AUSTRALIAN DENTAL COUNCIL

Written examination handbook for dental hygiene and dental therapy

September 2026

The Australian Dental Council (ADC) acknowledges the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nations as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our administration and examination centre sits.

We also acknowledge that our business operates across Australia, on the unceded lands of the oldest continuing cultures in the world. We pay our respects to each of the Clans, Language Groups and Nations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

We acknowledge and pay respect to their Elders, ancestors, cultures, and heritage and recognise their ongoing connection to culture, land, and community.

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Introduction

The Australian Dental Council's (ADC) written examination is designed to test your knowledge of the science and practice of dental hygiene and/or dental therapy and to assess your clinical judgement and reasoning skills relevant to dental practice in Australia.

Applying for the written examination

To apply for the written examination you must have successfully completed the ADC initial assessment and you must submit an application via ADC Connect during the specified application period. Application periods and details of how to submit your application are provided on the ADC website.

Dates and location

The written examinations are conducted over a single day, on two occasions each year (normally in March and September).

While the Written Examination is primarily held in Melbourne Australia, candidates may request to sit the examination at one of the six international hub locations in Toronto, Singapore, London, Johannesburg, Sao Paulo or the United Arab Emirates.

Places at international hub venues are subject to availability and candidates should contact the ADC to confirm their place prior to the closing date of the application period.

Please Note: If you are successful in progressing through the written examination, the practical examination is currently only held in Melbourne, Australia

Content and format

	Days	Papers	Questions	Duration
Dental hygiene	1	2	100 (50 per paper)	3 hours (1.5 hrs per paper)
Dental therapy	1	2	100 (50 per paper)	3 hours (1.5 hrs per paper)
Combined dental hygiene & dental therapy	1	2	130 (65 per paper)	4 hours (2 hrs per paper)

All papers contain scenario-based, single best answer multiple choice questions. All papers must be completed in the one examination session, (*i.e.* it is not possible to do one paper in March and the remaining in September).

Examples of scenario-based multiple choice questions can be found in the relevant section of the ADC written examination practice paper (link).

There is no restriction on the number of attempts allowed for the ADC written examination, however a new application and examination fee is needed for each attempt.

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Validity of results

A pass in the written examination is valid for **five years only**. You must pass the practical examination within five years of the ADC notifying you of your successful result in the written examination.

If you do not complete the practical examination in this timeframe, you must re-sit and pass the written examination to again become eligible to enter the practical examination.

Candidate contact information

Venue details and urgent information may be communicated to you via your nominated email address. Please ensure the email address you provide is reliable and checked regularly. Candidates who use free internet providers (Gmail, Yahoo etc.) should properly maintain their mailboxes and check junk mail or other filters. The ADC will not be responsible for non-receipt of correctly addressed emails.

Withdrawing from an examination

Withdrawal from an ADC examination can be made by submitting an online application via ADC Connect. Examination fees and application forms cannot be transferred to alternate examinations.

If you withdraw from an examination before the closing date for that examination you will forfeit 20% of your examination fees.

If your withdrawal form is received after the closing date for the examination you will forfeit 50% of your examination fees.

If you withdraw within four weeks of a scheduled examination you will forfeit the whole fee. You are not entitled to a refund unless your withdrawal is due to illness and is supported by a medical certificate reporting inability to undertake the examination, in which case you may be eligible for a 50% refund.

Please visit the ADC website for more details of the withdrawal process and withdrawal fees. Examinations cannot be rescheduled, i.e. application forms and examination fees cannot be transferred to alternate examination dates. If a candidate wishes to sit the examination at a later date they must withdraw from the current examination session and submit a new application and payment.

Failure to undertake the examination because of an inability to obtain necessary visas or to arrange travel *etc.* will be considered a withdrawal, and the full examination fee, or withdrawal fee as above, will apply.

Examination conduct

You must comply with the 'Professional Examination Rules' provided prior to sitting the written examination as ADC examinations are conducted under the strictest supervision.

You will be provided with all materials necessary for the examination.

Calculators or other electronic or mechanical aids are neither required nor permitted. Scrap paper is neither provided nor permitted for the written examination papers.

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You should remember to bring with you:

- Examination confirmation letter.
- **Evidence of identity** which will be checked at the beginning of the examination. This can be a valid passport or Australian driving licence. It must be an original, valid document which bears your photograph and signature.

You must arrive at the examination during the arrival registration time provided to you. You will not be permitted to sit the examination once registration closes. Once the examination has commenced no candidate will be granted late entry, regardless of the reason. Failure to sit a paper will be deemed an automatic fail of the entire examination.

Examination accommodations

Accommodations in examinations refer to changes in how an examination is administered, without compromising the integrity of the examination. Accommodations aim to remove the impact of a disability, or other medical condition, so that all candidates can fully demonstrate their knowledge, whilst not being given any advantage.

If you wish to request an accommodation, you must submit your request to the ADC in writing along with any supporting evidence (i.e. relevant medical certificate). All requests must be received six weeks prior to the examination date.

The ADC cannot grant exemptions from the requirements of the examinations under any circumstances. As such, an accommodation cannot involve the modification of the required standards, the examination content, or an awarded grade.

Adverse incidents

Adverse incidents include situations beyond your control which are likely to affect your performance in the examination (for example an extended power outage). Minor incidents (such as mild noise disturbance) which can be readily rectified are not considered as adverse incidents.

If an event occurs during an examination you believe is likely to affect your performance, it is your responsibility to notify the examination invigilator immediately. The examination invigilator will assess the situation and will attempt to remedy any adverse incident at the time of its occurrence. You may be moved to another work station to allow your examination to continue with minimal delay. If warranted, the examination invigilator may complete an *Adverse Incident form*.

The ADC will not be able to take into consideration any adverse incidents reported after the examination, as there is no opportunity to rectify or verify such incidents. Incidents reported by telephone or email following a written examination will not be considered.

The ADC recommends you investigate strategies to help manage your stress during the examination as minor changes, delays or interruptions during an examination are possible.

Written examination results

You will be advised of your result via ADC Connect. Candidate will receive a notification via email once results are available. Written examination results will be released **within six weeks** from the date of the examination. You should not contact the ADC before this time has elapsed.

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Written examination grades

Questions in the examination are categorised by cluster (as shown in the examination blueprint) and are derived from the *Professional competencies of the new qualified dentist*. Candidates must achieve a pass in each of the following four clusters in order to pass the examination overall:

For each cluster, you will be provided with a grade:

- Grades A and B indicate a Pass in the cluster.
- Grades C and D indicate a Fail in the cluster.

The meanings of grades A to D are shown below:

Grade	Description	Comments
A	Your score was more than 10% above the passing score.	Clear pass
B	Your score was within 10% above the passing score.	Close pass
C	Your score was within 10% below the passing score.	Close fail
D	Your score was more than10% below the passing score.	Clear fail

Passing standard

The passing score for each assessment cluster is determined using the Modified Angoff method of standard setting.

This method takes into account the minimum standard required to practice safely in Australia and ensures that the difficulty of questions in each examination paper is considered when setting the final passing score.

The ADC does not publish cluster passing scores, however the above grades provide you with additional information about your examination performance, relative to the passing score.

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Written examination specification matrix

The ADC written examination is designed to test your knowledge of the science and practice of dental hygiene and/or dental therapy, and to assess your clinical judgement and reasoning skills relevant to dental practice in Australia.

The target percentages as shown in the blueprint indicate the approximate percentage of questions pertaining to particular domains and disciplines which will appear in the written examination. Please note that the depth of understanding in each of these disciplines is assessed to the expected level of a minimally competent new graduate, from an ADC accredited dental program.

ADC Written Examination Blueprint Dental Hygiene		Domains				
		Social Responsibility & Professionalism	Health promotion	Clinical information gathering	Diagnosis and management planning	Clinical treatment and evaluation
		Professional Competency 1	Professional Competency 4	Professional Competency 6.1	Professional Competency 6.2	Professional Competency 6.3
		Cluster 1		Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
	Target % of questions	12.5%	12.5%	25%	25%	25%
Disciplines	Dental emergencies	3%				
	Fixed prosthodontics	5%				
	General medicine *(inc. medical emergencies and special needs dentistry)*	8%				
	Infection prevention & control	5%				
	Oral medicine & pathology	10%				
	Oral Surgery	2%				
	Paediatric dentistry & orthodontics	5%				
	Pain & anxiety management	10%				
	Periodontics	25%				
	Preventive dentistry & behaviour modification	15%				
	Removable prosthodontics	2%				
	Restorative dentistry *(incl. carious & non-carious tooth surface loss)*	10%				

Examination format

- Scenario-based multiple-choice questions
- 100 scored questions

Subdisciplines (assessed across multiple disciplines)	
Implantology	5%
Pharmacology	5%
Radiology	10%

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ADC Written Examination Blueprint
Dental Therapy

		Domains				
		Social & Responsibility & Professionalism	Health promotion	Clinical information gathering	Diagnosis and management planning	Clinical treatment and evaluation
		Professional Competency 1	Professional Competency 4	Professional Competency 6.1	Professional Competency 6.2	Professional Competency 6.3
		Cluster 1		Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
	Target % of questions	12.5%	12.5%	25%	25%	25%
Dental emergencies	10%					
Endodontics	5%					
General medicine *(inc. medical emergencies and special needs dentistry)*	5%					
Infection prevention & control	5%					
Oral medicine & pathology	5%					
Paediatric dentistry & orthodontics	20%					
Pain & anxiety management	10%					
Periodontics	5%					
Preventive dentistry & behaviour modification	15%					
Restorative dentistry *(incl. carious & non-carious tooth surface loss)*	20%					

Examination format

- Scenario-based multiple-choice questions
- 100 scored questions

Subdisciplines (assessed across multiple disciplines)	
Pharmacology	5%
Radiology	10%

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ADC Written Examination Blueprint
Combined Hygiene & Therapy

			Domains				
			Social Responsibility & Professionalism	Health promotion	Clinical information gathering	Diagnosis and management planning	Clinical treatment and evaluation
			Professional Competency 1	Professional Competency 4	Professional Competency 6.1	Professional Competency 6.2	Professional Competency 6.3
			Cluster 1		Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
		Target % of questions	12.5%	12.5%	25%	25%	25%
Disciplines	Dental emergencies	5%					
	Endodontics	4%					
	Fixed prosthodontics	3%					
	General medicine *(inc:. medical emergencies and special needs dentistry)*	5%					
	Infection prevention & control	4%					
	Oral medicine & pathology	5%					
	Oral surgery	2%					
	Paediatric dentistry & orthodontics	16%					
	Pain & anxiety management	8%					
	Periodontics	16%					
	Preventive dentistry & behaviour modification	15%					
	Removable prosthodontics	2%					
	Restorative dentistry *(incl. carious & non-carious tooth surface loss)*	15%					

Examination format

- Scenario-based multiple-choice questions
- 130 scored questions

Subdisciplines (assessed across multiple disciplines)	
Implantology	5%
Pharmacology	5%
Radiology	10%

Reviews and appeals

Candidates can apply for a review of the administrative procedures of the written examination, or an appeal against the administrative procedures of the written examination.

Candidates should read the Assessments and Examinations Review and Appeals Policy for further information regarding the review and appeal processes for the written examination.

The ADC will only take into consideration concerns relating to the administrative procedures of the written examination formally submitted according to the Assessments and Examinations Review and Appeals Policy. Reports or accounts provided by telephone or email following a written examination will not be considered and candidates will be re-directed to these policies.

Resources

The content of the examinations is derived from the same broad range of resources to which dental students and practitioners in Australia commonly refer. As a result, it is not possible to identify a narrow list of textbooks and journals with which candidates must be familiar and from which the examination will be derived. However, as a guide, candidates might find ADC Examination Resource List available on the ADC website a useful starting point in preparing for the written and practical examinations.

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