

CDAC Review of the Dental Council (New Zealand) and Australian Dental Council (ADC) Proposed Changes to the Accreditation Standards for Dental Practitioner Programmes

Survey Question Responses

Q1. Do you consider that the draft Standards are at the threshold level to deliver competent graduates who are safe to practise in Australia and New Zealand?

Yes

Please share any additional comments related to your response.

CDAC considers the draft Standards to be at an appropriate threshold level with an outcome-focus structure with criteria being indicators rather than prescribed requirements. This allows programs flexibility while maintaining accountability. The proposed changes support continued emphasis on public safety (Domain 1), strengthened academic governance (Domain 2), explicit assessment validity and reliability (new 5.1), and enhanced cultural responsiveness (Domain 6 – Australia) appropriately reinforce a regulatory framework grounded in public protection.

This coincides with revision of CDAC accreditation standards, with a similar approach on admissions being mentioned in both Domain 2 (Governance and Quality Assurance) and Domain 4 (Student experience).

Q2. Do you agree with the specific proposals as incorporated in the draft Standards?

Yes, with minor suggestions.

Please share any additional comments related to your response.

CDAC supports the proposed revisions, particularly:

- Inclusion of risk management within academic governance (2.1) aligns well with quality assurance in accreditation reform given the complexity of program delivery across dental programs.
- Relocation and strengthening of admission processes within governance accountability (2.4) could focus on “Integrity, Consistency, and Documentation” surrounding academic decisions. However, CDAC emphasized “Academic Criteria and Selection processes” in Domain 4 on Student Services and Experience to focus on fairness, alignment with program outcome for fitness to practice. Progression for CDAC is emphasized in Domain 5.
- New criteria explicitly addressing assessment validity, reliability and fairness (5.1) is a significant improvement.

- New criterion addressing emerging risks in assessment (5.2), including AI reflects the evolving educational landscape. This should be generalized to not explicitly mention AI, which may change in the future.
- Clearer expectations for external examiners in final year assessments (5.7).
- Strengthened cultural responsiveness requirements in Domain 6 (Australia) to also include community centered care, assessment of culturally responsive care in the curriculum and potential of placement or co-op opportunities for students.

Q3. Are there any additional Standards or Criteria that should be added?

No additional Domains recommended, but minor enhancements suggested.

Please share any additional comments related to your response.

CDAC does not recommend additional Domains. However, we suggest strengthening expectations (via guidance or clarification) in the following areas:

- Explicit mapping expectations of requirements/guidelines for curriculum-to-competency mapping documentation. This can support transparency to how students are being assessed for competency achievement.
- Structured faculty development and calibration for conducting assessment as well as training in culturally responsive care teaching, since it may be a new topic for some teaching staff / faculty. This could be incorporated into guidance under the new 3.5 and 3.9.
- Use of outcome data (e.g., assessment performance, progression data) within quality assurance and risk management processes under criterion 2.1.

Q4. Are there any Standards or Criteria that should be deleted or reworded?

No criteria are recommended for deletion. Minor clarifications suggested.

Please share any additional comments related to your response and clearly reference the specific criteria you are referring to for refinement.

CDAC supports the proposed revisions but suggests clarification in:

- **Criterion 1.8 on ethical and professional conduct:** Guidance should clarify the expectations regarding formal reporting pathways for managing misconduct, as well as what are the mechanisms to protect complainants or those who experienced the unethical or unprofessional behaviors.

- **Criterion 3.4 on clinical education:** Guidance should clarify expectations regarding the balance between simulation and direct patient care and interpretation of “complexity, quantity, duration and variety” of clinical education being sufficient. Guidance will be necessary, since the consultation document outlined that the: “The Standards are outcomes focused. The Standards, deliberately, do not specify a number of clinical or teaching hours, or prescribe an educational approach, or define curricula. It is for the provider to show how the program meets the Standards and prepares dental graduates to practise competently, safely and ethically.”
- **Domain 6 should be aligned with criterion 3.5 on cultural diversity:** Care should be taken to ensure that broad diversity language does not dilute Indigenous-specific accountability in Domain 6. The recommendation is for Domain 6 to use general and broadening group terms beyond specific First Nations and Indigenous populations.

Q5. Do you have any other questions or comments on the Standards?

CDAC commends ADC/NZ for maintaining stability while strengthening key areas, including:

- Assessment quality and integrity
- Governance and risk management
- Cultural responsiveness
- Responsiveness to technological change

As CDAC is concurrently modernizing its own accreditation standards, we welcome continued international dialogue to promote alignment in public protection, quality assurance, and competency-based accreditation frameworks, since the mobility of oral health care practitioners are increasing.

Clear implementation guidance and early publication of supporting documents will assist program providers in preparing for the anticipated January 1st, 2027, implementation timeline for successful adoption of the changes.