

Dental Specialty Recognition
and the
*Requirements for Recognition of
Dental Specialties*

November 2022



National Commission on Recognition of
Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards

Introduction

- The *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists* contain criteria that specialty applicants and the recognized specialty sponsoring organizations and certifying boards must meet in order to become and/or remain recognized by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards (National Commission).
- A specialty is a discipline of dentistry that has a separate, distinct and well-defined focus based on unique advanced knowledge, skills and training that has been formally recognized by the National Commission as meeting the "*Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialists*".
- Dental specialties are recognized to protect the public, nurture the art and science of dentistry, and improve the quality of care in disciplines of dentistry in which advanced knowledge, skills and training are essential to maintain or restore oral health.
- Not all disciplines in dentistry will satisfy the requirements for specialty recognition and there should be no expectation that all disciplines in dentistry will meet the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties*.



Introduction

- Disciplines of dentistry that are not currently recognized as a specialty by the National Commission and believe they can meet all of the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties* should contact the National Commission for a formal Application for Specialty Recognition.
- When making decisions related to specialty recognition, the National Commission will only determine compliance with the criteria outlined in the *Requirements for Recognition*.
- If a discipline of dentistry is granted specialty recognition by the National Commission a national board for certifying diplomates in accordance with the "*Requirements for National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists*" must be established and recognized by the National Commission as the national certifying board for the specialty.



Recognized Dental Specialties

- The National Commission recognizes the following twelve (12) dental specialties:
 - Dental Anesthesiology
 - Dental Public Health
 - Endodontics
 - Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
 - Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
 - Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
 - Oral Medicine
 - Orofacial Pain
 - Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics
 - Pediatric Dentistry
 - Periodontics
 - Prosthodontics



Requirement 1

There are three (3) separate components to **Requirement 1** that must be met.

Please note that the absolute number of specialists and/or the number of members associated with the applicant/recognized sponsoring organization is not a consideration for this requirement.

Requirement 1:

In order for a discipline of dentistry to become and/or remain recognized as a dental specialty, it must be represented by a sponsoring organization:

(a) whose membership is reflective of the proposed or recognized dental specialty;

Interpretation: There may be different types of membership offered by a proposed/recognized specialty sponsoring organization; however, a majority of the active members must be in the discipline that is recognized or seeking recognition.

Recommended Documentation:

- Section of *Bylaws* and/or policies and procedures outlining how the organization's membership is representative of the proposed/recognized specialty.
- Written description of the organization's membership categories and the associated criteria for each category.
- Outline the current mission/vision statements of the organization, organization values and current strategic plan.



Requirement 1

(b) in which the privileges to hold office and to vote on any issue related to the specialty are reserved for dentists who have either completed an advanced education program that is a minimum of two (2) academic years in length accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation in the proposed or recognized specialty or have sufficient educational and/or practice experience in the specialty as deemed appropriate through written criteria established by the sponsoring organization and its certifying board; and

Interpretation: Only dentist members who have completed a Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) accredited advanced education program or have sufficient educational and/or practice experience in the proposed/recognized specialty can hold office and vote.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written *Bylaws* and/or policies and procedures ensuring that only dentist members who have either completed a Commission on Dental Accreditation accredited advanced education program in the proposed specialty or have sufficient educational and/or practice experience can vote and hold office.
- Written metrics and criteria used to determine sufficient experience for members who can vote and hold office that have not completed a Commission on Dental Accreditation accredited advanced education program.



Requirement 1

(c) that demonstrates the ability to establish and maintain a certifying board, if the sponsoring organization is not recognized by the National Commission. The recognized specialty sponsoring organization must continue to have a recognized certifying board that continually meets the *Requirements for Recognition of National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists* in order to remain recognized.

Interpretation: An applicant sponsoring organization has established a separate certifying board and/or has the ability to establish a separate certifying board. The recognized specialty sponsoring organizations have a separate certifying board that is currently recognized by the National Commission.

Recommended Documentation:

- Section of sponsoring organization *Bylaws* or policy that identifies the certifying board with which it has a close working relationship, including formal agreements on how the two (2) groups work together in managing the certification process.



Requirement 2

A proposed or recognized specialty must be a distinct and well-defined field that requires unique advanced knowledge, skills and training beyond those commonly possessed by dental school graduates as defined by the Commission on Dental Accreditation's Accreditation Standards for Dental Education Programs.

Interpretation: Comparison of the current CODA Accreditation Standards for Dental Education Programs (Predoctoral) to the current Accreditation Standards for Advanced Dental Education Programs in the proposed/recognized specialty to determine if the knowledge, skills and training is beyond that of dental school graduates.

Recommended Documentation:

- Side-by-side comparison of the Commission on Dental Accreditation Predoctoral Dental Education Standards and Advanced Education Standards of the proposed specialty in the areas of didactics and clinical skills.
- Copy of Commission on Dental Accreditation Advanced Education Program accreditation standards in the proposed/recognized specialty.



Requirement 3

There are two (2) separate components to **Requirement 3** that must be met.

The National Commission acknowledges that there is limited degree of overlap among all the recognized dental specialties.

Requirement 3:

The scope of practice of a proposed or recognized specialty requires advanced knowledge, skills and training that:

(a) in their entirety are separate and distinct from the knowledge, skills and training required to practice in any recognized dental specialty; and

Interpretation: Comparison of the current CODA Accreditation Standards for Advanced Dental Education Programs in the proposed/recognized specialty to the Advanced Dental Education Accreditation Standards of the recognized dental specialties to ensure the proposed/recognized specialty is distinct.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written documentation explaining how the proposed/recognized specialty has distinct knowledge, skills and training that is unique to the specialty.
- Identification of the advanced skills (techniques and procedures) required for practice of the proposed/recognized specialty that are not included with the scope of practice **for each** of the recognized specialties.



Requirement 3

(b) cannot be accommodated through minimal modification of any of the recognized dental specialties.

Interpretation: None of the currently recognized dental specialties could be modified to encompass the knowledge, skills and training provided in a proposed/recognized specialty.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written documentation explaining how the proposed/recognized specialty has unique knowledge, skills and training that could not easily be assumed by any of the other recognized specialties.
- Explanation of what makes the scope of practice of the proposed/recognized specialty so unique that it could not be modified and incorporated into the scope of practice of any of the recognized specialties.
- Identification any areas of biomedical and/or behavioral science in which advanced knowledge, skills and training are required for practice of the proposed/recognized specialty that are not included in the scope of any of the currently recognized dental specialties.



Requirement 4

There are four (4) separate components to **Requirement 4** that must be met.

Requirement 4:

A proposed or recognized specialty must document scientifically, by valid and reliable statistical evidence/studies, that it:

(a) actively contributes to new knowledge in the field;

Interpretation: The proposed/recognized specialty promotes improvement in the field through sponsorship of a peer reviewed scientific journal, development of parameters of care, continuing education requirements, recertification requirements and engages in evidence-based, peer reviewed publications that contributes to the knowledge of the field.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written evidence of sponsorship of a peer reviewed scientific journal.
- Written Parameters of Care for the discipline.
- Written continuing education requirements for practitioners in the field.
- Written recertification/certification maintenance requirements for diplomates.
- List of evidence based, peer reviewed publications.



Requirement 4

(b) actively contributes to the educational needs of the discipline at the predoctoral, postdoctoral and continuing education levels;

Interpretation: Contributes to the education needs of the discipline at the predoctoral, postdoctoral and continuing education levels.

Recommended Documentation:

- Survey results showing the number of part-time and full-time faculty members in the field employed by dental schools and/or post-graduate dental education programs that contribute to the teaching programs.
- List of sustained and ongoing continuing education programs that are utilized by the profession that are CCEPR/Joint Accreditation/State Dental Board recognized.



Requirement 4

(c) actively engages in research that establishes evidence-based validity of therapy used by practitioners in the proposed or recognized specialty; and

Interpretation: Engages in current research that establishes the validity of therapy used by the practitioners in the proposed/recognized specialty.

Recommended Documentation:

- List of research in the field that has been actively conducted and continually published over a period of years (15 years) in peer-reviewed journals up to the present time.

The expectation of the National Commission is that the published research is in widely known professional journals.



Requirement 4

(d) Demonstrates a need for service that is not currently being met by general practitioners or any of the recognized dental specialties.

Interpretation: Shows a need for service that is not currently being met by general practitioners and/or the recognized dental specialties.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written evidence showing a need for the oral health service that is not currently being met by others.
- Written evidence showing there are a sufficient number of practitioners that limit their practice to the field.
- Evidence that general/specialty practitioners refer patients for definitive treatment to practitioners in the discipline.



Requirement 5

A proposed or recognized specialty must have a direct benefit/impact on clinical patient care and meet the needs of its patient population.

Interpretation: The proposed/recognized specialty has a direct benefit/impact on clinical patient care and can meet the needs of its patient population.

Recommended Documentation:

- Written evidence showing that the proposed/recognized specialty impacts clinical patient care and meets the needs of patients through the current and future number of practitioners in the field.



Requirement 6

A proposed or recognized specialty must have a formal advanced education programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation that are a minimum of two (2) academic years in length.

Interpretation: The proposed/recognized specialty must have advanced education programs accredited by CODA that are a minimum of two (2) academic years in length.

Recommended Documentation:

- Current copy of the CODA Standards for Advanced Dental Education Programs in the discipline.



Final Comments

- Applicant organizations seeking specialty recognition must meet all six (6) of the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialists* to become recognized as a dental specialty.
- The recognized dental specialty sponsoring organizations must be in compliance with all six (6) of the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialists* at all times to remain recognized.
- Any comments, questions or concerns should be submitted to the National Commission at nationalcommission@ada.org

