

ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL

1 Introduction

1.1 Over the years dental workers other than dentists have been introduced into the dental workforce. This varies greatly around the world depending on the particular country's existing dental workforce, resources, political climate but rarely on evidence-based analysis.

1.2 The Australian Health Ministers' Conference 2004 has determined a National Health Workforce Strategic Framework. The first guiding principle of this framework asserts that 'Australia should focus on achieving, at a minimum, national self sufficiency in health workforce supply, whilst acknowledging it is part of a global market.'

1.3 **Definitions**

1.3.1 ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL are those, other than dentists, working in the provision of dental services – namely dental assistants, dental therapists, dental hygienists, dental prosthetists, dental laboratory assistants, dental technicians and master dental technicians.

1.3.2 REGISTRABLE allied dental personnel are those whose autonomous duties and tasks include invasive dental procedures.

1.3.3 NON-REGISTRABLE allied dental personnel are those whose autonomous duties and tasks do not include any invasive dental procedures.

1.3.4 PRESCRIPTION is detailed written instruction provided by a dentist to allied dental personnel, and usually specifies the treatment to be performed.

1.3.5 INSTRUCTION is the oral elaboration of "prescription" and may include a teaching component.

1.3.6 SUPERVISION is the direction and/or oversight by dentists of the performance of duties by allied dental personnel. Supervision can be direct (i.e., the dentist is physically present in the treatment facility at all times the patient is being treated by allied dental personnel) or indirect (i.e., the dentist need not be physically present in the treatment facility, but must be able to be contacted at all times the patient is being treated by allied dental personnel).

1.3.7 INVASIVE PROCEDURES are those where entry to the tissue, body cavities or organs of a patient occurs, or where surgical repair of traumatic injury to a patient is undertaken.

1.3.8 BOARD is a Federal, State or Territory dental registration board.

2 Principles

- 2.1 All Australians should have access to modern, comprehensive oral health care.
- 2.2 Australia must be largely self sufficient with regard to the training of the dental workforce.
- 2.3 Allied dental personnel should only perform those duties for which they are formally trained.
- 2.4 Only allied dental personnel who perform invasive and irreversible procedures should be registered.

Responsibilities of Dentists

- 2.5 The dentist must be responsible for the diagnosis, treatment planning, and delivery of dental procedures and the continuing evaluation of the oral health of the patient. The dentist is also responsible for the support, direction and supervision of allied dental personnel in the conduct of prescribed duties for which they are legally accountable.
- 2.6 With respect to allied dental personnel other than dental prosthetists, it is the responsibility of the dentist to:
 - ensure that all members of the dental workforce at all times have appropriate competence and training for the tasks that are delegated to them;
 - have an understanding of the roles of all members of the dental workforce;
 - inform patients that a specified part of their treatment is to be undertaken by allied dental personnel;
 - monitor and supervise the performance of allied dental personnel;
 - consult with patients regarding the treatment plan and to instigate referral to specialists;
 - provide adequate prescription and instruction to ensure that the procedures and/or treatment to be performed are understood;
 - be available for consultation and management of any complications that may occur; and
 - ensure that all delegated procedures have been performed satisfactorily.

Responsibilities of Allied Dental Personnel

- 2.8 It is the responsibility of allied dental personnel to:
 - have a complete understanding of the role of all members of the dental workforce;
 - carry out only those delegated tasks for which they are legally authorised where they practise and for which they are formally educated and trained and have appropriate competence;
 - refer to a dentist any condition or task which is outside their competence, education and training, including changes in a patient's health status or medication; and
 - if applicable hold appropriate professional indemnity cover.

3 Policy

- 3.1 The future dental workforce should provide services that:
 - are population based;
 - are patient focused;
 - lead to the coordinated, non-fragmented provision of oral health services;
 - are preventively oriented; and
 - should ensure an adequate dental workforce in rural and remote areas.

Categories

3.2 The following categories of allied dental personnel in Australia are recognised:

Non-registrable:

- dental assistant;
- dental laboratory assistant;
- dental technician; and
- master dental technician.

Registrable:

- dental hygienist;
- dental therapist; and
- dental prosthetist.

Regulation of Practice of Allied Dental Personnel

3.3 Dental hygienists, dental therapists and dental prosthetists must be registered and practise in accordance with all statutory requirements. Regulation of practice must be vested in the Boards enacted by legislation under the relevant Federal, State or Territory Acts which must provide that:

- the scope of practice is clearly defined;
- the course of training is prescribed;
- registration is required and a register regularly maintained; and
- penalties apply for contravention of any provisions of the relevant Act.

3.4 Dental technicians, and any other persons not registered with a Board, who own and/or control dental laboratories must be licensed to do so by Boards.

3.5 Provider numbers must only be issued to those members of the dental workforce who practice independently. Therefore amongst allied dental personnel only dental prosthetists shall be issued with provider numbers.

Education and Scope of Practice of Allied Dental Personnel

3.6 Education and training for allied dental personnel must reflect their defined scope of practice, which should be nationally uniform.

Dental Assistant

3.7 Basic education and training of dental assistants must be at Certificate III level in the vocational sector and in accordance with the National Competency Standards.

3.8 With additional education and training in clearly defined areas to Certificate IV level in the vocational sector, and in accordance with the National Competency Standards, the duties of dental assistants extend to:

- dental assisting – oral health promotion;
- dental assisting – dental radiography;
- dental assisting – technical procedures;
- dental assisting – general anaesthesia and conscious sedation; and
- dental assisting – dental practice administration.

3.9 Duties shall comprise established procedures associated with chair side assisting, infection control and practice administration

3.10 A dental assistant must work under the supervision of a dentist or suitable allied dental personnel as detailed in Appendix 2 to this Policy Statement.

Dental Hygienist

- 3.11 Education and training of dental hygienists must be to Diploma level and of at least two years' duration. The education and training should be conducted in either the higher education sector in a tertiary institution associated with the training of dentists or in the vocational sector in a course dedicated to only dental hygiene training and accredited by the Australian Dental Council (ADC).
- 3.12 The duties of a dental hygienist should be directed towards oral health education and the prevention of dental diseases, including dental caries and periodontal disease.
- 3.13 Treatment services provided by a dental hygienist must be provided in accordance with a written treatment plan which has been signed and dated by a dentist who has personally examined the patient, and:
- such treatment plan shall be effective for not more than twelve months; and
 - the need for examination of the patient by the dentist after completion of the treatment plan by the dental hygienist will depend on the needs of the patient, the treatment provided and the experience and competency of the dental hygienist.
- 3.14 The role of the dental hygienist in the provision of dental treatment shall be subject to the following:
- 3.14.1 The dental treatment must be supervised by a dentist who is on the premises at the time of treatment, except in the case of dental treatment within categories referred to in paragraph 3.14.2 a. to h. provided on the premises of long term residential care, either government or licensed under local government legislation, for the elderly or persons with physical or intellectual disability, provided that a medical practitioner or registered nurse is at close call.
- 3.14.2 The dental treatment must fall within the following range of statutory duties:
- a. established procedures associated with chair side assisting and practice management;
 - b. oral health education;
 - c. instruction in monitoring and recording of plaque control routines and recording of periodontal disease;
 - d. prophylaxis;
 - e. polishing of restorations;
 - f. fluoride therapy, application of remineralising solutions and desensitising agents;
 - g. debridement to remove supragingival deposits from teeth;
 - h. debridement to remove subgingival deposits from teeth;
 - i. application and removal of rubber dam;
 - j. application of non-invasive fissure sealants;
 - k. taking of alginate impressions other than for the fabrication of prosthetic appliances;
 - l. removal of periodontal packs;
 - m. taking of dental radiographs;
 - n. orthodontic band sizing;
 - o. removal of orthodontic appliances including orthodontic cements and resins;
 - p. placement and removal of non-metallic separators and alastic modules;
 - q. administration of local anaesthesia by infiltration and mandibular nerve block.

Dental Therapist

- 3.15 Education and training of dental therapists must be to Diploma level and of at least two years' duration. The education and training should be conducted either in the higher education sector in a tertiary institution associated with the training of dentists or in the vocational sector in a course dedicated to only dental therapy training and accredited by the ADC.
- 3.16 A dental therapist must work under the supervision of a dentist.
- 3.17 The duties of dental therapists shall be restricted to prevention of dental diseases and control of dental caries in school children.
- 3.18 The provision of treatment by a dental therapist must fall within the following range of statutory duties:
- a. established procedures associated with chair side assisting and practice management;
 - b. oral health education;
 - c. oral health examination;
 - d. taking of dental radiographs;
 - e. application and removal of rubber dam;
 - f. pre- and post-operative instruction;
 - g. irrigation of the mouth;
 - h. fluoride therapy, application of remineralising solutions and desensitising agents;
 - i. debridement to remove deposits from teeth;
 - j. taking of alginate impressions other than for the fabrication of prosthetic appliances;
 - k. application of fissure sealants;
 - l. direct coronal restoration of primary and permanent teeth;
 - m. pulpotomies in vital primary teeth;
 - n. administration of local anaesthesia only by infiltration and mandibular nerve block;
 - o. forceps extraction of primary teeth under local anaesthesia.
- 3.19 Education and training of dental therapists should be phased out in favour of dental hygienists.

Dental Laboratory Assistant

- 3.20 Education and training of dental laboratory assistants must be to Certificate III level conducted in the vocational sector and in accordance with National Competency Standards.
- 3.21 A dental laboratory assistant must work under the supervision of a dental technician or dentist.
- 3.22 The duties of a dental laboratory assistant shall consist of the following established laboratory procedures:
- a. pouring impressions;
 - b. producing custom-made trays;
 - c. constructing occlusal registration rims;
 - d. constructing mouthguards;
 - e. articulating models; and
 - f. transferring records.

Dental Technician

- 3.23 Dental technician education and training must be to Diploma level and can be two to three years' full time study with a period of structured learning of one to two years. The training should be conducted in the vocational sector and in accordance with National Competency Standards.
- 3.24 A dental technician may work independently of a dentist, but must adhere to the prescription of a dentist and is not permitted any direct dealings with members of the public except in the case of non-invasive shade taking at the direction of the dentist.
- 3.25 The duties of a dental technician shall consist of the following established laboratory procedures:
- a. fabrication, maintenance and repair of complete and partial dentures;
 - b. fabrication of inlays, onlays, veneers, crowns and bridges;
 - c. fabrication of mouthguards, occlusal splints, medicament trays and stents;
 - d. fabrication of appliances used in orthodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery and other special areas of dentistry.

Master Dental Technician

- 3.26 A master dental technician must first be qualified as a dental technician and then gain an Advanced Diploma with a period of structured learning. The education and training must be conducted in the vocational sector and in accordance with National Competency Standards.
- 3.27 The advanced training for a master dental technician shall include:
- a. attachments to implants in complete and partial dentures;
 - b. precision attachments associated with inlays, onlays, crowns and bridges;
 - c. greater depth understanding of materials and processes; and
 - d. ceramic systems, CAD/CAM.

Dental Prosthetist

- 3.28 A dental prosthetist must first be qualified as a dental technician and then gain an Advanced Diploma with a period of structured learning. The education and training must be conducted in the vocational sector and in accordance with National Competency Standards.
- 3.29 Dental prosthetists may independently provide treatment to the public limited to the provision, in healthy mouths, of mouthguards and dentures not associated with implants.
- 3.30 All patients should be examined by a dentist prior to treatment by a dental prosthetist.
- 3.31 Education and training of dental prosthetists should be phased out in alignment with the decrease in demand for removable dental prostheses.

Career Path

- 3.32 Education and training institutions should facilitate entry of allied dental personnel into dental workforce training courses that are at a higher level than their current qualification (e.g., dental assistants training to become dental hygienists). This provides a career path for allied dental personnel within the dental workforce based on appropriate training.

Policy Statement 2.3

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APPENDIX 1 TO POLICY STATEMENT 2.3

ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL

AUSTRALIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

SECONDARY SCHOOLS SECTOR	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR	HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR
		Doctoral Degree
		Masters Degree
		Graduate Diploma
		Graduate Certificate
		Bachelor Degree
	Advanced Diploma	Associate Degree Advanced Diploma
	Diploma	Diploma
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate IV	
	Certificate III	
	Certificate II	
	Certificate I	

APPENDIX 2 TO POLICY STATEMENT 2.3

ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL

MODEL STANDARDS STATEMENT FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

EDUCATIONAL AND SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

Introduction

Dentists, dental therapists and dental hygienists and their employers have a responsibility to know a dental assistant's clinical and educational experience, scope of duties in keeping with appropriate Federal, State or Territory legislation and regulations, and supervisory requirements during the provision of oral health care procedures. There is no necessity for dental assistants to be registered.

Purpose

This Standards Statement describes the supervisory responsibilities and the relationship between the scope of duties and educational experience associated with the employment of dental assistants.

Scope of Duties

A dental assistant is primarily employed as a clinical assistant to the dentist. Their duties include clinical chair side assisting, maintaining infection control standards and to assist in practice administration.

The usual duties of a dental assistant are in accordance with their educational and clinical experience and require the direct supervision of a dentist, dental therapist and dental hygienist depending on the tasks undertaken by the dental assistant.

Educational and Clinical Experience

All dental assistants should be encouraged and supported to gain entry qualifications in dental assisting or recognition of equivalence, which has been issued by an Australian registered training organisation. Qualifications in dental assisting are particularly suited to the Australian Apprenticeship/Trainee pathway, which involves on-the-job and off-the-job training.

There are several levels of dental assistant educational and clinical experience that are recognised.

1. A dental assistant undergoing on-the-job training for at least six months and has no prior work-related experience. During the period of training a qualified dental assistant may support the training of an unqualified and inexperienced dental assistant.
2. A dental assistant undergoing on the job training and off-the-job training for a period of at least 12 months. During the period of training a qualified dental assistant may support the training of an unqualified and inexperienced dental assistant.
3. A dental assistant qualified in a nationally based Certificate III in Dental Assisting¹ or its equivalent working under the supervision of a dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist. Minimum units include²:
 - 3.1 Communicate and work effectively in health
 - 3.2 Comply with infection control policies and procedures in health work
 - 3.3 Process reusable instruments and equipment in health work

- 3.4 Participate in OHS processes
 - 3.5 Prepare for and assist with oral health care procedures
 - 3.6 Assist with dental radiography
 - 3.7 Assist with the administration in dental practice
 - 3.8 Apply first aid
4. A dental assistant qualified in a nationally based Certificate IV in Dental Assisting¹ or its equivalent working at an advanced level under the supervision of a dentist, including:
- 4.1 Dental Assisting – dental radiography
 - 4.2 Dental Assisting – oral health promotion
 - 4.3 Dental Assisting – technical procedures (also known as 'extended duties'²)
 - 4.4 Dental Assisting – general anaesthesia and conscious sedation
 - 4.5 Dental Assisting – dental practice administration

Supervision

The legal and ethical responsibilities associated with the actions and omissions of a dental assistant are attributed primarily to the supervising dentist. Any allied dental personnel or employer involved in the supervision of the dental assistant may also be liable.

Compliance with Board and statutory regulatory bodies is essential. Consultation to clarify any matters related to a dental assistant's qualifications, experience and competence to perform advanced scopes of duties or undertake on the job training may be required to attain nationally based Certificate IV qualifications in Dental Radiography and Technical procedures such as taking an impression for study models.

The clinical responsibilities for the patient remain with the dentist, dental therapist and dental hygienist providing the treatment and/or providing supervision at all times.

All advanced duties undertaken by a dental assistant should be in accordance with a written treatment plan prepared by a dentist.

During the performance of an advanced duty by a dental assistant, a dentist should be on the premises to:

- Provide supervision
- Provide advice and consultation in relation to authorised dental assistant activities
- Be available for referral in relation to other matters falling outside the competence of an individual dental assistant

All the above supervisory responsibilities of dentists apply equally to dental prosthetists conducting independent practice.

Patient Consent

Appropriate patient consent is to be obtained prior to the dental assistant undertaking any advanced duty involving direct patient contact.

The patient may decline to have the dental assistant undertake the advanced duty and elect to have a dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist to complete the task. The choice of dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist is dependent on the task and the dentist's supervisory obligations.

Records

A dental assistant undertaking advanced duties must maintain a signed work record of each patient contact recording the date and procedure undertaken.

The name of the dental assistant performing an advanced duty should be entered into the patient record for that procedure according to the usual standards for record keeping.

¹ Health Training Package HLT07 found at www.cshisc.com.au

² Terminology this section according to nationally based competency units, Health Training Package 07

Misrepresentation

When undertaking advanced duties involving direct contact with the patient, a dental assistant, supervisory dentist and employer should not hold out or represent a dental assistant as a dental care provider to the patient or through advertising.

APPENDIX 3 TO POLICY STATEMENT 2.3

ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL GLOSSARY OF TERMS

PREFERRED TITLE	ALTERNATE TITLE	OCCUPATION APPROPRIATE FOR AUSTRALIA
Dental Assistant	Dental Nurse	Yes
Dental Hygienist		Yes
Dental Therapist		Yes - short term
Dental Laboratory Assistant		Yes
Dental Technician	Laboratory Dental Technician	Yes
Master Dental Technician		Yes
Denturist	Clinical Dental Technician, Advanced Dental Technician, Dental Prosthetist	Yes - short/medium term
Maxillofacial Prosthetist and Technologist		No
Orthodontic Chair Side Assistant		No
Orthodontic Technician		No
Orthodontic Therapist		No
Oral Health Therapist		No
Practice Manager		Yes (not Allied Dental Personnel)
Receptionist		Yes (not Allied Dental Personnel)