

## Registration as an oral health practitioner in New Zealand policy

Date last reviewed	November 2024
Approved by	Council - February 2025

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent, fair and transparent approach to registration of oral health practitioners.

### Scope

This policy applies to all applicants for registration, including New Zealand graduates.

### Legislation

The Dental Council will register an oral health practitioner within a scope of practise if the applicant:

- (a) Is fit for registration as set out in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“the Act”);
- (b) Has the qualifications that are prescribed by the Dental Council for that scope of practice;
- (c) Is competent to practise, as described in the Dental Council’s Competence to practise policy.

### Policy

1. All applicants must declare in their registration application whether or not they have been convicted in New Zealand or overseas of any offence and whether they have ever had a recognised or treated drug or alcohol problem or other mental or physical disability or condition.
2. Details are required where applicable and failure to give this information may well jeopardise an applicant’s right to registration.
3. Applicants can register in a specialist scope of practice without being first registered in a general scope of practice.
4. Areas of practice which were not included in a practitioner’s training should not be undertaken unless the practitioner has completed appropriate training and practises to the relevant standards required by the Dental Council’s *Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners* and practice standards.
5. Applicants with non-prescribed qualifications can apply for registration and individual consideration by the Dental Council if they consider the Dental Council might regard their qualifications as equivalent to, or as satisfactory as a prescribed qualification. Such applications are subject to additional fees to cover the costs of the individual assessment of the applicant’s qualifications, training and experience.
6. In cases where the Registrar is considering an application that relies on a non-prescribed overseas qualification:

- (a) The Registrar shall arrange an assessment of the applicant's overseas qualification by assessors with relevant knowledge of the prescribed qualifications for the relevant scope of practice in which the applicant applies for registration.
- (b) Having conducted the assessment, the assessors shall advise Council in a written report whether or not they consider the applicant's overseas qualification is equivalent to a prescribed qualification and whether or not the applicant is considered competent to practise within the scope of practice applied for, giving reasons for their opinions.
- (c) Having considered the assessors' report and other information, evidence or advice relevant to the application, including information relevant to the applicant's fitness for registration and advice obtained by the Registrar from any professional adviser, the Registrar may:
  - i Register the applicant in the relevant scope of practice;
  - ii Propose to register the applicant in the relevant scope of practice subject to such conditions as the Registrar considers are required to ensure the competent practice of the applicant and notify the applicant accordingly. If the applicant accepts the proposed conditions, the Registrar may register the applicant subject to those conditions, otherwise the Registrar shall refer the application for Council's decision concerning the conditions that would apply; or
  - iii Refer the application for Council's decision.
- (d) The Registrar shall refer an application for Council's decision if any of the following circumstances apply:
  - i The assessors do not consider that the applicant's overseas qualification is equivalent to a prescribed qualification; or
  - ii The assessors do not consider that the applicant is competent to practise within the scope of practice applied for; or
  - iii The Registrar identifies concerns in relation to the applicant's fitness for registration or any other matters that the Registrar considers may involve material risk to the health and safety of members of the public.

- 7. Alterations or conditions may be placed on a scope of practice at the time of registration.
- 8. A pass in the New Zealand Dental Council Registration Examinations is a prescribed qualification for registration as an oral health practitioner.
- 9. Persons with dental qualifications who are engaged in advising, reporting, teaching, research or management roles and who consider that they are not engaged in 'dental practice' (see definition below) are not required to be registered.

Please note: Registered practitioners must also hold an annual practising certificate (APC) in order to practise dentistry in New Zealand (refer Dental Council Policy on Recertification).
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## Definition: The practice of dentistry

The Dental Council defines the practice of dentistry as:

*The maintenance of health through the assessment, diagnosis, management, treatment, and prevention of any disease, disorder or condition of the orofacial complex and associated structures within the scope of the practitioner's approved education, training and competence. Practice in this context goes wider than clinical dentistry to include:*

*(a) reporting or giving advice in a dental capacity; and*

*(b) teaching, research and management roles*

*given that such roles use the knowledge and skills attained through undertaking a dental qualification and that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety.*

The practice of dentistry is carried out by registered oral health practitioners: dentists, dental specialists, dental therapists, dental hygienists, oral health therapists, orthodontic auxiliaries, dental technicians and clinical dental technicians.

## Other relevant documents

1. English language requirements and tests policy
2. Dental Council competence to practise policy.
3. Dental Council fitness to practise policy.
4. Restoration to the Dental Register policy.
5. Recertification of oral health practitioners policy.
6. The New Zealand Dental Registration Examinations' policy.