

Policy Statement 3.4 – Specialist Dentists

Position Summary

A dentist seeking recognition as a specialist in a chosen area must be registered to practice in Australia and must have completed a minimum of two years general practice. The minimum period of postgraduate education, including training and experience for any speciality, should be equivalent to three years full time in a program accredited by the Australian Dental Council or equivalent.

1. Background

- 1.1. The recognition of specialities and specialist dentists serves to identify to the public and to the dental and other health professions, individual practitioners who have advanced knowledge and skills in a specified area of dental practice.
- 1.2. Specialisation serves to stimulate organizational education and research in a particular area of dentistry.

Definitions

- 1.3. BOARD is the Dental Board of Australia.
- 1.4. DENTAL ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY is a body responsible for evaluating and approving courses leading to formal dental qualifications and assessing and examining overseas qualified dental practitioners.
- 1.5. SPECIALISATION is the exclusive practice of a recognised speciality of dentistry by an appropriately qualified dentist.
- 1.6. A SPECIALIST DENTIST or SPECIALIST is one who practises a recognised speciality, possesses a higher qualification relevant to this area of dentistry, and has been so registered.
- 1.7. DENTIST is an appropriately qualified dental practitioner, registered by the Board to practise all areas of dentistry.

Position

Practice of dental specialists

- 1.8. The establishment of a dental speciality must address a clear health need and public demand.
- 1.9. The acquisition of specialist status and the use of the designated title of the speciality should be strictly regulated.
- 1.10. Only specialist dentists, recognised by the Board, may use specialist titles or refer to themselves as specialists.
- 1.11. Possession of a higher qualification and/or limitation of practice to an area of dentistry without registration as a specialist with the Board cannot of itself confer specialist status or an entitlement to use the term specialist.
- 1.12. The public must not be misled about a practitioner's specialist status.
- 1.13. Only dentists should be eligible for training and registration as specialists.
- 1.14. Specialisation should not in any way curtail the right of a dentist to practise any area of dentistry.

This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statements: 3.1 Dental Workforce, 3.2 Dentists, 3.6 Higher Education Funding, 3.8 Overseas Qualified Dentists, 5.9 Dental Accreditation Authority & 5.21 Regulatory Authorities

Recognition of Dental Specialities

1.15. To be recognised as a dental speciality by the Board, any proposed speciality should meet the following criteria. It should:

- have a clear need and demand of a substantial portion of the population;
- be important to the health of individual patients;
- be an area of dentistry in which dentists may have need to refer patients for provision of expert services;
- require special knowledge and skills, superior to the dental education and training to qualify for registration as a dentist, in order to perform procedures or treat patients with complex oral health needs of an advanced, difficult or unusual nature;
- be definable in order to prescribe the scope of the speciality;
- be one in which there are formal courses accredited by the Australian Dental Council to qualify practitioners appropriately;
- have an established specialist organisation; and
- be recognised by the Australian Dental Association (ADA).

Requirements for Specialisation

1.16. A person seeking recognition as a specialist in a chosen area shall have:

- successfully completed an acceptable course to qualify for registration as a dentist;
- been registered to practice as a dentist in Australia;
- completed a mandatory two-year period as a dentist in general practice; and
- completed a course of post-graduate education accredited by the Dental Accreditation Authority leading to an acceptable higher qualification relevant to the area of specialisation.

Education Requirements

1.17. The minimum period of postgraduate education, including training/experience for any speciality, should be three years full time, but longer clinical training may be deemed to be appropriate for some specialities. The title for such a qualification should be Master of Dental Science or Doctor of Clinical Dentistry.

1.18. Only those courses of specialist education, which have been accredited by the Australian Dental Council or courses deemed equivalent by it or the Board are to be recognised as acceptable qualifications for specialisation.

1.19. Completion of a research only program must not be considered as sufficient grounds for registration in any speciality.

Registration

1.20. Specialist status shall be subject to registration conferred through statutory powers vested in the Board.

1.21. Dental registration legislation should prescribe:

- areas of dental specialisation;
- requirements for registration as a specialist dentist; and
- that only recognised specialist dentists may use specialist titles.

Currently Recognised Dental Specialities

1.22. The dental specialities should be the following:

1.22.1 Dento-Maxillofacial Radiology

That part of dental practice which deals with diagnostic imaging procedures applicable to the hard and soft tissues of the oral and maxillofacial region and to other structures which are relevant for the proper assessment of oral conditions.

A Specialist in dento-maxillofacial radiology should have the title of Dento-Maxillofacial Radiologist.

1.22.2 Endodontics

That part of dental practice which deals with the morphology, physiology, and pathology of the human tooth and, in particular, the dental pulp, root and peri-radicular tissues. It includes the biology of the normal pulp, crown, root and peri-radicular tissues and the aetiology, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries that affect these tissues.

A Specialist in endodontics should have the title of Endodontist.

1.22.3 Forensic Odontology

That part of dental practice which deals with the examination and evaluation of dental evidence, which may then be presented in the interests of justice. It includes identification of unknown human remains, identification of unknown deceased individuals following mass disasters, examination and assessment of bite mark injuries, child abuse injuries and facial injuries following assault or trauma, age assessment of both living and deceased persons and civil cases involving malpractice and fraud allegations.

A Specialist in forensic dentistry should have the title of Forensic Odontologist.

1.22.4 Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

That part of dental practice which deals with the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive treatment of diseases, injuries and defects of the human jaws and associated structures.

A Specialist in oral and maxillofacial surgery should have the title of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon.

1.22.5 Oral Surgery

That part of dental practice which deals with the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive treatment of diseases and injuries limited to the dento-alveolar complex.

A Specialist in oral surgery should have the title of Oral Surgeon.

1.22.6 Oral Medicine

That part of dental practice which deals with the clinical diagnosis, assessment and principally non-surgical, pharmacological management of anatomical variants, pathological conditions, diseases and pain of the dental, oral and adjacent anatomical structures and the dental/oral manifestations and complications of systemic diseases, pathology and conditions and their treatment.

A Specialist in oral medicine should have the title of Oral Physician.

1.22.7 Oral Pathology

That part of dental practice which deals with diseases of the teeth, jaws, oral soft tissues and associated structures, studies their causes, pathogenesis and effects, and by use of clinical, radiographic, microscopic and other laboratory procedures establishes differential diagnoses and provides forensic evaluations.

A Specialist in oral pathology should have the title of Oral Pathologist.

1.22.8 **Orthodontics**

That part of dental practice which deals with the study and supervision of the growth and development of the dentition and its related anatomical structures, including preventive and corrective procedures of dentofacial irregularities requiring the re-positioning of teeth, jaws, and/or soft tissues by functional or mechanical means.

A Specialist in orthodontics should have the title of Orthodontist.

1.22.9 **Paediatric Dentistry (Paedodontics)**

That part of dental practice which deals with the diagnosis, prevention and the treatment of dental diseases, injuries and abnormalities in infants, children and adolescents, including those with special needs, developmental and behavioural problems.”

A Specialist in paediatric dentistry should have the title of Paediatric Dentist or Paedodontist.

1.22.10 **Periodontics**

That part of dental practice which deals with the prevention, recognition, diagnosis and treatment of the diseases and disorders of the investing and supporting tissues of natural teeth or their substitutes.

A Specialist in Periodontics should have the title of Periodontist.

1.22.11 **Prosthodontics**

That part of dental practice which deals with the restoration and maintenance of oral health, function and appearance by coronal alteration or reconstruction of natural teeth or the replacement of missing teeth and contiguous oral and maxillofacial tissues with substitutes.

A Specialist in prosthodontics should have the title of Prosthodontist.

1.22.12 **Public Health Dentistry**

That part of dental practice which deals with the community as the patient rather than the individual, being concerned with oral health education of the public, applied dental research and administration of dental care programs including prevention and control of oral diseases on a community basis.

A Specialist in Public Health Dentistry should have the title of Specialist in Public Health Dentistry.

1.22.13 **Special Needs Dentistry**

That part of dental practice which deals with patients where intellectual disability, medical, physical or psychiatric conditions require special methods or techniques to prevent or treat oral health problems or where such conditions necessitate special dental treatment plans.

A Specialist in Special Needs Dentistry should have the title of Special Needs Dentist.

Obligations of Specialist Dentists

1.23. In treating a referred patient, a specialist dentist shall:

- keep the referring practitioner informed of progress;
- attempt to seek consent of the referring practitioner before making a further referral;
- not perform services which are outside his/her speciality without the consent of the referring practitioner; and
- after completion of treatment, direct the patient back to the referring practitioner.

1.24. A specialist dentist shall guide and educate other dentists and allied dental personnel to higher levels of competence within their scope of practice.

Policy Statement 3.4

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