

Registration as an oral health practitioner

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Scope and purpose

1. This policy applies to all applicants for registration as an oral health practitioner in New Zealand, in any scope of practice. Its purpose is to:
 - protect public safety by ensuring the Dental Council |Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho (the Council) registers applicants who are qualified, fit and competent to practise in their oral health profession.
 - support the Council to apply a consistent, fair and transparent approach to considering applications for registration as an oral health practitioner.
 - When receiving and considering applications for registration, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“the Act”).

Application requirements

2. The Council will consider a complete application for registration as soon as practicable after receiving it.¹ An application for registration is not complete until all the following has been supplied by the applicant:
 - the correct, fully completed application form for the registration pathway the applicant is applying through
 - all supporting documentation required for the application²
 - the correct application fee for the registration pathway.
3. Applicants must meet all costs of their application, including (for example) costs relating to:
 - English language testing
 - verification or certification of documents
 - verification of professional status from other regulators
 - official translation of documents that are not in English.
4. If the applicant owes the Council any costs, expenses or fines under this Act or any previous Act, the Registrar may decline to act on the application for registration until the outstanding monies are paid.

Applying for registration in a dental specialist scope of practice

5. Applicants who wish to register in a dental specialist scope of practice are permitted to apply directly for the relevant specialist scope of practice without first obtaining registration in the general dentist scope of practice.

Accuracy of information

6. The applicant must complete their application form - and all relevant declarations - themselves. It is an offence under section 172 of the Act for an applicant to knowingly provide false or misleading information – oral or written - to the Council. The Council may

¹ Throughout this Policy, ‘the Dental Council’ includes any lawful delegate.

² For the supporting information referred to throughout this Policy, refer to the ‘*Required supporting documents list*’ for the relevant registration pathway, on the Dental Council’s website.

cancel the registration of any applicant who obtains registration by making a false or misleading representation or was not entitled to be registered.

Registration requirements

7. Sections 15 and 16 of the Act set out the requirements for registration. An applicant must:
 - have the qualifications prescribed by the Council for registration in that scope of practice (or a qualification recognised by the Council as 'equivalent to or as satisfactory as' a prescribed qualification – see below);
 - be competent to practise in the scope of practice for which they are applying; and
 - be fit for registration as set out in section 16 of the Act.

Qualifications for registration

8. The Council prescribes qualifications for registration in each scope of practice. The list of prescribed qualifications for each scope of practice can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Applications for individual assessment

9. If an overseas qualified applicant does not hold an overseas prescribed qualification, they can apply for individual assessment of their qualification under section 15(2) of the Act if they believe, on their own assessment, that their qualification, training and experience is equivalent to, or as satisfactory as a prescribed qualification.³
10. An individual assessment includes:
 - review of the applicant's overseas qualification, training and experience by assessors with relevant knowledge of the prescribed qualifications for the scope of practice in which the applicant has applied
 - preparation of a written report by the assessors, providing their views (and reasons for their views) on whether, in their opinion:
 - the applicant's overseas qualification is equivalent to or as satisfactory as a prescribed qualification, and
 - the applicant is competent to practise within the scope of practice applied for.
11. The Council will consider the application and the results of the assessment before deciding how to proceed with the application (see *Council consideration of applications for registration* below).

Competence for registration

12. The Council jointly accredits and monitors New Zealand and Australian training institutions that deliver New Zealand prescribed and Dental Board of Australia approved qualifications for registration. Because it oversees the quality of this training, the Council generally accepts that a new graduate from an accredited programme will meet the required standard of competence for registration.

³ There is a higher application fee and longer processing time for this application type, given the resources required for individual assessment of the applicant's qualifications, training and experience.

13. Applicants who are not new graduates, or who trained overseas, will need to demonstrate that they meet the required standard of competence for the scope of practice for which they have applied (refer to relevant Required Supporting Documents List).
14. When considering whether an applicant is competent for registration, the Council will consider the totality of the application. Relevant information includes, but is not limited to:
 - the applicant's overall training, experience and formal qualifications
 - whether the applicant has practised continuously in a regulated environment since qualifying, or can otherwise demonstrate that they have maintained their skills at a level appropriate for the scope of practice applied for
 - whether the nature of the work in the jurisdiction(s) that the applicant has worked can be considered comparable to contemporary practice in
 - New Zealand
 - evidence of appropriate continuing professional development within the last 3 years
 - referee and assessor reports.

Fitness for registration

15. The Council requires each applicant for registration to provide declarations and supporting material to satisfy the Council that they are fit for registration, as set out below.

Ability to communicate effectively in English

16. Applicants must demonstrate that they can understand and communicate in English effectively to protect the health and safety of the public. An inability to do so impacts the practitioner's ability to engage clearly with patients, whanau and colleagues.
17. English language requirements are normally considered to be met if the applicant can satisfy the Council that they meet at least one of the following requirements:

Orthodontic auxiliary registration applicants	
a.	<p>The applicant successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Certificate of Orthodontic Assisting, New Zealand Association of Orthodontists: Orthodontic Auxiliary Training Programme <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate Certificate of Orthodontic Assisting, Academy of Orthodontic Assisting, and possession of a dental therapy, dental hygiene or dentistry qualification and approved experience in the provision of orthodontic auxiliary services under the direction and supervision of a dentist or dental specialist who can attest to competency <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English is the applicant's first language, and the applicant has completed their secondary schooling in New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, United States of

	<p>America, Republic of Ireland, or Canada where English was the sole language of instruction and assessment.</p> <p>Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.</p>
All other applicants	
b.	The applicant is applying for registration as a graduate of a Council accredited programme.
c.	The applicant is applying for registration as a graduate of a Dental Board of Australia approved programme.
d.	<p>English is the applicant's first language</p> <p>AND</p> <p>The applicant completed their dental training in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Republic of Ireland or Canada where English was the sole language of instruction and assessment.</p> <p>Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.</p>
e.	<p>English is not the applicant's first language</p> <p>BUT</p> <p>The applicant has worked as a registered oral health practitioner in a practice where English is the primary language of communication with patients and colleagues, for at least 2 years within the 5 years immediately prior to application, in one of the following countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom • United States of America • Australia • Republic of Ireland • Canada. <p>AND</p> <p>Attestation to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in an oral health setting with patients and professional colleagues is given by two practitioners who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are registered in a similar oral health profession • speak English as their first language • have worked with the applicant for at least 6 months within the last 5 years in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Republic of Ireland or Canada. <p>This option may only be used in the absence of any existing questions or concerns about the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English.</p>
f.	<p>If none of the above applies:</p> <p>The applicant must sit and pass a Council approved English language test to the required level, as set out in Appendix 1 of this Policy.</p>

Criminal convictions

18. Having a criminal conviction in New Zealand or elsewhere will not necessarily prevent an applicant from being registered. However, if an applicant has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of 3 months or longer, they will need to satisfy the Council that this does not reflect adversely on their fitness to practise.
19. All applicants must declare in their application for registration whether they have been convicted in New Zealand or overseas of any offence punishable by 3 or more months in prison.⁴ Applicants who have a conviction that meets this threshold will also be required to submit relevant supporting documentation (refer to relevant *Required Supporting Documents List*).
20. The Council will consider any disclosure of criminal convictions on a case-by-case basis.

Health (fitness to practise)

21. Having a health condition does not necessarily prevent an applicant from being registered. However, the Council must be satisfied that a health condition does not impact on the applicant's ability to perform the required functions of their chosen profession.
22. Oral health practice includes performing exposure-prone procedures. All applicants for registration must provide the following laboratory results to confirm their health status in relation to the following blood borne viruses:
 - Hepatitis B
 - Hepatitis C
 - HIV.
23. All applicants must also declare any physical or mental health conditions (including drug or alcohol addictions and other dependencies) that may impact on their ability to perform the required functions of their chosen profession. If an applicant has a health condition and is unsure of its impact on their ability to practise, the Council recommends that they seek medical advice from their treating practitioner, and/or declare the condition to the Council.
24. Applicants who discloses a health condition will be required to submit supporting documentation (refer to relevant *Required Supporting Documents List*).
25. The Council will consider any health disclosures on a case-by-case basis.

Professional and disciplinary history

26. Having a disciplinary history will not necessarily prevent an applicant from being registered. However, the Council will need to be satisfied that the applicant's disciplinary history does not reflect adversely on their fitness to practise.
27. All applicants for registration must declare whether - in New Zealand or another country - they are:

⁴ It is not necessary for the applicant to have been imprisoned; it is sufficient that the offence was punishable by imprisonment for 3 months or longer.

- currently or have previously been the subject of any professional disciplinary proceedings
- subject to any orders of a professional disciplinary tribunal
- the subject of any investigations that may be the subject of professional disciplinary proceedings.

28. The applicant must also declare if they are subject to any order by the educational institution that delivered the qualification they are relying on for their application.

29. All applicants will be required to submit supporting documentation to confirm their registration record in every jurisdiction where they have practised as a health practitioner. Applicants who have disclosed a disciplinary history – whether in New Zealand or another country - will need to provide further information (refer to relevant *Required Supporting Documents List*).

30. The Council will consider any disciplinary disclosures on a case-by-case basis.

Endangerment to the health or safety of the public

31. The Council may refuse to register an applicant if it has reason to believe the applicant may endanger the health or safety of the public. If the Council has information about an applicant for registration that causes it to believe that the applicant may endanger public health or safety, the Council may propose to decline an application for registration on this basis.

Any other information

32. The Council may ask for any other information it thinks fit to assist it in deciding an application. Information may be sought from the applicant or any other person. If the Council intends to approach another person about the applicant's application, it will first tell the applicant who it intends to question and the nature of the questions it intends to ask.

33. The Council may require an applicant to sit and pass an examination or assessment that is recognised or set by the Council, to be satisfied that the applicant is competent to practise in the scope of practice applied for. Any such examination or assessment forms part of the consideration of the application and is not a decision to decline the application.

Council consideration of applications for registration

34. When considering a completed application for registration, the Council will have regard to the totality of the information supporting the application before deciding whether to:

- register the applicant in the relevant scope of practice
- propose to register the applicant in the relevant scope of practice subject to conditions to ensure the competent practice of the applicant
- propose to register the applicant to provide limited health services only
- propose to decline the application.

35. If varying a prescribed qualification, the Council must be satisfied that the varied qualification is adequate for the provision of the permitted health services, and for the protection of the public.
36. The Council will tell an applicant for registration if it proposes to:
- register the applicant to provide limited health services
 - include conditions in the applicant's scope of practice
 - decline an application for registration.
37. The applicant will be told why the Council is making the proposal, and will be given a reasonable opportunity to make submissions and/or be heard on the matter.
38. A final decision on the application will be made by the Council after considering submissions made by the applicant (if any).

Post-registration requirements

Oversight and supervision

39. Registrants who register on the basis of overseas qualifications may be required to practise under oversight or supervision for an initial period.
40. Oversight and supervision are intended as safeguards to support new registrants who did not train in New Zealand as they enter its unique practice environment.
41. Each practitioner required to practise under oversight or supervision must nominate a practitioner to provide the oversight or supervision. Nominated practitioners must:
- be registered in the same or a related scope of practice as the supervisee
 - have been continually registered for a minimum of five years
 - hold a current practising certificate
 - be in good standing with the Council.
42. A new registrant with a condition of oversight or supervision will work under a Council-approved oversight or supervision protocol (protocol). They must not start practising until their protocol has been approved by the Council. Each protocol will be individualised to the practitioner, and will usually include:
- the supervisor or oversight provider's details
 - any specified workplace
 - scope and duration of oversight or supervision
 - any specific assessments required
 - roles and responsibilities of each party to the protocol
 - frequency of reporting to the Council
 - information and documentation required when applying for removal of the condition of oversight or supervision
 - any other relevant information.
43. If a practitioner's oversight provider or supervisor withdraws their support, the practitioner must stand down from practice until a new arrangement is approved.

44. When the registrant believes they have completed all requirements, including the required period of oversight or supervision and any required training, they can apply to the Council for removal of the condition. They will need to supply all required documentation to support their application.
45. The registrant must not practise independently until the Council has told them that it has removed the condition from their scope of practice and they have been issued a practising certificate with the condition removed

Practising certificate required to practise

46. To practise in New Zealand, a practitioner must hold both registration and a practising certificate. Once registration has been approved, an applicant will be issued an invoice to apply for a practising certificate. New registrants must not start practising in New Zealand until their first practising certificate has been issued. Practising without a current practising certificate is an offence under the Act and grounds for professional discipline in New Zealand.
47. Practising certificates are renewed annually; a first practising certificate may be issued for a shorter period to enable the registrant to join the annual renewal cycle.

Removal from and restoration to the register

48. Individuals can apply for restoration to the Register if their registration was cancelled:
- following a statutory revision of the Register, the Registrar cancels the registrant's entry in the Register.
 - following a notification to the Council of the registrant's death (made in error) by a Registrar under the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registration Act 2021.
49. The Council must restore the applicant to the register unless:
- they do not meet the fitness for registration requirements (s 16); and/or
 - they are subject to a pending disciplinary proceeding or to an order made by the HPDT to cancel their registration.
50. If an applicant is restored to the Register, any conditions that applied when their registration was cancelled will be reinstated until the conditions are varied or cancelled by the Council.⁵
51. If a person's registration has been cancelled for any other reason (e.g. on their written request or by order of the HPDT), and they wish to be registered again, they must submit a full, fresh application for registration and pay the relevant application fee.

Administration

Related Policies

⁵ See Policy on Recertification

1. Examinations Policy
2. Health (fitness to practise) Policy
3. Policy of Risk of Harm and Risk of Serious Harm
4. Recertification Policy

Version control

Policies replaced or rescinded by this policy	
COM002	Competence to practise
HAF001	English competence and English tests policy
HAF002	Fitness to practise and Fitness for Registration (see also Health Policy)
REG002	Notification to relevant responsible authorities (see also Notifications Policy)
REG003	Registration as an oral health practitioner in New Zealand
REG003S	Registration information for dental students convicted of any offences
REG004	Restoration to the Register

Appendix 1: Approved English language tests and required pass rates

1. Results must be obtained in one sitting.
2. Results are valid for two years from the date of examination.
3. The Council will verify all results with the examining body.

International English Language Testing (IELTS)

Profession	Level of proficiency
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) sit the IELTS Academic test; and b) score at least 6 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
Dental Technicians	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) sit the IELTS Academic test; and b) gain an average score of 7 or more across the four individual components of listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
All other applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clinical dental technicians ▪ Dental hygienists ▪ Dental therapists ▪ Dentists and dental specialists ▪ Oral health therapists 	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) sit the IELTS Academic test; and b) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Occupational English Test (OET)

Profession	Level of proficiency
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	A pass with a minimum score of 250 in each of the four components ⁶
All other applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clinical dental technicians ▪ Dental hygienists ▪ Dental technicians ▪ Dental therapists ▪ Dentists and dental specialists ▪ Oral health therapists 	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.

⁶ This includes a grade of A, B and a minimum score of 250 in the C band, in each of the four components