

Policy on the approval of courses to equip registered oral health practitioners to remove exclusions from their scope of practice

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Introduction

This policy guideline has been developed to describe how courses designed to equip registered oral health practitioners to remove exclusions from their scopes of practice may be approved as a Dental Council approved course. These exclusions would have been placed on those practitioners' relevant general scope(s) of practice (i.e. dental hygiene, dental therapy and orthodontic auxiliary) that were not registered in all the additional scopes of practice as at 17 March 2011.

Legislation

The Dental Council is charged with the responsibility under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the "Act") of describing the contents of the oral health professions it regulates in terms of one or more scopes of practice.

Section 8 of the Act provides that "no health practitioner may perform a health service that forms part of a scope of practice of the profession in respect of which he is she is registered unless she or he is permitted to perform that service by his or her scope of practice."

Under the Act the Council must prescribe the qualifications it will accept for registration in 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.

For the Dental Council to consider and approve the courses to remove the exclusions from the practitioners' scope of practice, the Act requires that the Council be guided by the following principles:

- the qualifications must be necessary to protect members of the public; and
- the qualifications may not unnecessarily restrict the registration of person as health practitioners; and
- the qualifications may not impose undue costs on health practitioners or the public.

Approval Criteria

For a course to be approved as a Dental Council approved course to remove exclusions from a practitioner's registered scope of practice, the following criteria must be satisfied:

1. The course is run by an educational institution, a district health board, registered company or registered society.

2. The objective of a Dental Council approved course is to educate oral health practitioners to the same standard as that of a Dental Council prescribed qualification for registration in those specific procedures as defined in the relevant scope of practice. It must therefore be demonstrated that the course includes verifiable knowledge and clinical skills learning outcomes equivalent to the relevant Dental Council prescribed qualification(s). This should be clearly stated in the learning objectives of the course.
3. The course content must include sufficient theory and clinical experience to enable graduates to demonstrate their ability to meet the learning objectives. Details of the theory and clinical components together with the learning strategies must be provided. Teaching and assessment must be designed to ensure students who upon successful completion of the course can demonstrate the competencies required to remove the exclusions from their scope of practice and can assume responsibility for maintaining their continuing competence.
4. The course must demonstrate that it has adequate facilities and resources to enable its objectives to be achieved. Students must be provided with suitable patients, equipment, materials and facilities as appropriate during the course to enable them to develop the required competencies.
5. The course fee must not impose undue costs on the students.
6. The student/staff ratio and the quality and experience of the teaching staff must be sufficient to enable the courses objectives to be achieved. Maximum course numbers/staff ratios must be provided. Full details of the student/staff ratio and the qualifications of the staff must be provided.
7. Where successful completion of the course is dependent on the completion of practical experience under supervision in the workplace details of the practical experience requirements and the responsibilities of supervisors must be provided.
8. Admission into the course must be based on published selection criteria and applied equitably during the selection process.
9. Student performance must be assessed relative to the attainment of the expected learning outcomes. There must be a clearly stated process and timeframe for providing feedback to students, the assessment methods must be defined and the pass standard explicit.
10. The environment must be safe for patients. Clinical supervision (onsite and in the workplace if relevant) must be adequate to ensure that adequate standards of patient care are maintained including accurate and complete record keeping. Evaluation processes must be in place to ensure that acceptable standards of patient care are maintained. Informed consent procedures must be in place to ensure that patients are aware of and consent to treatment being provided by students under supervision.
11. The environment must be safe for students. There must be processes in place to identify and address student grievances and concerns. There must be clearly articulated policies in place in relation to students who fail to meet the course requirements and in relation to the management of the potential conflict, which arises when course participants are also employees of the organisation providing the training course.
12. The course provider must plan, implement and demonstrate continuous quality improvement.
13. Students must be provided with a formal certificate upon completion of the course.

Approval Process

A course provider is required to submit an application detailing how the course satisfies the approval criteria.

Approval process for course providers who do not provide training as part of a primary Dental Council accredited qualification

For any application submitted (other than that received by an educational institution, which currently provides such training as part of the primary Dental Council accredited qualification) the Council will appoint a Course Review Team to evaluate and make recommendations to Council on the sufficiency of the course to equip existing registrants to remove exclusions from their scope of practice.

The team is an adhoc committee of the Dental Council. Each team is constituted to assess and report on a particular course and then is disbanded.

The composition of the team must provide a balance of expertise to allow a transparent and independent assessment of the course.

Each team will normally consist of:

- An experienced oral health practitioner who is registered and competent in the relevant procedures being reviewed within the scope of practice and preferably with previous experience of a course approval/accreditation process
- A dental academic who has the educational competencies to evaluate the course submitted, preferably with previous experience of a course approval/accreditation process
- A member who preferably participates in all reviews and who is familiar with registration processes and the scopes of practice under consideration

Where the course covers material which is also part of the scope of practice of other health practitioners or is covered by separate legislation an appropriate educational, professional, or legislative body may be commissioned to provide a course review report or invited to nominate a representative on the Course Review Team.

The Course Review Team will conduct a paper review of the submitted documentation against the criteria and the team may require an onsite evaluation before making its recommendations to the Council.

The Team will prepare a draft report and course recommendations. This will be provided to the course provider for correction of errors of fact prior to submission to Council.

Approval process for course providers who do provide training as part of a primary Dental Council accredited qualification

For any application submitted by an educational institution, which currently provides such training as part of the primary Dental Council accredited qualification the Council will appoint an educationalist rather than a Course Review Team to evaluate and make recommendations to Council on the sufficiency of the course to equip existing registrants for removal of exclusions from their registered scope of practice. The review process is not expected to be onerous on the educational institution (particularly as the education institution has been through a formal Council accreditation process) but simply allow the Council to review and monitor the approved course.

The educationalist will conduct a paper review of the application against the criteria and prepare a draft report and recommendations. The educationalist will then add a recommendation whether or not the course should be approved. This will be provided to the course provider for correction of errors of fact prior to submission to the Council.

Course Approval Status & Periods

The Council will consider the Course Review Team or educationalist's report and on the advice of its recommendation will select one of the following options for each course put forward for approval:

- **Approval** covering a period of up to five years from the date of approval before which time the course must be resubmitted for approval.
- **Approval with conditions** up to five years but is subject to the condition that certain actions detailed in the report are realised within a specified time frame. The Council may require the submission of further materials for review. A written statement detailing compliance with the conditions is the minimum requirement.
- **Refusal** - used in circumstances where deficiencies in a course are such that it is considered practitioners would be unable to achieve the required levels of competence.

Course Approval Costs

The relevant application fees required to be submitted with the application is published in the Gazette, and available on the Dental Council website under the schedule of fees.

Please note additional charges will occur if a site visit is required.

Timeframe

Course providers should allow up to three months from the date of submitting the documentation to Council and receipt of Council's decisions on accreditation. Additional time may be required if the documentation submitted is not adequate to allow the Council to assess the sufficiency of the course against the defined criteria.