

Subject Review Report

April 1999 Q218/99

Eastman Dental Institute
(affiliated to University College London)

Dentistry

Reviewing the Quality of Education

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997. It has responsibility for assessing the quality of higher education (HE) in England and Northern Ireland from 1 October 1997 under the terms of a contract with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The purposes of subject review are: to ensure that the public funding provided is supporting education of an acceptable quality, to provide public information on that education through the publication of reports such as this one, and to provide information and insights to encourage improvements in education.

The main features of the subject review method are:

Review against Aims and Objectives

The HE sector in England and Northern Ireland is diverse. The HEFCE funds education in over 140 institutions of HE and 75 further education (FE) colleges. These institutions vary greatly in size, subject provision, history and statement of purpose. Each has autonomy to determine its institutional mission, and its specific aims and objectives at subject level.

Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives set by each provider. It measures the extent to which each subject provider is successful in achieving its aims and objectives.

Readers should be cautious in making comparisons of subject providers solely on the basis of subject review outcomes. Comparisons between providers with substantively different aims and objectives would have little validity.

Review of the Student Learning Experience and Student Achievement

Subject review examines the wide range of influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of students. It covers the full breadth of teaching and learning activities, including: direct observation of classroom/seminar/workshop/ laboratory situations, the methods of reviewing students' work, students' work and achievements, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of resources (library, information technology, equipment), and student support and guidance. This range of activities is captured within a core set of six aspects of provision, each of which is graded on a four-point scale (1 to 4), in ascending order of merit.

The aspects of provision are:

- Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Student Progression and Achievement
- Student Support and Guidance
- Learning Resources
- Quality Management and Enhancement.

Peer Review

Reviewers are academic and professional peers in the subject. Most are members of the academic staff of UK HE institutions. Others are drawn from industry, commerce, private practice and the professions.

Combination of Internal and External Processes

The review method has two main processes:

- Preparation by the subject provider of a self-assessment in the subject, based on the provider's own aims and objectives, and set out in the structure provided by the core set of aspects of provision.
- A three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers. The review team grades each of the aspects of provision to make a graded profile of the provision, and derives from that profile an overall judgement. Provided that each aspect is graded 2 or better, the quality of the education is approved.

Published Reports

In addition to individual review reports, the QAA will publish subject overview reports at the conclusion of reviews in a subject. The subject overview reports are distributed widely to schools and FE colleges, public libraries and careers services. Both the review reports and the subject overview reports are available in hard copy and are also on the world-wide web (see back cover for details).

Introduction

1. This Report presents the findings of a review in April 1999 of the quality of education in dentistry provided by the Eastman Dental Institute (affiliated to University College London). The subject review programme in dentistry is being undertaken after consultation with the General Dental Council.

2. The Eastman Dental Clinic was opened in 1931 as an integral part of the Royal Free Hospital. It became a separate postgraduate dental teaching hospital in 1947 and changed its name to the Eastman Dental Institute in 1992. As part of the University of London, the Institute has offered masters degree programmes with a large clinical component since 1969. It is based on Grays Inn Road close to other constituent members of the University, and, subject to Act of Parliament, is set to merge with University College London (UCL) in August 1999.

3. The only taught courses offered by the Institute are at masters level. The long-established MSc programmes have recently been supplemented by Masters of Clinical Dentistry (MClinDent) courses. The Institute has 126 postgraduate students on masters programmes, taught by 40 full-time equivalent academic staff.

4. The following provision forms the basis of the review:

MClinDent

- Endodontics
- Fixed and Removable Prosthodontics
- Paediatric Dentistry
- Periodontology

MSc

- Conservative Dentistry
- Dental Public Health
- Endodontics
- Implant Dentistry
- Oral Medicine
- Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- Orthodontics
- Paediatric Dentistry
- Periodontology
- Prosthetic Dentistry
- Special Needs.

5. The statistical data in this Introduction are provided by the institution itself. The aims and the objectives are presented overleaf. These also are provided by the institution.

The Aims and Objectives for Dentistry

Aims

The Eastman Dental Institute (EDI) aims to provide career and professional development for individuals, and raise standards within the dental profession, through education for postgraduate students (postgraduates) which:

- is provided in a supportive environment where emphasis is also placed on clinical and research excellence and lifelong learning;
- extends postgraduates' knowledge, understanding and practical skills towards specialist level, within the wider context of oral and general health and social environment;
- involves postgraduates who will be best able to gain from its programmes to the ultimate benefit of their communities locally, nationally and internationally, whilst maintaining a balance between home and overseas postgraduates;
- offers quality assured, intellectually challenging, and clinically relevant postgraduate education for personal improvement, patient care and career advancement.

For aims of individual programmes, the best guides are Programme Handbooks.

Objectives

Postgraduates at the Eastman Dental Institute study for a wide range of degrees and as a result certain objectives are more central to some programmes than others.

On graduation, postgraduate students will be able to demonstrate, at a level relevant to their speciality, the following academic clinical, practical and personal outcomes:

- knowledge of evidence sources relevant to their chosen speciality;
- the ability to conduct literature searches and the critical cognitive skills to review published evidence;
- the application of scientific method to an individual research project;
- an enhanced knowledge of the clinical aspects of their chosen speciality, including the ability to plan patient care with reference to the evidence base and available resource;
- enhanced practical skills especially within their speciality;

- improved self-appraisal skills and an appreciation of the extent of their clinical abilities and limitations;
- the development of independent and critical thinking together with enhanced written and verbal communication skills;
- the development of appropriate complementary transferable skills, including modern communication techniques, information technology (IT), literature reviews, research, written work and oral presentations;
- an awareness of the developing multicultural society, together with an understanding of the place of oral health care in the wider medical, psychological and social context.

For objectives of individual programmes, the best guides are Programme Handbooks.

Summary of the Review

6. The graded profile in paragraph 7 indicates the extent to which the student learning experience and achievement demonstrate that the aims and objectives set by the subject provider are being met. The tests and the criteria applied by the reviewers are these:

Aspects of provision

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Student Progression and Achievement
4. Student Support and Guidance
5. Learning Resources
6. Quality Management and Enhancement.

Tests to be applied

To what extent do the student learning experience and student achievement, within this aspect of provision, contribute to meeting the objectives set by the subject provider?

Do the objectives set, and the level of attainment of those objectives, allow the aims set by the subject provider to be met?

Scale points

1

The aims and/or objectives set by the subject provider are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified.

2

This aspect makes an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives, but significant improvement could be made.

The aims set by the subject provider are broadly met.

3

This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement.

The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

4

This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives.

The aims set by the subject provider are met.

7. The grades awarded as a result of the review are:

Aspects of provision	Grade
Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation	4
Teaching, Learning and Assessment	3
Student Progression and Achievement	4
Student Support and Guidance	4
Learning Resources	4
Quality Management and Enhancement	4

8. The quality of education in dentistry at Eastman Dental Institute (affiliated to University College London) is **approved**.

The Quality of Education

Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation

9. The postgraduate programmes offered at the EDI are separate and distinct courses that have common educational elements. The MSc programmes have the longer pedigree and the majority are run over one year. The introduction of the two-year MClintDent programmes is a response to the advent of specialist lists in the UK and demand from overseas applicants for longer courses.

10. Curricula are well-designed to meet the aims and objectives of the EDI. There is a wide range of provision in an ordered framework allowing student choice. The individual curricula are coherent and the progression logical and well designed. The courses provide career and professional development for individuals and aim to raise levels within the dental profession.

11. The curricula match the student profile. The provision of one and two year full-time programmes and the opportunity to study part-time provide for the needs of postgraduates from a range of backgrounds. Curricula are coherent and build upon the previous qualifications and experience of students. The 15 specialist programmes have a common format including an introductory course followed by three parallel components; practical training, theoretical learning and a research project. The introductory course orientates students towards effective postgraduate learning. This is followed by a common core course undertaken by all postgraduates. These course elements are examples of good practice, although committee minutes indicated that some students had raised doubts about the relevance of the latter course to their particular programme.

12. The significant practical laboratory element in many of the programmes provides supportive skills that add value to the cognitive and clinical elements of the courses. The integral research projects increase the students' understanding of the scientific process involved in their chosen specialism.

13. The curriculum has an impressive currency and demonstrates examples of teaching innovation, such as the use of case-based, student-centred learning. It encourages the development of specific knowledge and skills related to the specialism studied. Despite this specialisation, there is a valuable degree of multidisciplinary teaching and learning built into the curriculum. There was evidence from discussions with current and previous students that the degrees inculcate

positive attitudes towards dentistry and lifelong learning. The curriculum is well matched to the expertise of staff and is informed by their research and scholarship.

14. Graduates complete their courses having obtained an impressive range of transferable skills, including those relating to IT, communication, presentation and critical analysis. The intensive nature of the programmes helps to develop students' abilities in self-management.

15. There is evidence of some crowding in the curriculum especially in the one-year courses. Intense use of resources and the high work ethic of the graduates on the courses help to overcome these pressures. Consideration could be given to reducing the demands of one-year courses, now that the MClintDent programmes have been introduced.

16. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation:
Grade 4.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

17. There is an appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategy concerned with the provision of modern facilities, development of innovative methods of teaching and production of learning materials. As a result, students experience a wide range of teaching methods including lectures, seminars, supervised clinical teaching and practical work, case presentations and directed self-learning appropriate to this level of education. Learning is further enriched through the use of computer-aided learning and the Institute Intranet together with a range of information services. Programmes are assessed by a range of approaches including examinations, essays, viva voce (oral examinations), laboratory exercises, case presentation, performance on clinics and research dissertation. The balance between the different assessment techniques varies between programmes.

18. The reviewers observed 16 sessions including lectures, seminars and clinical activities. Almost all the sessions had clear aims and objectives, were well planned and were presented by enthusiastic, well-informed staff. Overall they were of a very high quality with strengths far outweighing weaknesses. The content was mostly of a suitable postgraduate level and was delivered at an appropriate pace. The students were generally very willing contributors and were encouraged to participate. Several sessions were enriched with reference to relevant research and clinical examples. A few sessions contained weaknesses, including content

at a level more suited to undergraduate programmes and a pace of delivery which was too fast for some students to assimilate material.

19. The very highly motivated postgraduates are admirably supported in the demanding programmes, by guidance in study skills and research methods. Students were complimentary about the quality of teaching and learning.

20. A variety of appropriate methods of assessment, both formative and summative, are used throughout the programmes. Every three months, the postgraduates undergo an appraisal based on the formative assessments. These help to promote learning and enable guidance to be given in relation to study skills and research projects. Students appreciate this effective appraisal system.

21. Postgraduates use self-assessment in some laboratories and clinical areas. Both students and their supervising member of staff are encouraged to each award a grade; this is recorded using a logbook system. This is not mandatory and the reviewers recommend that consideration be given to extending its use. There is evidence that application of self-assessment varies among members of staff. Postgraduates receive effective feedback, usually within two weeks. They reported that some of the written feedback was variable but the oral feedback was very beneficial.

22. In general, assessment tasks reflect aims and objectives and provide good opportunities for the best students to demonstrate their abilities. Dissertations, case presentations and oral examinations ensure that students can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in depth.

23. There is a lack of consistency in assessment practices between programmes. In particular, University of London procedures for applying grading mechanisms have resulted in no students achieving Distinction level in recent cohorts of the MSc programmes in Orthodontics and Prosthetic Dentistry. Whilst staff are aware of this problem and have amended some examination regulations in response, the situation is not yet wholly satisfactory. This lack of consistency was also evident in differences in practices regarding the recording of marks on examination papers and in the logbooks. The need for such consistency is reinforced by the welcome increase in multidisciplinary teaching within the Institute.

24. This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Grade 3.

Student Progression and Achievement

25. There has been buoyant demand for the programmes, with around four 'serious' applicants, as defined by the Institute, for each place. As a result, the programmes have been able to recruit well-qualified students, about one-third of whom have another qualification in addition to their first dental degree. The freedom to select within this large pool of applicants supports the provider's aim to recruit those who will be best able to benefit from the programmes.

26. There is a strong policy to maintain the balanced representation of postgraduates from within and outside the European Union. Current postgraduates represent an equitable mixture on the basis of age, gender, ethnic and national origin and there are opportunities for part and full-time study on some courses. In general, applicants are accepted only if they have at least one year of post-qualification experience, although in exceptional circumstances applicants have been accepted on to courses shortly after qualification. Admission policies support the objective of developing an awareness of the developing multicultural society and present extremely wide access to the courses.

27. Progression and completion rates are impressive. Over 95 per cent of postgraduates have completed their course of study on time and attained their masters degree, with consistently high success rates across all programmes. Distinctions have been awarded to between 16 per cent and 20 per cent of those taking final examinations, although there is a disappointingly uneven distribution across the programmes. External examiners have been very supportive of the high level of achievement of postgraduates at the Institute. Prizes may be awarded internally for high levels of achievement in six programmes. The reviewers commend this good practice and suggest the School investigate how it may be extended to other areas.

28. The reviewers scrutinised a wide range of student work, including dissertations, essays, practical work, poster presentations and examination scripts. Written work was generally of a high level, indicating good understanding and appropriate preparation. In addition to a high level of technical knowledge and understanding, the work demonstrated a range of

transferable skills including IT, presentation and communication skills. Practical work showed high levels of technical competence, whilst subsequent questioning revealed an impressive level of understanding of the underlying principles.

29. Graduates have progressed to a wide variety of employment both in the UK and overseas, in line with stated aims. Out of 241 recent postgraduates, 11 have proceeded to research degrees at the Institute. In discussion, employers expressed full satisfaction with the calibre of the graduates.

30. The provision has not been subject to visitation by external validating authorities, but is anticipating inspection by the General Dental Council and a range of External Course assessors.

31. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Progression and Achievement:
Grade 4.

Student Support and Guidance

32. There is a well-articulated strategy for support and guidance of postgraduates that conforms well to the multicultural and multi-ethnic profile of the intake. Written guidance is particularly thorough. Programme handbooks are produced to a uniformly high level and contain details of departmental staff, facilities, study skills guidance, local and university-based pastoral care systems and regulations. There are, in addition, detailed programme timetables and reading lists. An advisory document sent to all postgraduates on acceptance for long courses is highly instructive. The Postgraduate Charter clearly enunciates both rights and responsibilities of postgraduates from application to attainment of degree and forms a sound basis from which both staff and students may work. Postgraduates reported a very high level of satisfaction with documentation provided. The Institute should, however, continue to guard against the potential for misconception as to the extent that MClintDent programmes fit an individual for specialist registration.

33. The arrangements for admission are clearly laid out in the extremely helpful and informative handbooks for the courses. There are well-developed induction programmes including social, academic and study skills elements; the students found these procedures to be very comprehensive, addressing all their needs.

34. Processes for academic support and guidance are well matched to the programmes and the student profile. Such support is well integrated into the teaching,

learning and assessment strategy, notably though the appraisal process. Each student has nominated primary and secondary supervisors, drawn from departmental staff, whilst the academic registrar, postgraduate tutor and programme directors are also directly available to postgraduates. The quarterly appraisal meetings for each postgraduate ensure close monitoring of, and timely feedback on progress. Monthly progress reports enable the identification of the particular needs of individual students. These can then be addressed, including any identified needs for English language support. The high progression rates of postgraduates are evidence of effective academic support.

35. Pastoral and welfare support is organised on several levels and appears well understood by staff and postgraduates alike. The recent introduction of personal tutors is a helpful development, but students reported that they can approach any member of staff for help and guidance. This is indicative of the excellent staff-student relations. There is evidence of a commendably high level of peer support among the postgraduates. In addition, separate tutors for male and female postgraduates, the Dean and the academic registrar are available for particular problems. Documentation makes clear how access can be made to central university-based welfare services. A supplementary document sent to overseas postgraduates is an excellent practical introduction to life in Britain in all its aspects.

36. There is a strong focus on issues of culture and ethnicity as evidenced by the local development of a user-friendly database on cultural issues, to which postgraduates are invited to contribute, and the provision of rooms for prayer.

37. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Support and Guidance:
Grade 4.

Learning Resources

38. The Institute has invested heavily in the provision of modern facilities and associated support, and intends to continue this strategy. This has been matched by clinical developments. There are sufficient learning resources to support the curriculum and learning. The staff are highly qualified and staff-student ratios are good.

39. The Information Centre, which incorporates library and IT facilities, is an excellent resource. Within the Centre there are 44 workspaces with 12 networked computers. Students reported that the provision of networking points for them to use their own laptop

computers in the Information Centre was much appreciated. There is also an IT cluster with 14 networked computers in the Centre. Opening hours are from 0800 hours to 2000 hours, whilst an adjacent room is equipped for out of hours use and has 24-hour access to four work stations and networked computers. A paging facility allows efficient use of these resources during breaks in the student programme.

40. Book and journal stock is adequate to meet the current needs of the postgraduates and there is good librarian and support staff cover. The postgraduates receive appropriate induction to the Information Centre and IT and this is reinforced by ongoing support and guidance, together with assistance from helpful library staff.

41. Students reported that access to computers is satisfactory. They are encouraged to use email and Intranet. Technical back up is available in the Eastman Media Centre that has six full-time staff. These staff are also available to assist postgraduates in the production of presentational material.

42. Clinical equipment is of varying age but is satisfactory. The Hospital has a rolling programme of equipment replacement. There are sufficient numbers of dental chairs for current needs; they are used heavily. Staff acknowledged that an increase in student numbers could not be accommodated without more chairs being made available.

43. The practical, technical and research laboratories are appropriately equipped. There is good provision of seminar rooms and lecture theatres which are well equipped and suitable for classes of variable sizes. A wide range of research facilities and specialist staff are also accessible by students who are required to undertake a research project as part of their courses.

44. There is sufficient relevant technical and administrative support, which is reinforced by a close relationship between postgraduates, technical and teaching staff.

45. The International Centre for Excellence in Dentistry, a few minutes walk from the Institute, is an impressive additional resource and facilities at the Middlesex University campus are proving valuable to postgraduates.

46. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Learning Resources:
Grade 4.

Quality Management and Enhancement

47. There is a wide range of effective mechanisms for reviewing, making and evaluating changes. The institutional committee structure is robust and recently improved with the addition of the staff-postgraduate liaison committee. The Programme Committees play a key role in the monitoring of the provision. They report to the Education Advisory Committee, which has student representation and has inputs from external assessors and examiners. It can, therefore, ensure that issues arising from such sources are effectively dealt with by the Programme Committees.

48. There is a process of Annual Programme Reviews and the Institute underwent an Internal Quality Audit in 1998. The Institute is to be commended for its process of annual assessment, in which external assessors visit the Institute, interview students and view facilities. They then produce an external assessment report.

49. External examiners' reports have generally been highly supportive of the quality of assessment processes. There are mechanisms for ensuring that any concerns they may raise receive an appropriate response.

50. The students' views are valued and there is a staff-postgraduate liaison committee which has a student representative from each programme. There is also postgraduate representation on the Education Advisory Committee, Programme Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Board. Their views can be expressed to the Dean through regular lunch meetings or direct through the Institute's Intranet service. The postgraduates are confident that their views are listened to and taken seriously. They cited several examples of changes which had resulted from their suggestions, for example changes to Saturday library opening hours.

51. There is biennial staff appraisal which includes identification of staff development needs. A formal peer review process for the observation of teaching skills has recently been formally introduced. There is evidence of a significant take up of staff development events, with particular reference to those courses which concern small group teaching.

52. The opportunities for enhancement are identified and acted upon through the Institute's accessible committee structure. The subject aims and objectives are reviewed and updated constantly by the Programme Committee. The introduction of peer review and the external assessor arrangements are both indications of attempts to disseminate good practice. More could be done to encourage this between programmes.

53. There is a formal induction arrangement for new staff which includes, for those without teaching experience, the need to attend relevant courses.

54. The self-assessment document gave a fair rationale for curricular structure and teaching, learning and assessment strategies. It also made regular links between the aspect sections and aims and objectives. It provided a fair basis for the visit.

55. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Quality Management and Enhancement:
Grade 4.

Conclusions

56. The quality of education in dentistry at the Eastman Dental Institute (affiliated to University College London) is approved. All aspects make at least a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives and the aims are at least substantially met. The reviewers come to this conclusion, based upon the review visit together with an analysis of the self-assessment and additional data provided.

57. The positive features of the education in dentistry in relation to the aspects of provision include the following:

- a. The wide choice of programmes provides for the needs of students from a wide range of backgrounds (paragraphs 10; 11).
- b. The coherent and current curricula develop knowledge, skills and understanding in line with aims and objectives (paragraphs 10; 12; 14).
- c. High-quality teaching and learning is supported by a well-considered teaching, learning and assessment strategy (paragraphs 17; 18).
- d. The strong motivation of the students and careful guidance on study skills, ensures highly effective learning (paragraph 19).
- e. The programmes attract high-quality students, almost all of whom achieve their masters qualification (paragraphs 25 to 27).
- f. Students perform well on the courses; their work is of high quality (paragraphs 27; 28).
- g. The Institute provides support and guidance which are well matched to the student population (paragraphs 32; 34; 35).
- h. Course admissions and induction processes and documentation are highly effective (paragraphs 32; 33).

- i. Resources are well matched to the provision (paragraphs 38; 39; 43).
- j. Students have appropriate access to library and IT facilities which have excellent librarian and technical support (paragraphs 39; 41).
- k. There are appropriate processes to ensure the proper monitoring of programmes, and a high commitment to their continuing development (paragraphs 47 to 49; 52).
- l. There are extensive mechanisms for obtaining the views of students. Their views are clearly valued and acted upon (paragraph 50).

58. The quality of education in dentistry could be improved by addressing the following issue:

- a. The Institute should address the issue of inconsistencies in the awarding of Distinctions and in other assessment practices (paragraph 23).