

Competences for the Hong Kong Dentists

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Introduction

Dentists are expected to contribute to the achievement of the general health of patients by implementing and promoting appropriate oral health management.

A dentist must have acquired this ability through the achievement of a set of generic and subject specific competences – abilities essential for independent, unsupervised dental practice.

This document contains sets of competence statements which serve dual purposes, i.e.

- 1. to act as a blueprint on standards requiring for licensing examination of the Dental Council of Hong Kong*
- 2. to provide the undergraduate dental teaching institution with a benchmark with which to:*
 - review the undergraduate curriculum*
 - review and improve student evaluation processes; and*
 - establish and apply outcome measures to assess the effectiveness of the undergraduate programme.*

While this document on competence statements can be useful in accreditation of any dental teaching institution which provide undergraduate program, it is understood that other standards on institutional effectiveness, faculty and staff, educational support services, patient care services and research program should also be identified for the purpose.

Competences

The competences, at the graduation, are the basic level of professional behaviour, knowledge and skills necessary for a registered dentist to respond to the full range of circumstances encountered in general professional practice. This level of performance requires some degree of speed and accuracy consistent with patient well-being. It also requires an awareness of what constitutes acceptable performance under changing circumstances and a desire for self-improvement.

Competences should support integration and merging of all disciplines, which should benefit dentists in training and also patients who are receiving treatment.

Domains

The present document is structured from the general to the more specific for every section. Eight domains have been identified that represent the broad categories of professional activity and concerns that occur in the general practice of dentistry. They are interdisciplinary in orientation and must embrace an element of critical thinking. They may apply in differing ways to patients of all ages, including children, adolescents, adults and the elderly in Hong Kong:

I.	Professionalism
II.	Interpersonal, Communication and Social Skills
III.	Knowledge Base, Information and Information literacy
IV.	Clinical Information Gathering
V.	Diagnosis and Treatment Planning
VI.	Therapy: Establishing and Maintaining Oral Health
VII.	Health Promotion
VIII.	Practice Management

Major competences

Within each domain, one or more ‘major competence’ is identified as relating to that domain’s activity. A major competence is the ability of a dentist on graduation to perform or provide a particular, but complex, service or task. Its complexity suggests that multiple and more specific abilities are required to support the performance of any major competence.

Supporting competences

The more specific abilities could be considered as subdivisions of a 'major competence' and are termed a 'supporting competence'. Achievement of a major competence requires the acquisition and demonstration of all supporting competences related to that particular service or task. However, some supporting competences may also contribute to the achievement of other major competences. It is understood that there exists a dynamic nature of supporting competence due to social, cultural, economic, disease pattern and technological changes.

Please note that in this document, only the domains and major competences are outlined. It offers the flexibility and diversity for any teaching institutions to define related supporting competences in order to achieve all major competences.

Domain I: Professionalism

1.1 Major competence: Professional Attitude and Behaviour

A dentist must be competent in a wide range of skills, including research, investigative, analytical, problem solving, planning, communication, presentation, team building and leadership skills and has to demonstrate a contemporary knowledge and understanding of the broader issues of dental practice. A dentist should understand the relevance of these issues in clinical dental practice.

1.2 Major competence: Ethics and Jurisprudence

A dentist must be competent to display knowledge and understand thoroughly the moral and ethical responsibilities involved in the provision of care to individual patients, to populations and communities as described in the Declaration of Geneva. A dentist must display knowledge of contemporary laws applicable to the practice of dentistry in Hong Kong, such as the Dentists Registration Ordinance, Cap. 156 of the Laws of Hong Kong as well as the “*Code of Professional Discipline for the Guidance of Dental Practitioners in Hong Kong*” prepared by the Dental Council of Hong Kong.

Domain II: Interpersonal, Communication and Social Skills

Major competence: Communication

A dentist must be competent to communicate effectively, interactively and reflectively with patients, their families, relatives and carers, members of the dental team, dental colleagues, and with other health professionals involved in their care.

A dentist must be competent to discuss the findings, diagnoses, etiology, risks, benefits and prognoses of the treatment options, with a view to patient participation in oral health management and obtain informed consent including the patient’s written acceptance of the treatment plan and any modifications.

Domain III: Knowledge Base, Information and Information Literacy

3.1 Major competence: Application of Basic Biological, Medical, Technical and Clinical Sciences

A dentist must be competent to acquire the knowledge and understanding of the basic biological, medical, technical and clinical sciences in order to

- recognize the difference between normal and pathological conditions/ disorders relevant to clinical dental practice.
- recognize the relationship between general health and oral health.
- prevent the transmission of infectious diseases by following current infection control guidelines.
- recognize and institute procedures to ensure health and safety and minimize occupational hazards to oneself and members of the dental team related to the practice of dentistry.
- select and, where indicated, prescribe appropriate biomaterials for patient treatment.

3.2. Major competence: Acquiring and Using Information

A dentist must be competent at demonstrating appropriate information literacy to acquire and use information from libraries and other databases and display the ability to analyze and use this information in a critical, scientific and effective manner in order to justify management recommendations based on the level of evidence available.

A dentist must be competent to demonstrate an ability to maintain his/her professional knowledge and understanding throughout his/her professional life.

Domain IV: Clinical Information Gathering

Major competence: Obtaining and Recording a Complete History of the Patient's Medical, Oral and Dental State

A dentist must be competent at obtaining and recording a complete history of the patient's medical, oral and dental state. This will include biological, medical, psychological and social information in order to evaluate the oral and dental condition in patients. In addition, a dentist will be competent at

performing an appropriate physical examination; interpreting the findings and organizing the required diagnostic tests including radiographic examination, considering the risks and benefits when necessary in order to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis.

A dentist must be competent to maintain accurate and complete the patient records in a confidential manner.

Domain V: Diagnosis and Treatment Planning

Major competence: Decision-making, Clinical Reasoning and Judgment

A dentist must be competent in decision-making, clinical reasoning and judgment in order to develop a differential, provisional or definitive diagnosis by interpreting and correlating findings from the history, clinical and radiographic examination and other diagnostic tests, taking into account the social and cultural background of the patient.

A dentist must be competent at formulating and recording a diagnosis and developing an appropriate comprehensive, prioritized and sequenced treatment plan with appropriate options which meets the needs and demands of the patient.

A dentist must be competent to present and discuss the risks and benefits, sequence of treatment, estimated fees, payment arrangements, time requirements and the patient's responsibilities for treatment.

A dentist must be competent to recognize those treatments that are beyond his/her skills and need to be referred on for a specialist opinion and treatment.

Domain VI: Therapy: Establishing and Maintaining Oral Health

This domain provides a broad range of major and supporting competences on establishing and maintaining oral health. There is no intention to be prescriptive and for more specific competences relating to particular aspects of dentistry and its associated specialties.

This domain should relate to patients from different age groups (children, adolescents, adults and the elderly) or specifically to one particular age group and to those patients with special needs and requirements. A dentist should be aware of their limitations and know when to refer a patient for specialist dental or medical care.

Major competences:

A dentist must be competent at:

- 6.1 educating patients and managing primary oral health care for patients at all stages in their life (including children, adolescents, adults and the ageing population/elderly) appropriately, effectively and safely, emphasizing current concepts of prevention and treatment of oral disease which supports the maintenance of systemic and oral health.
- 6.2 treating patients whose special needs, anxiety, desires and requirements may influence their dental care and knowing when to refer
- 6.3 employing appropriate techniques to manage oro-facial pain, including TMJ disorders, discomfort and psychological distress
- 6.4 managing conditions and diseases of the periodontium, providing periodontal treatment when indicated and monitoring treatment outcomes.
- 6.5 managing and assessing risk factors, extent and activity for caries and other hard tissue tooth loss, pulpal and peri-radicular disease and disorders.
- 6.6 restoring defective and/or missing teeth to acceptable form, function and aesthetics.
- 6.7 treating and managing conditions requiring minor surgical procedures of the hard and soft tissues, and applying and/or prescribing appropriate pharmaceutical agents to support treatment.
- 6.8 diagnosing and managing common oral mucosal diseases and disorders.
- 6.9 managing minor developmental or acquired dentoalveolar, growth-related and functional abnormalities of the primary, mixed and permanent dentition.
- 6.10 preventing and managing the majority of medical and dental emergency situations encountered in clinical dental practice.

Domain VII: Health Promotion

Major competence: Improving Oral Health of Individuals, Families and Groups in the Community

A dentist must be competent at promoting and improving the oral health of individuals, families and groups in the community.

Domain VIII- Practice Management

Major competence: Apply basic principles of practice administration, financial and personnel management to a dental practice

A dentist must be competent in managing a sound business operation which facilitates the delivery of quality oral health care to patients.

A dentist must be able to establish a professional practice by developing practice goals and plans; implement effective office systems; evaluate outcomes; manage personnel; manage patient care; and understand the legal ramifications of patient care.

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