



Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON, WC1H 9HD

Tel: +44 (0)20 7419 5494 Fax: +44 (0)20 7380 1482

Email: admin@dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk

Responding to an influenza pandemic: the use of dental students to support the NHS

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The Dental Schools Council believes that:

- 1 There should be a uniform approach across the UK albeit with ample scope for local flexibility.
- 2 Students should be required to opt in to any scheme rather than opt out and all students should receive adequate, nationally agreed information about the consequences of opting in.
- 3 Only final year dental students should be permitted clinical duties. The term 'clinical duties' needs to be clearly defined by Trusts.
- 4 Dental students from earlier years should not undertake clinical work but could undertake to man phone lines, undertake administrative or clerical work etc in hospitals
- 5 Students described in points three and four should have formal, time limited contracts with NHS providers to provide the necessary indemnification. These contracts will need to outline any relevant governance arrangements.
- 6 Final year students undertaking clinical duties should receive appropriate payment for their work.
- 7 These students should be required to work only within their competence and they should be supervised as much as circumstances allow.
- 8 Such students should have access to vaccines and/or antivirals in the same way as qualified dentists exposed to the same risks.
- 9 Depending on the duration and extent of the pandemic (and the need for final year students to "act up") there will be practical issues to be resolved surrounding progress through finals and work in vocational training. It is likely that there would need to be a readjustment of start dates to allow students to go back and make up lost time and/or sit final exams. This will knock on through the system but the best place to "catch up" is probably going to be at the point of competition for core training. More detailed work will be necessary on this.

Chair:

Professor WP Saunders BDS PhD FDS RCS Edin
FDS RCPS Glas FDS RCS Eng MRD FHEA FHKAM
Dean of Dentistry, University of Dundee

Executive Secretary and Treasurer:

Professor F Fortune CBE, BDS MBBS MRCP, FRCP, FDS
RCSeng, FGDP, PhD, DipEd teachers Med/Dent
Director, Institute of Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London