

Student professionalism and fitness to practise Standards for the Dental Team Case studies

Principle 9

Make sure your personal behaviour maintains patients' confidence in you and the dental profession



David

David is a 29 year old clinical dental technician student and has a part time job in a pub. He has been missing some lectures and rushing his work before his next shift.

Student clinical dental technician

David has increased his hours working at the pub to help with his finances. He has family responsibilities and has two children to support. David now works some weekday evenings as well as his usual shift at the weekend. His tutor has noticed that he has been coming in late and rushing toward the end of the afternoon work placements. David has asked one of his fellow students to sign in for him in a couple of the morning lectures as he is worried he will get into trouble if he is caught missing them. His friend has signed him in for a third time.

What do you think David should do next?

Select an option:

- Check if his friend is still happy to keep signing him in or whether he ought to ask someone else
- Speak to his tutor about the financial pressures he is under
- Ask if there are any ways he can apply for financial support through the student support office

What do you think David's friend should do?

- Refuse to sign him in again as he is feeling uncomfortable
- Keep signing him in as he knows David needs the money and David seems to be passing his assessments
- Tell the tutor he has been signing in for David and the reasons why

See what David did next...

David asked someone else to sign in for him. As his tutor had noticed issues with lateness and rushing at the end of the afternoon clinic he raised the issue with David and asked him about his commitment to the training programme and whether there were any issues. David confided that he had been working extra shifts to help with finances. The tutor highlighted how the situation was impacting on his work and that there may be some support that could be found to help him. They explained to him that it was always a good idea to talk to someone if he felt pressured or stressed. They also explained that it wasn't appropriate that patients' interests, whatever his financial pressures, were put second and appointments rushed. David was directed to the student support office who helped look at a range of options relating to accommodation, travel, bursaries and emergency funding that could be applied for. David did not mention that his friend had signed in for him at a few of the lectures.

The tutor later noticed that the signing in forms did not tally with the attendance at the last lecture. David was questioned about this and admitted what he had done. His tutor explained this was dishonest and incompatible with GDC standards for the reason that patients must be able to trust dental professionals. David apologised and received a warning. He had to declare the warning on his GDC registration application form.

See what David's friend did next

His friend refused to sign him in again as he was uncomfortable with the dishonesty asked of him. His friend shouldn't have agreed to sign David in the first few times and should have been honest with their tutor. When his friend realised that the tutor knew then he admitted it, explaining that he felt under pressure to help with David's family situation. His friend also received a warning.

GDC principles

9.1 you must ensure that your conduct, both at work and in your personal life, justifies patients trust in you and the public's trust in the dental profession

1.7 You must put patients' interests before your own or those of any colleague, business or organisation

Other guidance

With regards to first time registration or a restoration application, we advise applicants to read the following guidance:

- [Convictions and cautions guidance](#) (available on our website). This explains how we look into cautions and convictions. We look at these on a case-by-case basis.
- [Health self-certification guidance](#)

Discussion points

- Are you under any external pressures? How does this affect you? Have you checked what support may be on offer?
- What would you do if a friend asked you to lie/cover for them? What consequences might this have?
- Do you think David gave any thought to the consequences that involving his friend in this situation might have?
- Can you think of ways you could balance the responsibilities of student life, especially professional student life, with family responsibilities?

Disclaimer

These fictional case studies are for illustration purposes only and should not be relied on to make clinical decisions. Their aim is to put GDC guidance in context, exploring how some of the principles might work in practice.

The case studies cannot be relied on to be clinically accurate. Nor do the case studies intend to show the "correct" interpretation of GDC guidance, only one (or more) possible interpretation(s).