

REVISED GUIDELINES ON THE DISPLAY OF ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OR TITLES

Guidelines on the Display of Qualifications or Titles

Introduction

1. The purpose of listing for display is to indicate to the public and to other practitioners that, in addition to a primary dental qualification, a dental surgeon has acquired knowledge, skills or experience which are available for the benefit of patients.
2. Dental Surgeons should be encouraged to upgrade their knowledge, skills and experience, whether as General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) or after attaining specialist status. The qualification or title must indicate that the dental surgeon has achieved a genuine advancement in expertise and experience and provided the dental surgeon with a quantum leap in knowledge and expertise. Acquired titles that are displayed should not be merely cosmetic.
3. The Singapore Dental Council views the display and use of qualifications and titles as pertaining to the provision of information to the public about the dentist's services, as promulgated in Section 5.4 of the SDC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (2018). In general, dentists may provide information about their qualifications (approved by SDC) and such information should be neutrally toned, objective, accurate, verifiable and without extravagant claims. They must not include information that could mislead the public as to their registered qualifications.

Section 38 (7) of the Dental Registration Act 1999 defines "use", in relation to any qualification, title, addition or designation, includes "..... to exhibit or publish the qualification, title, addition or designation in any card, letter, stationery, nameplate, signboard, placard, circular, handbill or any notice displayed by the registered dentist concerned at any premises used by him or her for the practice of dentistry".

4. Titles suggesting various degrees of specialization should only be allowed for display if they conform to our current pattern of recognition of specialties and sub specialties. This is to avoid ambiguity in a dental surgeon's specialist status in Singapore. The titles themselves need not fall neatly within our specialist or sub-specialist classification, but the topics therein should be relevant to the registered area of practice of the applicant.
5. Titles accepted for display up to now should continue to be allowed. New rules should not be applied retrospectively. The list of Aqs accepted as of 2 February 2009 will be grandfathered into the List of Displayable Additional Qualifications (Aqs).
 - 5.1. However, these "grandfathered" qualifications/titles may only be approved for display if they were attained prior to 1 January 2017 or if there is official documentation that enrollment into the course of study that leads to the qualification was prior to 1 January 2017.
 - 5.2. With effect from 1 January 2017, all applications for additional qualifications, including qualifications that are already on the List of Displayable Additional Qualifications, shall be assessed in accordance with the prevailing criteria in force, except where the condition set in para 5.1 is applicable.

6. If the dental practitioner's occupation does not involve patient management, their display of non-dental qualifications would not be within the purview of AQ.

Criteria for acceptance for the purpose of display

Acceptable Qualifications or Titles

7. Qualifications or titles will normally be accepted for display if:
 - a. these are awarded after a programme of training, study or research in an area directly relevant to some aspect of dentistry or medicine or area of health care that is complementary and relevant to clinical dental practice.
 - b. the qualification must demonstrate that the holder possesses a more extensive knowledge in a subject relevant to the practice of dentistry than would be required to obtain a registrable primary dental qualification.
 - c. when in a clinical area, qualifications must have adequate supervised clinical training in an approved institution.
 - (i). supervised clinical training- this is defined as training involving the management and treatment of a specific patient/patients, where a supervisor is responsible for the treatment planning and is physically present during the treatment of the patient/patients to ensure proper delivery of such care. The supervisor must be appointed by the approved institution.
 - (ii). Approved institution- this is defined as a dental school that is listed on the Schedule or one that is deemed equivalent by the Council in the context of this AQ Guidelines.
 - d. for qualifications that may lead the public to believe that the holder has advanced clinical training in a particular area of clinical dentistry or clinical specialty, these will be held to a higher standard commensurate to the claimed level of advanced training.

I. All qualifications/Titles

a. *Clinical Qualifications*

Clinical qualifications including those involving DSAB-recognized specialties shall be evaluated in accordance with AQ Guidelines.

b. *Non-Clinical Qualifications*

Non-clinical qualifications relevant to the practice of dentistry shall be evaluated in accordance with AQ Guidelines. Non-clinical qualifications that are not relevant to the practice of dentistry shall not be accepted for display.

II. DSAB-specialty exit qualifications:

An exit qualification is one which meets criteria approved by the DSAB and is equivalent in standard and requirements to the exit assessment recognised for registration as a specialist in Singapore.

Exit qualification in a DSAB-recognized specialty can only be displayed by an SDC-registered specialist.

Examples of exit qualifications include the Fellow of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (FAMS), American Board diplomates, Royal College (UK) Fellowships (via the training pathway) and Australian colleges' specialty Fellowships.

e. Distance learning courses, or courses with a major distance learning component, leading to implied advanced training in a clinical area, shall not be accepted for display.

f. Any qualification where the major part of training is outsourced to or conducted through a private organization/s shall not be accepted for display even if an approved institution awards the qualification.

8. With respect to Awarding Bodies, acceptable qualifications or titles for display are either:

a. higher qualifications by examination or research awarded by a Faculty of Dentistry or Dental School in a University of standing; or

b. qualifications awarded in recognition of completion of prescribed training and/or experience by Dental / Medical / Surgical Colleges and recognised institutions, accredited specialty training programmes or American Specialty Board equivalent.

Honorary Qualifications

9. Honorary Qualifications are those that are conferred by Colleges, Associations, Membership Societies and other professional bodies upon dental surgeons in recognition of their status. The criteria are often based on seniority, research, teaching, contribution to literature and community involvement. There is no training course, no examination and does not demonstrate an advancement in experience and expertise on the recipient.

10. Honorary qualifications and fellowships without examination should henceforth not be allowed for display with the exception of or unless they are deemed to be of special status to the individual that is of credit to the profession.

Examination for Qualifications or Titles

Examining Body

11. The Examining Body must be recognized by the national Ministry of Health or equivalent as well as the national Dental Council or equivalent. The title in question must itself be either (a) recognized by the authorities for specialist accreditation in the country of origin, or (b) if not recognized for specialist accreditation but is accepted for display. However, the examining body for specialist qualifications must be the one that the authorities accept, for specialty recognition in that country and from an institution of good international standing.

Nature of the Qualifications or Titles

12. There are many levels and types of qualifications available. To be acceptable for display:

a. The qualification must provide a dental surgeon with a significant quantum increase in knowledge and expertise. The content must push the dental surgeon clearly above his current state. Qualifications that merely reinforce a current level of competence will not be acceptable as this is no better than Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

b. Any qualification that is not relevant to dentistry cannot be approved.

Courses and Examination

13. While there is wide variation in training courses and examinations, some basic criteria must be met to ensure reliable increase in competence. Criteria and method of assessment used by the awarding body for conferment of the qualification should demonstrate sufficient academic rigour and due process e.g. continual assessment, examinations.

a. There should preferably be eligibility criteria such as minimum qualification already attained or number years of practice post graduation or post-specialisation, to ensure that the dental surgeon has consolidated his previous experience before taking a course or an examination.

b. There must be a standard training programme or course structure with a syllabus that demonstrates clear extension of knowledge and expertise beyond the level of a primary dental qualification. The course content could include didactic lectures, clinical teaching, essays or dissertations and field or clinical experience; and the program must be substantial and cumulative.

- i. **If a Clinical Course**, the program must demonstrate supervised clinical training in an approved institution equivalent to a minimum of at least 8 weeks full time clinical training (est. 320 hours) in addition to other forms of training. Such supervised clinical training must be scheduled in the course curriculum. Definitions of “supervised clinical training” and “approved institution” are stated in Clause 6 above.

(A clinical course is one that requires candidates to undertake examination and/or treatment of patients as a course requirement.)

- ii. **If a Non-Clinical Course leading to a Masters/Doctorate degree**, the program should be of at least 1 year duration (est. 1,200 hours) or an equivalent period of part-time study.

If a Non-Clinical Course not leading to a Masters/Doctorate degree, the program should be of at least six months duration (est. 600 hours) or an equivalent period of part-time study.

(A non-clinical course is one that does not require candidates to undertake examination and/or treatment of patients as a course requirement.)

- iii. Council reserves the right to determine the classification of a course as Clinical or Non-Clinical.

c. There must be a structured assessment that examines the theoretical and / or clinical aspects or practice evaluation. While there may not be clinical examinations involving real patients, there must be evidence of evaluation of practice aspects of the subject.

Administrative Processes

14. A dental surgeon seeking to display a qualification or title should apply online via the Singapore Dental Council website. A criterion-based application form is available to guide dental surgeons in the submission of qualifications or titles to SDC for display. The checklist should be completed and this should be accompanied by documentary

verification. For qualifications that are not on the list of approved qualifications, course prospectus and curriculum must be submitted and it should pertain to the period of study undertaken by the applicant.

15. If any category in the checklist is checked NO, it is a veto factor and the dental surgeon need not submit the form to SDC at all. This should constitute a self-selection or de-selection process.
16. The application should, where relevant, include the following information and documents:
 - (a) a certified true copy of the certificate confirming the award of the qualification
 - (b) syllabus: subjects, length of study, abstract of thesis (if relevant)
 - (c) the number of years of practice required by the conferring body before the candidate is eligible
 - (d) method of assessment (e.g. a postgraduate specialty exam) and the criteria on which it is awarded
 - (e) awarding body
 - (f) proof of recognition of qualification in country of awarding body
 - (g) whether the qualification can be displayed in the country of awarding body
 - (h) whether the qualification conferred is eligible for specialist accreditation in the country of awarding body
 - (i) suggested abbreviation for the qualification, if relevant (to provide evidence of the most widely recognized abbreviation for the qualification in the country of awarding body)
17. Upon submission of the application to SDC, the secretariat will verify the documentation, then forward the request to the Credentials Committee to evaluate the titles.

Minimum time taken for a decision on a **new** qualification is two calendar months from the time that all supporting documents including source verification confirmation, are received by SDC.
18. The application will be processed by the Council and it must be satisfied that the criteria listed have been fully met.
19. Council reserves the right to make changes to the guidelines as necessary.

Updated on 20 January 2023

Annex 1

History of Additional Qualifications

- i. The Accreditation Committee formed on 3 July 2003 had been tasked to set up the criteria and evaluate the recognition and registration of Additional Qualifications (AQ). The guidelines were formulated in 2004 and formally approved and adopted by the Singapore Dental Council on 12 November 2004. They were further modified at the Council Meeting of 12 January 2007.
- ii. With the setup of the guidelines for the Specialist's Register in the first half of 2008, the Committee had been tasked by the Singapore Dental Council as follows:
 - a. At the special council meeting of 11 December 2007, the Singapore Dental Council had given in-principle approval to a new framework with Additional Qualifications now divided into Specialty Qualifications and Displayable Qualifications (DQs).
 - b. The incumbent AC was tasked to make recommendations on the criteria for the new Displayable Qualifications category.
- iii. Subsequent discussions by Council and consultations with the DSAB led to the modification of the categorization mentioned in Para (ii) above, with recognition of relevant specialty qualifications to be determined by DSAB independently and DQs to be the universal set of all qualifications and titles acceptable for display. DQs would be under the purview of the council.
- iv. The Accreditation Committee will be renamed the Credentials Committee (CC) with effect from 02 February 2009.
- v. The roles of the Credentials Committee are to:
 - a. Make recommendations on the criteria for the acceptance of new Displayable Qualifications
 - b. Make recommendations to Council with respect to the application of any qualification that is not a basic degree
- vi. The formulated guidelines are principally to protect the public.
- vii. At the Council meeting held on 14 May 2019, it was agreed that the terminology will be changed from Displayable Qualifications to Additional Qualifications. AQs will represent all qualifications that dental professionals hold in addition to their basic dental qualifications.
- viii. On 17 January 2023, Council decided to remove the separation of additional qualifications that are DSAB specialty-based from those that are not. All additional qualifications, including specialty qualifications, shall be assessed based on the same criteria stipulated in para 13 of this Guidelines.

Disclaimer

- ix. The Singapore Dental Council maintains this listing for the acceptance of additional qualifications or titles for the purpose of display. This is because there is a need to control the proliferation and misrepresentation of titles to protect the interest of the

public. This listing does not imply endorsement, accreditation or approval by the SDC. The qualifications or titles accepted for display must be Qualifications or titles that "...indicate genuine advancement in expertise and experience and provide the dental surgeon with a significant quantum increase in knowledge and expertise..."