

24 June 2026

Tēnā koutou katoa,

### Consultation on three new accredited specialist qualifications, and amendment to dental hygiene and dental therapy examinations

The Council is consulting on the following proposed changes to prescribed qualifications:

1. 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. Remove the reference to a dentist qualification from the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination prescribed qualifications.

#### **Accredited FRACDS training programmes in oral medicine, paediatric dentistry and special needs dentistry**

On 3 March 2026 the Council accredited three new programmes from the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (RACDS), with conditions, until 31 December 2030. The commencement of the accredited programmes is subject to confirmation from Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora on the:

- establishment of the dental specialist training registrar roles;
- disciplines the roles are earmarked for;
- secured duration of the roles; and
- agreement with the Royal Australian College of Dental Surgeons to undertake the training for these registrar roles.

The Council considered these assurances were essential to demonstrate how the programmes can meet the accreditation standards. As these are new programmes, a number of implementation conditions must be met within defined timeframes which will be closely monitored by the Council.

The Council's decision was informed by a site evaluation team (SET) report. A SET was appointed to review the proposed programmes, comprising of international senior dental academics and New Zealand practising clinicians in the relevant disciplines. On balance, the SET considered that there were sufficient frameworks in place with robust processes and administrative support from the College. Clinical case load, patient mix and complexity will support dental specialist training. Planned clinical supervision, assessments and monitoring mechanisms were robust. The SET was satisfied that adequate resourcing was presented to support the planned maximum of six trainees across the three disciplines at any given time. Training is currently planned at New Zealand sites only.

The accreditation assessment of the oral medicine programme was conducted against current prescribed qualification requirements. Any future changes will be handled in due course, dependent on the [outcome](#) of the Council decisions on the proposed prescribed qualification changes.

The Council accepted the SET findings. The full accreditation report is available [here](#).

In light of the above decision, the Council is proposing to gazette the following accredited programmes as prescribed qualifications:

- For oral medicine scope of practice: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Oral Medicine
- For paediatric dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Paediatric Dentistry
- For special needs dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Special Needs Dentistry.

The gazette notices will include reference to the required confirmations from Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora. This is because the commencement of the three programmes are dependent on the establishment of the dental specialist training registrar roles and the other related matters referred to above.

Section 14 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 requires the Council to consult on changes to prescribed qualifications.

Gazetting these qualifications as prescribed qualifications will enable practitioners who satisfactorily complete these programmes to register and practise in the relevant dental specialist discipline in New Zealand.

Accredited training pathways in these disciplines will support growth in areas with critical workforce shortages.

Draft notices with the proposed updates to the prescribed qualifications are presented for:

- [oral medicine](#)
- [paediatric dentistry](#)
- [special needs dentistry](#)

### **Dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination changes**

Following the Council's March 2026 consideration of the submissions made in response to amendments to the prescribed qualifications for oral health therapy, dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examinations, the Council is consulting on consequential changes to the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examinations.

During the November 2025 consultation, the Council re-tested its policy position that requires a candidate entering a New Zealand registration examination to hold a formal qualification in the scope of practice being examined. At the time, the Council proposed that overseas qualified practitioners holding a dentist qualification could enter the New Zealand oral health therapy registration examination, as already reflected in the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination prescribed qualifications.

After considering the submission feedback the Council decided not to implement the proposal, as communicated in the consultation [outcome](#) on 15 April 2026. As a result, the proposed inclusion of a dentist qualification for the New Zealand oral health therapy registration examination was removed from the updated prescribed qualifications [gazetted](#).

To affect the Council's position and for alignment across the scopes of practice, the Council is now proposing to amend the existing prescribed qualifications for the dental hygiene and dental therapy scopes of practice to also remove the reference to a dentist qualification from those scopes' listed registration examinations. This includes the New Zealand registration examinations for both hygiene and therapy, and for dental hygiene the USA and Canadian national examinations.

Draft notices with the proposed updates to the prescribed qualifications are presented for:

- [dental hygiene](#)
- [dental therapy](#)

### Have your say

We welcome and value all feedback on these proposals.

#### What we are asking

##### Proposed new dental specialist qualifications

1. Do you support the gazetting of the following prescribed qualifications following successful accreditation:
  - For oral medicine: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Oral Medicine
  - For paediatric dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Paediatric Dentistry
  - For special needs dentistry: Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Special Needs Dentistry.

If not, please detail why.

##### Proposed changes to existing prescribed qualifications

2. Do you support removing the reference to a dentist qualification from the dental hygiene and dental therapy registration examination prescribed qualifications. If not, please detail why.

Your submissions must reach us **by 6 August 2026**.

We encourage online submissions via our online [feedback survey](#). Submission letters or supporting documents can be uploaded as part of the survey.

## Submissions

Submissions received will be published on our website and will record the submitter's name and profession (for registered oral health practitioners), or name and organisation. All other contact details will be removed. We will not publish any submissions containing derogatory or inflammatory content.

As this is a public consultation process, "In confidence" information will only be accepted under special circumstances. Please contact us before submitting material in confidence.

## Next steps

Once the consultation is closed, Council will consider all feedback before making any final decisions. We will then communicate the outcome of the consultation.

As relevant to the Council decision, changes will be given effect by notices in the New Zealand Gazette ([www.gazette.govt.nz](http://www.gazette.govt.nz)), which will also be published on our website and come into effect 28 days after gazetting.

If you have any questions about this consultation, you can contact us by [email](#) or phone 04 499 4820.

I look forward to receiving your views on the proposals.

Ngā mihi,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marie MacKay', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Marie MacKay  
Chief Executive

## Draft gazette – prescribed qualifications

Draft notices are presented for consultation purposes as required under section 14(2) of the HPCAA.

Proposed changes to the gazetted prescribed qualifications are indicated in the relevant attachments as red text:

1. [Prescribed qualifications for oral medicine specialists](#)
2. [Prescribed qualifications for paediatric dentistry specialists](#)
3. [Prescribed qualifications for special needs dentistry specialists](#)
4. [Prescribed qualifications for dental hygiene practice](#)
5. [Prescribed qualifications for dental therapy practice.](#)