



Australian Dental Council report of an evaluation of The University of Melbourne's Doctor of Dental Surgery program

July 2023

Executive summary

Program provider	The University of Melbourne
Program/qualification name	Doctor of Dental Surgery
Program/qualification abbreviation	DDS
Program/qualification code	MC-DDENSUR
Head office address, including State	720 Swanston Street, Melbourne VIC 3010
Campus	Melbourne Dental School
Program length	4 Years
Registration division	Dentist
Registration specialty	NA
Qualification type	HE
Australian Qualifications Framework level	9
Accreditation standards version	Accreditation Standards for Dental Practitioner Programs (Approved August 2020)
Date of site evaluation	18 - 19 July 2023
Date of ADC decision	1 December 2023
Type of accreditation	Reaccreditation
Accreditation start date	1 January 2024
Accreditation end date	31 December 2030

Background

The University of Melbourne's Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) program commenced in January 2011. It is an entry-to-practice graduate program of 4-years duration and graduates are eligible to apply for registration with the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) as a general dental practitioner. The first cohort of students graduated from the program in December 2014.

The program was last reviewed by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) in 2016, at which time the program was accredited for a period of seven years without conditions. In May 2018, the Melbourne Dental School advised the ADC of a proposed major restructure of the DDS program, with the changes proposed to be implemented from 2019. The ADC Accreditation Committee determined that the changes were a major change to an accredited program and a limited paper-based review was undertaken in 2018 against Standard 3 – Program of study, Standard 4 – Student experience and Standard 5 – Assessment. The ADC determined that the major change was accepted, and that accreditation was maintained until 31 December 2023.

Overview of evaluation

An ADC AT conducted a site visit on 18 and 19 July 2023 to The University of Melbourne's Melbourne Dental School campus. Further interviews with stakeholders were undertaken virtually on 18 September 2023. The AT reviewed the School's self-review against the Standards, attached appendices and additional information requested following the AT's teleconference of 25 May 2023.

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

- Dean of Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
- Head, Melbourne Dental School
- Program coordinator
- Year level coordinators
- Academic staff
- CEO Melbourne Dental Clinic
- Manager Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne
- Clinical supervisors
- Professional staff
- Student support team
- Equity and diversity staff
- Current students
- Recent graduates
- Employers
- Representatives of committees
- Representatives of professional associations

The AT toured the facilities at the Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne, the Melbourne Dental Clinic and Your Community Health.

The findings of this report are based on the AT's assessment of the material outlined above and interview evidence.

Key findings

The evidence considered by the Accreditation Team (AT) indicates that the University of Melbourne's Doctor of Dental Surgery Program (DDS) produces graduates competent to practice as dentists. The provider is well placed to deliver the program with agreements in place for student clinical placements at the Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne (RDHM), the Melbourne Dental Clinic (MDC) and Community Health Centres (CHC). The AT were impressed with the relationships that the School has established with external clinical placement providers, particularly in rural and remote areas, and commends the School for its ability to provide diverse clinical placement opportunities for students. While the quality and quantity of patients was sufficient for students to be competent upon graduation, the AT recommends the School explores ways to increase access to patients aged 0 – 5, patients with periodontal disease and patients requiring fixed and removable prostheses.

The program has undergone significant changes over the past few years. The ADC approved a major restructure of the program in 2018 that was implemented from 2019. The program experienced further changes due to the impacts of COVID-19 from 2020. There have also been significant staffing changes, particularly with clinical supervisors which the AT understands is partly due to a change of contract from casual to permanent. The AT were concerned that these changes have resulted in a loss of knowledge across the teaching staff. The interview evidence showed that there is a current lack of cohesion in the program and that staff are teaching in silos. This has resulted in a disjointed education philosophy and assessment strategy. The AT understands that the School is currently conducting a major curriculum review that aims to address some of these issues however expressed concern that there appeared to be a lack of understanding and awareness of the changes to be implemented by staff, students, and stakeholders, who are not directly involved in the review around what the new curriculum looks like and what changes to the curriculum and assessments are planned. The AT understands that the new curriculum is proposed to commence for the first-year intake in 2024 and recommends the School conducts a thorough change management and communications plan to ensure all stakeholders and staff understand the changes and are well placed to support the implementation.

The program has the right staffing mix and qualifications to deliver the program and the AT commend the staff for their clear commitment and dedication to the program, however due to the impacts outlined above the AT were also concerned about staff wellbeing and workload. The AT also raised concerns with regards to the new curriculum and having sufficient resources to support the implementation across the program.

The program has strong support from the profession. The provider established an External Advisory Committee to involve external stakeholders in the design, development and evaluation of the program and the inaugural meeting was held in March 2023. The AT recommends the School continues to establish the role of the Committee to enhance the opportunities for external input into the program.

The AT commends the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences commitment to foster interprofessional collaborative practice. The Faculty has an established Interprofessional Education and Practice Committee (IPEP) and has an IPEP framework which aims to develop students who are ready to engage in collaborative practice upon graduation. At the program level, there are opportunities for students to learn about other health professions throughout the course and students work collaboratively with Bachelor of Oral Health (BOH) students at the MDC and the CHCs however the AT recommends the School reviews its opportunities for students to engage in intra and interprofessional collaborative practice and explore ways students can work with dental and non-dental health students, in addition to BOH students.

The AT commends the School for the opportunities provided to students to provide care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly through the relationships that have been established with rural placement providers and the rotation students have at the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Oral Health Centre. The Australasian Council of Dental Schools (ACODS) commissioned the University of Melbourne to develop 'Join the Dots', a dental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety curriculum which the provider has committed to embedding into the DDS curriculum from 2024. The provider has rolled out cultural safety training for some staff, however the AT understands that not all staff teaching into the program or supervising students in clinics have completed this training. The AT recommends that training for staff and supervisors is prioritised. The AT also recommends the School implements a plan to ensure students and staff learn and work in a culturally safe environment and develops a strategy to increase the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into the program.

Interview evidence from all stakeholders showed that a major pain point was timetabling. Timetabling is complex due to changes in staff and supervisors, limitations in finding appropriate teaching spaces, plus the variety of clinical placements opportunities available to students that all require coordination. The AT understands that limited administrative support staff and a manual timetabling system result in a complex timetable that is difficult to interpret, this plus last minute and frequent changes results in confusion for both students and staff, which has at times resulted in staff not showing up to lectures when scheduled. The AT also heard that some patient clinics were getting late notifications that students wouldn't be attending which has had an impact on patient care and service delivery.

ADC's accreditation decision

The ADC has determined that The University of Melbourne's Doctor of Dental Surgery program is reaccredited for a period of seven (7) years from **1 January 2024** until **31 December 2030** subject to the following conditions:

1. To fully meet Standard 2 – Academic Governance and Quality Assurance the provider is requested to provide an update on the External Advisory Committee since the inaugural meeting in March 2023. A report is to be submitted by **1 November 2024**. The report should include the number of meetings held, key activities conducted and how the Committee has input into the design and evaluation of the program.
2. To fully meet Standard 2 – Academic Governance and Quality Assurance the provider is requested to review the agreement in place between the School and the RDHM to ensure that roles and responsibilities for the purchase and maintenance of equipment is clear. The provider must provide a copy of the agreement by **1 November 2024**.
3. To fully meet Standard 3 – Program of study the School is requested to provide evidence by **1 November 2024** of the formalisation and systematic approach to interactions with other dental and non-dental health professionals to foster interprofessional collaborative practice.
4. To fully meet Standard 4 – Student Experience, the School is requested to review its process for timetabling to ensure that students, staff, and placement providers are provided with a less complex timetable and adequate notice for timetable changes. An update to changes that have been implemented is to be provided by **1 March 2024**.
5. To fully meet Standard 5 – Assessment, the School is required to provide evidence by **1 March 2024** of a process for calibrating supervisors and assessors across the program, including when students are on external placements.
6. To fully meet Standard 6 – Cultural safety, the School is requested to submit a report by **1 March 2024** demonstrating how it ensures that the learning environment and clinical placements are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and how any cultural safety breaches are identified and addressed. The report should also include an update on the appointment of appropriate staff and any strategies that have been implemented by the School to support the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into the program.

In addition, the following monitoring requirements are imposed on the Doctor of Dental Surgery Program (DDS):

1. The University of Melbourne is requested to provide an update and evidence on the progress being made to the design, delivery and implementation of the new DDS curriculum including:
 - a) An outline of the planned changes to the curriculum and assessment for each year of the program.
 - b) How the 'Join the dots' curriculum is being embedded into the program.
 - c) The change management and communications plan to ensure staff, students and stakeholders understand the changes to the program and can support the implementation.

- d) A resourcing plan, including staffing and learning spaces, that demonstrates how the School intends to support the implementation of the new curriculum as well as the teach-out of the current program.

A report is to be submitted by **1 February 2024**.

- 2. The provider is requested to provide an update as part of its **2024, 2025, and 2026 Annual report** on the roll-out of the new curriculum as it is being implemented for each year level.
- 3. The ADC reserves the right to schedule a monitoring review as detailed in the Accreditation Monitoring Framework. To assess the implementation of the new curriculum, a monitoring visit may be requested prior to the first cohort of students entering the clinic against Standard 1 – Public safety, Standard 3 – Program of study, Standard 5 – Assessment and Standard 6 – Cultural Safety.

