



## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

### **MID-WAY PROBATION REVIEW (Independent Higher Education)**

**INSTITUTION:** College of Medicine and Dentistry

**ADDRESS:** Floor 3  
32–34 Colmore Circus  
Birmingham  
B4 6BN

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Professor Maher Almasri

**ACCREDITATION STATUS:** Probation accreditation

**DATE OF INSPECTION:** 29 January 2021

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued probation accreditation, 6 April 2021

## **PART A – INTRODUCTION**

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### **1. Background to the institution**

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The College of Medicine and Dentistry (the Institution/COMD) is a privately owned institution offering master's degrees validated and awarded by Ulster University (UU) in a range of dental specialties. It is based in modern premises in Birmingham city centre.

COMD's mission is to deliver excellence and innovation in medical and dental education through knowledge and academic values, and to develop clinical leaders. It aims to provide education based on scientific enquiry and the latest research, and to produce graduates who are influential in their chosen field and who serve the needs of patients. Courses are career focused and intended to enhance employability by producing graduates who deliver high-quality specialist dental services.

COMD is a limited company. The COMD Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is also the Dean, is one of the three owners. The CEO is supported by a Director of Education for academic matters and a Chief Operating Officer for administrative functions. The governing body of the Institution is the Board of Directors, which is responsible for both academic and administrative matters.

COMD was previously a faculty of BPP University (BPP), which is based in the same building. COMD has been an independent entity since November 2018. COMD signed a memorandum of agreement with UU in May 2019 for eight years. The Institution's first intake of students started their programmes in September 2019. COMD has a validation agreement with BPP to teach BPP students until the final BPP cohort graduates in 2022. This inspection only applies to COMD.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

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COMD offers 17 Master of Science (MSc) Dental Specialties courses. There were 12 courses running at the time of the inspection.

There are three modes of delivery. Full-time courses are delivered face to face. Part-time blended learning courses are delivered largely online and include three one-week annual on-campus practical activities. Part-time distance courses are delivered entirely online. Some courses are available in all three modes. Others are available in two modes.

In line with practice in all higher education institutions in England, face-to-face teaching was suspended in March 2020. All teaching was online for several months. Teaching in the COMD clinic resumed with appropriate additional safeguards in August 2020. Face-to-face teaching has resumed, but some face-to-face teaching sessions have been deferred until March 2021.

The length of the courses varies between one year and three years depending on the content and mode of delivery. There are exit awards at the end of three-year courses. Students may also exit at the end of the first year with a postgraduate certificate, and at the end of the second year with a postgraduate diploma.

All courses include periodic clinical practical sessions. Students on full-time and blended learning courses can undertake these in the clinic located within COMD's premises, or in their own dental practice. All students on distance learning courses complete the clinical case requirements in their workplace.

There were 102 students enrolled at the time of the inspection, 32 full time and 70 part time. The vast majority of full-time students were on the Advanced General Dental Practice course. The most popular part-time courses were Facial Aesthetics with 18 students and Clinical Endodontics with 14 students.

COMD has capacity for 100 full-time students and approximately 500 part-time online students and 300 part-time blended learning students.

The majority of students are from the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU). The majority of EU students are from Ireland, with Italy, Greece, Malta, Spain and Bulgaria each providing a single student. The majority of students are male. All students are over the age of 18.

Programmes have three points of entry and can be joined at the start of each semester. Courses are primarily aimed at practising dentists, and admission requires a relevant dental qualification. The MSc in Digital Dentistry is also open to dental technologists and dental therapists, and the MSc in Facial Aesthetics is open to medical practitioners and dentists.

### **3. Inspection process**

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The inspection was carried out over half a day by one inspector making use of remote online communication methods. The inspector had discussions with the CEO, the Director of Education, the Chief Operating Officer, and other managers. Students and teachers were interviewed. A wide range of documentation was reviewed. COMD fully cooperated with all aspects of the inspection process.

### **4. Inspection history**

<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Full Accreditation	30-31 January 2020

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## **PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

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*The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.*

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

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A Chief Operating Officer post has been established following a governance review. The postholder is an experienced member of COMD staff and took up post on 1 January 2021. The post consolidates the supervision of student services, quality, clinic, operations and the administrative functions of the Institution. This structure fosters a cohesive approach to COMD's management.

The Institution has made a strategic decision to expand its activity in dental nurse education. It intends to offer awards recognised by the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN). COMD has received the necessary NEBDN approval and is developing its delivery plan.

### **2. Response to action points in last report**

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*2.4 The Board of Directors and senior management must regularly and systematically review their own performance and COMD's overall performance against targets to support effective strategic monitoring.*

COMD updated its strategic plan in June 2020. The Board of Directors regularly and systematically reviews COMD's performance against the plan at quarterly meetings. It also undertook a strategic review of 2020 that covered the range of COMD activities. A recent strategy away-day was held to consider the 2021–25 strategy.

A College Senior Management Board, reporting to the Board of Directors, meets monthly. Its responsibilities include the student experience, learning and teaching systems and processes, curriculum development, programme approval, audit and review. The College Senior Management Board monitors these functions against targets and tracks in its minutes the actions that are taken.

The recently developed Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Strategy sets out the main academic strategic aims and the ways in which they will be achieved. Progress will be tracked at meetings of the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee and by the Board of Directors.

These structures and processes facilitate systematic tracking of achievements and the identification of any shortfalls, enabling them to be addressed. This supports effective strategic monitoring.

*26.2 26.3 COMD must ensure that the student body is given the opportunity to provide formal feedback and be notified when action is taken in response to the student body's views.*

There is an active Staff–Student Liaison Committee comprising student representatives and representatives of academic and administrative staff. Its remit and terms of reference set out its role in improving the levels of engagement of students in the life and management of the Institution.

Staff–Student Liaison Committee views feed into the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee, which includes a student representative. The Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee feeds into the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is therefore informed of the student body's views and can take any necessary action.

This provides the student body with opportunities to provide formal feedback and participate in quality enhancement. COMD intends to have a student delegate at meetings of the Board of Directors to provide another mechanism for communication and representation.

Students are notified when action is taken in response to their views. The Institution's process for setting out what students have said and how the Institution has responded is commendable. As a result, changes that are

made because of student feedback are effectively publicised. An example is the additional tutorials in academic writing, which were held because of student feedback. This process demonstrates that COMD is responsive and it provides an incentive for student involvement.

COMD therefore ensures that the student body has opportunities to provide formal feedback and is notified when action is taken in response.

*27.2 27.4 27.5 The Institution must ensure that quality assurance and enhancement inform strategic management, that there is regular and systematic monitoring of performance against clear indicators, and that the results of reviews are compiled and included in action plans.*

Quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms effectively inform strategic management via regular meetings of the Board of Directors and committees. The Board of Directors reviews and revises strategy at its meetings. Feedback from the Staff–Student Liaison Committee, module evaluation, regular reports from the academic leaders of each programme to the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee, and monitoring of action plans systematically monitor performance against indicators. Results of reviews are included in the action plans of the Board of Directors and in committee action plans. A quality manual is a useful source of reference on policies and regulations. Significant advances have therefore been made in monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

A cohesive process that is easily understood by all stakeholders is particularly important in a complex system involving the Institution and UU. COMD has therefore devised an appropriate annual monitoring process that is intended to consolidate, integrate and improve its quality assurance and enhancement system. COMD is rolling out the annual monitoring process in stages and intends this to be in place by the end of the current academic year.

Ensuring that quality assurance and enhancement inform strategic management, that there is regular and systematic monitoring of performance against clear indicators and that the results of reviews are compiled and included in action plans is therefore work in progress.

*27.7 27.8 Student performance in each module must be reviewed and feed into an annual programme monitoring review, with action taken to resolve any issues arising.*

There is annual formal monitoring of each module. The resultant reports include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), commentary and an action plan. The results of module monitoring are then consolidated into an annual module overview used for monitoring. The module reviews will feed into programme reviews. This is a significant advance in monitoring for the purposes of improving delivery.

Annual programme monitoring will be conducted in house and by UU. Currently, updates from the leaders of each programme and programme KPIs are considered and monitored at Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee meetings. Module evaluations and the programme updates will contribute towards end-of-year programme reports. These programme reports will be part of COMD's annual monitoring process. The Institution is preparing for this, so it is work in progress.

*27.9 Key performance indicators must be used to track performance and outcomes so that COMD can monitor and address year-on-year variations.*

KPIs are now reviewed by committees and by the Board of Directors at its quarterly meetings. Progress and actions are recorded in the minutes. This enables COMD to monitor and address quarterly and year-on-year variations and to track performance to maintain and enhance provision.

*27.10 General performance reports must include an analysis of year-on-year data and a review of resourcing issues.*

Module and programme data and resourcing issues are regularly discussed and monitored at committee and Board of Director meetings. The collection, analysis and actioning of year-on-year data and resource issues will be part of the annual monitoring process that is being rolled out. This is work in progress.

*27.11 Regular review and revalidation of COMD programmes must involve external assessors as appropriate.*

Review and revalidation of the programmes under the terms of the COMD–UU agreement will take place in 2022 as planned. COMD and UU have agreed that external assessors will be included in the programme review process.

*27.12 COMD must ensure that the system for analysing and actioning programme reports is implemented.*

Regular reports from programme leads are regularly considered at Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee meetings and actions arising are tracked. The committee's reports are provided for the Board of Directors. This ensures that reports are analysed and that actions are taken and monitored.

*28.2 The Institution must implement a system of end-of-session module and annual programme reports that include improvement, ongoing developments and areas for enhancement.*

Annual module reports have been introduced. Annual programme reports will be part of the annual monitoring process that is being rolled out. This is work in progress.

*28.3 Action plans for enhancement must be implemented and reviewed regularly within COMD's committee structure.*

Action plans for enhancement are implemented and reviewed regularly at COMD committee meetings and feed into meetings of the Board of Directors. Minutes show that the committees and the Board of Directors are continually looking for ways to enhance course development and delivery, and student support, and management has a dynamic approach to quality improvement.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

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*COMD should consider expanding the detail of its strategy and its learning and teaching strategy to support institutional strategic planning and development.*

COMD is developing its 2021-25 strategy and is considering the level of detail in response to this recommendation. It intends to produce a more comprehensive document that will support COMD's strategic development. The Teaching and Learning Strategy 2020-22 has been recently revised and includes an appropriate level of detail.

*It is recommended that committee minutes or committee action plans include timelines for action to enhance monitoring.*

Committee minutes and action plans now include timelines for action and this appropriately supports effective monitoring.

*COMD should continue its efforts to establish a staff and student liaison group that will support students' active role in the development of academic provision and ensure student-centred learning.*

The Staff–Student Liaison Committee meets regularly and is represented on key committees. This enables students' views to influence academic provision and learning.

The students interviewed, including a student representative, all praised the opportunities to make their voice heard. They appreciated that COMD listened to their views and acted upon them.

*It is recommended that COMD monitor the personal academic tutor system to ensure that students are aware of the system and are encouraged to use their tutor to support their learning.*

COMD publicises the personal tutor system at induction and on the virtual learning environment platform and encourages students to use it. Teachers and the Director of Education monitor the system, and COMD will keep it under review.

**PART C – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**FURTHER WORK TO MEET OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

<i>27.2 27.4 27.5 The Institution must continue to develop and implement its quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms, incorporating monitoring of performance, analysis of results of reviews and action plans.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<i>27.7 27.8 28.2 COMD must produce annual programme reports that review student performance, issues to be addressed and areas for enhancement, and that include an action plan.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<i>27.10 General performance reports must include an analysis of year-on-year institutional data and a review of resourcing issues.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<i>27.11 Regular review and revalidation of COMD programmes must involve external assessors as appropriate.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

**FURTHER WORK TO MEET OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

None

**ADDITIONAL ACTIONS REQUIRED**

None	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
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**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT (to be reviewed at the next inspection)**

None