

HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR DENTAL ASSISTING, DENTAL THERAPY AND ORAL HYGIENE

EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mandate of the Board

The implementation of the examination is in line with the objectives of the Professional Board Dental Assisting, for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene as outlined in section 15A of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), which entails, amongst others, the control and exercise of authority in respect of all matters affecting the education and training of persons in, and the manner of the exercise of the practices pursued in connection with, any health profession falling within the ambit of the professional board. In terms of section 15B of the Act the boards may appoint examiners and moderators and conduct examinations and charge such fees in respect of the examinations as may be prescribed.

In terms of the Act the primary mandate of the HPCSA and professional boards is the protection of the public and therefore, the HPCSA and boards are obliged to ensure the registration of competent and appropriately and properly qualified health practitioners and the Board examination is implemented as one of the measuring instruments in this regard.

1.2 Registration is a prerequisite for professions under the ambit of the Board

Registration is a prerequisite for practising as a Dental Assistant and in terms of section 17 of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), no person shall be entitled to practice within a Republic as a Dental Assistant or any profession registrable in terms of the Act, unless he/she is registered. The professions under the ambit of the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene are the following:

Dental Assistants
Oral Hygienists
Dental Therapists

1.3 Challenges regarding registration of Dental Assistants and Solution by the Board

In view of the lack of distant learning for Dental Assistants and the high number of persons that are required to obtain the National Certificate in Dental Assisting, the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene resolved to implement a Board

examination for Student Dental Assistants, who are registered under the grandfather clause (i.e. persons with less than 5 years experience) and unable to do a formal course in Dental Assisting. Student Dental Assistants who are successful in the Board examination may apply for registration as Dental Assistants.

2. THE BOARD EXAMINATION

The South African Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) framework requires that examinations and/or assessments are based on minimum objective criteria/outcomes. The examination is predicated on minimum competency and ethical standards within the South African context, legislation and international best practice in the profession.

The Board examination tests competency and knowledge of Student Dental Assistants registered under the grandfather clause for registration as Dental Assistants. No qualification certificate will be issued to candidates who are successful in the examination, as the Board is not an education institution. The examination focuses on the application of theoretical knowledge in practice and will also include issues relating to ethics, human rights and HIV/Aids.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD EXAMINATION

The examination of the Board is not an open book examination. It is a 3-hour written paper of 100 marks and contains true and false questions.

The prescribed duration of an examination session is indicated on the examination question paper and no candidate may exceed the time limit. The question paper **AND** answer sheets must be handed to the invigilator immediately after expiry of the time of the examination.

The examination will be conducted in English only and candidates should note that grammar will not be taken into consideration when marking the papers, as the focus of the examination is on conceptual issues and not on grammar.

The pass mark for the examination is 50%.

4. EXAMINATION DATES AND VENUES

The closing date for applications to write the examination is **6 weeks prior to date of the examination.**

The Professional Board shall assume no responsibility for incorrect information on examination arrangements, given by unauthorized persons. The day and time determined for an examination should be carefully observed and adhered to.

If candidates wish to change their examination centre after they have applied, their written application to do so must reach the Professional Board **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination.**

5. REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

Applicants must be registered as Student Dental Assistants under the “grandfather clause” (i.e. persons registered with less than 5 years experience as Dental Assistants);

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that all the requirements for admission to sit for the Board examination are complied with.

6. APPLICATION TO SIT FOR THE EXAMINATION AND CANCELLATION

a. All candidates who intend writing the Board examination are required to submit a duly completed application form (**form 324**). This application form must be accompanied by:

- i. proof of payment of the **examination fee of R710,00** (deposit slip). The proof of payment (deposit slip) must reflect the candidate’s surname, registration number and contact telephone number. The Professional Board will not accept responsibility for exclusion of a name of a candidate from the list of candidates due to non-receipt of proof of payment by the HPCSA.

The banking details of the HPCSA are as follows:

HPCSA

ABSA

Arcadia Branch

Account number: 0610-000-169,

Branch code: 33-49-45

REF NO: REGISTRATION NUMBER AND INITIALS AND SURNAME OF THE CANDIDATE

- ii. The HPCSA has for safety reasons implemented “a no cash on premises policy” and payments have to be made at the bank or through the internet;
 - iii. incomplete application forms will not be processed and will be returned to candidates;
 - iv. applications received after the closing date will not be considered;
 - v. an admission letter issued by the Board will be the only acceptable proof that a candidate is registered for the examination. Candidates are required to show the Board’s examination admission letter **AND** their ID document to the invigilator on the day of the examination.
- b. Cancellation of an application to sit for the examination must be in writing to 012 338 9352 or 012 338 9347 or e-mailed to simangelek@hpcsa.co.a or channu-Leel@hpcsa.co.za

Notification of cancellation to sit for the examination has to reach the Board **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination**, where after the examination fee will be forfeited.

- c. If the applicant changes either his/her address or contact details before the examination for which an application has been made, the applicant shall notify the Board in writing of such change of address or contact details **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination** to ensure that the study material and confirmation of the examination venue are mailed to the correct address.

7. SETTING OF THE EXAMINATION PAPER

- i. The responsibility for setting of the examination paper for Dental Assistants rests with the Professional Board or relevant Committee established by the Board. The Professional Board reserves the right not to disclose the names of the examiners;
- ii. the Board or relevant Committee established by the Board will appoint examiners and moderators in accordance with the criteria and guidelines, as determined by the Board from time to time;
- iii. examiners and moderators have to abide by the Professional Board's policies, rules, guidelines and code of conduct and declaration of confidentiality for examiners and moderators.

8. PUBLICATION OF THE EXAMINATION RESULTS

The results of the examination will be available 6 weeks after date of the examination and will be communicated to candidates in writing.

9. RE-EXAMINATIONS

Candidates who are unsuccessful in the examination will be allowed to sit **for 3 redo examinations**. The candidates are required to advise the Board in writing **6 weeks prior to date of the examination** of their intention to re-write the examination. Proof of payment of the examination fee (deposit slip) must be submitted together with the written application.

The re-marking of examinations shall be subject to the following conditions:

- i. receipt of a written application for a re-mark and proof of payment of the remark fee within the set time frame;
- ii. the person appointed to re-mark a script shall not be the same person who conducted the marking of the candidates' script.

10. COMPLAINTS AND/OR REQUESTS FOR REMARK OF EXAMINATION PAPER

- i. Candidates may apply for a remark of their examination papers once only. The written application has to be submitted to the Board within **2 weeks** of date of receipt of the examination results;
- ii. the fees payable for a remark is **50% of the examination fee**;
- iii. candidates who have any complaints/grievances regarding the examination are at liberty to submit their complaints/grievances **in writing** to the Board within **1 week** after date of the examination;
- iv. results of the examination remark shall be availed to the candidates 6 weeks after date of receipt of the application for a re-mark.

The complaints process aims to be fair to all parties involved with the complaint. All complaints will be treated as legitimate and investigated without prejudice.

Complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously and in accordance with their urgency within the Board's set timeframes. Complaints will be resolved in a maximum of 30 working days where possible. Complaints handling shall be at no charge to the complainant, subject to statutory requirements. However, the normal charges relating to Access of Information requests will apply.

Complaints have to be lodged in writing and may be submitted by fax or e-mail to-

The Board Manager
Professional Board for Dental and Oral Hygiene
P.O Box 205
Pretoria
0001

E-mail : simangelek@hpcsa.co.za and channu-Leel@hpcsa.co.a

Fax: 012-3389352 / 012-3389347

11. FRAUD DISHONESTY AND OTHER MISCONDUCT

If it shall appear to the Board that there is credible evidence of the following misconduct and/or fraudulent activities, the Board shall serve written charges on the specific candidate by mail at the last address provided to the Board by the candidate, stating with particularity the facts upon which such charges are based. The candidate's examination results shall be withheld pending the outcome of the investigation

- i. :
Either by omission or commission falsified the application or proof required for admission to the Board examination or misrepresented the applicant's eligibility to sit for the Board Examination;
- ii. either by omission or commission falsified documentation submitted in support of a special request or served such documentation under false pretences;
- iii. brought unauthorised items or materials into the examination room or otherwise violated the Board's examination security policy;
- iv. opened a question paper or reviewed the questions prior to the announcement that the examination has begun, or otherwise violated any of the oral and/or written instructions given by the invigilators in connection with the administration of the Board examination;
- v. possessed in any manner, reviewed and/or utilised any unauthorised notes, books, recordings, electronically retrievable data or other unauthorised materials during the Board examination;
- vi. written or designated any answers to questions on the Board examination prior to the announcement of the beginning of the examination session or written any answers or other information on the answer sheet after the announcement of conclusion of the session;
- vii. sought copied or used answers or information from or given answers or information to other candidates during the Board examination;
- viii. removed any examination materials or notes made during the examination from the examination room;

- ix. memorised questions for the purpose of reporting and or reported the substance of questions to any person associated with any person or organization engaged in the preparation of the applicants to take the Board examination or otherwise violated the copyright protection to the Board examination materials;
- x. engaged in fraud, dishonesty in connection with the administration of the Board examination;
- xi. compromised or disrupted the process for admission to or administration of the Board examination.

Candidates shall be granted an opportunity to respond to the charges within a period of 21 days after date of the letter which contains the charges. Such a response shall identify with specificity the charges disputed by the candidate, who shall set forth any evidence which can be adduced by the candidate in the contradiction of such charges. The applicant may include in such written response a request that a hearing be held.

In the event of the candidate not submitting a written response within the set timeframe, the Board shall deem the facts presented in the written charges to be true. In the event of the candidate not requesting a hearing and the Board does not on its own accord determine to conduct a hearing, the Board shall make a determination based on the evidence submitted.

The Board shall have the authority to determine a sanction to be applied based on the severity of the allegations/ offences and inform the candidate accordingly.

Sanctions to be applied by the Board may include but not be limited to:

- i. nullification of the examination taken by the candidate;
- ii. disqualification of the candidate from sitting for another examination for a period not exceeding five years from the date of such determination;
- iii. invalidation or striking off one or more answers of the examination taken by the candidate, or reduction of the candidate's final score by one or more points.

The Board shall notify the candidate of its decision in writing within a period of 30 days from the date of the hearing of the charges.

The candidate shall be entitled to representation by an attorney at his/her own expense at every stage of the proceedings.

12. SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL

- i. Examination Preparation Guide (form 322)
- ii. Ethical rules, relevant legislation, e.g. Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974), regulations relating to the scope of practice, etc. (obtainable from Council's website www.hpcs.co.za /Health Related Acts/ scope of practice)
- iii. any reading material and/or text books of the candidates' own choice that address the core competencies of the relevant registration category, as well as contextual issues such as HIV/AIDS, multi-culturalism, child abuse, human rights, etc.

- iv. Torres and Ehrlich Modern Dental Assisting by Bird D L and Robinson D S (ISBN 9781416042457.00)
- v. Delmars Dental Assisting: A Comprehensive Approach by Phinney D J and Halstead J H
- vi. Modern Dental Assisting by Bird Robinson

13. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Examination- means a method of assessing the standard and/or the skills and knowledge level achieved by a candidate in a discipline and/or profession.

Examiner- means a person appointed by the Professional Board to ascertain whether the specific outcomes of a qualification and its underpinning programme have been achieved.

Invigilator- means any person who supervises candidates during examinations, including any member of the Board or HPCSA staff member. The primary task of the invigilator is to ensure that the examination rules are adhered to at all times.

Misconduct- means any unacceptable/fraudulent act or deed (examples indicated above).

Moderation- means the process that ensures that the assessment of outcomes has been fair, valid and reliable.

Moderator- means a person appointed by the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene or relevant Committee established by the Board for measuring the specific outcomes achieved for registration as a Dental Assistant.

Re-marking- means the re-marking of an examination answer sheet/book by the moderator and is subject to the payment of a fee (50% of examination fee) by the candidate.

14. CONTACT DETAILS FOR ENQUIRIES RELATING TO THE EXAMINATION

The Executive Company Secretariat
HPCSA
P O Box 205
PRETORIA
0001

Contact person

Mrs Simangele Shirindi
Committee Coordinator
Tel no: 012 3389352
E-mail: simangelek@hpcsa.co.za

Mrs C Norris
Administrator
Tel no: 012 3389347
E-mail: channu-leel@hpcsa.co.a

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