

Summary of Decisions

From the Dental Council meeting in July 2021

Level 8
Kordia House
109-125 Willis Street
Wellington 6011
New Zealand

PO Box 10-448
Wellington 6143
New Zealand

Tel: +64 4 499 4820
Fax: +64 4 499 1668
inquiries@dcnz.org.nz

www.dcnz.org.nz

The Dental Council (Council) is the statutory body constituted under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) to maintain the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise. Council endeavours to keep its key stakeholders up to date with key decisions.

This document is a summary of Council's decisions from the meeting held in July 2021.

Appointments to subcommittees

The Council approved the following appointments:

- Rosemary Fitzpatrick (lay member) to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- Charmaine Pene (lay member) and Dr Simon Briggs (subject matter expert) to the TMVI Panel.

Professor Ed Gane was also reappointed to the TMVI panel for another term of three years.

Consultation outcome on changes to the working relationship requirements for oral health practitioners with dentists, and the practising conditions for dental hygiene activities

The follow-up consultation was issued on 19 March 2021 with submissions closing on 7 May.

A total of 36 completed submissions were received. Each of the proposals received over 80% support by submitters.

The proposal to remove the requirement for a professional relationship was supported by most submitters. The concerns expressed by those who did not support the proposal related to the potential for the safety and quality of patient care to be compromised, and the view that the overall treatment plan is best overseen by a registered dentist to ensure safe and appropriate care.

The proposal to remove direct clinical supervision for administration of local anaesthetic and prescription preventive agents from the dental hygiene scope of practice was overwhelmingly supported. Concerns about this proposal related to the implications for management of medical emergencies.

Following consideration of the submission responses, the Council has agreed to proceed with the proposals, as consulted. Further details are outlined in the consultation outcome letter (dated 12 July 2021).

Professional competencies

The Council has reviewed the competencies and related scopes of practice for the following professions:

- dentists (excluding dental specialists)
- oral health therapists
- dental therapists
- dental hygienists
- orthodontic auxiliaries
- clinical dental technicians
- dental technicians.

The competencies for dental specialists were reviewed jointly with the Dental Board of Australia in 2015-2016. This review focused on the undergraduate competencies. On finalisation of the undergraduate competencies, consequential changes to the dental specialist competencies will be further explored.

The review was undertaken to ensure the professional competencies and related scopes of practice remain up to date, fit for purpose, reflect contemporary practice and enable oral health practitioners to meet the oral health needs of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Accreditation Committee considered the draft professional competencies and feedback was also sought from Te Aō Marama and the Māori Oral Health Quality Improvement Group on the cultural aspects contained in the draft competencies.

The Council discussed the proposals and recognised its role to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi within the health sector to improve Māori health outcomes, as demonstrated in the Ministry of Health's Whakamaua Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025.

Within this context, the Council agreed to the following proposals to be consulted on:

- update the professional competencies that prescribe the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours an oral health practitioner must have to practise safely, competently, and professionally in their scope of practice
- gazette the updated professional competencies which means they will have the same legal standing as the scopes of practice
- streamline each scope of practice by retaining only the scope definitions and removing the detailed activities currently listed in each scope – the updated professional competencies will replace the detailed list of activities from the scopes.

The most significant proposed change to the professional competencies relates to the shift from practitioners being 'culturally competent' to 'culturally safe' - as determined by the patient, their whānau, hapū or iwi.

The cultural safety work will specifically focus on Māori during this phase of the work to fulfil our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and to protect tangata whenua. Focus will then shift, aligned with the government's strategic focus, to other vulnerable groups such as Pacific peoples, disabled people, people living in rural communities or with socioeconomic disadvantage.

Other key changes proposed to the professional competencies include expansion of the professionalism and communication domains - with clear links to the professional standards in the Council's Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners.

[2020/21 financial statements](#)

The 2020/21 audited financial statements were approved.