Dental Council
Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho

Recertification programmes for oral health practitioners

Approved:	5 October 2026
Issued:	28 October 2026
For review:	30 September 2029

Purpose

1. The Dental Council (the Council) has a statutory responsibility to protect the health and safety of members of the public. The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCA Act) allows the Council to set recertification programmes for the purposes of ensuring oral health practitioners (practitioners) are competent to practise within their scope of practice[1].

2. The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements of the recertification programmes the Council has set for this purpose. The Council has set two programmes:
   - a new overseas registrants recertification programme; and
   - an annual recertification programme.

Scope

New overseas registrants recertification programme

3. The new overseas registrants recertification programme applies to all newly registered overseas qualified practitioners who obtained registration through one of the following pathways:
   - Competent authority qualification (previously referred to as overseas prescribed qualification pathway)
   - Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act (TTMRA)
   - Dental Council registration examination.

4. Practitioners who are required to complete the new overseas registrants recertification programme will be advised of this by the Council upon registration.

5. Overseas qualified practitioners who register through a different pathway are also required to complete learning modules on oral health practice in New Zealand. However, they will do this through an individual oversight or supervision arrangement.

Annual recertification programme

6. The annual recertification programme applies to all practitioners registered in all scopes of practice who:
   - have been registered in New Zealand for six months or longer; and

[1] section 41

- hold a current annual practising certificate (APC).

Non-practising practitioners

7. Practitioners who do not hold an APC (i.e. non-practising) are not required to participate in the annual recertification programme, but are encouraged to do so if they intend to return to practise. When they apply for an APC, completion of any annual recertification programme while non-practising will be relevant to the Council's consideration of whether they have maintained the required standard of competence to practise.

Requirements of the new overseas registrants recertification programme

Content

8. The purpose of the new overseas registrants recertification programme is to support practitioners who are new to New Zealand to orientate safely and competently to the New Zealand practice environment.

9. All participants in the new overseas registrants recertification programme are required to complete all modules of the programme. The programme comprises a series of e-learning modules about oral health practice in New Zealand, covering elements including (but not limited to):
   - the legal context, and legal obligations of practitioners
   - cultural competence for practice in Aotearoa New Zealand
   - concerns about a practitioner's competence, health, or conduct
   - patient complaints
   - New Zealand legislation relevant to oral health practice
   - Dental Council standards and scopes of practice.

10. The Council will, from time to time, publish a notice on its website setting out the specific requirements of the new overseas registrants recertification programme.

Timeframe for completion

11. Participants in the new overseas registrants recertification programme are required to complete the programme within six months of obtaining their first APC.

12. If a participant in the new overseas registrants recertification programme has not completed all requirements of that programme within the required timeframe, the Council will consider how to respond to the non-completion in accordance with this policy; any exemption from the annual recertification programme may also end at this time.

Requirements of the annual recertification programme

Content

13. Every practitioner who is required to participate in the annual recertification programme is individually responsible for ensuring they have met its requirements each year. While other

people (including professional peers) have a role in helping the practitioner to meet requirements, the primary responsibility lies with the practitioner.

14. The content of the programme is set out in Appendix 1, and in the notice published on the Council's website.

15. The Council will, from time to time, publish a notice on its website setting out the specific requirements of the annual recertification programme

Start and end date

16. Every year, practitioners intending to continue practising over the next 12 months must apply to the Council to renew their APC. The annual recertification programme runs on an annual cyclical basis, linked to the renewal of APCs. This means that:
    - dentists and dental specialists will start their programme on 1 October each year and must meet all requirements by 30 September the following year.
    - oral health therapists, dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic auxiliaries, dental technicians and clinical dental technicians will start their programme on 1 April each year and must meet all requirements by 31 March the following year.

17. Once they have been registered for six months, practitioners will be prompted to register a professional peer. At this point, practitioners who hold an APC must commence participating in the annual recertification programme, unless they have been exempted by the Council under this policy or the HPCA Act.

Selection and appointment of a professional peer

18. The Council may decide that a practitioner cannot be a professional peer for other practitioners. The Council will likely exclude a practitioner from being a professional peer in situations including (but not limited to) where:
    - the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal has made an adverse finding against the practitioner
    - the practitioner is suspended from practice for any reason
    - there is some other reason which, in the Council's opinion, may risk the integrity of the annual recertification programme, or impact adversely on the practitioner, the professional peer, or the public.

19. A practitioner who is a professional peer must not be paid to undertake these activities.

Exemptions

Exemptions from new overseas registrants recertification programme

Exemptions

20. The Council believes it is critical for safe practice that every practitioner practising in New Zealand understands its unique practice environment. For this reason, exemptions from the new overseas registrants recertification programme are unlikely.

Extensions in exceptional circumstances

21. The Council acknowledges that, on occasion, life or health challenges or other exceptional circumstances arise that may impact on an individual's professional life. If a practitioner believes they are (or will be) unable to meet the requirements of the new overseas registrants recertification programme within the six-month timeframe, due to an exceptional or unforeseen circumstance, they may apply to the Council, as soon as they become aware of the issue, for an exemption from completing some or all requirements.

22. The Council will consider applications for an extension on a case-by-case basis.

Exemptions from annual recertification programme

Overseas registrants new to practice in New Zealand

23. Overseas qualified practitioners who are required to complete the new overseas registrants recertification programme are exempt from participating in the annual recertification programme while completing the new overseas registrants recertification programme in the first six months of holding a practising certificate.

Practitioners completing individual competence or recertification programmes

24. If the Council requires a practitioner to complete an individual recertification programme or competence programme, the requirements of that programme will be set separately by the Council.

25. The Council may, at its discretion, exempt a practitioner from meeting annual recertification programme requirements while they are completing an individual recertification programme or a competence programme. Unless expressly advised by the Council that they have been exempted from the annual recertification programme, the practitioner must assume that they have not been exempted from it.

Practitioners in part-time practice

26. If a practitioner is practising, they must maintain their knowledge, skills and competence to the required standard – regardless of how often they practise. For this reason, there is no exemption or reduction of annual recertification programme requirements for practitioners who practise part-time.

Exceptional circumstances

27. The Council acknowledges that, on occasion, life, health or other exceptional circumstances arise that may impact on an individual's professional life. If a practitioner believes they are (or will be) unable to meet the requirements of the annual recertification programme within the required timeframe, due to an exceptional or unforeseen circumstance, they may apply to the Council, as soon as they become aware of the issue, for an exemption from completing some or all requirements.

28. The Council will consider applications for an exemption on a case-by-case basis. Practitioners wishing to apply for an exemption should refer to the *Your recertification programme* handbook on the Council's website for further guidance.

29. An application for an exemption can be made at any time in the APC cycle and, unless expressly agreed by the Council, is only valid for the APC cycle for which it was granted. If the reason for the exemption remains at the end of the APC/recertification cycle, the practitioner must apply for an extension to the exemption when applying for their APC.

Non-compliance with the requirements of a recertification programme

30. If a practitioner who is required to complete a recertification programme under this policy does not satisfactorily meet one or more of its requirements, the Council will consider how to respond to the non-completion. In doing so, it will consider all the information before it, including, but not limited to:
    - the Council's regulatory principles
    - the reasons for the non-compliance
    - the practitioner's insight
    - the quality and appropriateness of any remedy proposed by the practitioner
    - any previous compliance, competence or conduct concerns about the practitioner
    - any other relevant circumstances.

31. Options open to the Council include (but are not limited to):
    - taking no further action on the matter, and, if appropriate, advising the practitioner that a note of their non-compliance will be retained on file and may be considered relevant to any future issues that arise in relation to the practitioner's conduct, competence or compliance with the Council's requirements
    - providing the practitioner with an educational letter setting out the Council's expectations for the coming recertification cycle
    - setting an individual recertification programme for the practitioner to complete (while also meeting any annual recertification programme obligations specified by the Council)
    - proposing to alter the practitioner's scope of practice, include conditions in their scope of practice, or suspend the practitioner's registration[2]
    - ordering that the practitioner undergo a competence review if the Council believes that the practitioner may be practising below the required standard of competence3
    - referring any questions about the safety or conduct of a practitioner's practice to a professional conduct committee (PCC).[4]

Administration

Related policies and guidance

1. Annual recertification programme handbook: Your recertification programme.
2. The Council's regulatory principles

[2] Section 43(1) HPCA Act

[3] Sections 36-37 HPCA Act

[4] Section 68 HPCA Act.

Version control

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Scheduled review
1	6 April 2020	The Council	1 August 2022
2	30 October 2023	Chief Executive (administration review)	1 November 2026
3	5 October 2026	The Council	30 September 2029

Appendix 1: Annual recertification programme requirements

Core Element	Practitioner's obligations	Professional peer's obligations
Professional peer	▪ Find and nominate to Council a registered practitioner who agrees to be their professional peer ▪ Interact with their professional peer about their professional development.	▪ Agree to be the practitioner's professional peer ▪ Interact with the practitioner about their professional development and submit an annual confirmation about the practitioner's professional development ▪ Maintain confidentiality of all information discussed with a practitioner unless that information meets the legal and/or ethical requirements for disclosure ▪ Declare to Council any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interests in meeting the obligations of a professional peer.
Professional development plan (PDP)	▪ Develop, reflect and continuously update their PDP to capture their progress and ensure their competence—relevant to their scope of practice, work setting(s) and patient group(s) ▪ Identify learning objectives and professional development activities to meet those learning objectives.	▪ Interact with the practitioner and provide credible feedback on their PDP.
Professional development activities (PDAs)	▪ Complete the planned PDAs in their PDP.	▪ Interact with the practitioner and provide credible feedback on the PDAs.
Written reflection on PDP and PDAs **Declarations/confirmation to Council at the end of the annual recertification programme cycle**	▪ Critically appraise (in writing) the PDAs engaged in, whether the PDP achieved the defined learning outcomes and the impact of these on their practice. ▪ Declare to Council they have met the requirements of the recertification programme ▪ If these requirements have not been met, explain to Council the reason(s) why not and how they plan to meet these as soon as possible.	▪ Provide credible feedback on the practitioner's written reflection. ▪ Submit a written confirmation annually to Council that they have interacted with the practitioner about their PDP, PDAs and the written reflection ▪ If some or all of the requirements have not been met and they are unwilling to confirm the practitioner has met the requirements, provide detail to Council on the reason(s) why.
Retention of records and supporting documents	▪ Retain documentation and evidence of meeting the requirements of the annual recertification programme, or reasons if they have not, for at least three years. ▪ If requested, provide documentation to Council	▪ Retain documentation and evidence of professional peer interactions with their practitioner for at least three years. ▪ If requested, provide documentation to Council