

Dear _____,

I am writing on behalf of the students of _____ and FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) concerning the importance of considering the mental health and well-being of the members of the dental school. This is key for our general health and well-being and, consequently, a basic human right.

Healthcare is considered by the WHO to be an **at-risk occupation** that is susceptible to mental health challenges¹. Burnout, stress, depression, and anxiety are found in a concerning high proportion of dentists globally²⁻⁴, and can impact careers and well-being. Research indicates that 1 in 3 dentists have considered leaving the profession due to personal well-being, and 12% have thought about committing suicide⁵.

As dental students, we need your support to gain the skills and tools needed to face the **future pressures** of working in dentistry, and also to deal with the **current stressors** we face in our studies. Common stressors for dental students include:



Academic

Stressors: Exams, grades, workload, lack of time to complete clinical requirements, and inconsistent feedback

40% of students identified inconsistent feedback from tutors as a stressor. 72% identified exams and grades⁵



University life

Stressors: New living situations, managing own routine, reduced family contact, inadequate sleep, loneliness, and struggle to balance

Almost a third of dental students report that they have little time for relaxation⁵



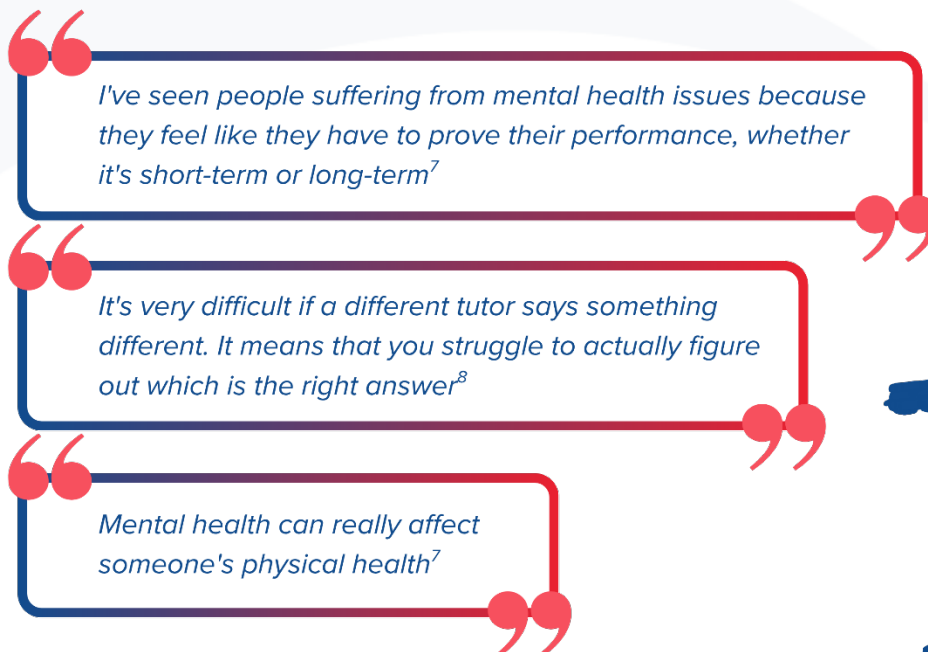
Financial

Stressors: First-time financial independence, student debt anxiety, and socializing feeling like a battle between cost and community

Over a third of UK dental students identified financial responsibilities as a stressor⁵

In a study at Cardiff University, UK, over half of dental students reported that poor mental health and well-being led to an inability to focus and a drop in academic performance⁶. Building skills in mental health and well-being early will not only help us achieve our academic potential but also enable us to have successful careers that are not detrimental to our personal well-being.

Student quotes



What can you do?

FDI believe in the importance of having specific policies that address dental students' mental health and well-being. As your students, we share this belief.

We strongly encourage you to consider this issue and prioritise actions to promote the mental health of dental students, and to collaborate with relevant bodies to implement such actions. Therefore, we kindly ask you to implement **FDI's 10 Recommended Student Well-being Policies**:

Recommendation 1: Implement surveys to identify and address the challenges students face in your specific dental school.

Recommendation 2: Provide regular mental health and well-being assessments.

Recommendation 3: Create a teaching plan that is up-to-date, avoids overlapping pressure points in student workload, and encourages a positive work-life balance.

Recommendation 4: Organize social and team-building opportunities for dental students, including with other dental schools.

Recommendation 5: Include mental health and well-being in the university dental curriculum, including stress management training.

Recommendation 6: Provide mental health training for all staff.

Recommendation 7: Produce and/or share resources and tools to support dental students' mental health, such as the **FDI Dental Student Mental Health and Well-being resources**.

Recommendation 8: Provide and encourage open channels of communication for students to express concerns or well-being challenges to staff and peers.

Recommendation 9: Ensure access to counselling and well-being services that provide support for problems both within and outside of dental school.

Recommendation 10: Provide targeted career support to reduce uncertainty and fear for the next steps after qualification.

*Additional background and tips on implementing these recommendations can be found in **FDI's Student Well-being Policies** publication.*

Yours sincerely,

References

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About FDI World Dental Federation

FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) is an international, membership-based organization that serves as the main representative body for more than 1 million dentists worldwide, active in some 200 National Dental Associations and specialist groups in close to 130 countries. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, FDI's mission is to lead the world to optimal oral health.