POLICY

Dental Council
Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho

Practising certificates

Approved:	8 June 2026
Issued:	1 July 2026
For review:	31 March 2029

Scope and purpose

1. This policy applies to all oral health practitioners (practitioners) who are registered with the Dental Council (the Council) and who intend to practise their profession.

2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the Council applies a consistent, fair and transparent approach to decisions on whether to issue practitioners with an annual practising certificate (APC).

3. In considering all applications for an APC, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 ("the HPCA Act").

Background

4. To practise as an oral health practitioner in Aotearoa New Zealand, a person must:

   - be registered with the Council in the relevant scope of practice;

   AND

   - hold a current APC issued by the Council.

5. Practising without a current APC may be grounds for professional disciplinary proceedings. Exceptions to this requirement apply if a practitioner performs health services:
   - in an emergency;[1]
   - as part of a training course or instruction; or
   - in the course of an examination, assessment or competence review required or ordered by the Council.

Legal

6. All applications for an APC must include the required information and payment of the relevant fee. Incomplete applications, including non-payment of the relevant fee, will not be processed.

7. An APC may be issued for a period of no longer than 12 months from the date it is issued.

8. The Registrar[2] must issue an APC unless any of the following circumstances apply:

- the applicant has, at any time, failed to maintain the required standard of competence;
- the applicant has failed to fulfil, or has failed to comply with, a condition included in the applicant's scope of practice;
- the applicant has not satisfactorily completed the requirements of any competence programme that he or she has been ordered by the Council to complete;
- the applicant has not held an APC of a kind sought within the 3 years immediately preceding the date of the application;
- the applicant is unable to perform the functions required for the applicant's profession because of some mental or physical condition;
- the applicant has not, within the 3 years immediately preceding the date of application, lawfully practised the profession to which the application relates.

9. If any of the above circumstances apply, the Registrar (if they hold the relevant delegations) must decide whether to:
   - Issue an APC;
   - Propose to issue the APC with conditions; or
   - Propose to decline to issue an APC, and if so, whether to issue an interim practising certificate.

10. If the Registrar does not hold the relevant delegation, the application must be promptly referred to the Council[3] for consideration.

Policy

Information for consideration

11. If any of the circumstances in paragraph 8 above apply the applicant will be asked to provide further information:

Consideration	Information required
Maintaining competence Has the applicant failed at any time to maintain the required standard of competence?	Applicants must provide all information about: • current or previous competence and professional disciplinary processes (other than processes with the Council). • any formal competence inquiry or restriction or withdrawal of credentials based on performance or conduct, undertaken by an employer, or a complaints, licensing, or professional body (other than the Council). • confirmation of engagement in recertification or professional development Any disclosures or other information provided as part of the application will be considered.

Compliance with conditions Has the applicant failed to fulfil, or failed to comply with, a condition included in the applicant's scope of practice?	An applicant's compliance with any condition is confirmed at the time of application. This may require contact with Council agents (e.g., supervisors), employers or others who are able to provide informed comment on compliance with conditions.
Completion of competence programme Has the applicant failed to satisfactorily complete the requirements of a competence programme that he or she has been ordered to complete?	An applicant's compliance with the requirements of a competence programme is confirmed at the time of application. This may require contact with Council agents (e.g., supervisors), employers or others who are able to provide informed comment on the practitioner's progress in their competence programme and consideration of the Council's views about the progress or completion of a competence programme (where relevant).
Recency of practice Has the applicant within the three years immediately preceding the date of the application either: (a) not held an APC in New Zealand or (b) not lawfully practised their profession?	The applicant must provide evidence of how they have maintained their competence to practise. Considerations include (but are not limited to): • the applicant's training, experience and formal qualifications (including when the applicant undertook their relevant formal qualifications) • professional status in any jurisdiction in which they have been practising • the length of time the applicant practised before taking the break from practice • the length of time away from practice • the relevance and extent of any professional development undertaken by the applicant when not practising • the nature and extent of any relevant practice outside New Zealand (including research, study or teaching). • the comparability or otherwise to New Zealand of the health system(s) in which the applicant has been working.
Health (fitness to practise) Is the applicant unable to perform the functions required to practise their profession because of some mental or physical condition?	Applicants are required to advise if they have been affected by, diagnosed with, or assessed as having, a mental or physical condition with that may affect their ability to perform the functions required to practise their profession. These include neurological, psychiatric or addictive (drug or alcohol) conditions, and physical deterioration due to injury, disease, or degeneration. Council staff will contact the applicant to discuss their condition. See the Council's **Health (Fitness to**

	Practise) Policy for information about management of practitioners with health conditions.
Other required disclosures Including investigations and convictions	Applicants must disclose if they have been the subject of: • a police investigation; • a criminal charge laid by the police; and/or • a guilty finding in a criminal proceeding including traffic offences involving alcohol or illegal substances. Disclosure is required even if the criminal proceedings resulted in discharge without conviction or a similar finding – unless the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004 applies. Information on application of this legislation can be found at https://www.justice.govt.nz/criminal records/clean-slate/.

Applicants who do not commence practice within 12 months of qualification

12. If an applicant applies for their first APC 12 months or more after confirmation that they have completed the requirements for their qualification, their application will usually be referred to the Council for consideration. The reason for this is that there is an expectation that newly qualified practitioners will usually need the benefit of immediate post-qualification practice to consolidate their skills and maintain their competence to practise.

Other information

13. The Council may ask an applicant for any other information it considers relevant to consideration of an application for an APC.

Consideration of an application

14. If an application for an APC needs to be referred to the Council for consideration, additional fees may apply, in line with the Council's gazetted fees. Applicants will be advised of this before the matter is referred to Council.

15. If the Council is not satisfied that an APC may be issued, it may decide to:
    - Propose to decline the application; or
    - Propose to decline the application until the applicant meets 1 or more conditions specified by the Council; or
    - Propose to include or vary conditions in the applicant's scope of practice which may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following requirements, to be completed within a specified timeframe:
    - the applicant must undertake an approved course of study or retraining
    - the applicant must complete a satisfactory period of practice under Council approved oversight or supervision.

- the applicant must pass an approved assessment or examination
- the applicant must complete approved recertification activities.

16. If the Council is considering declining an application or approving it subject to conditions, it will tell the applicant about its proposed decision, and the reasons for it, and give them an opportunity to be heard and make submissions before making a final decision.

Interim practising certificate

17. If the Council declines an application for an APC until 1 or more conditions are met (e.g. satisfactory completion of an examination or assessment), it may issue an interim practising certificate.

18. An interim practising certificate may be subject to conditions and may be extended if required, provided the total period of the interim practising does not exceed 12 months.

First practising certificate

19. When a practitioner is first registered, they must not practise until they have applied for an APC, paid the relevant fee, and been issued with an APC. The application can generally be made in conjunction with the application for registration.

20. The fee to be paid will depend on the profession and the date of the application relative to the APC cycle.

Applying to renew a current APC

21. Practitioners must renew their APC each year if they intend to continue practising their profession. The annual renewal cycle for dentists and dental specialists runs between 1 October and 30 September, and the annual renewal cycle for all other oral health practitioners runs between 1 April and 31 March.

22. Practitioners must renew their APC before the expiry of their current APC if they intend to continue practising. In the weeks prior to the expiry date of the annual APC cycle, the Council will contact all members of the profession to remind them to renew their APC.

23. If a practitioner who holds a current APC applies for and pays the relevant fee before their current APC expires, they are ‘deemed to hold’ an APC until one is issued by the Council, or they are advised it will not be issued.

24. Being ‘deemed to hold’ an APC allows the practitioner to continue practising until an APC is issued or declined.

25. If a practitioner’s APC has expired when they make their application, they are **not deemed to hold** an APC, and they must not practise until an APC is issued. It is a disciplinary offence to practise without a current APC.

Non-practising practitioners

26. If a practitioner does not intend to renew their APC, they have the following options either as part of the annual renewal cycle or at any stage during a practising cycle:
    - asking to be retained on the register as non-practising; or
    - requesting that their entry on the register be cancelled.[4]

27. Practitioners who wish to remain on the register but not practise will be charged a non-practising fee to retain their registration.

Fees

28. There are two types of APC fees:
    - A full year APC fee.
    - A four-month APC fee, which applies when an application is made within four months from the end of the relevant profession’s annual renewal cycle.

29. Special circumstances:
    - Practitioners applying to practise in more than one scope of practice in the same profession are only required to pay one APC fee.
    - Practitioners applying to practise in two or more professions within the same annual renewal cycle will only pay one APC fee, being the higher APC fee for the relevant professions.
    - Practitioners applying to practise in two or more professions with a different APC renewal cycle must apply for and pay the APC fee for each profession.

30. Practitioners applying for an APC after a period of not practising for 3 years or more will be charged an APC fee and the relevant recency of practice fee (where applicable).

31. Practitioners returning to practise after being recorded on the register as non-practising will be charged an APC fee and the relevant recency of practice fee (where applicable) to return to practising status.

32. Practitioners returning to practise after removal from the register will be charged an APC fee and the relevant fee for restoration to the register.

Administration

Related policies

1. Registration Policy
2. Oversight and Supervision Policy
3. Emergencies.

Version control

Approved by Council:	
Policies replaced or revoked by this policy	
COM004	Recency of practice
FIN001	APC fees