



Communiqué

September 2018 meeting of the Dental Board of Australia

The 100th meeting of the Dental Board of Australia (the Board) was held on Friday 21 September 2018 at the National Office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

This communiqué highlights key discussions and considerations from the Board's meeting, as well as other important information.

We publish this communiqué on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. We encourage you to distribute it to colleagues and interested parties, including in the organisation you work in.

Board completes review - Improving scope of practice regulation to reflect contemporary dental practice

The Board has completed its review, *Improving scope of practice regulation to reflect contemporary dental practice*.

Since the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), the Board has moved incrementally from the prescriptive requirements for scope of practice to implement changes that encourage a responsive, risk-based approach that aligns with the [Regulatory principles of the National Scheme](#).

Over the past year the Board has carried out a review of the current *Scope of practice registration standard* and associated regulatory documents. The Board has heard from the profession and community about the proposed changes. Submissions can be viewed on the Board's website under [Past consultations](#).

The feedback provided is greatly valued and has informed the Board's proposed revised registration standard (which is consistent with the consultation version) which will be submitted to [COAG Health Council](#) for approval.

The Board will inform dental practitioners and stakeholders of the outcome once a decision has been made by ministers.

The proposed key changes aim to:

Strengthen healthcare teams

- The requirement for a structured professional relationship between a dentist and dental therapists, dental hygienists or oral health therapists will not be regulated by the Board.
- Dental practitioners should be mindful of other regulatory requirements and workplace agreements which will continue to cover credentialing and scope of clinical practice.
- The Board's expectations of professional relationships are set out in the Board's *Code of conduct* (the Code).

- The Code sets out the standards of professional conduct the Board expects and is used to evaluate dental practitioners' conduct.
- By defining the Board's expectations of professional conduct, including professional relationships, the Code supports patients' interests, good patient care and the delivery of appropriate, effective services within an ethical framework.
- Practitioners have a professional responsibility to be familiar with and to apply the Code.

Recognise the professional roles and responsibilities of all dental practitioners

- The regulatory bar on independent practice for dental therapists, dental hygienists and oral health therapists will be removed.
- The Board has seen important changes to the education programs for dental therapists, dental hygienists and oral health therapists and current training is sufficient to support these practitioners in working in team-based settings without supervision.
- This change has no influence on the ability for dental therapists, dental hygienists and oral health therapists to own and run a dental business – as that right already exists.
- The ability of dental therapists, dental hygienists and oral health therapists to access a provider number or other funding sources is not the responsibility of the Board.

Support practitioners to understand their own scope of practice

- The Board has designed a reflective tool to support practitioners in reflecting on their knowledge, skills and abilities, and consider how their competence relates to their areas of practice.
- You should review your individual scope of practice regularly.
- This is especially important when updating or refreshing your knowledge and skills in response to changes in your workplace setting or before the introduction of new technologies, equipment and/or treatments into your practice.
- As a registered dental practitioner it is your responsibility to know your own scope of practice and ensure that you comply with the requirements of the Board's registration standard and guideline.

Phasing out the approval of Programs to extend scope

Before the National Scheme, dental hygienists, dental therapists and dental prosthetists could extend their scope of practice in some jurisdictions by completing an 'add-on' program. The add-on programs, now known as Programs to extend scope, transitioned to the National Scheme as programs reviewed and approved by the Board.

Last year, the Board announced through its [communiqué](#) and [newsletter](#) that it had agreed to phase out approval of Programs to extend scope – this means these programs will no longer be accredited by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) or approved by the Board. The approval of the current programs will expire on 31 December 2018 and the list will be removed from the Board's website.

These types of programs can continued to be delivered as continuing professional development (CPD). CPD is how all dental practitioners continue to learn and develop their professional practice. If you decide to complete CPD that broadens your knowledge, expertise and competence (e.g. a CPD course to learn a new technique), you need to:

- self-assess whether you have been provided with sufficient clinical experience
- assess the quality of training to incorporate this new technique into your clinical practice, and
- make sure you are practising within your division of registration and definition of dentistry.

The Board has published updated [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ) to answer common queries that you might have about this transition phase.

New results format for OET English language test; registration standards remain unchanged

AHPRA and the Board have started accepting an updated format of test results for the Occupational English Test (OET).

All National Boards have a registration standard for English language skills, which require applicants for initial registration to demonstrate English language skills to be suitable for registration. The OET is one of the English language skills tests accepted by the Dental Board.

The English language level being tested by OET remains the same. Test takers are not being measured differently, with the only change being the way the OET scores are described. As such, the National Boards' [English language skills registration standards](#) referring to OET have not changed. Rather, updates have been made to internal systems and relevant application forms to accommodate and reflect the new numerical scale.

Find out more on the [AHPRA website](#).

Are your contact details up to date?

It is important that your contact details are up to date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the Login icon at the top right of the [AHPRA website](#). Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

Conclusion

The National Board publishes a range of information about registration and the National Board's expectations of practitioners on its website at www.dentalboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more information or help with questions about your registration please send an [online enquiry form](#) or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

John Lockwood AM
Chair, Dental Board of Australia
28 September 2018