



Motivating Your Foundation Dentist

Range of Clinical Cases and
How These Progress

GDC Development Outcomes A B D

Objective

- ▶ Appreciate the challenges faced by the foundation dentist and demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively with both patient and colleague to ensure best practice.
- ▶ Learning Outcomes - the learner will:
 - ▶ List and explore the challenges faced by a foundation dentist
 - ▶ Describe expected clinical case complexity during DFT
 - ▶ Identify the developing role of the dental nurse in DFT
 - ▶ Explore motivational strategies
 - ▶ Recall effective communication principles

Understanding the Foundation Dentist's Journey

- ▶ Foundation Dentists (FDs) are recent graduates transitioning from dental school to independent clinical practice. This stage involves significant growth in:
 - ▶ **Clinical competence** (diagnosis, treatment planning, patient management)
 - ▶ **Professional confidence**
 - ▶ **Time management and efficiency**
 - ▶ **Interpersonal communication**
 - ▶ **Understanding of NHS systems and team dynamics**

Understanding the Foundation Dentist's Journey

- ▶ What do you think are the common challenges faced by Foundation Dentists when they work in practice for the first time?
- ▶ Discuss

Understanding the Foundation Dentist's Journey

▶ Common Challenges Faced by FDs

- ▶ Managing clinical uncertainty and decision-making without constant supervision
- ▶ Adapting to real-world time pressures and mixed patient demands
- ▶ Balancing learning with productivity expectations/service delivery
- ▶ Dealing with treatment failures or complications for the first time
- ▶ Building patient rapport and handling anxiety, complaints, or consent issues

Clinical Case Progression

- ▶ Early: Simple restorations, exams, pain relief
- ▶ Developing: Extractions, single-root endodontics, scaling
- ▶ Competent: Multi-root endodontics, dentures
- ▶ Advanced: Crowns, bridges, aesthetic cases

- ▶ → Skills: Confidence, independence, treatment planning

Clinical Case Progression

► FDs typically start with simpler cases and gradually move to more complex ones as their competence grows.

Stage of Development	Typical Clinical Cases	Skills Developed
Early Stage (First 3 months)	Simple restorations, examinations, fluoride varnish, emergency pain relief	Confidence building, communication, basic operative skills
Developing Stage (3-6 months)	Extractions, endodontics (single root), scaling, anterior composites	Time management, patient rapport, independent decision-making
Competent Stage (6-9 months)	Multi-rooted endodontics, indirect restorations, dentures	Treatment planning, critical thinking, managing complexity
Advanced Stage (9-12 months)	Crown & bridge work, advanced perio, aesthetic cases	Leadership, quality assurance, holistic care, reflection

Evolving Role of the Dental Nurse

- ▶ Early Stage: Supportive, guide setup and protocols
- ▶ Developing: Encourage independence and feedback
- ▶ Competent: Collaborate and anticipate clinical needs
- ▶ Advanced: Act as a reflective partner and peer

Evolving Role of the Dental Nurse

► As the FD becomes more competent, the dental nurse's role transitions from *supportive supervision* to *collaborative partnership*.

Stage	Dental Nurse's Role
Early Stage	Offer reassurance, guide clinical setup, remind of protocols (cross infection, record keeping)
Developing Stage	Encourage independence, provide feedback on workflow and chairside efficiency
Competent Stage	Collaborate in treatment sequencing, anticipate needs, support patient communication
Advanced Stage	Function as a professional peer, discuss complex cases, act as a reflective partner

Motivating the Foundation Dentist

- ▶ Early: Positive reinforcement, safe learning, reflection (Gibbs)
- ▶ Mid-year: Goal setting, varied cases, feedback
- ▶ Advanced: Empower ownership, mentoring opportunities, celebrate success

Motivating the Foundation Dentist

▶ Early Stage Motivation

- ▶ Provide **positive reinforcement** for small achievements (first successful LA, patient compliment).
- ▶ Allow **safe opportunities to fail** – create a culture where mistakes are learning moments. Failure will occur. Key to growth is how to deal with it. Avoidance....
- ▶ Encourage **reflection** using models like **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle**. Eportfolio weekly reflection initially

Motivating the Foundation Dentist

▶ Mid-Year Motivation

- ▶ Introduce **goal setting** and personal development plans (aligned with the Foundation Training curriculum).
- ▶ Involve FDs in **treatment planning discussions** and **case reviews**.
- ▶ Rotate them through a **variety of cases** to maintain engagement and skill breadth.
- ▶ Monthly reflection logs in e-portfolio

Motivating the Foundation Dentist

▶ **Advanced Motivation**

- ▶ Empower them to take **ownership** of patient care and complex treatment.
- ▶ Offer **mentoring roles** (e.g. shadowing the principal dentist). Visit Oral surgery or endodontic practice for observation. Useful in areas that are difficult.
- ▶ Provide **constructive feedback** and celebrate milestones (e.g. first crown fit, completing targets). APLAN 3 case presentation

Motivating the Foundation Dentist

▶ Team Communication

- ▶ Maintain **open dialogue** between nurse, FD, and trainer.
- ▶ Use **daily debriefs** to discuss challenges, successes, and patient care plans.
- ▶ Share experiences.
- ▶ Encourage **peer support** within the practice team.
- ▶ **Liase with ES** if you think there is something the FD needs help with, or if they don't seem aware of an issue.

Communication

- ▶ Adopt active listening and empathy when FDs express frustration or uncertainty.
- ▶ Use non-judgmental feedback — focus on behaviours and outcomes, not personality.
- ▶ How do you describe the FD to patients? What language can you use to reassure patients about the care they are receiving from a newly qualified dentist?

Communication

- ▶ Patient communication - the patient may not be aware or used to FD - use terms like “Junior Dentist” rather than “Trainee”. “Peer assessment” during workplace-based assessments.
- ▶ Reassures patient.
- ▶ If need assistance from ES or associate “this is a difficult case, we need a 2nd opinion” or “Dr ES is excellent at crowns so will bring him in for an opinion” rather than “the trainee hasn’t done a crown before”

Summary

- ▶ Motivation and growth are built on **trust, structure, and encouragement.**
- ▶ As competence develops, the dental nurse transitions from **teacher and supporter to collaborative colleague.**
- ▶ The ultimate goal is for the FD to become a **confident, independent practitioner** who feels valued, capable, and motivated within the team.

References

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