AUSTRALIAN
DENTAL COUNCIL

ADC written examination

General dentistry handbook

AUSTRALIAN
DENTAL COUNCIL

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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Document Version Control

Rev	Description	Originator	Reviewed	Approved	Date
E	Revision	Manager, Examination Development	Director, Assessments and Examinations	September 2025	September 2025
D	Revision	Manager, Examination Development	Director, Assessments and Examinations	April 2025	April 2025
C	Revision	Manager, Examination Development	Director, Assessments and Examinations	June 2022	June 2022
B	Revision	Acting Manager, Examinations	Acting Director, Assessments and Examinations	May 2021	April 2021
A	Final	Director, Assessments and Examinations	ADC Board of Directors	May 2019	May 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1. The role of the ADC

Health professions in Australia are regulated to maintain integrity and public safety under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) and the *Health Practitioner National Law Act* 2009 (the National Law). This regulation includes maintaining standards for health practitioners and limiting health practitioner registration to only those who are competent to practice.

The Australian Dental Council (ADC) has been assigned the accreditation functions by the Dental Board of Australia (DBA). Under this function, the ADC contributes to the regulation of dental practitioners by:

- ensuring that Australian training programs leading to qualification as a dental practitioner meet accreditation standards, and
- conducting the *ADC assessment process* to assess the knowledge, judgement, clinical skills, and professional competency of overseas qualified dental professionals seeking registration with the DBA, whose qualifications are not otherwise approved for registration.

The ADC is also the national assessment authority, appointed by the Department of Home Affairs, to assess the professional skills of overseas trained dentists and dental specialists for migration purposes.

The ADC is the independent accreditation authority for the dental professions in Australia. A not-for-profit company, the ADC is appointed by the DBA under the NRAS to conduct assessments and examinations of overseas qualified dental professionals who are seeking eligibility to apply for registration with the DBA.

1.2. The ADC assessment process

The ADC assessment process is a three-stage process.

Figure 1 - The three stages of the ADC assessment process for overseas qualified dental practitioners

The format of the ADC assessment and examination process is aligned to current, national and international best practice and has been approved by the DBA for the purposes of eligibility to apply for registration in Australia. Exemptions from the requirements of the examination process cannot be granted under any circumstances.

Successful completion of the three stages of the ADC assessment process indicates that an overseas qualified dental practitioner has demonstrated they have the professional ability to perform safely in the role of a dental practitioner in Australia. It is only after the successful completion of these three stages that the practitioner is eligible to apply for registration with the DBA.

Detailed information about the initial assessment and practical examination stages of the ADC assessment process can be found on the ADC website.

1.3. About the ADC written examination

The written examination is the second stage of the ADC assessment process. Candidates must hold a complete and valid initial assessment to be eligible to sit the written examination.

The written examination is a multiple-choice question examination held over two consecutive days. It is held twice per year, usually in March and September. The questions are in a scenario-based format. This means a scenario is provided to you that is relevant to dental practise in Australia, and you are asked to answer several multiple-choice questions based on the information provided in the scenario.

The assessment format is designed to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate you 'know how' to practice dentistry in Australia by assessing your:

- knowledge of the science and practice of dentistry, and
- clinical judgement and reasoning skills relevant to dental practice in Australia.

The written examination is delivered in partnership with Pearson VUE. This allows the examination to be delivered via computer at various test centres around the world. Further information on test centre locations is available on the ADC website.

1.4. Handbook objectives

This handbook is a guide for ADC general dentistry candidates on the written examination stage of the ADC assessment process. This handbook is part of a suite of resources available on the ADC website including:

- The Professional Competencies of the Newly Qualified Dental Practitioner (the Competencies)
- Written examination application periods
- Written examination venues
- Candidate rules agreement for the written examination

2. Applying for the written examination

2.1 Eligibility

To sit the written examination, you must:

- have a valid initial assessment (for both the application period and examination dates)
- have your identification documents (Passport and Photo) verified in ADC Connect and
- meet the eligibility requirements of the designated examination dates.

A valid initial assessment is the time your initial assessment is valid for after successful completion. Initial assessments are usually valid for seven years before renewal is required. The validity period is in place to ensure that the standards assessed at the time of your initial assessment application are current at the time you are eligible to sit the written examination.

2.2 Booking process

If you meet the eligibility requirements, you can book your written examination by first, applying for an examination place with the ADC and then booking your examination venue with Pearson VUE. This process is demonstrated in Figure 2.

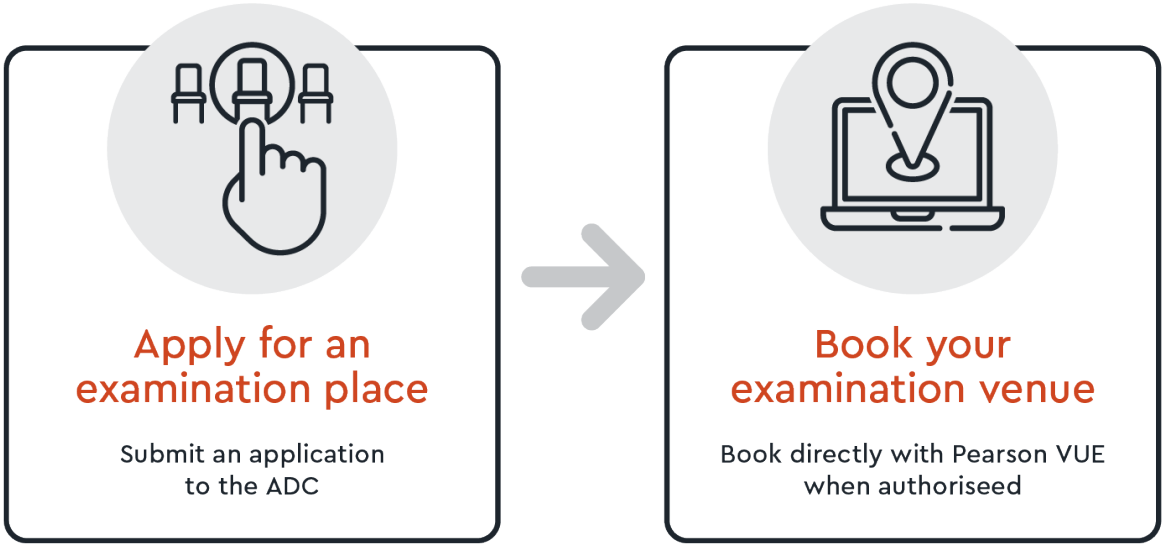

Figure 2 – The two-stage written examination booking process with the ADC and Pearson VUE.

Applying for an examination place

To apply for a written examination place, you must submit an application to the ADC via ADC Connect during the specified application period. Application periods and details of how to submit your application are provided on the ADC website.

Submitting an application does not guarantee a place in the written examination.

We do not accept:

- incomplete or incorrect applications that have not been submitted successfully
- applications where payment has not been made by the application period closing date
- applications received outside the designated application period, or
- applications from candidates who do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Further information on how to submit an application via ADC Connect can be found in the video guides on the ADC Website.

Booking your examination venue

Following completion of the application, you will also need to book your examination venue. An *Authorisation to Test* email from Pearson VUE, which outlines when you can log onto the Pearson VUE system to book your examination venue, will be sent to you once bookings open.

To book your examination venue with Pearson VUE, you will be provided a booking window of approximately two weeks from the date of your *Authorisation to Test* email.

Some venues have limited capacity and allocated seats in order of receipt.

For the best chance to secure your preferred venue, the ADC recommends you book as soon as possible after receiving your authorisation notification.

If you have problems with logging into the Pearson VUE system or booking your examination, you should contact Pearson VUE immediately.

Venues are subject to change, sometimes at short notice. You should check the current venues on the Pearson VUE website once you have your *Authorisation to Test* email and ensure that you are able to travel to your preferred venue before booking.

Once the booking is complete, you will receive a *Confirmation email* from Pearson VUE detailing the time, location, and requirements for your examination. You will also receive a reminder email from Pearson VUE seven days prior to the examination.

Changing your examination venue

Once an examination booking has been made, you may request a change in venue up until the closure of the booking period (subject to availability). Changes to

examination venues cannot be made after the booking period has closed. All change of venue requests should be made directly to Pearson VUE.

2.3 Your contact details

Urgent information, including information about your eligibility and upcoming applications may be communicated to you via the contact details you provided on ADC Connect. It is your responsibility to ensure your contact details are current and correct. If you have changed your name, or if your ADC Connect name does not match your identification documents, please contact the ADC for further advice via written.connect@adc.org.au

As email is a primary form of correspondence, we recommend you regularly check any email services you use. If you use free webmail services, such as Gmail, Yahoo, or Hotmail, you should ensure you properly maintain your mailboxes and check your junk or spam mail to ensure you do not miss important information from the ADC.

The ADC does not accept responsibility for the non-receipt of correctly addressed emails, correspondence, or other communications.

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3. Written examination format

3.1 Examination structure and timings

The written examination is a computer-delivered, multiple-choice question examination which takes place over two consecutive days. The examination consists of a total of 280 questions across four sections, with 70 questions in each section. You will be allocated a period of two hours to complete each section. Two sections will be scheduled on day one, and two sections will be scheduled on day two. This is shown in figure 3.

Each examination section contains a mix of questions from the examination blueprint (see section 4).

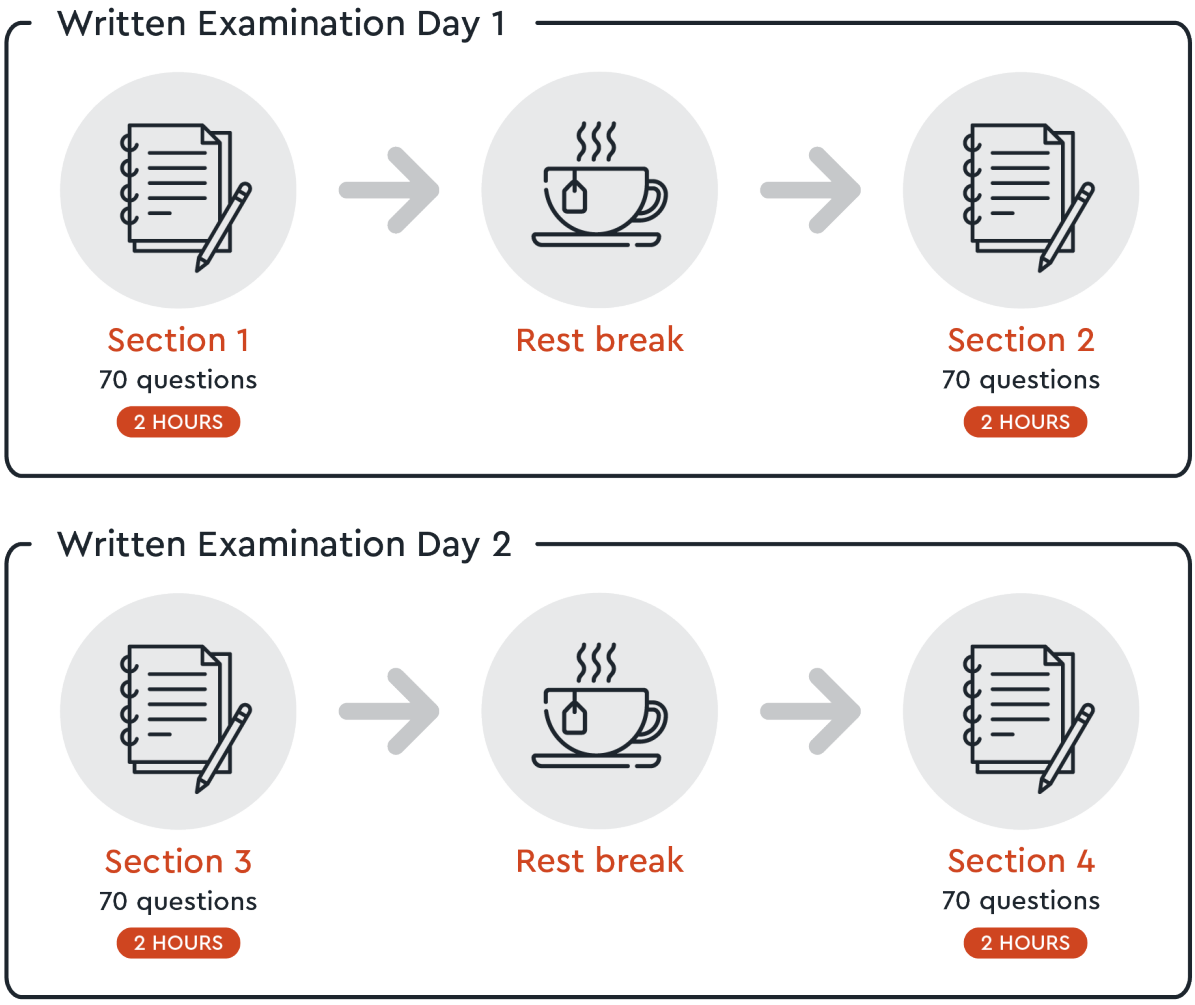

Figure 3 - Structure and timings of the ADC written examination

3.2 Question construction

The ADC uses scenario based multiple-choice question (MCQ) items for the written examination. A *scenario based MCQ item* is an overarching clinical vignette, with five multiple choice questions attached. Each multiple-choice question has a single- best-

answer and relates to the information in the clinical case outlined in the clinical vignette.

As the total examination contains 280 questions across four sections, this means that every examination will have 56 scenarios (clinical vignettes), each with five related questions.

An example scenario based MCQ item is available in on the ADC website.

4. Written examination blueprint

The written examination blueprint refers to the underlying structure of the examination, which describes the content covered and the approximate percentage of questions allocated to each content area. The written examination blueprint is shown in Table 1.

To ensure that the standard of the ADC assessment process is consistent with Australian qualified dental practitioners, the content of the written examination is based on the expected competencies of a recently qualified Australian dental practitioner at the point of graduation from an ADC-accredited dental program. These competencies are described in detail in the Competencies, available on the ADC website.

4.1 Domains of assessment

Specifically, written examination questions are designed to assess the following domains listed in the Competencies, which are grouped into clusters:

- Cluster 1:
  - Domain 1 – Social Responsibility & Professionalism (1)
  - Domain 4 - Heath Promotion (4)
- Cluster 2:
  - Domain 6 - Patient Care - Clinical information gathering (6.1)
- Cluster 3:
  - Domain 6 - Patient Care - Diagnosis and management planning (6.2)
- Cluster 4:
  - Domain 6 - Patient Care - Clinical treatment and evaluation (6.3)

Each examination question focuses on a specific domain, with the examination built by targeting a certain percentage of questions focused on each domain, as shown in Table 1.

4.2 Disciplines of assessment

Each examination question focuses on a particular discipline. Some questions may also assess a subdiscipline. The examination will be built so that a target percentage of questions is focused on each discipline and subdiscipline, as shown in Table 1.

ADC Written Examination Blueprint General Dentistry		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%	8%	30%	30%	20%
Disciplines	Dental emergencies	8%				
	Endodontics	7%				
	Fixed prosthodontics	5%				
	General medicine *(inc. medical emergencies and special needs dentistry)*	8%				
	Infection prevention & control	5%				
	Oral medicine & pathology	7%				
	Oral surgery	7%				
	Paediatric dentistry and orthodontics	10%				
	Pain & anxiety management	5%				
	Periodontics	9%				
	Preventive dentistry & behaviour modification	10%				
	Removable prosthodontics	5%				
	Restorative dentistry *(incl. carious & non-carious tooth surface loss)*	14%				

Examination format

- Scenario-based multiple-choice questions
- 280 scored questions
- 40 unscored questions

Subdisciplines (assessed across multiple disciplines)	
Implantology	4%
Pharmacology	10%
Radiology	10%

Table 1 - ADC written examination blueprint

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5. Written examination day

5.1 Registration

Arrival time

At the start of each examination day, you will be asked to register at your venue. You must arrive within the stated arrival time for your venue. This will be outlined in your Pearson VUE *Confirmation letter*. This is usually at least 45 minutes before the examination starts but may vary depending on the examination venue. Once the examination has commenced no candidate will be granted late entry, regardless of the reason. If you do not arrive on time to sit a section, this will be counted as a withdrawal from the examination, and you will not be eligible to receive any examination results.

Identification

You are required to bring with you evidence of your identity (ID) as authorisation to sit the examination. These documents will be checked as part of the examination registration process before you will be allowed to sit the examination.

Candidates who do not meet the ID requirements will not be permitted into the examination.

You must present **two** forms of ID when asked. You may present either:

- two forms of Primary ID, or
- one form of Primary ID and one form of Secondary ID.

The types of ID that qualify as primary and secondary ID are shown in Table 2.

Primary ID	Secondary ID

• Government-issued.
• Must show:
  ○ your name.
  ○ a recent recognizable photograph.
  ○ your signature.
 	
For example: An International Travel Passport.
	• Must show either:
	  ○ your name AND a recent recognizable photograph.
	  OR
	  ○ your name AND your signature.
	
	For example: A debit/credit card

Table 2 - Types of primary and secondary identification.

The ID documents that you present at the examination must:

- be original documents (photocopies of your ID will not be accepted),
- be current and valid at the time of the examination,
- display first and last names that **exactly** match the first and last names that you used to book your examination venue,
- be issued in the country you are testing in (except for International Passports).

If required, any non-English documents, must be accompanied by an appropriate translation as outlined in the ADC translation of document guidelines available on the ADC website.

If you have any questions regarding the ID you are required to bring with you to the examination venue you should contact Pearson VUE directly.

If you do not have suitable forms of Primary or Secondary ID, you should contact the ADC. Any exceptions to the ID policy must be pre-approved by the ADC at least two weeks before the examination date.

5.2 Equipment and supplies

The written examination is a computer-delivered examination. All equipment and supplies you need to complete the examination are provided by the examination venue.

At the start of the examination day, you will be allocated a workstation by your examination venue. At your station you will be presented with a tutorial guiding you how to use the computer and how to move between questions during each section. A demonstration of the examination software is freely available by Pearson VUE here.

Calculators and electronics are not permitted into the examination. Scrap paper is neither provided nor permitted during the written examination.

6. Written examination conduct

6.1 Candidate conduct

You should review the *Candidate rules agreement for the written examination* and *Candidate misconduct policy* prior to your examination.

At your examination registration you will be asked to sign a declaration stating that you understand and agree to abide to the terms outlined in these documents.

6.2 Examination special considerations

Special considerations in examinations refer to changes in how an examination is administered with the aim of removing the impact of a disability, or other medical condition, so all candidates can fully demonstrate their skills. Special consideration cannot give any candidate an advantage or compromise the integrity of the examination.

If you wish to request any special consideration due to disability or other medical condition, you should contact the ADC with your request. All requests for special consideration should be made prior to the opening of the Pearson VUE booking period. The ADC may deny requests for special consideration.

The ADC cannot grant exemptions from the requirements of the examinations under any circumstances. As such, special considerations cannot involve the modification of the required standards, the questions assessed, or an awarded grade.

6.3 Adverse incidents

The ADC recommends you investigate strategies to help manage your stress during the examination, as minor changes, delays, or interruptions over a two-day examination are inevitable.

The ADC defines *Adverse incidents* as situations relating to the delivery of your examination that are beyond your control and are likely to affect your performance in the examination, for example, an extended power outage or computer malfunction. Inability to understand a question, personal illness, or minor events that are readily rectified, are not considered adverse incidents.

If an event occurs during an examination that you believe is likely to affect your performance, it is your responsibility to notify an examination invigilator immediately. The invigilator will assess the situation and attempt to remedy any adverse incident at the time of its occurrence to provide you with the best opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and skills on your examination day. This may include asking you to move to another workstation to allow you to continue with your examination with minimal delay.

If warranted, the invigilator may complete an *Adverse incident* form to report the incident to the ADC.

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.

6.4 Absenteeism and withdrawal

If you cannot attend your written examination, you will be required to withdraw. Depending on when you withdraw from the examination, you may forfeit some, or all, of your examination fee.

> Failure to undertake the examination due to illness, the inability to obtain necessary visas, and failure to arrange travel will be considered a withdrawal.

Examinations cannot be rescheduled. For example, your application and/or examination fees cannot be transferred to an alternate examination if you are unable to attend your scheduled examination date. If you wish to sit the examination at a later date, you will be required to withdraw your booked examination and submit a new application form and payment.

Further information on withdrawing from a written examination is available on the ADC website.

7. Assessment

7.1 Scored and unscored items

Of the 280 questions in the written examination, 240 are 'scored' questions which count towards the passing requirement. The remaining 40 questions are 'unscored' questions. This means that they are included in the examination for calibration and testing, but do not count towards your grade.

Unscored questions may relate to any discipline or domain listed in the blueprint, but they do not count towards the target percentage of questions for any of the disciplines or domains. Unscored items are distributed equally across all four sections. It will not be made known to you which examination questions are scored, and which are unscored.

7.2 Passing requirement

Scored questions are counted for each cluster. You must score above the passing standard for each cluster.

To pass the written examination, you must achieve a pass in each of the four written examination clusters, which are shown across the top of the examination blueprint, shown in table 1 and also below in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - The four clusters that must be passed in the written examination to achieve an overall pass in the examination.

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 in Table 3.

Table 3 - Grade bandings and their descriptors for the written examination

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 than 10% below the passing score.	Clear fail

To pass the written examination, you must pass all four written examination clusters by achieving a grade of A or B for each cluster. The clusters are based on the domains of the *Professional competencies of the newly qualified dentist*, being:

- Professionalism and Health promotion,
- Clinical information gathering,
- Diagnosis and management planning, and
- Clinical treatment and evaluation.

7.3 The passing standard

There is not a set pass mark for the written examination or for each cluster. The pass mark is determined for each cluster by taking into consideration the difficulty of each question used in the examination. This is called test equating and allows the ADC to make sure that a pass in each cluster is determined by whether you meet a standard, rather than by an arbitrary score. The standard used to set the pass mark of each cluster in each examination is the equivalent level of the minimally competent recent Australian dental graduate.

The ADC determines passing scores for each cluster in each examination using modified Angoff standard setting methodology and item response theory, specifically Rasch modelling. Cluster passing scores for each examination are not published.

To pass each cluster, you must meet the standard of the minimally competent recent Australian dental graduate. This is determined by modified Angoff standard setting methodology and test equating with Rasch modelling (item response theory).

7.4 Getting your results

Written examination results are usually available within six weeks of the examination but may take longer. You will be notified when your written examination results are available and how to access your results. Results will not be released by telephone or fax.

7.5 Challenging examination results

If you feel your results have been incorrectly provided or feel your examination performance was adversely impacted by an incident or administrative procedure, the ADC website shows further information on the options available to you.

7.6 Repeat examinations

If you do not pass the written examination you may apply to sit another written examination, provided you meet all eligibility criteria described in section 2.1 of this handbook.

No credits or exemptions will be given for previous attempts at the written examination.