

Postgraduate Student Cause for Concern Process

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Guidance on raising a concern about a student

The School operates a student Cause for Concern process, to provide a constructive framework to support students to develop their professionalism. We aim to address any professional behaviour concerns early, offering an opportunity for students to reflect and be supported and to develop the necessary professional, academic and clinical skills for their chosen field.

The majority of referrals made about students do not result in the need to report information to professional bodies. The context for our Cause for Concern process is supportive and developmental, with the aim of developing reflective professionals.

The process aligns with the GDC [‘How do I raise a concern about a dental professional’](#) guidance and principle 8 of the [Standards for the Dental Team](#).

‘You must raise any concern that patients might be at risk due to:

- *the health, behaviour or professional performance of a colleague;*
- *any aspect of the environment where treatment is provided; or*
- *someone asking you to do something that you think conflicts with your duties to put patients’ interests first and act to protect them.’*

Serious concerns raised about a student will be reported to the GDC.

‘The General Dental Council, look into more serious concerns when someone is:

- *causing harm to patients*
- *causing harm to people they work with or other members of the public*
- *making people worry about those who work in dentistry’* (<https://www.gdc-uk.org>)

Submitting a cause for concern form

Any student, member of staff, or member of the public can raise a concern about a student, by completing a Cause for Concern form.

The concern could relate to a number of areas:

- a) Relationships with patients and clients – e.g. not respecting confidentiality, being discourteous;
- b) Working with others – e.g. being disrespectful towards other students or colleagues, continually disrupting teaching and learning;
- c) Probity – e.g. dishonesty, fraudulent or illegal behaviour;
- d) Learning – e.g. not engaging in administrative or academic requirements of the programme;
- e) Health – e.g. physical or mental health issues, which are not appropriately managed, alcohol or drugs problem;

We expect students and staff to provide their name and contact details when raising a concern. Under the Data Protection Act there is no guarantee that we can withhold the identity of the reporter as students have a right to see information held about them by the University, although we will not pass your contact details on to the student in question.

Students will be made aware of the forms submitted about them. Normally, the Cause for Concern form is provided to the student, once the reporter's contact details have been removed, to help them to prepare for any subsequent meetings. Please bear this in mind when completing the form and please try to use factual statements, and appropriate language.

University staff or students who make malicious or deliberately misleading statements concerning a student may be referred to the relevant University disciplinary procedures or the Faculty's Fitness to Practise procedure. No action will be taken against a member of staff or student who raises a concern in good faith.

Concerns about patient safety

Patient safety is paramount. If the concern about a student is serious and may put patient safety at risk, immediate contact should be made with the relevant Programme Director and Student Administration Manager so that an appropriate intervention can quickly be initiated.

Concerns relating to professional behaviour

Professional behaviour concerns about a student may be raised by using a Postgraduate Student Cause for Concern form. However, you should always attempt to deal with the issues informally by discussing the concern with the student, so that the student is given the opportunity to address the issues raised. This course of action should be considered before completing the Cause for Concern form.

The form should include a clear description of the incident(s) which have led to you submitting a Cause for Concern, including the date(s) or time period of the relevant events. The form should provide enough information for us to be able to understand the nature of your concern and for the student to be able to respond to it.

Cause for Concern forms should be supported by documented evidence where available. If the concern relates to more than one student, please submit a Cause for Concern for each student concerned.

Concerns which do not relate to professional behaviour

If the concern does not relate to professional behaviour and is an academic concern (e.g., the student may be struggling academically) the student should be encouraged to contact the programme team such as Programme Director or Unit Lead.

If the concern is in relation to health and wellbeing, the student themselves should be encouraged to contact the Student Wellbeing Service, or Senior Tutor as appropriate, or one of the support services listed on the Faculty and/or University websites. However, if it is felt that a student (or another person) is at risk of harm, contact should be made with the Senior Tutor, relevant Programme Director or Student Wellbeing Service directly who will consider what action may be appropriately taken. Students or staff distressed by a colleague's situation may seek support from one of the support services listed on the University of Bristol website

www.bristol.ac.uk/student-services/.

For postgraduate programmes that require GDC registration for clinical activity

If a concern reported to the GDC results in temporary or permanent suspension from the register, the student may be required to suspend studies or withdraw from the programme due to being unable to continue with the clinical component.

The form

1. The Postgraduate Cause for Concern Form will be available on the [Bristol Dental School website](#) for download or alternatively can be requested from the programme administrative coordinator. The form includes links to the GDC guidance on what constitutes a Cause for Concern and the instructions for reporting concerns to the school for review.
 2. Forms must be submitted to the programme administrative coordinator via the programme mailbox.
 3. Programme administrative coordinators will distribute forms to the nominated school reviewers (programme director and their delegates) so that the concern can be reviewed and actioned accordingly
 4. A copy of the completed form will be kept in the student file for future reference if required.
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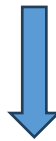
The review process

1. Concern received

Cause for concern form and guidance on Dental School webpage [insert link]

Received form sent to relevant programme mailbox

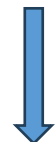
Form sent to Programme Director (or nominated delegate) and Student Administration Manager for first stage review.



2. Programme level review

Programme director (or nominated delegate) to review form and either:

- a) Hold a school level meeting with the student to discuss the concerns. Following the meeting the student may be referred to further support, occupational health, training or subject to additional monitoring and review as required on a case by case basis, or proceed to option b) or c)
- b) Immediately escalate the case to school level review (step 3)
- c) Dismiss the case entirely



3. School level review

Head of Teaching (or nominated delegate) to review form and either:

- a) Hold a school level meeting with the student to discuss the concerns. Following the meeting the student may be referred to further support, occupational health, training or subject to additional monitoring and review as required on a case by case basis, or proceed to option b) or c)
- b) Immediately escalate the case for referral to the GDC (step 4).
- c) Dismiss the case entirely



4. Referral to GDC (UK students only)

Head of School (or nominated delegate) to review form and either:

- b) Approve the case being referred to the GDC
- c) Dismiss the case entirely

If the case is being referred to the GDC a meeting will be held with the student to inform them of the decision along with a letter. A support meeting will be offered to discuss the referral with the student.