



Australian Dental Council report of an evaluation of Griffith University – Doctor of Clinical Dentistry in Periodontology

May 2021

Updated August 2022

1. Executive summary

Program provider	Griffith University
Program/qualification name	Doctor of Clinical Dentistry in Periodontology
Program/qualification abbreviation	DClinDent
Program/qualification code	5699
Head office address, including State	Gold Coast Campus, QLD 4222
Campus	Griffith Health Centre, School of Medicine and Dentistry, Gold Coast campus Level 7, Parklands Drive
Program length	3 Years
Registration division	Specialist
Registration speciality	Periodontics
Qualification type	Master's Degree
Australian Qualifications Framework level	9
Accreditation standards version	Accreditation Standards for Dental Practitioner Programs (Approved January 2021)
Date of site evaluation	12 May 2021
Date of ADC decision	12 August 2022
Type of accreditation	Re-Accreditation
Accreditation start date	1 January 2022
Accreditation end date	31 December 2026

Background

Griffith University's Doctor of Clinical Dentistry (DClinDent) in Periodontology program was last reviewed for the purposes of accreditation by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) in 2015. The program was reviewed against the accreditation standards in effect at the time and was accredited for a period of 5 (five) years without conditions. The program was due for review in 2020 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, accreditation was extended by one year.

Griffith University's DClinDent in Periodontology program is a full time, three-year program that enables graduates to apply to the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) to register as specialists in periodontics.

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 visit to reaccredit the DClinDent in Periodontology program was completed in combination with a monitoring review of the Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics program, which is the subject of a separate report. The review was undertaken against the new Accreditation Standards that came into effect on 1 January 2021.

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.

Key findings

Evaluation of the DClinDent in Periodontology concluded that the provider is well placed to deliver the 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. Staff are appropriately qualified and their enthusiasm and commitment to the program was noted throughout the review. The School of Dentistry and Oral Health has been amalgamated with the School of Medicine creating the School of Medicine and Dentistry. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this change on the program.

However, the AT did have some concerns, and these were similar to some of the issues raised at the last review in 2015. The greatest challenges to the program continue to be the lack of specialist input paired with a clear lack of opportunities for students to interact with other specialist disciplines, namely prosthodontics and orthodontics. Whilst the provider informed the AT that plans are underway to address some of the deficiencies in the staffing profile, evidence will need to be provided that these plans have been implemented, and that they are effective.

Two main program staff deliver almost all didactic teaching and clinical supervision, and the Professor of Periodontics role remains vacant. There is some further specialist input into the program from part-time Periodontal specialists, but the nature and extent of this input is unclear. The AT is concerned about whether there is sufficient supervision in the clinical aspects of the program, in particular in the second and third years of the program where more complex cases are encountered. The limited number of specialist periodontists teaching in the program could reduce the exposure of students to a wider range of treatment approaches. The lack of interprofessional working opportunities and clinical support by some dental specialist disciplines is of further concern. Whilst there is clinical support within endodontics, there is a lack of collaboration with the orthodontics and prosthodontics disciplines. This limits treatment planning opportunities of complex interdisciplinary cases but particularly the provision of intermediate dentures and final restoration/ rehabilitation of periodontitis and implant patients. To date most of the limited clinical support in prosthodontics has been provided by the students of the Bachelor of Dental Prosthetics program, however interview evidence confirmed that resources are limited and the current level of support is not adequate. As prosthodontics and periodontics are collaborative disciplines and successful treatment outcomes are reliant on a close working relationship, it is of paramount importance for the School and the DClinDent in Periodontology program to establish sufficient clinical support in prosthodontics. A similar issue was identified with orthodontics.

The AT noted that the process of allocating patients to students could be improved. Administrative staff are responsible for the allocation of patients and whilst students get access to a sufficient number of patients, most seem to be basic periodontal cases. There is some access to more complex cases, but the sequencing of patient care does not necessarily reflect student competence or case complexity. The provider confirmed in the submission that students are expected to manage their own caseload in consultation with their tutor to ensure that their clinical experience covers a range of periodontal treatments and procedures. To improve student's learning experience and ensure that access to more complex cases is better aligned to their learning needs, the provider is encouraged to review this process. To further support students with more complex case treatments, the AT recommends that the provider utilise simulation models to allow students to undertake additional pre-clinical training of more complex procedures (i.e. for flap surgeries, suturing, trans crestal and lateral window sinus floor elevation).

Cultural safety with regards to the new Standard 6 was explored during the review. Whilst it was clear that it is being addressed at a provider level, there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate that it is sufficiently integrated throughout the program and student learning outcomes. There was also limited information to confirm that clinical experiences provide students with exposure to demonstrate culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Students do not currently undertake external clinical placements so appropriate clinical opportunities are limited.

Research support for the program is strong with students having access to a range of research staff and resources. The research laboratory facility is excellent and in recognition that students are clinicians and not researchers, the provider is committed to better integrating research into the program to support students with their projects. The amalgamation with the Medical School appears to offer new research opportunities and cooperation for the DClinDent in Periodontics students. A new research committee has been set up to encourage better collaboration, secure grant funding and reduce the overlap in projects that is currently occurring.

ADC accreditation decision

The ADC has determined that Griffith University's Doctor of Clinical Dentistry in Periodontology program is accredited from **1 January 2022 to 31 December 2026** subject to the following conditions:

1. To fully meet Standard 3 – Program of study, the provider is required to submit a report to the ADC by **30 April 2022** detailing:
 - (a) The staffing profile for the program detailing the full-time equivalent (FTE) workload of each staff member, their didactic teaching and clinical supervision commitments and whether they are permanent or sessional staff and whether they are new appointments since May 2021.
 - (b) An update on the recruitment of the Professor of Periodontics position and what contingencies are in place should this position not be filled.
 - (c) How specialist input is integrated into the program to ensure students are able to develop the full range of professional competencies required for an entry level specialist in Periodontics.

The ADC has determined that this condition has been met.

2. To fully meet Standard 3 - Program of study, evidence is to be provided by **30 April 2022** of how the School is providing students the opportunities to participate in interprofessional collaboration, treatment planning and support with the orthodontic and prosthodontics specialist disciplines to ensure successful treatment outcomes. Evidence demonstrating how treatment planning for complex interdisciplinary cases is managed is required.
3. To fully meet Standard 6 – Cultural safety, the provider is required to submit a report to the ADC by **30 April 2022** demonstrating how external input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is used to inform program design and management to ensure cultural safety is integrated throughout the program and learning outcomes.

The ADC has determined that this condition has been met.