

Policy Statement 3.2 – Dentists

Position Summary

Education and training of dentists must be to degree level in a total program of at least five years duration conducted by a tertiary institution in the higher education sector. Dentists should maintain an appropriate level of professional indemnity cover and conduct themselves in accordance with the Australian Dental Association Code of Ethics. Dentists must be the leaders of the dental team.

1. Background

- 1.1. Dentists were one of the first formally trained health practitioners.
- 1.2. Dentists in Australia have a proud tradition of voluntarily supporting Australian Dental Schools and dental research.
- 1.3. Dentists in Australia have a strong culture of cooperation by sharing experiences and knowledge.
- 1.4. Dentists have a strong culture of philanthropy.
- 1.5. A dentist is the only dental practitioner entitled to use the title “dentist” and may also be known as a dental surgeon, surgeon dentist or by a specialist dentist title.
- 1.6. Dentist education and training involves different models with at least five years at university and so the Board and governments recognise dentists as the principal dental practitioner and team leader.

Definitions

- 1.7. BOARD is the Dental Board of Australia.
- 1.8. A DENTAL TEAM comprises a mix of dentists and other registered dental practitioners and support staff and must at all times be headed by a dentist who must be responsible for the diagnosis, treatment planning, delivery of dental procedures and continuing evaluation of the oral health of the patient and the dentist supports and directs the other members of the dental team working directly with them.
- 1.9. A DENTIST is an appropriately qualified dental practitioner, registered by the Board to practise all areas of dentistry.
- 1.10. DENTAL PRACTITIONER is a person registered by the Board to provide dental care.
- 1.11. DENTISTRY is defined as the evaluation, diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment (nonsurgical, surgical, or reversible and irreversible procedures) of diseases, disorders, irregularities or conditions of the oral cavity, maxillofacial area and/or the adjacent and associated structures and their impact on the human body.

2. Principles

- 2.1. Dentists, being the most completely and highly trained dental practitioners, are central to the delivery of dental treatment.
- 2.2. All Australians should have access to modern, comprehensive oral health care.
- 2.3. Dental practitioners should only perform those duties for which they are trained and are competent.
- 2.4. Dentists perform invasive and irreversible procedures and must be registered.

3. Position

- 3.1. Education and training of dentists must be to degree level in a total program of at least five years duration conducted by a tertiary institution in the higher education sector. This can be:

This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statement: 3.1 Dental Workforce, 3.3 Allied Dental Personnel, 3.4 Specialist Dentists, 3.8 Overseas Qualified Dentists, 3.9 Recency of Practice, 3.10 Clinical Practice Placements, 3.12 Benefits of Defined Health Professions, 3.15 Post Graduate Year One Programs 4.1 Continuing Professional Development & 5.21 Regulatory Authorities

- either a single primary dentist degree; or
- a combination of initial general biological science degree and a postgraduate primary dentist degree the latter of which must be of at least four-year duration; or
- a three year primary dentist degree and a two year postgraduate dentist degree.

The programs that lead to registration as a dentist must be accredited by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) and approved by the Board.

- 3.2. Selection for entrance into such a program should not be based solely on academic performance and may include:
- communication skills, including competence in the English language;
 - state of health, including being blood borne virus free;
 - good character; and
 - physiological suitability to be a health practitioner.
- 3.3. A one-year clinical placement within the dentist training program is supported provided assistance and clinical supervision is provided to enhance the knowledge and skills of the student.
- 3.4. Voluntary post-graduate year one programs are supported provided they are based on mentoring and the continuing professional development of the graduates and not just the provision of service.
- 3.5. Specialist dental training must be of at least three years duration and should be consistent nationally.
- 3.6. Overseas qualified dentists must satisfactorily fulfil ADC and Board requirements before practising in Australia.
- 3.7. The dentist, by providing a full spectrum of care, is the primary provider of dental services to the community. Dentist-based systems of care and delivery must be accorded top priority. Where allied dental personnel are utilised, they must be part of a dental team.
- 3.8. Dentists providing dental care within clinical practice must maintain an appropriate level of professional indemnity insurance cover.
- 3.9. Dentists should conduct themselves in accordance with the Australian Dental Association and their Branch's Codes of Ethics.
- 3.10. Dentists should engage in continuing professional development throughout their practising careers.

Policy Statement 3.2

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