



**Australian Dental Council report of an evaluation of
Griffith University
Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics – monitoring visit**

May 2021

Updated May 2022

Executive summary

Program provider	Griffith University
Program/qualification name	Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics
Program/qualification abbreviation	BDentPros
Program/qualification code	1580 and 1638
Head office address, including State	School of Medicine and Dentistry Gold Coast Campus Griffith University QLD 4222
Campus	Gold Coast
Program length	1 – 4 years full time (dependant on pathway)
Registration division	Dental Prosthetist
Registration specialty	N/A
Qualification type	Choose an item
Australian Qualifications Framework level	7
Accreditation standards version	Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs (Approved August 2020)
Date of site evaluation	12 May 2021
Date of ADC decision	29 October 2021
Type of accreditation	Monitoring - Reporting Requirement
Accreditation start date	1 January 2018
Accreditation end date	31 December 2022

Background

Griffith University's Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics (BDentPros) program was accredited by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) in 2017. The program was reviewed against the accreditation standards in effect at the time and was accredited for a period of 5 (five) years with a monitoring requirement. The monitoring requirement was imposed on the program to ensure the proposed changes implemented to the program structure in 2018 continued to meet Accreditation Standards 3 (Program of Study) and 5 (Assessment).

The BDentPros program is designed for students with a recognised Dental Technology bachelor's degree who want to upgrade their qualification to work directly with patients. It can be completed in one year if students already have a bachelor's degree in dental technology or over three years if not. The first two years of the Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics program are identical to the Bachelor of Dental Technology (BDentTech) program. The final year includes relevant, clinical content delivered and assessed at Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level 7.

Students also have the option to undertake a four-year double degree combining the full three years of the BDentTech program with an extra year to complete the requirements of the BDentPros program. Completing the BDentTech/BDentPros double degree enables graduates to work as a dental prosthetist.

Whilst the monitoring review considered the whole program, the final clinical year of the dental prosthetics program was a key focus of the monitoring visit as the final year clinical training enables graduates to apply to the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) for registration as a dental prosthetist.

Overview of evaluation

An ADC Accreditation Team (AT) conducted a site visit on 12 May 2021 to the School of Medicine and Dentistry at Griffith University's Gold Coast Campus. The monitoring visit for the Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics was completed in combination with the reaccreditation of the Doctor of Clinical Dentistry in Periodontology program, which is the subject of a separate report. The review was undertaken against the new Accreditation Standards that came into effect in January 2021 and involved assessment against Standard 3 and Standard 5.

To verify the information evidenced in the provider's submission, the AT interviewed a range of key stakeholders including.

- Head of School
- Program Director
- Academic and clinical staff
- Students
- Graduates

The AT also inspected clinical and learning and teaching facilities within the Griffith Health Centre. The findings in this report are based on the AT's assessment of the material outlined above, interview evidence and a review of the facilities at the time of the site visit.

Key findings

Griffith University is well placed to deliver the BDentPros program. The program is financially well resourced and clinical facilities are excellent. All students train on site and the Griffith Health Centre contains a range of supporting facilities associated with the program including a fully equipped dental laboratory, a simulation clinic, research labs and a state-of-the-art anatomy and pathology facility. The integration of digital technologies into the curriculum is a significant development for the program and involves training students in modern restorative dentistry techniques. Core academic staff are appropriately qualified and their enthusiasm and commitment to the program and students was evident throughout the review.

The School of Dentistry and Oral Health amalgamated with the School of Medicine in April 2021 creating the new School of Medicine and Dentistry. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this change on the program. The AT noted some concerns, primarily centred around the staffing profile, deficiencies in the quantity and range of clinical experiences available to students and the limited interdisciplinary interaction with other dental practitioners and health care professions in the final year of the program.

Program and support staff are commended for their commitment to the program and to students, however the clinical staffing profile highlights a reliance on sessional staff in the clinics. This presents a potential risk to the program with regards to continuity of teaching, consistency of supervision, input into program development and quality improvement processes as well as the time available for the academic staff to support sessional staff. Program evaluation data indicated a clear decline in student satisfaction levels.

Interview evidence also highlighted that some students require additional support transitioning from a dental technician to working one-on-one with patients in a clinical setting. To ensure students receive adequate support and supervision, the provider is encouraged to review the provision of training and resources in place for sessional staff members to ensure they are fully supported to fulfil their teaching responsibilities and the program can achieve its stated outcomes.

Evidence gathered throughout the review questioned whether students are getting sufficient access to the quality, quantity and range of patients needed to develop the professional competencies. Access to patients is an ongoing issue at the clinic and the average number of patients treated by students has steadily declined since 2017. Students do not undertake outplacement training and the impact of this on the diversity of students' clinical experiences and access to patients was noted. Clinical activity reduced significantly in 2020 with students only just meeting the program's minimum case numbers to graduate. Whilst it is acknowledged that COVID-19 will have contributed to this, the AT still has concerns considering that the provider has been operating with minimal disruption for several months and interview evidence confirmed that access to patients continues to be an issue.

The limited interdisciplinary collaboration in the final year of the BDentPros program is noted as an area for improvement. Students have minimal interaction with other dental practitioners during their clinical training. An interdisciplinary approach is vital for improving patient outcomes and students are missing out on the benefits of shared knowledge and expertise across teams. The program is not maximising the opportunities available with regards to the unique set up of the provider and the onsite access to dental and medical specialisations.

ADC accreditation decision

The ADC has determined that Griffith University's Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics program meets the monitoring requirement and accreditation is maintained until **31 December 2022** subject to the following conditions:

1. To meet Standard 3 – Program of study, the provider is requested to submit by **31 August 2022** evidence of the quantity and range of clinical experiences undertaken by students and that this is sufficient to demonstrate that students are on track to meet the professional competencies of a newly qualified dental prosthetist.
2. In order to fully meet Standard 3 – Program of study, evidence is to be provided by **28 February 2022** of the formalisation and systematic approach to the interactions with other dental and health professionals in the final year of the program to provide interdisciplinary treatment and care.

The ADC has determined that this condition has been met.

3. In order to fully meet Standard 3 – Program of study, evidence is to be provided by **28 February 2022** demonstrating that the staffing profile is sufficient to deliver the clinical component of the BDentPros program. The report should include clear details of the level of engagement (FTE) of both permanent and sessional staff members, their teaching and clinical supervision commitments, a clinic roster as well as details of succession planning.

The AT recommends an additional monitoring requirement be imposed on the program.

1. The provider is requested to provide by **3 December 2021**, a list of external experts and details of how these experts are used to assess students in the final year of the program.

The ADC has determined that this monitoring requirement has been met.