

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL

The scope of your practice is a way of describing what you are trained and competent to do. It describes the areas in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise safely and effectively in the best interests of patients.

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Introduction

Your scope of practice is likely to change over the course of your career. You may expand your scope by developing new skills, or you may narrow your scope but deepen your knowledge of a particular area by choosing more specialised practice.

This guidance sets out the skills and abilities each registrant group should have. It is not a list of tasks that someone can do. It also describes additional skills that you might develop after registration to increase the scope of your practice. Lastly, this guidance lists 'reserved duties' which you can only practise if you are registered in a particular group. If you want to carry out these duties, you will need to receive further training and gain a qualification which would allow you to register in a different registrant group. We will review all the lists regularly to make sure that they are relevant in the light of new developments in dentistry.

You should only carry out a task or type of treatment or make decisions about a patient's care if you are sure that you have the necessary skills.

You should only ask someone else to carry out a task or type of treatment or make decisions about a patient's care if you are confident that they have the necessary skills.

Please note - a patient could collapse on any premises at any time, whether they have received treatment or not. It is therefore essential that ALL registrants should be trained in dealing with medical emergencies and be competent to carry out resuscitation.

Dental nurses

Dental nurses are registered dental professionals who provide clinical and other support to other registrants and patients.

Dental nurses

- prepare and maintain the clinical environment, including the equipment
- carry out infection-control procedures to prevent physical, chemical and microbiological contamination in the surgery or laboratory
- record dental charting carried out by other appropriate registrants
- prepare, mix and handle dental materials
- provide chairside support to the operator during treatment
- keep full and accurate patient records
- prepare equipment, materials and patients for dental radiography
- process dental radiographs
- monitor, support and reassure patients
- give appropriate advice to patients
- support the patient and their colleagues if there is a medical emergency
- make appropriate referrals to other health professionals

Additional skills dental nurses could develop during their careers include

- further skills in oral health education and oral health promotion
- assisting in the treatment of patients who are under conscious sedation
- further skills in assisting in the treatment of patients with special needs
- intra-oral photography
- shade taking
- placing rubber dam
- measuring and recording plaque indices
- pouring, casting and trimming study models
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist
- applying fluoride varnish as part of a programme which is overseen by a consultant in dental public health or a registered specialist in dental public health
- constructing occlusal registration rims and special trays
- repairing the acrylic component of removable appliances
- tracing cephalographs

Additional skills on prescription

- taking radiographs to the prescription of a dentist
- applying topical anaesthetic to the prescription of a dentist
- constructing mouthguards and bleaching trays to the prescription of a dentist
- constructing vacuum formed retainers to the prescription of a dentist
- taking impressions to the prescription of a dentist or a CDT (where appropriate)

Dental nurses do not diagnose disease or treatment plan. All other skills are reserved to one or more of the other registrant groups.

Orthodontic therapists

Orthodontic therapists are registered dental professionals who carry out certain parts of orthodontic treatment under prescription from a dentist.

Orthodontic therapists

- clean and prepare tooth surfaces ready for orthodontic treatment
- identify, select, use and maintain appropriate instruments
- insert passive removable orthodontic appliances
- insert active removable appliances adjusted by a dentist
- remove fixed appliances, orthodontic adhesives and cement
- take impressions
- pour, cast and trim study models
- make a patient's orthodontic appliance safe in the absence of a dentist
- fit orthodontic headgear
- fit orthodontic facebows which have been adjusted by a dentist
- take occlusal records including orthognathic facebow readings
- place brackets and bands
- prepare, insert, adjust and remove archwires
- give advice on appliance care and oral health instruction

- fit tooth separators
- fit bonded retainers
- make appropriate referrals to other healthcare professionals

Additional skills which orthodontic therapists could develop during their career include

- applying fluoride varnish to the prescription of a dentist
- repairing the acrylic component part of orthodontic appliances
- measuring and recording plaque indices and gingival indices
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

Orthodontic therapists do not

- remove sub-gingival deposits
- give local analgesia
- re-cement crowns
- place temporary dressings
- place active medicaments

as these tasks are reserved to dental hygienists, dental therapists and dentists.

They do not carry out laboratory work other than that listed above as that is reserved to dental technicians and clinical dental technicians. They cannot diagnose disease, treatment plan or activate orthodontic wires — only dentists can do this.

Dental hygienists

Dental hygienists are registered dental professionals who help patients maintain their oral health by preventing and treating gum disease and promoting good oral health practice. They carry out treatment under prescription from a dentist.

Dental hygienists

- provide dental hygiene care to a wide range of patients
- plan the delivery of care for patients to improve and maintain their periodontal health
- obtain a detailed dental history from patients and evaluate their medical history
- complete periodontal examination and charting and use indices to screen and monitor periodontal disease
- provide preventive oral care to patients and liaise with dentists over the treatment of caries, periodontal disease and tooth wear
- undertake supragingival and subgingival scaling and root debridement using manual and powered instruments
- use appropriate anti-microbial therapy to manage plaque related diseases
- adjust restored surfaces in relation to periodontal treatment
- apply topical treatments and fissure sealants
- give patients advice on how to stop smoking

- take, process and interpret various film views used in general dental practice
- give infiltration and inferior dental block analgesia
- place temporary dressings and re-cement crowns with temporary cement
- take impressions
- identify anatomical features, recognise abnormalities and interpret common pathology, and carry out oral cancer screening
- if necessary, refer patients to other healthcare professionals
- placing rubber dam

Additional skills a dental hygienist might develop during their career include

- tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist
- prescribing radiographs
- administering inhalational sedation
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

Dental hygienists do not

- diagnose disease
- restore teeth
- carry out pulp treatments
- adjust unrestored surfaces
- extract teeth

as these skills are reserved to dental therapists and dentists. They do not undertake any of the skill areas described later in this document as being reserved to dental technicians, clinical dental technicians or dentists.

Dental therapists

Dental therapists are registered dental professionals who carry out certain items of dental treatment under prescription from a dentist.

Dental therapy covers the same areas as dental hygiene, but dental therapists also

- carry out direct restorations on permanent and primary teeth
- carry out pulpotomies on primary teeth
- extract primary teeth
- place pre-formed crowns on primary teeth
- plan the delivery of a patient's care

Additional skills which dental therapists could develop during their careers include

- administering inhalational sedation
- varying the detail of a prescription but not the direction of a prescription
- prescribing radiographs
- carrying out tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

Dental therapists do not carry out a patient's initial diagnosis or take overall responsibility for planning a patient's treatment.

They do not undertake any of the skill areas described in the rest of this document as being within the roles of the dental technician, clinical dental technician or dentist.

Dental technicians

Dental technicians are registered dental professionals who make dental devices including dentures, crowns and bridges to a prescription from a dentist or clinical dental technician. They also repair dentures direct for members of the public.

Dental technicians

- review cases coming into the laboratory to decide how they should be progressed
- work with the dentist or clinical dental technician on treatment planning and outline design
- design, plan and make a range of custom-made dental devices according to a prescription
- repair and modify dental devices
- carry out shade taking
- carry out infection control procedures to prevent physical, chemical and microbiological contamination in the laboratory
- keep full and accurate laboratory records
- verify and take responsibility for the quality and safety of devices leaving a laboratory
- make appropriate referrals to other healthcare professionals

Additional skills which dental technicians could develop during their careers include the following

- working with a dentist in the clinic assisting with treatment by:
 - taking impressions

- recording facebows
- carrying out intra-oral and extra-oral tracing
- carrying out implant frame assessments
- recording occlusal registrations
- carrying out intra-oral scanning for CAD/CAM
- helping dentists to fit attachments at chairside
- working with a clinical dental technician in the clinic assisting with treatment by:
 - taking impressions
 - recording facebows
 - carrying out intra-oral and extra-oral tracing
 - recording occlusal registrations
- tracing cephalographs
- taking intra-oral photographs

Dental technicians do not

- work independently in the clinic
- perform clinical procedures related to providing removable dental appliances
- carry out independent clinical examinations
- identify abnormal oral mucosa and related underlying structures
- fit removable appliances

Dental technicians do not provide treatment for or give advice to patients in the ways that are described under the sections for hygienists, therapists, orthodontic therapists or dentists.

Clinical dental technicians (CDTs)

Clinical dental technicians are registered dental professionals who provide complete dentures direct to patients and other dental devices on prescription from a dentist. They are also qualified dental technicians. Patients with natural teeth or implants must see a dentist before the CDT can begin treatment. CDTs refer patients to a dentist if they need a treatment plan or if the CDT is concerned about the patient's oral health.

Clinical dental technology builds on dental technology. CDTs also

- take detailed dental history and relevant medical history
- perform technical and clinical procedures related to providing removable dental appliances
- carry out clinical examinations
- take and process radiographs and other images related to providing removable dental appliances
- distinguish between normal and abnormal consequences of ageing
- recognise abnormal oral mucosa and related underlying structures and refer patients to other healthcare professionals if necessary
- fit removable appliances
- give appropriate advice to patients

Additional skills which CDTs could develop during their career include

- oral health education
- providing sports mouth guards
- re-cementing crowns with temporary cement
- providing anti-snoring devices on prescription of a dentist
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

CDTs do not provide treatment for patients as described under the sections for hygienists, therapists, orthodontic therapists or dentists, as the skills set out are reserved to the relevant groups.

Dentists

Dentists can carry out all of the treatments we have already mentioned.

They also

- diagnose disease
- prepare comprehensive treatment plans (this is a 'strategic' role as a treatment plan can be taken to any appropriate DCP — dentists are not the only dental-health professionals to plan how to deliver care, but they have an overall long-term responsibility for the treatment)
- prescribe and provide endodontic treatment on adult teeth
- prescribe and provide fixed orthodontic treatment
- prescribe and provide fixed and removable prostheses
- carry out oral surgery
- carry out periodontal surgery
- extract permanent teeth
- prescribe and provide crowns and bridges
- carry out treatment on patients who are under general anaesthesia
- give inhalational and intravenous conscious sedation
- prescribe drugs as part of dental treatment
- prescribe and interpret radiographs

An additional skill which a dentist could develop during their career

- provision of implants

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If you would like a copy of this leaflet in a different format (for example, large print or audio), please contact us:

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