



**College of Alberta
Dental Assistants**

Program Approval Policies

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Introduction

The College of Alberta Dental Assistants (“the College”) regulates the profession of dental assisting in the public interest as mandated in the *Health Professions Act* (“the Act”).¹

In accordance with the Act, the College has the authority to approve dental assisting programs and education courses in Alberta.² By exercising this authority the College ensures that the programs and courses offer education that will produce, at a minimum, dental assistants who meet standards for entry to practice.

The College will use these Program Approval Policies and Dental Assisting Education Principles when approving and monitoring dental assisting programs and education courses.

The Council, under the authority of the Act³ and the College Bylaws,⁴ approves Program Approval Policies and the Dental Assisting Education Principles. If there is any conflict, real or perceived, between the Policies, Principles, the Act, the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation* and or the Bylaws, the legislation and Bylaws take precedence.

¹ *Health Professions Act* (2000), s.3

² *Health Professions Act* (2000), s.3(1)(f)

³ *Health Professions Act* (2000), s.6

⁴ CADA Bylaws, s4.04

Education Principles Development

The College developed these Education Principles to serve as guiding principles when making best decisions for dental assisting education program and course approval. The principles are not prioritized nor are any of the principles in isolation to another. The purpose is that they work together for successful dental assisting education programs and courses.

The Education Principles support educational institutions' flexibility in the development and improvement of their education program(s) and course(s). Institutions are encouraged to develop unique program(s) and course(s) using curricular experimentation to aid in the achievement of excellence without the establishment of uniformity.

The Education Principles development process was comprehensive, covering information gained from regulatory bodies across the globe and keeping in mind the educational institutions' submissions to provincial government bodies, the Commission of Dental Accreditation of Canada and the National Dental Assisting Examining Board.

Risk assessment in conjunction with the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation* and the College's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics was also used in establishing the Education Principles.

The purpose of risk assessment is to identify potential problems before they occur. This falls in line with the concept of right-touch regulation. Right-touch regulation ensures that the level of regulation is proportionate to the level of risk to the public. It means a regulatory body anticipates change and focuses on prevention as opposed to reaction.

Educational assessments could include many data sources and indicators of risk. The College has adopted three main risk factors⁵ to consider when approving and monitoring dental assisting education programs and courses:

- (1) A program or course is not producing, or is not likely to produce, "graduates" who are fit to practice⁶ as a safe beginner.⁷
- (2) The care and treatment of patients by the students enrolled in a program or course is not at the required level.
- (3) A program or course is not well-managed and does not have effective systems in place to identify and address the issues.

Dental Assistants are required to meet standards for entry practice and for continuing to practice. As educated health care professionals, they practice to the highest standards to ensure protection of the public.

⁵ Risk factors adopted from *Education Processes; Consultation Outcome Report* November 2018, 3.2 Risks, General Dental Council UK

⁶ For this policy, "fit to practice" means compliance with the Standards of Practice

⁷ For this policy, "safe beginner" means entry level

Education Principle 1: Student Preparation

Dental Assistant program graduates meet the requirements for initial registration, practice permit renewal and continuing competence to ensure their practice meets the standards expected by the Public and the College.⁸

Criteria

Programs providing Dental Assisting Education:

- (a) provide diverse, relevant, and sufficient resources to support student success;
- (b) champion professional development and promote lifelong learning;
- (c) ensure program stability and work to be significant, innovative and progressive;
- (d) demonstrate the Criteria in the Standards of Practice and integrate the Criteria throughout the program;
- (e) lead with integrity while educating students to provide competent application of knowledge and skills; and,
- (f) upon graduation students meet entry-level competencies.

⁸ *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation (AR252/2005)*

Education Principle 2: Patient Protection

Dental Assistant program graduates take professional responsibility for their actions and strive to do no harm to patients by engaging in best practices and competent application of knowledge and skills. If harm occurs, the Dental Assistant program graduate discloses the issue, takes appropriate steps to minimize the harm and evaluates processes to prevent recurrence.⁹

Criteria

Programs providing Dental Assisting Education:

- (a) educate students to be guided by the individual needs of the patient and make all treatment or care decisions in the patient's best interest;
- (b) continually evaluate processes and outcomes to meet and improve the standard of care for patients;
- (c) enforce the creation and maintenance of accurate, complete, concise and confidential patient records in compliance with the policies and protocols of the institution and all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements;
- (d) ensure students have exposure to an appropriate breadth of patients and procedures in order to achieve competence in all learning outcomes;
- (e) educate students on how to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest, maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional relationships; and recognize their unique position of power in professional-patient relationships; and,
- (f) recognize and remedy issues that may affect students' ability to provide safe, competent care.

⁹ CADA Code of Ethics, April 9, 2016

Education Principle 3: Program Effectiveness

Dental Assistant program graduates are knowledgeable of and practice to the current standard of care, seeking sound scientific information to support practice decisions.¹⁰

Criteria

Programs providing Dental Assisting Education:

- (a) participate in learning and research activities to remain knowledgeable about the current standard of care and educational methods; use this information to evaluate internal policy/procedures, curriculum, assessment, program and course outcomes as well as delivery modes;
- (b) collaborate with industry and other educational institutes to promote educational excellence and to make informed decisions;
- (c) establish assessments which are appropriate and undertaken against criteria clear to both faculty and students;
- (d) provide education that is evidence-based and meets the current standard of care; while following a logical and organized framework;
- (e) ensure clinical and didactic experience provides enough opportunities for students to achieve course learning objectives, program outcomes, and relevant practice competencies; and,
- (f) take responsibility for decisions and actions through professionally managed and effective systems that can identify and address issues.

¹⁰ CADA Code of Ethics, April 9, 2016

Program Approval

PAP1 Approval of Programs

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP1
Approval Date: November 29, 2014	Scheduled Review: September
Revised Date(s): Feb 29, 2020	

Policy Statement

The College approves Alberta dental assisting programs for the purposes of registration requirements¹¹ through a Council motion.

Indicators

- (1) Council may:
 - (a) prescribe Provisionally Approved Program status or Approved Program status; and,
 - (b) utilize recognized third-party organizations to assist with the administration of its program approval processes.

¹¹ Health Professions Act (2000), s.3(1)(f)

Program Approval

PAP2 Provisionally Approved Program Status

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP2
Approval Date: November 29, 2014	Scheduled Review: September
Revised Date(s): Feb 29, 2020	

Policy Statement

Provisionally Approved Program status may be granted to a proposed dental assisting program in Alberta that is in the process of meeting the requirements for Approved Program status.

Indicators

- (1) Applicants for provisional program approval must ensure enough time to complete all program approval requirements and be provisionally approved by the College prior to advertising and enrolling students.
- (2) The Council may consider provisional approval of a new dental assisting program in Alberta when the Registrar, or their delegate, has reviewed the program approval submission for alignment with the Dental Assisting Education Principles, conducted a site visit of the proposed program physical facilities, and deemed the proposed program as meeting the minimum requirements.
- (3) Applicants for Program Approval must submit:
 - (a) a complete and current Program Approval Application;
 - (b) the program approval fee payment;
 - (c) a copy of the proposed program's submission to the National Dental Assisting Examining Board (NDAEB) and a copy of the NDAEB letter verifying that the proposed program graduates will be eligible to sit the NDAEB written examination;
 - (d) a declaration that the program will achieve a Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada accreditation status within the three calendar years following the date Provisionally Approved Program status is granted;
 - (e) confirmation that the program is duly recognized by the appropriate branch of the Ministry of Education in Alberta;
 - (f) a declaration that the program will attend and participate in the annual dental assisting programs meeting hosted by the College;
 - (g) a declaration that the program will apply to the College for approval of any major proposed changes with respect to curriculum content, program delivery, enrollment pre-requisites, faculty to student ratios, enrolment numbers or program length; and,

- (h) a declaration that the program is committed to providing a progress report to the Registrar, or their delegate, at least every six (6) months following the date provisionally approved program status is granted;
- (4) The Registrar, or their delegate, reserves the right to request further information and evidence that the Registrar, or their delegate, considers necessary to assess an application under this policy.
- (5) *Provisionally Approved* programs applying for approval of any major changes with respect to curriculum content, program delivery, enrollment pre-requisites, faculty to student ratios, enrolment numbers or program length must submit the program change fee payment.

Program Approval

PAP3 Approved Program Status

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP3
Approval Date: November 29, 2014	Scheduled Review: September
Revised Date(s): Feb 29, 2020	

Policy Statement

Approved Program status may be achieved and maintained by an Alberta dental assisting program that has met the requirements as determined by Council.

Indicators

- (1) Council may consider approved status of an Alberta dental assisting program when the dental assisting program meets the requirements as determined by Council and described below.
- (2) Approved Programs must:
 - (a) achieve and maintain accreditation with the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, report/review to be shared with the College;
 - (b) provide the College with National Dental Assisting Examining Board results/reports;
 - (c) attend and participate in the annual dental assisting programs meeting hosted by the College;
 - (d) maintain approval by the appropriate branch of the Ministry of Education in Alberta;
 - (e) obtain written approval from the College to offer advanced practice education curriculum which result in the consideration of addition to authorized practice; and,
 - (f) apply to the College for approval of any major proposed changes with respect to curriculum content (i.e. additions/deletions), program delivery, prerequisites for entry to the program, faculty to student ratios, enrolment numbers and program length, and submit the program change fee payment.

Program Approval

PAP4 Removal of Approved Status

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP4
Approval Date: November 29, 2014	Scheduled Review: September
Revised Date(s): Nov 25, 2017; Feb 29, 2020	

Policy Statement

The College may remove the approval of an Alberta dental assisting program for the purposes of registration requirements¹² through a Council motion.

Indicators

- (1) The incorporation of risk assessment is critical when considering removing approval status.
- (2) Graduates or students of a program which has its approval status removed may be deemed ineligible for registration.
- (3) Council may consider removing approval of a dental assisting program for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to:
 - (a) the College is provided with notice of institution closure, sale and or transfer of ownership;
 - (b) the program fails to meet or maintain approval requirements;
 - (c) the program fails to provide evidence of progress towards meeting any outstanding requirements and or fails to align with the Education Principles;
 - (d) analysis of conduct cases against recent graduates of a program;
 - (e) a lack of program transparency;
 - (f) safety of students and or patients is compromised; and,
 - (g) issues identified at other programs offered by the provider.

¹² *Health Professions Act (2000)*, s.3(1)(f)

Post-Graduate Course Approval

PAP5 Approval of Orthodontic Education Courses –

RESCINDED

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP5
Approval Date: May 27, 2018	Scheduled Review:
Revised Date(s): Dec 20, 2019	
RESCINDED September 7, 2019	

Course Approval

PAP6 Approval of Advanced Practice Education Courses

Policy Type: Program Approval	Policy Number: PAP6
Approval Date: September 7, 2019	Scheduled Review:
Revised Date(s): Sep 7, 2024	

Policy Statement

The College approves advanced practice education courses through a Council motion for the purposes of authorizing regulated members to perform Advanced Practices.¹³ Course providers who intend to deliver advanced practice education courses to dental assisting students and or regulated members must first apply for and obtain approval with the College.

Indicators

- (1) Council may:
 - (a) prescribe Approved Course status upon application; and,
 - (b) utilize a third-party to assist with the administration of its course approval processes.
- (2) Council will consider course approval when a complete application with supporting documentation is submitted and the Registrar, or their delegate, has deemed it as meeting the requirements. Supporting documentation will include the following:
 - (a) detailed course information, including copies of course outlines, timetables, course workbooks or manuals, and evaluations/assessments;
 - (b) a description of the teaching methods and learning activities used within the course, including the number of clinical learning experiences performed by students on manikins and patients;
 - (c) evidence the course is being delivered:
 - (i) by a CADA-approved program; and/or
 - (ii) through an accredited¹⁴ program.
 - (d) evidence the instructors are regulated members of their respective regulatory authority and authorized to perform the advanced practice being taught;

¹³ Registration Policy RP7 Advanced Practice Authorization

¹⁴ Accreditation must be issued by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada.

- (e) a description of the equipment, instruments and material available to support the course and permit students to use the techniques being taught to achieve an acceptable entry-level of competence for the performance of the advanced practice;
 - (f) a description of instructor to student ratio for clinical course components; and,
 - (g) the applicable advanced practice education course approval fee payment.
- (3) Each application for approval will be reviewed on an individual basis.
 - (4) The Registrar, or their delegate, may request additional information and or evidence and or a site visit to determine whether the submission meets the requirements.
 - (5) Review and approval of complete submissions may take up to 16 weeks, or longer if additional information or evidence is required.
 - (6) Applicants must ensure course approval is in place prior to advertising and enrolling students.

Orthodontic Clinical Competencies

- (1) obtain diagnostic records;
- (2) prepare teeth for bonding and banding procedures;
- (3) place and remove orthodontic separators;
- (4) select, fit and cement orthodontic bands;
- (5) insert orthodontic appliances;
- (6) place and bond orthodontic brackets and bondable attachments;
- (7) insert, ligate and remove orthodontic arch wires, which were formed by a dentist, using individual elastomeric ligatures, chain elastomeric ligatures, wire ligature ties (separate and continuous) and self-ligation mechanisms;
- (8) trim and or bend distal ends of orthodontic arch wires;
- (9) place and remove orthodontic accessories;
- (10) remove orthodontic bands, brackets and bondable attachments with hand-held instruments;
- (11) remove excess bonding agent and cement with hand instruments and or slow speed rotary handpiece; and,
- (12) apply non-medicinal material to reduce the effect of irritating orthodontic components.

Prosthodontic Clinical Competencies

- (1) place intermediate restorative materials for temporary restoration of a tooth, and remove excess material from occlusion or contour with hand instruments and slow speed rotary handpiece;
- (2) select or fabricate and fit provisional acrylic crowns, inlays, onlays and bridges intra-orally using self-curing or light curing materials, or prefabricated or custom fabricated acrylic shells, and remove excess material from occlusion or contour extra-orally with slow speed rotary handpiece;
- (3) cement provisional crowns, inlays, onlays and bridges using temporary cement, and remove excess temporary cement with hand instruments;
- (4) remove provisional crowns, inlays, onlays or bridges and cement with hand instruments; and,
- (5) place and remove gingival retraction cord with or without hemostatic agents (no epinephrine) in sulcus.

Preventive Clinical Competencies

- (1) perform periodontal screening and recording assessment;
- (2) perform full mouth periodontal probing;
- (3) evaluate periodontal scaling instruments for appropriate sharpness;
- (4) perform periodontal scaling instrument sharpening; and,
- (5) perform periodontal scaling using hand-held instruments and ultrasonic instruments.

Expected Outcomes

The College can expect students and dental assistants, who successfully complete an approved advanced practice education course, to receive relevant theoretical knowledge, clinical experiences and evaluations to be deemed competent and safe to perform the advanced practice for patients.