

Policy on Registration as an Oral Health Practitioner in New Zealand

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Introduction

The Dental Council has approved the following policy on the registration of oral health practitioners in New Zealand.

Registered practitioners must also hold an annual practising certificate (APC) in order to practise dentistry in New Zealand [s7(2) Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act 2003].

Legislation

Section 15 of the HPCA Act states that the Council¹ may register an applicant within a scope of practice if the applicant:

- a) is fit for registration in accordance with section 16;
- b) has the qualifications that are prescribed under section 12, for that scope of practice; and
- c) is competent to practise within that scope of practice.

Section 19(5) of the HPCA Act allows the Council to require an applicant to take and pass an examination or assessment that is set or recognised by Council, for the purpose of satisfying Council that the applicant:

- a) is competent to practise in the scope of practice applied for; and
- b) is able to communicate in and comprehend English.

Fitness for registration

Fitness for registration is covered in section 16 of the HPCA Act. The sections states that no applicant may be registered if:

- a) He or she does not satisfy Council that he or she is able to communicate effectively
- b) He or she does not satisfy Council that he or she is able to communicate and comprehend English sufficiently to protect the health and safety of the public
- c) He or she has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of three months or longer which reflects adversely on his or her fitness to practise
- d) He or she is unable to perform the functions required for the practise of dentistry because of a mental or physical condition
- e) He or she is the subject of professional disciplinary proceedings and those proceedings reflect adversely on his or her fitness to practise
- f) He or she is under investigation in respect of a matter that may be the subject of professional disciplinary proceedings and that investigation reflects adversely on his or her fitness to practise

¹ Or the appropriate Committee/ Registrar with delegated authority.

- g) He or she is subject to an order which reflects adversely on his or her fitness to practise
- h) Council has reason to believe that the applicant may endanger the health and safety of the public

Applicants who can demonstrate that their first language is English and that they have studied for and gained their dental degree in English are usually considered to have satisfied Council that they have sufficient communication skills. All other applicants are normally required to sit and pass to the required level a Council approved English examination. For more information please see Council's Policy on English language competence.

Scopes of Practice and Prescribed qualifications

Council has agreed that:

- a) applicants can register in a specialist scope of practice without being first registered in a general scope of practice;
- b) 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 standards required by the relevant Code of Practice; and
- c) conditions should only be placed on Scopes of Practice as a reaction to disciplinary, competency or health matters raised about a practitioner.

Non-prescribed individual consideration of registration applications

Applicants with non-prescribed qualifications can apply for registration and individual consideration by Council if they consider Council might regard their qualifications as equivalent to a prescribed qualification (s15(2)).

Such applications are subject to additional fees to cover the costs of the individual assessment of the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Direct Entry to the Registration Examination Process – Dentists

A pass in the New Zealand Dental Council Registration Examinations (NZDREX) is a prescribed qualification for registration as a dentist. Dentist applicants with non-prescribed undergraduate qualifications can apply direct to the NZDREX examination process and avoid the costly qualifications assessment process. For entry requirements please see Council's Policy on Entry requirements to the NZDREX examinations.

Dentist applicants with non-prescribed postgraduate qualifications can apply direct to the NZDREX specialist examination process but only if they hold a prescribed registration in the general dental scope of practice (which includes a pass in the NZDREX general dental practice examination) or are registered in the general dental scope of practice. For other entry requirements please see Council's Policy on Entry requirements to the Specialist Registration examinations.

Competent to practise

In determining whether an applicant is competent to practice the Council will consider the following matters:

- a) The applicant's training, experience and formal qualifications (including when the applicant undertook their relevant formal qualifications);
- b) Recency of practise (has the applicant practised in the last 3 years²);

² Under sections 27 and 29 of the HPCA Act 2003 an APC cannot be issued to a practitioner who had not held an APC in the past three years unless the Council is satisfied that the applicant meets the required standard of competence.

- c) Whether the nature of the work in the country(s) that the applicant has worked, would be comparable to contemporary practice in New Zealand;
- d) Evidence of appropriate continuing professional development within the last 3 years;
- e) Referee and assessor reports;
- f) Where the applicant is applying for registration in a specialist scope of practice, whether the applicant has practised the speciality to the required level in the last three years;
- g) Where the applicant is applying for registration in a specialist scope of practice, whether the applicant has appropriate skills and knowledge of general dental practice³;
- h) What type of practice the applicant will be entering (sole, associate, employee etc), and the nature of the employment arrangement;
- i) Whether the applicant needs to pass NZDREX or the Specialist Registration Examination or any other examination or assessment set or recognised by Council to satisfy Council of their competence to practise.

Restoration to the Register

Practitioners whose names have been removed from the Dental Register under section 144(3) of the HPCA Act 2003 (practitioner request) or section 144(5) of the HPCA Act 2003 (failure to notify address) will subject to the provisions of section 145(2) of that Act, be restored on request to the Dental Register. Applications for Annual Practising Certificates will be considered under sections 26-33 of the HPCA Act 2003.

³ Applicants with a prescribed undergraduate qualification or who are registered in the general scope of dental practice will normally be considered to have satisfied this requirement. Council may require other applicants to sit and pass all or part of the NZDREX general dental examination or any other Council approved examination or assessment to demonstrate the appropriate level of skills and knowledge of general dental practice