

Joint Communiqué

Specialist project – 10 January 2014

This communiqué provides an update on the Specialist Project, which the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) agreed to proceed with in 2013. The project is a substantial body of work on dental specialties.

Dental Council New Zealand (Dental Council)

Firstly, we are very pleased to announce that the Dental Council (NZ) is an official partner with the DBA in this project. Developing the framework and competencies documents in collaboration with the Dental Council is imperative in light of the Trans-Tasman mutual recognition that enables registration between Australia and New Zealand. It also supports the DBA and Dental Council's commitment to work together, where possible, on shared regulatory matters.

The documents developed in this project will be used in both jurisdictions, as relevant, to help establish standards for specialist registration, noting that there are some differences between the two jurisdictions' lists of recognised specialties.

What is the scope of the project?

The primary focus of the project is to develop a framework for specialist registration and a list of competencies for the recognised dental specialties in Australia and New Zealand. This will be done in close consultation with relevant specialist organisations and education providers.

The term 'competency' is used in this project in line with the language of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) in Australia; and with the required standards of competence defined in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, regulating New Zealand practitioners. It is however understood that specialists have advanced training and knowledge.

The intent of the documents being developed is to describe the minimum standard competencies for the newly graduated dental specialist and are not intended to define advanced practice competencies.

Why are the DBA and the Dental Council doing this work?

The pathway for specialist registration in Australia is in accordance with section 58 of the National Law. The qualifications needed for specialist registration in Australia are an approved program of study for the specialty (referred to as an 'approved qualification') or another qualification that the DBA considers to be "substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies, to an approved qualification for the specialty".

Specialist registration in New Zealand is available to those with prescribed specialist qualifications; or where the qualification is not prescribed by either assessing the qualifications to determine whether they can be considered as "equivalent to, or as satisfactory as" a prescribed qualification, or by sitting specialist examinations. Competencies underpin the curriculum of prescribed qualifications, and are therefore key in setting the educational standard required for registration in a scope of practice.

It is the DBA and Dental Council's role to set the minimum standards that all applicants must meet and the competencies documents will provide part of DBA's and Dental Council's registration framework.

In addition, it is important that the framework and competencies are recorded in a consistent way across the specialties so that they are easy to understand and the commonalities and differences between

specialties are clear. This information also needs to be easily accessible and the DBA and Dental Council will publish the final documents on their respective websites.

What is the purpose of the framework and competencies?

The competencies documents will provide one part of the broader framework. The purpose of the framework and the competencies is to clarify the minimum standards, education and training required for dental specialists who want to register to practise in Australia and New Zealand. The framework and competencies will be used in a range of contexts including:

- accrediting specialist programs of study
- assessing qualifications for specialist registration in Australia and New Zealand
- assessing overseas qualified dental specialists toward specialist registration in Australia and New Zealand, and
- evaluating the competence or otherwise of dental specialists in the context of regulatory processes.

Who is involved?

Expert Reference Group – Specialist

The DBA's Expert Reference Group Specialist (ERGS) is overseeing the project. The ERGS is not intended to be a representative body, but rather a group of experts from Australia, New Zealand and the education sector that the DBA and Dental Council have agreed to provide advice about specialist related matters and to provide recommendations from the project.

The ERGS will take the lead in reviewing all relevant material gathered as a part of the project, overseeing the drafting of the framework and the competencies, consulting with stakeholders throughout the project, advising and providing recommendations to the DBA and the Dental Council.

Stakeholders

The DBA and Dental Council are aware of the breadth and depth of the work needed to develop competencies for each of the dental specialties and the need to work closely with the profession throughout the process. In particular the DBA and Dental Council are keen to work with the specialist academies and the education providers delivering approved programs of study in the specialties.

The DBA and Dental Council will consult widely about the draft documents.