

29 September 2026

Tēnā koe,

Consultation outcome: accredited specialist qualifications and amendment to examinations

On 24 June 2026 a consultation was issued to 109 stakeholders and 5683 practitioners on the following proposed changes to prescribed qualifications:

1. To recognise three newly accredited dental specialist training programmes as prescribed qualifications for New Zealand registration in oral medicine, paediatric dentistry and special needs dentistry.
2. To remove the reference to a dentist qualification from the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination prescribed qualifications.

The consultation closed on 6 August 2026, with a total of 41 submissions received. There was strong support for both proposals. Details on the areas of support and concerns raised are available in Appendix 1.

After considering the submission feedback at its September 2026 meeting, the Council accepted both proposals. This means that:

1. The following accredited programmes will be gazetted as prescribed qualifications for the respective scopes of practice:
 - Oral medicine: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Oral Medicine
 - Paediatric dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Paediatric Dentistry
 - Special needs dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Special Needs Dentistry.
2. References to dentist/dental qualifications will be removed from the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination prescribed qualifications, as follow:

For dental hygiene:

- A dental hygiene ~~or dental~~ qualification and a pass in the USA National Board Dental Hygiene Examination, and a pass in a USA state board dental hygiene clinical examination, and Dental Council approved courses for administering local anaesthetic, undertaking orthodontic procedures, intra-oral radiography and extra-oral radiography.
- A dental hygiene ~~or dental~~ qualification and a pass in the Canadian National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination, and a pass in a Canadian regional dental hygiene clinical examination, and Dental Council approved courses for administering local anaesthetic, undertaking orthodontic procedures, intra-oral radiography and extra-oral radiography.
- A dental hygiene ~~or dentist~~ qualification and a pass in the New Zealand Dental Hygiene Registration Examination.

For dental therapy:

- A dental therapy or dentist qualification and a pass in the New Zealand Dental Therapy Registration Examination.

The draft notices included in the [consultation document](#) remain unchanged and will be published in the New Zealand Gazette and made available on our [website](#).

Thank you for participation in the consultation process.

Ngā mihi nui,



Marie MacKay

Chief Executive

Summary of feedback

Proposal 1: Accredited FRACDS programmes in oral medicine, paediatric dentistry and special needs dentistry

Summary of proposed change

Following accreditation of the RACDS Fellowships in oral medicine, paediatric dentistry and special needs dentistry in March 2026, the Council consulted on gazetting the three programmes as prescribed qualifications for the related specialist scopes of practice.

Programme commencement remained subject to Health NZ - Te Whatu Ora confirming the specialist registrar roles, disciplines, role duration, and agreement with RACDS to deliver the training.

The draft notices reflected these dependencies, as the programmes could not commence until the registrar arrangements were confirmed. The RACDS confirmed that formal Health NZ approval of the six proposed registrar roles had not yet been received. Positive engagement was continuing, and the Council would be advised of any formal developments.

Level of support

- Most submitters supported the proposals, including stakeholders outside the affected disciplines. A total of 39 (95%) submitters responded to the oral medicine and paediatric dentistry components of the consultation question. The majority dental specialists (10) and dentists (10). All the professional associations and the sector body submitters responded to these questions.
- An additional 2 stakeholders (professional associations) responded to the special needs dentistry component of the consultation question.
- Seven overseas submitters (6 dental specialists, 1 dentist – also representing professional associations) responded to the proposal; the majority can be identified as practising in Australia.
- Oral medicine and paediatric dentistry: 32 of 39 submitters supported the proposal, three somewhat supported the proposals.
- Special needs dentistry: 34 of 41 submitters supported the proposal, four somewhat supported the proposal.
- Four disagreed with the oral medicine programme, and two with the proposals on special need dentistry and paediatric dentistry programmes.
- Some submitters were involved in, or taught in disciplines related to, the proposed programmes.

Reasons for support

Key areas offered for support can be summarised as:

- Quality assurance: curriculum was co-designed by Australasian subject-matter experts, iterative College review, independent pre-accreditation review by international subject-matter experts, and evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research on the programmes' pedagogical design. The Dental Council then reviewed the programmes with international senior academics and practising NZ clinicians within the disciplines and accredited the programmes.
- Opportunities to increase workforce in areas with critical shortages, that will benefit patient care and public health over time.

- Introducing hospital-based learning for these disciplines primarily practising within hospital environments will be beneficial.
- Referencing the required Health NZ confirmations in the gazette notice, as proposed, enables the pathway to activate once the registrar roles are established.

Questions or concerns raised

Questions or areas of concern raised included:

- The RACDS should not award the Fellowship for these disciplines, as unlike the five-year oral and maxillofacial surgery qualification, these training programmes are three-year programmes.

The Council considered this matter outside the consultation scope and the Council's ambit. This is a matter for the College, and not a regulatory matter.

- The curriculum, and inadequate resourcing and capabilities of those delivering the didactic, research and clinical supervision.

These areas formed a core part of the accreditation review process – refer [accreditation report](#) for details. The Council accepted that the programmes met the accreditation standards, subject to implementation-related conditions.

- A question whether the special needs dentistry programme enable trainees to provide care to patients under general anaesthesia.

Yes, the programme (and paediatric dentistry programme) includes GA sessions.

- A medicine degree is not needed for registration in oral medicine in Australia.

This matter was considered outside of this consultation. The Council is already aware of the Australian oral medicine training requirements and have acknowledged this matter in its January 2026 consultation. This matter is being addressed in a separate process.

Proposal 2: Dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination changes

Summary of proposed change

In November 2025, the Council re-tested its position that candidates entering a New Zealand registration examination must hold a formal qualification in the scope of practice being examined.

After considering the feedback, the Council decided not to allow overseas-qualified dentists to enter the New Zealand oral health therapy registration examination, as outlined in the 15 April 2026 consultation outcome. The dentist qualification reference was removed from the updated prescribed qualifications gazetted for oral health therapy.

To align the dental hygiene and dental therapy scopes of practice, the Council consulted in June 2026 on removing references to dentist qualifications from their listed registration examinations, including the New Zealand hygiene and therapy registration examinations and the USA and Canadian dental hygiene examinations.

Level of support

- A total of 33 submitters responded to this question:
 - Support: 22 (67%). Five of these were oral health therapists and dental hygienists, 14 dentists and dental specialists, and three professional associations and sector body.

- Somewhat: 8, being dentists and dental specialists, and a practice owner
- Disagree: 2, a dentist and dental therapist
- Unfamiliar with issue (1).

In summary:

- Most submitters supported or somewhat supported the proposal.
- The three new registration pathways were expected to increase options for overseas applicants from 1 November 2026.
- The changes may help address workforce pressures, although broader workforce issues required wider solutions.

The consultation document can be accessed [here](#) for any further detail.