

DRAFT Guidance for the
professional relationship between a
dental technician or clinical dental
technician and other health
practitioners

Introduction

Dental technicians and clinical dental technicians are registered oral health practitioners who design, construct and repair fixed and removable oral and extra-oral appliances and prostheses, e.g. dentures, crowns, bridges and implant supported prostheses, to the 'prescription' of another registered health practitioner who is authorised by their scope of practice to perform the fitting of the appliance or prostheses, e.g. dentist, dental specialist, clinical dental technician, medical practitioner or other practising health practitioner.

In this context 'prescription' is defined as an instruction, either written or verbal, by an appropriately registered health practitioner to a dental technician to carry out a procedure contained in their registered scope of practice.

Clinical dental technicians can also work as independent practitioners and deal directly with the public in the making and fitting of complete removable dentures, and some other types of removable dentures and intra- and extra- oral appliances.

The individual scopes of practice are described by the Dental Council ('the Council') and detail the activities dental technicians and clinical dental technicians may perform, commensurate with their education, training, experience and competence.

The professional relationship that exists between a dental technician or clinical dental technician and the practitioner prescribing to them carries with it responsibilities for the parties involved.

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to detail the professional responsibilities of dental technicians and clinical dental technicians when providing or sourcing dental technology services, and health practitioners prescribing to them.

Responsibilities of practitioners

Dental technicians

- Have a responsibility to seek professional advice from, or give professional advice to, the prescribing practitioner in a timely manner, when advice is required.
- Are responsible for keeping accurate and up-to-date records of advice sought, received or provided.

Clinical dental technicians

- Have a responsibility to ensure that the patient's mouth is fit for the purpose and free of disease, disorder or abnormality before taking any impression or fitting any denture or appliance. The clinical dental technician's assessment may result in the need for timely referral of the patient to a dentist, dental specialist or medical practitioner.
- Have a responsibility to seek professional advice from, or give professional advice to, the prescribing practitioner in a timely manner, when advice is required.
- Are responsible for keeping accurate and up-to-date records of advice sought, received or provided.

- May not adjust, modify or treat the natural dentition, bone, soft tissue or dental restorations; apart from the use of tissue conditioners and soft lining materials.
- Are jointly responsible with the prescribing practitioner for ensuring the patient is informed of all treatment options available.
- In the case of designing, constructing, relining or fitting a removable partial denture directly for a patient, the clinical dental technician is obliged to refer the patient to a dentist or dental specialist to provide an oral health certificate. By supplying an oral health certificate the dentist/dental specialist confirms there are no diseased or unhealed hard or soft tissues, or any other abnormalities contraindicating the provision of a partial denture.
- Have a responsibility to ensure the patient is referred back to the prescribing dentist/dental specialist for the final fitting of appliances that can be provided only under prescription, with the exception of extra oral maxillofacial prostheses.

Final fitting for clinical dental technicians means ensuring the patient is referred back to the prescribing dentist/dental specialist for the subsequent management and ongoing monitoring of the patient's oral health.

The prescribing practitioner

- Is obliged to assess and have confidence in the skills and competence of dental technicians or clinical dental technicians undertaking their work, and be familiar with their scopes of practice. A verifiable measure of a dental technician's qualification, skill and competence is whether or not he or she is registered with the Dental Council and holds a current annual practising certificate.
- Has a responsibility to ensure that all products purchased and supplied by a dental laboratory are of an acceptable quality or standard, and that a custom-made appliance supplied to them (or to a patient) is traceable in the event of a product recall or an adverse reaction or complaint.
- Has a responsibility to give timely advice to the dental technician or clinical dental technician undertaking their work, and seek advice from the dental technician or clinical dental technician, when required.
- Is responsible for keeping accurate and up-to-date records of advice sought and provided, prescriptions provided, and oral health certificates issued (where applicable).
- Is obliged to be available when the patient is having a shade taken or checked with the dental technician in case of emergency; and as soon as possible on the same day to recement the temporary restoration (where applicable).
- Is jointly responsible with the clinical dental technician for ensuring that a patient is informed of all treatment options available.
- In cases where work is undertaken by a clinical dental technician under prescription, the prescribing practitioner (dentist, dental specialist, clinical dental technician, medical practitioner) remains responsible for the clinical care outcomes of the patient.
- Is responsible for confirming that a clinical dental technician is registered in the additional scope of practice for the scope for implant overdentures before delegating associated clinical tasks to them.

A dentist or dental specialist

- Is responsible for providing an oral health certificate to a clinical dental technician wishing to supply a removable partial denture direct to the patient only when there are no diseased or unhealed hard or soft tissues or any other contraindicating abnormalities. An oral health certificate template is provided on page 5 of this guidance.

- Is always responsible for the final fitting of:
 - Removable complete and partial immediate dentures
 - Removable complete and partial root/tooth overdentures
 - Removable complete and partial overdentures on implants
 - Dental appliance therapy for the treatment of sleep disorders.

Oral Health Certificate

Patient's Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Address: _____

Referred by: _____
(Name of clinical dental technician)

In my opinion, on: _____
(State date of examination by dentist)

1. The patient is dentally fit¹ and the condition of the denture bearing area is satisfactory for the fitting of dentures.

Treatment by a dentist is NOT required before denture treatment can commence

2. Required modifications to the teeth such as rest seats **have/have not** been undertaken.
(circle one)
3. The patient is not dentally fit but the oral condition of the denture area is satisfactory for the fitting of dentures.

Denture treatment may commence but treatment by a dentist is required to restore dental fitness

4. The patient is not dentally fit and the oral condition of the denture area is not satisfactory for the fitting of dentures.

Treatment by a dentist is required before denture treatment can commence.

(Delete whichever does not apply in 1, 3 and 4 above and use the space below for any further comments, eg relevant medical or dental history details)

This certificate of oral health is provided in good faith, without prejudice, and applies for the purposes of a removable partial denture.

It is valid on the date of the examination and expires² on: _____
(State expiry date of certificate)

The clinical dental technician remains responsible for the clinical care outcomes in relation to the provision and fitting of the patient's denture.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Dentist to sign)

Dentist's name and address: _____

¹ Dentally fit means no diseased or unhealed hard or soft tissues or disorders or abnormalities contraindicating the provision of the partial denture. It also means that the abutment teeth are suitable for a partial denture and that there is no caries, pulp or periapical disease or periodontal conditions requiring treatment.
² It is recommended that an expiry date of 90 days be used.