

ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs - IDAA submission to the Australian Dental Council

Background:

The Australian Dental Council has called for feedback from all interested persons and organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, on the proposed changes to the Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs (the Standards).

The Standards ensure education and training providers produce graduates who demonstrate the skills, knowledge and professional competencies needed to register as a dental practitioner in Australia. The proposed changes are intended to ensure the Standards remain in-line with the current regulatory environment and expectations to maintain public safety. The key focus areas for change relate to:

- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori and Pacific Peoples health outcomes;
- consumer involvement;
- inter-professional learning and practice; and
- assessment.

The feedback provided during this consultation will be considered by the Australian Dental Council and used to refine the amendments to the Standards. The revised Standards, following endorsement by the Australian Dental Council, will be submitted to the Dental Board of Australia for approval.

Indigenous Dentists' Association Australia:

Indigenous Dentists' Association Australia (IDAA) is the national member-based organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dentists and dental students. IDAA was founded in 2004 with the purpose of improving Indigenous oral health in Australia. IDAA is a member of the NHLF and the Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality (Close the Gap).

Cultural safety:

The proposed new domain, cultural safety, is of particular interest to IDAA. This domain will require that dental practitioner programs ensure students are able to provide culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The terminology 'cultural safety' was first described within the Maori health setting in Aotearoa/New Zealand nearly 30 years ago. The concept has been translated from these bicultural origins into the multicultural context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. This translation has produced both variation and commonalities. The

understanding of the concept is continuing to be developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within their organisations, academies and health professions.

Fundamentally cultural safety is a philosophy for the health practitioner; it is not about what care is provided but how care is provided. At the core of cultural safety is the recognition by the health practitioner of the power differential within each encounter with a patient. Cultural safety has been described as a decolonising method of practice, reliant upon negotiation and power-sharing through discussion and effective communication, and requires health practitioners to acknowledge their own culture, including white privilege.

The presence, or absence, of cultural safety must be defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receiving the care.

Proposed domain of cultural safety:

The six criteria for the domain are:

- **6.1** *There is external input into the design and management of the program from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*
- **6.2** *The program provider promotes and supports the recruitment, admission, participation, retention and completion of the program by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*
- **6.3** *Cultural safety is integrated throughout the program and clearly articulated in required learning outcomes.*
- **6.4** *Clinical experiences provide students with experience of providing culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*
- **6.5** *The program provider ensures students are provided with access to appropriate resources, and to staff with specialist knowledge, expertise and cultural capabilities, to facilitate learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.*
- **6.6** *Staff and students work and learn in a culturally safe environment.*

IDAA supports the proposed changes to the ADC/DC(NZ) accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs, particularly the proposed domain of cultural safety.

IDAA recommends that the ADC incorporate the principle that *'the presence, or absence, of cultural safety must be defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receiving the care'* within the domain and its assessment.

IDAA is very supportive of criteria 6.2 *'the program provider promotes and supports the recruitment, admission, participation, retention and completion of the program by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'* and suggests that this could be strengthened by public reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student numbers in programs, by program, by the ADC.



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President

20 April 2020