New Examination Process for Overseas Trained Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists and Oral Health Therapists

Up until recently, the examination of overseas trained dental hygienists and dental therapists had been undertaken by Curtin University and TAFE SA under a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Dental Council (ADC). A Consensus Workshop was held on 18 October 2013 to determine the assessment pathway for these practitioners and was attended by representatives from the:

- Dental Hygienists Association of Australia;
- College of Oral Health Academics;
- Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists Association;
- Australasian Council of Dental Schools;
- Dental Board of Australia;
- TAFE South Australia;
- Curtin University; and
- University of Queensland.

A Reference Group met on 16 December 2013 and developed a blueprint for the written and practical examinations for dental therapists, dental hygienists and oral health therapists. This blueprint is based on the ADC Professional Attributes and Competencies of the Newly Qualified Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist and Oral Health Therapist. Following approval from the Dental Board of Australia, the first written examination was held in September 2014, and the first practical examination in November 2014. The written examination will then be held twice each year in March and September, and the practical examination in June and November.

An Item Writing Workshop (examination question development) was held on 17 and 18 February 2014, to develop scenario based multiple choice questions for the dental therapist and dental hygienist written examination. The ADC is intending to conduct further Item Writing Workshops over the next twelve month period.

The written papers broadly follow a blueprint to ensure a spread of questions from a range of disciplines (i.e. periodontology, cariology, preventive dentistry, oral medicine and pathology, paediatric dentistry, radiology, infection control, pharmacology and therapeutics) and domains (i.e. basic science, aetiology, investigations, diagnosis, prevention, treatment, outcomes, complications and social context).

The following components will be included in the dental hygiene examination: clinical communication, infection control, radiography, scaling, root debridement, rubber dam and fissure sealants.

The ADC will engage profession specific examiners for the practical examination and invites practitioners who are interested in becoming involved with the examination and/or Item Writing Workshops to contact Dr Matthew Hopcraft at matthew.hopcraft@adc.org.au

Nicole Varrasso
Executive Officer
Australian Dental Council Ltd