

Professional competencies of the newly qualified dental practitioner

Guidance note:

Interprofessional collaborative practice

July 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
What is interprofessional collaborative practice?	3
Relevant professional competencies	4
Domain 2: Communication and leadership	4
Domain 6: Person-centred care	4
Domain 3: Program of study	4
Why is interprofessional collaborative practice important?	5
Guidance for education providers	6
References	7
Resources	7

Introduction

Australian Dental Council (ADC) guidance notes aim to provide helpful information for education providers in specific areas where our standards have recently changed.

This includes the following standards:

- ADC Professional competencies of the newly qualified dental practitioner (the Competencies), effective from 1 July 2023.
- ADC Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs (the Standards), which became effective from 2021.

Guidance notes are not definitive or binding documents, nor are they intended to be prescriptive.

What is interprofessional collaborative practice?

The Competencies define interprofessional collaborative practice as follows:

'Interprofessional collaborative practice is when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, carers, and communities to deliver the highest quality of care across settings'.

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides a similar definition, differentiating between 'interprofessional education' and the outcome such education aims to achieve – 'collaborative practice'.

'Interprofessional education' occurs when two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.

Collaborative practice in healthcare occurs when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds provide comprehensive services by working with patients, their families, carers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care across settings.'¹

Relevant professional competencies

The previous versions of the Competencies included competencies about 'understanding the importance of intra and interprofessional approaches to healthcare' and determining 'when and how to refer patients to the appropriate health professional'.

The newly revised Competencies have been strengthened to move beyond understanding, requiring instead that newly qualified dental practitioners are able to engage in interprofessional collaborative practice.

The Competencies now include the following:

Domain 2: Communication and leadership

Newly qualified dental practitioners must be able to:

- engage in interprofessional collaborative practice to provide person-centred care

Domain 6: Person-centred care

6.2 Diagnostic and management planning

Newly qualified dental practitioners must be able to:

- determine when and how to refer to the appropriate health and or care professional.

The ADC Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs (2021; 'the Accreditation standards') also set a clear requirement that dental programs must prepare students for interprofessional collaborative practice:

Domain 3: Program of study

3.6. Students work with and learn from and about relevant dental and health professions to foster interprofessional collaborative practice.

Why is interprofessional collaborative practice important?

There is robust evidence for the contribution of interprofessional and collaborative practice to positive health outcomes.²

As the understanding of the role oral health plays in overall health continues to increase, the need for dental practitioners to work with and learn from other health professions is also expanding.

There is increasing expectation placed on dental practitioners to be prepared to educate other health professionals as to the importance of maintaining oral health, as well as understanding that treatments being provided by other health professionals may impact on the oral health of patients.

The roles of health practitioners are constantly changing, and it is important for dental practitioners to keep abreast of new developments both in treatments and in emerging models of care, which incorporate the entire health care team.

The newly revised Competencies include a clearer statement which links interprofessional collaborative care with patient-centred care.

Education providers providing opportunities for dental students to work with and learn from and about other relevant dental and health professions is therefore about students developing the understanding, skills and personal qualities needed to work effectively with those outside of their own profession once qualified, with the aim of improving quality of care for patients.

Guidance for education providers

To become and remain accredited with the ADC, programs are required to demonstrate that their 'design, delivery and resourcing enable students to achieve the required Professional competencies' (Accreditation standards; Domain 3). This includes demonstrating that program learning outcomes address and assess all the required Competencies (Accreditation standards; 3.2; 5.2).

To meet the ADC's standards in this area, education providers should consider how students can be best prepared throughout the curriculum to work collaboratively with other relevant professions. The experiences students have, how they are delivered and how the relevant Competencies are assessed are likely to vary between programs depending on several factors including the profession and program – for example, whether it is a pre-registration or specialist program.

We do not prescribe exactly how a program should provide opportunities for students to work with and learn from and about relevant dental and health professions. However, some approaches might include, for example:

- common modules providing opportunities for students from other relevant professions to learn from and about each other
- taught content which addresses the role of other relevant professions to improve understanding of their respective roles
- structured opportunities to work with and learn from and about students and qualified staff from other relevant professions during clinical modules. This might include, for example, experience of making and responding appropriately to referrals.

We do not prescribe which 'relevant dental and health professions' education providers should include in their programs. Education providers should consider how they can best prepare students for interprofessional collaborative practice with those professions they are likely to work and interact with once qualified. Whilst this is likely to focus on other professions in the wider dental team, education providers should also consider the other professions in the wider health care team whose treatment impacts on oral health and that qualified practitioners are also likely to engage with.

References

1. World Health Organization. Framework for action on interprofessional education and collaborative practice. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2010. Accessed from: www.who.int/publications/i/item/framework-for-action-on-interprofessional-education-collaborative-practice
2. Woods M. Australia's health workforce: Strengthening the education foundation. Independent review of accreditation systems within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professions. Canberra, ACT: COAG Health Council, 2018. Accessed from: <https://apo.org.au/node/235651>.

Resources

- Australian Dental Council. Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs. Melbourne, Vic: ADC, 2021. Accessed from: https://adc.org.au/files/accreditation/standards/ADC_DCNZ_Accreditation_Standards.pdf
- Australian Dental Council. Professional competencies of the newly qualified dental practitioner. Melbourne, Vic: ADC, 2022. Accessed from: https://adc.org.au/files/accreditation/competencies/ADC_Professional_Competencies_of_the_Newly_Qualified_Practitioner.pdf
- Australian and New Zealand interprofessional education and practice resource repository. Accessed from: <https://nexusipe.org/informing/resource-center/anzahpe>
- Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE). Accessed from: <https://www.caipe.org/resources>
- Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum. Position statement on interprofessional education. Kingston, ACT: HPACF, 2018. Accessed from: <http://hpacf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Forum-statement-IPE-Update-Nov-2018a.pdf>.
- O'Keefe M. Developing sustainable and embedded interprofessional education: Threshold learning outcomes as a potential pathway. Sydney, NSW: Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, 2015. Accessed from: [SP10_1856_O'Keefe_Report_2015.pdf \(ltr.edu.au\)](https://www.olt.edu.au/SP10_1856_O'Keefe_Report_2015.pdf)