POLICY

Dental Council
Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho

Consultation

Approved: 23 October 2026
Issued: 27 October 2026
For review: September 2029

Purpose

1. The Dental Council (the Council) is committed to obtaining feedback from its stakeholders, building its understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, and meeting its legal responsibilities. The purpose of this policy is to facilitate good decision-making by setting out the Council's approach to consultation.

Policy

Introduction

2. Consultation involves a genuine and open-minded invitation to receive feedback on a proposal, which can inform and assist the Council with its decision-making. The Council recognises that consultation can lead to better decisions and create a greater understanding of the Council's role.

Decision to consult

3. The Council will decide whether to consult as follows:[1]
   a. the Council **must** consult when there is a statutory requirement to do so.[2]
   b. the Council **will** consult when the proposal under consideration could involve a significant change or have a significant impact on oral health practitioners, education providers, or other parties.
   c. the Council **may** consult when there are policy reasons to do so, including (without limitation) to enable cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders.

4. If the Council has stated that it will consult, or if it has previously consulted in a similar situation, it will consider whether there may be an expectation to consult. Public interest considerations may override an expectation to consult (e.g. in an emergency where a prompt response by the Council is required).

5. The Council may issue guidelines or guidance statements without formal consultation. Guidelines or guidance statements provide information to assist practitioners to meet existing obligations or professional standards. They do not impose mandatory requirements on practitioners.

6. If the Council is required to consult or decides to consult it will undertake a consultation process before making a final decision.

[1] See attached flowchart

[2] For example, scopes of practice and prescribed qualifications.

Stakeholders

7. The Council's stakeholders include oral health practitioners, professional associations, education providers, health sector and government agencies, professional interest groups, international regulatory and accreditation partners, and members of the public. In general, stakeholders who may be affected by a proposal will be consulted. Stakeholders may be consulted directly or through their representatives.

Consultation process

8. The Council will generally use discussion papers to explain the proposal and provide related information. Consultation documents will:
   - clearly communicate the proposal
   - contain enough information to ensure those being consulted are adequately informed and can provide an informed response
   - ask stakeholders specific questions to determine their views on the proposal and the reasons for their views
   - clearly state the timeframe for submissions
   - explain how make a submission
   - inform submitters that submissions will be published for transparency.

9. Consultation documents and the communication used to invite submissions will include a statement about the publication of submissions along the following lines:

   Submissions received will be published on our website at the conclusion of the consultation and will record the submitter's name and profession (for registered oral health practitioners). All personal contact details will be removed. We will not publish any derogatory or inflammatory content.

10. Consultation documents will be made widely available and shared with stakeholders by email and by publication on the Council's website.

11. The Council may use other communication or engagement tools to support and promote a consultation process, including direct stakeholder meetings or information sessions, webinars, website content, or practitioner updates.

Timing of consultation

12. The timing of a consultation will aim to support effective and meaningful engagement. The Council will consider:
    - whether there is any urgency with the proposal
    - other consultations (whether underway, recently completed, or planned);
    - any other key regulatory or sector activities;
    - holiday periods.

Timeframe for submissions

13. The Council's usual timeframe for submissions is 8 weeks. The usual timeframe may change depending on the complexity of the issue, the type of proposal, the volume of material provided to stakeholders, and the number of stakeholders to be consulted. The following factors may also change the usual timeframe:

Factors that may shorten usual timeframe	Factors that may extend usual timeframe
The matter is urgent	The matter is complex
The topic is straightforward	Multiple topics are involved
Simple responses are sought from those being consulted	Additional stakeholder engagement is required as part of the consultation process
The proposal has limited impact on identifiable stakeholders	The proposal will affect a wide range or large number of stakeholders and/or have a significant impact
Few stakeholders are involved in the consultation	The consultation is through an extended holiday period
Those being consulted are aware of the issues from previous consultation or engagement	The proposal is likely to generate extensive debate or be disputed
Those being consulted indicate, with valid reasons, that the time should be shorter.	Those being consulted indicate, with valid reasons, that the time should be longer.

14. If the usual timeframe changes, it will be no less than 4 weeks and no more than 12 weeks. The Council will consider the need to allow enough time for meaningful consultation, including a reasonable timeframe for those being consulted to consider the issues and prepare a response.

15. Reminders may be issued to stakeholders before the timeframe for submissions close, including where there is a longer consultation period.

16. The Council may change the timeframe for submissions during a consultation process if it considers this is necessary. The Council will inform stakeholders if this occurs.

Submissions

17. For efficiency, submissions will generally be collected through an online survey.

18. For transparency, all submissions received will be published on the Council's website at the end of the consultation process, including the name and profession of any oral health practitioner who made a submission. The Council will not:

- publish personal contact details;
- publish any information it considers derogatory or inflammatory.

19. Submissions may be published individually or as a single document including all submissions.

Analysis of submissions

20. All submissions received will be recorded and analysed for the Council's consideration.

21. Analysis of submissions involves a substantive evaluation of the issues, views, reasons and evidence provided by submitters. Quantitative analysis is supplementary and may be used to inform the Council about the number of submissions received and the overall pattern of stakeholders' responses to the proposal.

22. Analysis may include:
    - new information or context that may change any original assumption(s) relevant to the proposal
    - new or different approaches that could achieve the same or similar outcome
    - information relevant to compliance or implementation
    - evidence about the impact of the proposal, particularly unintended consequences
    - unanticipated concerns
    - a summary of the submissions in support of a proposal
    - a summary of any concerns or disagreement raised about a proposal.

23. AI tools may be used for the analysis of submissions in accordance with relevant policies. The use of AI tools will be disclosed in consultation documents or other consultation communications.

Consideration by the Council

24. The Council will be provided with all relevant information relating to the proposal and the consultation process, including access to all submissions received and the analysis of the submissions.

25. A report will be prepared for the Council and will usually include:
    - the proposal and its purpose
    - a summary of the consultation process
    - a summary of submission(s) received
    - recommendations following the consultation process.

26. The Council will give primary consideration to the substance and merits of the issues raised in submissions. The number of submissions supporting or opposing a proposal may provide context but will not in itself determine the Council's decision.

27. The Council will carefully consider all relevant information with an open mind before making a final decision. The Council's final decision may or may not change the original proposal and not all stakeholders may agree with the outcome.

28. The Council may defer a decision for further investigation to occur or to seek additional information.

29. The Council may decide to consult further if its views or the original proposal is substantially changed because of the consultation process.

Outcome

30. The Council's final decision and the reasons for the decision will be shared with stakeholders and published on the Council's website. A summary of the consultation process and feedback received will also be provided. Where relevant, any final documentation (e.g. a standard), a summary of key changes, relevant timeframes, implementation requirements, or other information, will also be provided to stakeholders.

31. The Council may provide additional information to some stakeholders, including where it considers it is necessary to address specific submissions made by the stakeholder which are not covered in the general communication.

Retention of documents

32. The Council will retain copies of consultation documents and submissions on its website for a minimum of three years to allow stakeholders access to earlier consultation processes and their outcomes.

Evaluation

33. The Council may review a consultation process, including for training, administrative, or quality purposes. This may include seeking feedback from stakeholders.

Version control

Policies replaced or rescinded by this policy	
	Consultation policy
	Guidelines on consultation

Flowchart: decision to consult

