

## Accreditation of qualifications for registration as an oral health practitioner

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### Purpose

Accreditation is the process by which the Dental Council ('Council') recognises an oral health educational programme as having met the defined national requirements and standards. This policy has been developed to describe the process that the Council uses to accredit and monitor New Zealand educational institutions and an oral health degree, course of studies, or programme.

### Legislation

Council is charged with the responsibility under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act 2003 of describing the work of the oral health practitioners it regulates in terms of one or more scopes of practice.

Under the HPCA the Council must prescribe the qualifications that it will accept for each scope of practice and:

- accredit and monitor the New Zealand educational institutions that provide the training for degree or diploma qualifications
- accredit other courses of study or programmes which are prescribed for registration.<sup>1</sup>

### Council approach

Under the HPCA Council has jurisdictional authority for the accreditation of New Zealand programmes. However, wherever possible, the Council uses joint Australasian accreditation processes to review primary qualifications for registration in a 'main' scope of practice e.g. dentist, dental therapist

Council will make decisions on the accreditation of such qualifications in terms of this policy, and the policies and protocols of the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Committee, and on the basis of recommendations made by a site evaluation team appointed by Council.

It is intended that the accreditation review process will be conducted in a positive and constructive manner. It is the Council's intention to make the process, as much as possible, a self assessment process by the educational institution concerned complemented by external review/validation. The accreditation process undergoes regular evaluation and modification based on experience and feedback.

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<sup>1</sup> Council has a separate process for the approval of courses of training to equip existing registrants for registration in an additional scope of practice

## Accreditation costs

Accreditation cost is based on full cost recovery from the educational institution.

Costs include the participation of the assessors and its secretary, where required, during the site visit and any follow-up visit. This include travel, accommodation and sessional fees for team members.

Direct costs also include any other administrative cost directly associated with the review of the programme, such as:

- preliminary site evaluation team teleconference
- printing the accreditation reports
- the administration of any surveys used in the review
- Secretariat time spent on the logistics of the site visit
- Secretariat time spent on the preparation of ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Committee and Council meeting papers
- Council time for consideration of accreditation for programme.

## The site evaluation team

Each accreditation is conducted by an expert team. Site evaluation teams interact with the organisation being reviewed and, using the relevant Accreditation guidelines and protocols, conduct:

- a review of the documentation provided by the organisation, and
- on site visits to the organisation.

The size and composition of the team will vary according to the degree, course of studies or programme being assessed. The team should be small but should provide a balance of expertise to allow a transparent assessment of the programme with sufficient academic rigour.

Team members are expected to support the concept of professional accreditation and to be willing to contribute directly to the growth and further development of the process. They should be supportive of change and innovation. In addition, members must be able to work in a team, be able to communicate effectively, be discreet and be able to commit the time necessary to contribute to all stages of the review.

As a minimum the team should include:

- an experienced and respected oral health practitioner who is registered in the relevant scope(s) of practice;
- a dental academic who has the educational competencies to evaluate the course submitted;
- a member who is experienced in accreditation processes either from within the profession or from another profession; and
- a lay member.

In appointing a team for undergraduate course accreditation, consideration should be given to ensuring adequate input into the assessment of the educational institution's response to the principles of Mana Maori and the Treaty of Waitangi.

In appointing teams consideration should also be given to:

- the desirability of including Australian input on the review team, in particular for the dental academic position
- the importance of at least half of the review team being registered in the relevant scope(s) of practice.

The membership of a site evaluation team is noted by the joint ADC/Dental Council (NZ) Accreditation Committee, and the relevant educational institution is given the opportunity to comment on any real or perceived conflicts of interest of the appointed members.

The ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Committee maintains a register of suitably experienced and skilled assessors, that fulfill the skillset criteria set by the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Committee *Policy on assessor criteria and appointment of site evaluation teams*. Wherever possible, assessors on the register must be appointed to site evaluation teams.

A team may request a secretary who must not be a member of the educational institution's staff. However, the organisation of a team secretary is normally the responsibility of the host institution.

Teams are ad hoc committees of Council. Each team is constituted to report on a particular organisation and course or programmes and is then disbanded. Teams work within the policy and procedures of Council.

### Preparation by the organisation being reviewed

The accreditation process starts within the educational institution concerned with a process of self-assessment, the documentation of policies and practices and the development of an accreditation submission.

The educational institution needs to begin to prepare its accreditation submission well before the accreditation review. About six months before the review the Council provides the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standard applicable to the relevant education programme as the basis for the development of the submission. The ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standards sets out the desirable standards against which the degree, course or programme will be assessed. For each of the areas to be considered by the site evaluation team, together with their associated guidelines, a series of questions and requests for evidence is provided to direct responses from the educational institution.

Normally Council asks for the submission three months before the actual review visit. The educational institution being accredited is required to submit an electronic copy and one hard copy of the submission to Council.

A two stage process is used for the assessment of new dental educational institutions, new programmes or programmes that have undergone major structural change. In the first instance the Council provides the relevant ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standard as the basis for the development of the educational institution's Stage One submission.

This submission provides an overview of the educational institution's plans and resources and evidence of support from relevant authorities. The purpose of this initial assessment is to determine whether the educational institution's plans are sufficiently well developed to proceed with the accreditation process and to establish whether the planned curriculum is likely to comply with the requirements of the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standard.

On receipt of the Stage One submission and after consideration of the views of the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Committee, the Council makes a decision as to whether the educational institution should be invited to submit a more detailed submission (addressing the ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standard) or that further development is required.

If the Educational institution is asked to proceed to Stage 2 the same process as for existing programmes is used.

## Preliminary Site Evaluation Team Teleconference

When the educational institution lodges its accreditation submission the Secretariat circulates it to the team. The Secretariat convenes a preliminary teleconference of the team two months before the assessment visit.

The purpose of the teleconference is to consider the accreditation submission, decide on the additional information necessary or clarification required, and identifies the meetings and site visits that they want included in the review. The team, via the Secretariat, will advise the educational institution of the groups and individuals whom it wishes to meet and the range of teaching sites/facilities it wishes to visit.

The educational institution then develops an accreditation visit schedule in consultation with the Secretariat. The accreditation visit schedule should provide opportunities for interactive discussions with staff and members of the profession and other stakeholders to present their views to the team, and for relevant facilities to be viewed by the team.

The educational institution submits its final information about four weeks before the team begins its site visit.

## The Site Visit

The team's interactions with the educational institution comprise a series of meetings with the groups and committees that contribute to the delivery of the course or programme, are consumers of programme or that are important influences on the environment in which the training occurs.

The site visit is normally conducted over 2 – 3 days.

The site evaluation team works through the office of the Dean/Head of the educational institution. All requests for information are made to this office and the programme of meetings is finalised in consultation with the Dean/Head.

At the conclusion of the site visit the team chair discusses the team's preliminary findings with the educational institution's management team.

## Development of the Accreditation Report

The preparation of the team report is a collaborative team effort with the approach to be taken, decided by the team. All team members may contribute to the writing of the report. Alternatively the report may be prepared by the chair and circulated to the team for comment. Team members should nominate particular chapters or topics as their areas of report writing responsibility. During the review, team members should normally chair meetings that relate to their areas of report writing responsibility and ensure adequate notes of these sessions are made.

Reports generally address the major topics in the Accreditation Standards. Reports are written to a tight deadline. The aim is to provide a draft report to the educational institution, usually within eight weeks after the conclusion of the review. This timetable allows both team members and the educational institution to comment on the draft report.

The team's accreditation report, prepared after the site visit, is the basis on which the Council determines the period of accreditation. The report includes a draft recommendation on accreditation, as well as programme-specific recommendations, suggestions and commendations.

## Decision on Accreditation

The accreditation report is reviewed by the joint ADC/DC (NZ) Accreditation Committee who then make recommendations to Council. If there are issues in the Accreditation report which require detailed explanation the chair of the site evaluation team should participate in the accreditation committee's consideration. Council can also request the chair of the site evaluation team to participate in Council's consideration if there are any areas of particular concern or complex issues raised in the report.

Council makes the decision on accreditation and endorses the final wording of the report. The report and recommendations are then forwarded to the educational institution.

No Council member can be appointed as a site evaluation team member.

There is provision for a mutually acceptable independent review process in the event of an educational institution disagreeing with the Council's accreditation decisions.

## Outcomes of the Accreditation Process

The options for accreditation are as follows:

**Accreditation:** Accreditation indicates that the program achieves or exceeds the minimum standards for accreditation. Retention of this accreditation status is subject to monitoring.

**Accreditation with Conditions:** Accreditation with Conditions indicates that the program substantially meets the Accreditation Standards but the program has a deficiency or weakness in one or more Standards. The deficiency or weakness is considered to be of such a nature that it can be corrected within a reasonable period of time. Evidence of progress towards meeting the conditions within the timeline stipulated must be demonstrated in order to maintain accreditation of the program.

**Revocation of Accreditation:** Accreditation can be revoked when:

- a program which has accreditation with conditions fails to demonstrate that progress has been made towards meeting the conditions within a reasonable period of time, and the program therefore does not comply with the Accreditation Standards.
- a program is identified, at any time, as having serious deficiencies or weaknesses and fails to meet one or more Accreditation Standards. The serious nature of the deficiencies or weaknesses means that accreditation must be revoked.

The ADC/DC(NZ) will advise the program provider of the reasons for its decision to revoke accreditation of the program and require the provider to advise the ADC/DC(NZ) of the management of currently enrolled students.

**Refusal of Accreditation:** Accreditation can be refused if a new program or a program undergoing reaccreditation has a serious deficiency or weakness in one or more Accreditation Standards that cannot be corrected within a reasonable period of time. The ADC/DC(NZ) will advise the program provider of the reasons for its decision to refuse accreditation of the program.

## Evaluation of the accreditation process

In order to ensure continuous improvement in the process, Council invites comments on the review from the educational institution concerned and from each member of the assessment team.

The Secretariat writes formally to team members to seek their comments on the accreditation visit and suggestions for improvement. These comments are presented to Council and taken into consideration when planning future visits.

## Process for the accreditation of qualifications for registration as an oral health practitioner

