

5 May 2020

COVID-19, recertification, engagement update

The government's call to unite against COVID-19 has presented us all with new challenges over the last six weeks. We have each made massive changes in our home, work, and social lives.

Thank you for the numerous messages of support we have received over the weekend for the work we are doing to support the government's call. Understandably, many practitioners are expressing their frustration and concerns to us about the ongoing restrictions on their practice during this time.

New Zealand remains in alert level 3 and together with all oral health practitioners, we look forward to the [PM's briefing on Thursday 7 May](#) and Cabinet's decision to be announced on 11 May 2020 about the next move.

Alert level 2 guidelines

As advised, associations and educational institutions were invited to provide feedback on the draft level 2 guidelines last week. Their responses have now been received, and once collated and reviewed, and any resulting changes made, we will submit the finalised guidelines to the Ministry of Health for approval.

As indicated previously, our aim is to issue the guidelines to practitioners as soon as Ministry decisions on delivery of health services at alert level 2 are finalised.

Recertification requirements waived for 12 months due to COVID-19

In our 27 March update, we advised that the Council has [suspended the current recertification programmes](#) for the time being.

At its meeting yesterday (4 May 2020), the Council decided to waive recertification requirements for 12 months.

What this means for practitioners

- This means that all practitioners will have until 31 December 2021 to meet the [CPD hours and peer contact requirements notified on 28 August 2019](#).
- Practitioners will need to submit a self-declaration of their CPD activities and peer contacts after 31 December 2021.

- The start of the [new recertification programme](#) has also been deferred by 12 months, so will start from:
 - o 1 October 2021 for dentists and dental specialists
 - o 1 April 2022 for all other oral health practitioners.

Why has Council made these decisions about recertification?

Practitioners are currently and will likely continue to face severe impacts on their businesses, livelihoods, and personal wellbeing due to the COVID-19 response.

Recertification programmes are one of the key tools that the Council has for ensuring ongoing competence. The Council needs to balance the current situation with our statutory duty to protect public health and safety, by ensuring practitioners are competent to practise.

We encourage all practitioners to complete any professional development that is possible to keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date while the recertification programme requirements are waived.

We are pleased to note there has been a significant increase in the online CPD activities available. The Council would like to thank the professional associations, organisations and other providers who have made this possible.

Communications

The Council Chair and CE attended a ZOOM call with the NZDHA members last week to respond to queries about their return to work, the alert level guidelines, sourcing PPE and other concerns. Over 300 members came into the call. We would like to thank NZDHA for their support, engaging with us constructively and giving us the opportunity to take part in this collegial forum.

The Council continues to work closely with professional associations. Over the coming week we will meet with the executives of NZIDT, NZDHA, NZDOHTA, NZDA and Te Ao Mārama. Last week we met with the NZDA President and CEO and will meet with NZDA Branch Presidents tonight.

Our team is working remotely as it deals with the increased demands of the pandemic situation and are aware that we currently have an email backlog. We have contracted additional resources to assist with the COVID-19 response and endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to the significant volume of practitioner queries during this this uncertain time for many.

Please look after yourself

Being an oral health practitioner can be challenging and stressful at the best of times and even more so now, as we face the uncertainty of a global pandemic. This is a difficult time for everyone.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to supporting the national COVID-19 response. Please look after yourselves and your whānau in this difficult time.

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