, providing excellent opportunities to specialise.

