I qualified as a dentist in 2002, and like many spent my early career completing vocational training, working within the NHS, and paying off my student debt! With the treatment constraints of certain areas of NHS funding, I was keen to push my career towards the independent/private sector, and wanted a skill-set to enable me to do this. In 2006 I completed a year-long, one day a month restorative dentistry course amongst other CPD courses, and was considering what to spend my money on next!

In 2008, I heard Glenn Dupont from the Dawson Academy Lecture on Solving Anterior Wear Problems, and then did the break-out session taught by Glenn and Ian Buckle. Several dentists I’d spoken to had recommended the Dawson Academy and I was considering going to Florida to complete the courses. Fortunately, Ian was in the process of bringing the core curriculum to the UK, and having liked what I’d heard I decided it was something that I’d like to do. I phoned Sally-Ann (Ian’s wife and course administrator), and reserved my place. I was to be one of the first dentists to pass through the (UK style!) Dawson Academy continuum.

May 2009, and I’m checking into a hotel at for the initial Dawson Academy lecture: Functional Occlusion – From TMD to Smile Design. The usual questions featured in my thoughts. Would it be worth the cost? Would I learn things that would improve my dentistry? Would they be applicable to my practice and relevant to me?

Over the next six months I completed the remainder of the core curriculum, an excellent value for money. The small group nature of the hands-on sessions encouraged discussion and the opportunity to ask questions, and seeing the familiar faces of participants at each of the courses led to group camaraderie and a heightened sense of learning together. Without exception, the lecturers always wanted to give as much information as possible, and many class-sessions had timings extended at their insistence to enable this. This added lots of value and made the courses excellent value for money.

Mention must also be made of the venue – I attended the hands-on classes at Ian’s practice in the Wirral. The facility is lovely, but it is the friendliness and support of his staff that really make the courses run well. They also provide an excellent social program, so it’s not all just learning!

So, the benefits of studying with the Dawson Academy? It is simply the best post-graduate course I’ve taken. So much so, that when Ian set up some advanced courses I readily signed up. It has given me a set of clinical principles and a framework in which to approach my treatment decisions in a different way. I’ve used the three dimensional approaches taught by Dr Buckle and started to visualise and create plans in the diagnostic wax up phase myself rather than expect a technician to guess where the teeth should go and what they should look like. This alone improves clinical and diagnostic skills and coupled with the additional modules of anterior restoration and equilibration helps to make important treatment making decisions in the planning phase rather than start treatment with no concept of how it will conclude- an unfortunate error many of our profession have made and are still making.

At this transitional time, Dr Buckle is there to help. He encourages bringing models and helping with the treatment making decisions, while always insisting that all the records are as accurate as possible. Poor records mean all further stages are compromised. Unlike many of the restorative gurus out there, Dr Buckle is always approachable.

This course has truly changed my practicing career and I am now doing the kind of dentistry I could only have imagined a few years ago. I have since gone on to the advanced set of modules and slowly have gained the confidence to tackle complex and difficult cases.

The philosophy of the Dawson approach really emanates from Peter Dawson himself, possibly the most important figure in the advancement of complete dentistry, and Ian Buckle, along with John Cranham, Glenn Dupont, Dewitt Wilkinson and Andrew Cobb(ito name a few) have brought this philosophy forward. They teach with a passion and desire to spread their knowledge as Peter Dawson would have wished when the academy was first set up.

Simply the best

Chris Dakin discusses the UK Dawson Academy...