The MJDF (Diploma of Membership of the Joint Dental Faculties) is the new membership examination of the FGDP(UK) and FDS. It is a modern assessment designed to recognise the successful acquisition of the knowledge and skills defined in the new foundation training curriculum for dentistry. This curriculum describes knowledge and skills that the newly qualified dentist should acquire during the first two years post qualification.

The examination consists of a Part 1 paper of multiple choice questions that test knowledge and the application of knowledge. Part 2 comprises an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) and a structured clinical reasoning (SCR) component. The third part is a portfolio of evidence which draws on the candidate’s work experience.

Candidates who successfully complete all three parts of the MJDF will be eligible for joint membership of both faculties for an initial period of three years, after which they may choose membership of either the FGDP(UK) or FDS, depending on whether their career is taking them in the direction of general dental practice or specialist training.

Candidate experience

The eagerness of practitioners to complete the examination has been evident from the outset; 180 and 166 candidates entered the first Part 1 and 2, and 265 are registered to sit Part 1 in March 2008. Pass rates for the first diets were also good, with 81 per cent and 77 per cent of candidates passing Part 1 and 2 respectively. Specialist advice identified an excellent level of reliability (summarised as ‘the accuracy with which an assessment is made’) for the first sitting of the examination.

A crucial part of the process is feedback from candidates on their experience of the new assessment. As part of quality assurance, candidates’ feedback will be used to refine processes for the future. So far, we have found that candidates have been keen to provide their views, with 161 out of 166 candidates sitting Part 2 (97 per cent) completing a feedback form.

The feedback helped confirm a number of important aspects of this first assessment. In response to the question, ‘Did you feel the assessment was fair?’, 92 per cent responded yes for the SCR component and 93 per cent for the OSCE component. Detailed feedback was also provided in other areas, for example on the wording of questions and instructions for candidates, which will help us build on the service to candidates for future diets.

Assessing dentists of the future

One of the ways in which dentistry has differed from medicine is in the absence of a compulsory period of postgraduate training and assessment following registration. There are signs that this may be about to change, and the General Dental Council is currently consulting on the introduction of provisional registration.