Believe it or not, three months on and I am still enjoying the studying! The format of the course is that lectures can be viewed live with a live webcam of the lecturer and the opportunity to type in the ‘chat’ box questions either during the lectures or at breaks. I have only attended a few lectures live – mostly due to conflicts of schedule. The lectures are posted on the web a few days later to be viewed at our leisure. They can then be paused at any point to give you time to write notes or copy down a slide – there is a running time on the footnote which allows you to note down where you are in a presentation if you are interrupted and have to restart later. The perfect solution for distance learning amidst a hectic lifestyle.

So, inspired by the looming date for handing in my first assessments, I have been on a crash course of catch-up. So far, we’re in Unit 1 – we’ve covered Anatomy, Basic disease processes, Diagnostics in perio, endo and caries detection, foundations of occlusion and foundations of material science. We have had a variety of lecturers from Manchester and beyond – including Peter Galgut on perio, Prof Nigel Pitts from Dundee on caries and Prof David Watts from the University of Manchester on dental materials. Each webinar is accompanied by critical reading which for the most part can be accessed very easily using the University of Manchester library. The library remote access is really slick, and I have been able to create a VPN link (which means virtual private network) so that I can download and print articles. The technical helpdesk assistance has been out-standing although my bill for printer ink has more than trebled!

At this point, I am (still) a few lectures behind but I have spent an enormous amount of time in the last few weeks catching up on reading and lectures. It is amazing how many hours can whizz by when you are sat at a computer with headphones on and a notebook & pen by your side – even 10-minute bursts between patients, or whilst the tea is cooking or even after the kids are in bed. ‘Mummy’s doing her homework’ is becoming a familiar tune in our house.

Part of the final mark for the course is made up from continuous feedback from each webinar – and there are self-assessment quizzes to take on-line to assess your understanding. The Msc website keeps a log of all your completed and incompleated tasks, so there is a certain satisfaction to completing reading, the webinar, the feedback and the self-assessments – four items ticked off the list! My only complaint is that some of the self-assessments aren’t working, which is frustrating but due to a technical glitch.

Still – I have five questions to answer in only 200 words each for 20 marks before next week. I’ve worked out that’s 10 words per mark – not much room for waffling on them….. better get to it!

About the author
Elaine Halley BDS (DGDP UK) is the BACD Immediate Past President and the principal of Cherrybank Dental Spa, a private practice in Perth. She is an active member of the AACD and her main interest is cosmetic and advanced restorative dentistry and she has studied extensively in the United States, Europe and the UK.