

## **Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists**

Adopted as Amended by the ADA House of Delegates, October 2018

### **Introduction**

A specialty is an area of dentistry that has been formally recognized by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards as meeting the "Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialists" specified in this document. Dental specialties are recognized to protect the public, nurture the art and science of dentistry, and improve the quality of care. It is the Association's belief that the needs of the public are best served if the profession is oriented primarily to general practice. Specialties are recognized in those areas where advanced knowledge and skills are essential to maintain or restore oral health.<sup>1</sup>

Not all areas in dentistry will satisfy the requirements for specialty recognition. However, the public and profession benefit substantially when non-specialty groups develop and advance areas of interest through education, practice and research. The contributions of such groups are acknowledged by the profession and their endeavors are encouraged.

The sponsoring organization must submit to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards a formal application which demonstrates compliance with all the requirements for specialty recognition.

Following recognition of a specialty by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards a national board for certifying diplomates in accordance with the "Requirements for National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists" may be established as specified in this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Association policies regarding ethical announcement of specialization and limitation of practice are contained in the *ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct*.

## Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties

A sponsoring organization seeking specialty recognition for an area must document that the discipline satisfies all the requirements specified in this section.

- (1) In order for an area to become and/or remain recognized as a dental specialty, it must be represented by a sponsoring organization: (a) whose membership is reflective of that proposed or recognized dental specialty; (b) in which the privileges to hold office and to vote on any issue related to the specialty are reserved for dentists who either have completed an advanced education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation in that proposed or recognized specialty or have sufficient experience in that specialty as deemed appropriate by the sponsoring organization and its certifying board; and (c) that demonstrates the ability to establish a certifying board.
- (2) A proposed specialty must be a distinct and well-defined field which requires unique knowledge and skills beyond those commonly possessed by dental school graduates as defined by the Commission on Dental Accreditation's Accreditation Standards for Dental Education Programs.
- (3) The scope of the proposed specialty requires advanced knowledge and skills that: (a) in their entirety are separate and distinct from the knowledge and skills required to practice in any recognized dental specialty; and (b) cannot be accommodated through minimal modification of a recognized dental specialty.
- (4) The specialty applicant must document scientifically, by valid and reliable statistical evidence/studies, that it: (a) actively contributes to new knowledge in the field; (b) actively contributes to professional education; (c) actively contributes to research needs of the profession; and (d) provides oral health services in the field of study for the public; each of which the specialty applicant must demonstrate would not be satisfactorily met except for the contributions of the specialty applicant.
- (5) A proposed specialty must directly benefit some aspect of clinical patient care.
- (6) Formal advanced education programs of at least two years accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation must exist to provide the special knowledge and skills required for practice of the proposed specialty.

## **Requirements for Recognition of National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists**

In order to become, and remain, eligible for recognition by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards as a national certifying board for a dental specialty, the specialty shall have a sponsoring organization that meets all of the elements of Requirement (1) of the Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties. A close working relationship shall be maintained between the sponsoring organization and the certifying board. Additionally, the following requirements must be fulfilled.

### **Organization of Boards:**

- (1) Each Board shall have no less than five or more than 12 voting directors designated on a rotation basis in accordance with a method approved by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards. Although the Commission does not prescribe a single method for selecting directors of boards, members may not serve for more than a total of nine years. Membership on the board shall be in accordance with a prescribed method endorsed by the sponsoring organization. All board directors shall be diplomates of that board and only the sponsoring organizations of boards may establish additional qualifications if they so desire.
- (2) Each board shall submit in writing to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards a program sufficiently comprehensive in scope to meet the requirements established by the American Dental Association for the operation of a certifying board. This statement should include evidence of sponsorship of the board by a national organization that meets all the elements of Requirement (1) of the Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties.
- (3) Each board shall submit to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards evidence of adequate financial support to conduct its program of certification.
- (4) Each board may select suitable consultants or agencies to assist in its operations, such as the preparation and administration of examinations and the evaluation of records and examinations of candidates. Consultants who participate in clinical examinations should be diplomates.

### **Operation of Boards:**

- (1) Each board shall certify qualified dentists as diplomates only in the special area of dental practice approved by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards for such certification. No more than one board shall be recognized for the certification of diplomates in a single area of practice.
- (2) Each board, except by waiver of the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards, shall give at least one examination in each calendar year and shall announce such examination at least six months in advance.
- (3) Each board shall maintain a current list of its diplomates.
- (4) Each board shall submit annually to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards data relative to its financial operations, applicant admission procedures, and examination content and results. Examination procedures and results should follow the Standards for Educational Psychological Testing, including validity and reliability evidence. A diplomate may, upon request, obtain a copy of the annual technical and financial reports of the board.
- (5) Each board shall encourage its diplomates to engage in lifelong learning and continuous quality improvement.
- (6) Each board shall provide periodically to the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards evidence of its examination and certification of a significant number of additional dentists in order to warrant its continuing approval by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards.
- (7) Each board shall bear full responsibility for the conduct of its program, the evaluation of the qualifications and competence of those it certifies as diplomates, and the issuance of certificates.
- (8) Each board shall require an annual registration fee from each of its diplomates intended to assist in supporting financially the continued program of the board.

### **Certification Requirements:**

- (1) Each board shall require, for eligibility for certification as a diplomate, the successful completion of an advanced education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of two or more academic years in length, as specified by the Commission.

Although desirable, the period of advanced study need not be continuous, nor completed within successive calendar years. An advanced educational program equivalent to two academic years in length, successfully completed on a part-time basis over an extended period of time as a graduated sequence of educational experience not exceeding four calendar years, may be considered acceptable in satisfying this requirement. Short continuation and refresher courses and teaching experience in specialty departments in dental schools will not be accepted in meeting any portion of this requirement.

Each board may establish an exception to the qualification requirement of completion of an advanced specialty education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation for the unique candidate who has not met this requirement per se, but can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the certifying board, equivalent advanced specialty education. A certifying board must petition the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards for permission to establish such a policy.

- (2) Each board shall establish its minimum requirements for years of practice in the area for which it grants certificates. The years of advanced education in this area may be accepted toward fulfillment of this requirement.
  - (3) Each board, in cooperation with its sponsoring organization, shall prepare and publicize its recommendations on the educational program and experience requirements which candidates will be expected to meet.
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