



Australian Dental Council International report of an evaluation of the University of Sharjah's Bachelor of Dental Surgery program

October 2023

Executive summary

Program provider	University of Sharjah
Program/qualification name	Bachelor of Dental Surgery
Program/qualification abbreviation	BDS
Program/qualification code	N/A
Head office address, including State	P.O Box 27272, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
Campus	Medicine and Health Science Campus
Program length	5 years
Registration division	Dentist
Registration specialty	NA,
Qualification type	HE
Accreditation standards version	Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs (Approved August 2020)
Date of site evaluation	2 - 5 October 2023
Date of ADC decision	22 March 2024
Type of accreditation	Initial Accreditation
Accreditation start date	1 January 2024
Accreditation end date	31 December 2030

Background

The University of Sharjah (UoS) was established in 1997 and is a leading University in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). There are 14 colleges spread across two campuses with more than 19,000 students enrolled. The College of Dental Medicine was established in 2004 in conjunction with the University of Adelaide and offers five programs including the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS), Master of Dental Surgery in Oral Surgery, Master of Dental Surgery in Prosthodontics, Master of Dental Surgery in Periodontology, Master of Dental Surgery in Endodontics, and Master of Dental Surgery in Orthodontics. A PhD for Dental Sciences program is also currently in the process of undergoing initial accreditation with the Commission for Academic Accreditation.

The BDS is a five-year, co-educational, undergraduate competency-based program. The Program competencies are aligned with the [Professional Competence Standards of Graduates of Baccalaureate Dental Initial Training and Education Programs in the United Arab Emirates](#). The college also provides a one-year internship program for UoS and non-UoS graduates.

The BDS is accredited by the United Arab Emirates' Federal Government Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). On 23 February 2021, the Australian Dental Council International (ADCI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CAA. Under the MoU, the CAA has accepted the ADCI as a preferred agency for international accreditation of college and university dental programs within the UAE. As part of this agreement, dental practitioner programs based in the UAE can apply to be accredited by the ADCI and the CAA simultaneously.

This accreditation cycle, UoS applied for joint CAA and ADCI accreditation of the BDS program. For the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to be accredited by both organisations, the HEI must demonstrate that the program meets the Standards as published by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) and the Standards published by the CAA. This is the initial accreditation for UoS's BDS program with the ADCI.

Overview of evaluation

A joint ADC and CAA Accreditation Team (JAT) conducted a site visit between 2 and 5 October 2023 to the University of Sharjah's Medical and Health Sciences campus. The AT consisted of three ADC assessors, the Commissioner from the CAA, a Specialist assessor from the CAA and the Director of Accreditation, Policy and Research from the ADC.

The JAT reviewed the College of Dental Medicine's self-review against the ADC and CAA Standards, attached appendices and additional information requested following the AT's teleconference on 28 July 2023.

During the visit, the AT interviewed a range of individuals, including:

- Chancellor
- Vice-Chancellor of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, Vice-Chancellor of Medical Colleges, and the Vice-Chancellor of Research and Graduate Studies
- Dean and Vice Dean of the College of Dental Medicine
- Department Chairs, Lecturers, clinical instructors and clinical leads
- Administrative/Professional staff
- Current students from all years of the program and Alumni/Program graduates
- Chairs of the curriculum, assessment and examination, accreditation and student success committees
- Student Services/Student support staff
- Director of Research, Director of Library, Director of Finance and Director of Human Resources
- Employers and the external advisory group

The AT toured the facilities at the University of Sharjah and Dental Hospital, and also observed students in the pre-clinical, clinic and laboratory settings.

During the visit, the AT was provided with additional information including the faculty files that are maintained and stored in Human Resources.

Key findings

The evidence considered by the ADCI Accreditation Team (AT) indicates that the Bachelor of Dental Surgery program offered by the University of Sharjah produces graduates competent to practice as dentists. The University and College of Dental Medicine is well resourced, and the program is well regarded both within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and internationally.

The AT commends the leadership within the University and the College of Dental Medicine (CoDM). There is a strong positive culture among the faculty, and the AT were impressed by the dedication and calibre of staff in leadership roles as well as those staff teaching into the program and staff supervising students in clinics.

The program is well supported, and students have access to an excellent patient pool through the University Dental Hospital Sharjah (UDHS) which comprises of 165 fully equipped dental chairs. Students are provided with more than 800 pre-clinical hours and more than 2000 clinical hours which ensures that all students have sufficient access to the range, number and variety of patients to achieve the required clinical competencies. The supervisor to student ratio in the hospital is 1:6 which ensures that students are adequately supervised in the clinics. The AT were impressed with the Clinical Mentor Scheme which was introduced in 2017 and provides close supervision of student performance and progress throughout the clinical aspects of the program.

The learning environments and clinical facilities are accessible and well maintained. The AT were impressed with the UoS Mobile Dental Clinic (MDC) which is equipped with three dental chairs to support community-based health care programs in remote areas of Sharjah. The MDC is operational four days per week and all BDS students have an opportunity to be rostered to the clinic which provides them with an outreach experience.

One area of concern for the AT were apparent barriers to the procurement of equipment. The BDS students do not have access to a broad range of contemporary equipment and materials and the AT recommend the UoS review the procurement and delegations process and remove any barriers to ensure a streamlined and expedited approach. The AT also recommend that the CoDM and UDHS develop functional guidelines to clearly define roles, responsibilities and expectations for the purchase and maintenance of equipment.

The University provides strong financial support for research activities. The AT were impressed with the funding allocated for research and the availability of research projects accessible to both students and staff. The University provides students and staff with a range of resources to support research activities including access to the library, statisticians, research assistants and laboratory facilities. Each BDS student is also allocated funding for the final research project to purchase consumables and materials.

The College is managed by three academic departments and four key committees. The three departments are headed by Department Chairs who report to the Dean and include:

- Department of Oral and Craniofacial Health Sciences

- Department of Preventive and Restorative Dentistry
- Department of Orthodontics, Paediatric and Community Dentistry.

The Department of Orthodontics, Paediatric and Community Dentistry is a newly formed Department and at the time of the site visit was still in the processes of being established. The AT noted that while it was evident that the Chairs of each department work in close collaboration and that there was a strong underpinning educational philosophy, the evidence showed that there were some parts of the curriculum that overlapped. The AT understands that this is currently being addressed through a review of the curriculum by the Curriculum Committee however the AT also recommends that the College reviews its staffing structure. Currently, the three Department Chair's report directly to the Dean however the Dean has the responsibility for all programs delivered within the CoDM and is not solely focused on the BDS. The AT recommends that the College reviews the staffing structure to improve the unification of the program.

The AT also noted that administrative support was limited, and faculty were required to take on administrative tasks which takes time away from their education and research responsibilities. The AT recommends that the College reviews its administrative support structure to better support academics and thereby enable better utilisation of academic staffs' time.

The AT understands that clinical tutors are currently employed under an administrative contract and recommends that this be reviewed. The administrative award impacts on the delivery of the program due to the timing for vacation relief. Also, clinical tutors should be provided a framework for career progression which should include access to internal and external continuing professional development and research funding.

There is a governance and committee structure in place and quality assurance process are evident. The four key committees include;

- Curriculum Committee
- Program Evaluation and Accreditation Committee
- Examination and Assessment Committee
- Student Success Committee

The AT recommends several areas that the governance could be strengthened. For example, the AT recommends that the College reviews how it evaluates the performance of its committees. It is understood that the Dean currently reviews the minutes from the committee meetings and is responsible for the selection of each of the committees' Chairs and its members. The AT recommends that this be reviewed to ensure decision making is clear and that the terms of reference for each committee and selection of committee members is transparent. It was also unclear to the AT how the committees are governed, and where they report to. The AT recommends the governance of the committee structure is reviewed to ensure there is a mechanism for centralised decision making. The AT understands that students are represented within

the Committees, however the selection and representation of students on Committees was not reflected in the terms of reference and it is recommended that these are updated to ensure a transparent and robust process.

An External Advisory Board was established in January 2023 and will be a mechanism for the College to gain input from a diverse range of stakeholders into the program. The Board is in its infancy and the AT recommend that the College continues to establish the Board and its role to optimise how the members can better provide input into the design, development and evaluation of the program. The AT also recommends the College considers including consumer representation on the External Advisory Board.

The program learning outcomes and assessments address the professional competencies. The AT understands that the program is currently undergoing a curriculum review and recommends that health promotion and digital dentistry are included in the review. The AT also noted that there is scope for the College and the HEI to improve its approach to interprofessional collaboration. There is some evidence of interprofessional education in the didactic components of the program, however there are currently no opportunities for students to collaborate at a clinical level with professionals from medicine, pharmacy or allied health disciplines. The University is well placed for the Colleges within the Medicine and Health Sciences College to work together and establish interprofessional collaborations. This would also benefit patient care and the broader community.

The AT commends the HEI for its student support services, all students have access to a range of support services, and these are well funded and supported. Course information is clear and accessible for all students and admission and progression requirements are fair and transparent. The AT also noted the support that is in place for students of determination (students with impairments and disabilities) and commends the HEI for these initiatives.

The program has a clear relationship between learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Multiple assessment methods are used including direct observation in the clinical setting. The AT understands that students feel that the assessment process is fair and transparent. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate a consistent approach to assessment, including two assessors for assessments and moderation with mentors, however the AT notes that calibration for clinical tutors and faculty has only occurred for endodontics. The process for calibration was highly regarded and the AT recommends that this is replicated across the other disciplines. It is also recommended that a process for re-calibration is implemented, particularly as new staff are onboarded.

ADCI accreditation decision

The ADCI has determined that the University of Sharjah's Bachelor of Dental Surgery Program is accredited for a period of five (5) years from **1 January 2024** until **31 December 2028**, subject to the following conditions:

1. To meet Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance the HEI is requested to review the governance of its four key committees. The review should include:
 - a. How the College evaluates the performance of its four key committees.
 - b. How decisions are made within committees and where and how these decisions are approved through a centralised body.
 - c. An update to the terms of reference for each committee to ensure there is a robust and transparent process in place for the selection of committee members.

A summary of the outcomes of the review, and changes that have been implemented, is to be provided to the ADCI by **1 July 2024**.

2. To meet Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance the HEI is requested to provide an update on the progress of the establishment of the External Advisory Board. An update on the progress of the Board and activities that have been achieved is to be provided to the ADCI by **1 July 2024**.
3. To meet Standard 2 Academic governance and Standard 3 Program of study, the HEI is requested to review the procurement and delegations process and remove any barriers to ensure there is a streamlined approach to enable the program to purchase required equipment and materials in a timely fashion to support the implementation of contemporary developments to the curriculum. This review should also include the relationship between the College of Dental Medicine and University Dental Hospital Sharjah to ensure roles, responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined.

A summary of the outcomes of the review, and changes that have been implemented, is to be provided to the ADCI by **1 July 2024**.

4. To meet Standard 3 Program of study, evidence is to be provided as part of the **2025 Annual Report** of progress made to formalise an approach for BDS students to interact with other dental and non- dental health professionals in the clinical setting to provide interdisciplinary treatment and care.
5. To meet Standard 3 Program of study, the College is requested to review its clinical staffing profile to ensure that the structure and staff contracts are appropriate to support the development and delivery of the program.

A summary of the outcomes of the review, and changes that have been implemented, is to be provided to the ADCI by **1 July 2024**.

6. To meet Standard 4 Student experience, the HEI is requested to provide evidence to the ADCI by **1 July 2024** that students are represented within the deliberative and decision-making processes for the program.
7. To meet Standard 5 Assessment, the HEI is requested to provide evidence to the ADCI by **1 July 2024** of the calibration process for all faculty and clinical tutors involved in assessment of students.