Well - lo and behold I managed to pass the Unit 6 module! This was the module all about research which the University of Manchester decided we needed to learn sooner rather than later so that we have some insight into research before commencing our dissertations. (I am not entirely sure I know the difference between a thesis and a dissertation…probably shouldn't admit that at this point.)

Great intentions
So - after the trauma of getting all the cases for Unit 3 in plus the end of Unit 6 assignment in, the pressure has eased off and we are back to webinars and electronic feedback forms. I did start off with great intentions of getting my posterior composites and I fooled myself into the belief that I was going to catch up with the webinars. In my defence, this illustrates the flexibility of this course which does adapt to your life – as long as you remember there are deadlines which creep up silently but surely!

The first webinar in Unit 4 was Trevor Burke on Posterior composites and I fooled myself into the belief that I had watched this live - until my children asked me 'what did that man say?' and I realised I had been distracted into family life and had to re-watch most of it when I was alone. And worse than that - apologises Wolfgang - as I was listening to your webinar, my husband has banned me from listening to any more webinars without headphones as he complained that he bonding would be fascinating to a farmer!

Latest controversies
So - Dr Wolfgang Richter's presentation on advanced composite techniques, introduced some of the latest controversies in the science which can influence us in clinical practice – including whether we should be disinfecting our cavities with chlorhexidine to prevent the reactivation of matrix metalloproteinases. These MMPs are thought to be the reason why composite bond strengths degrade over time.

After presenting three or four papers telling us that we should do this, he then presented a paper which found that there was no benefit and that with a self-etch system, the bond strengths could be drastically weakened – the overriding message being that we must remember to be cautious and critical of research before jumping to change our clinical practice. An excellent illustration of how important it is for us to research claims independently before changing our clinical routines.

University of Jena
This was followed by an inlay/onlay lecture from a very cheerful Dr Harald Kuepper from the University of Jena in Germany. My post-graduate education to date has been mostly US based and so I must confess to never having heard of the University of Dental Medicine in Jena – and as it has recently been voted the number one of 31 Universities in Germany, I stand shame-faced as to my ignorance.

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Time flies
This unit, there has been very little notice as to when the lectures have been taking place. This is very frustrating as although it is entirely possible to watch the webinars live, you do miss the opportunity to ask questions. Although all the lecturers provide an email contact – there is something about the contemporaneous nature of the chat box which is missing after the event. Of course, the second intake of students will have started their first term. I hope it is all going smoothly for them – I remember it well and how time flies when you're enjoying yourself! I cannot believe we are now over a year into our studies...

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.