

**SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)**

In accordance with Regulation 24(c) of the National Standards Bodies Regulations of 28 March 1998, the Task Team for

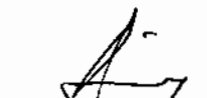
Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene

registered by Organising Field 09 – Health Sciences and Social Services, publishes the following Qualification for public comment.

This notice contains the titles, fields, sub-fields, NQF levels, credits, and purpose of the Qualification. The full Qualification can be accessed via the SAQA web-site at www.saga.org.za. Copies may also be obtained from the Directorate of Standards Setting and Development at the SAQA offices, SAQA House, 1067 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria.

Comment on the Qualification should reach SAQA at the address below and **no later than 28 September 2009**. All correspondence should be marked **Standards Setting – Task Team for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene** and addressed to

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D. MPHUTHING

ACTING DIRECTOR: STANDARDS SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT



SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

QUALIFICATION:
Higher Certificate: Dental Assisting

SAQA QUAL ID		QUALIFICATION TITLE	
73492		Higher Certificate: Dental Assisting	
ORIGINATOR		PROVIDER	
TT - Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene			
QUALIFICATION TYPE	FIELD	SUBFIELD	
National Higher Certificate	9 - Health Sciences and Social Services	Promotive Health and Developmental Services	
ABET BAND	MINIMUM CREDITS	NQF LEVEL	QUAL CLASS
Undefined	120	Level 5	Regular-ELOAC

This qualification does not replace any other qualification and is not replaced by another qualification.

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE QUALIFICATION

Purpose:

The purpose of this Qualification is to equip learners to become competent, responsible and accountable oral health care auxiliaries. They will be able to assist in various activities associated with a full community clinical dental practice.

The learner will be able to:

- Assist oral health practitioners in all clinical dental disciplines and procedures.
- Communicate effectively with patients, members of the oral health team and the community.
- Perform administrative duties.
- Provide fundamental oral health education to patients, the public and community of all age groups.

The successful learner will be able to register as a Dental Assistant with the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

Rationale:

Dental Assisting in South Africa was first recognised as a new vocation by the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene of the Health Professions Council of South Africa in 2006. The Scope of Practice for this vocation indicates that this is primarily that of an assisting nature for Dentists, Dental Therapists and Oral Hygienists. This vocation is also recognised as a critical health skill by the Department of Health and has been named a required skill for mid-level workers in the Human Resources for Health Plan of April 2007, which document also charged the Health Professions with identifying such categories of workers and ensuring appropriate training for them. Dental Assisting is a relatively young profession in South Africa. Up until 2007, dental assistants could be employed without having to undergo any formal education and training and were not required to register with the HPCSA.

This Qualification provides qualified dental assistants with the knowledge, skills and values to contribute to effective chair side assisting, infection control, practice management and the education of patients, the public and the community regarding fundamental oral health. The

dental assistant will perform his/her functions primarily under supervision of a professional oral health practitioner. The nature of the work performed by this dental auxiliary within the oral health team makes the dental assistant a vital member of the oral health team in both private and public environments, where oral health care is provided.

This Qualification will allow for vertical mobility after additional study within the oral health care field, which has been developed to accommodate the changing needs and demands of the South African population.

RECOGNIZE PREVIOUS LEARNING?

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LEARNING ASSUMED IN PLACE

- Communication at NQF Level 4.
- Mathematical Literacy at NQF Level 4.
- Biology or Life Sciences at NQF Level 4.

It is strongly recommended that the learner is proficient in end-user computing skills at NQF Level 3.

Recognition of Prior Learning:

This Qualification may be achieved through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Portfolios of Evidence, endorsed by previous mentors/employers may be presented and may include learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal/non formal learning and work experience. RPL may be awarded in accordance with the decision of the relevant provider and in agreement with the relevant ETQA.

Access to the Qualification:

Admission is open to all learners in possession of a Senior Certificate or equivalent NQF Level 4 Qualification, subject to the additional requirements laid down by the providing institution and/or relevant ETQA.

QUALIFICATION RULES

All five Exit Level Outcomes must be achieved for the learner to be awarded the Certificate.

EXIT LEVEL OUTCOMES

1. Communicate effectively with patients, members of the oral health team and the community.
2. Explain and apply the legal and ethical requirements and implications associated with dental assisting.
3. Assist oral health practitioners in all clinical dental procedures.
 - Range of dental procedures include but are not limited to:
 - Clinical examination; anaesthetics; restoration; surgery; prosthetics; managing medical emergencies; radiography; infection control.
4. Perform administrative duties.
 - Range of administrative duties include but are not limited to:
 - Preparation and maintenance of clinical oral health facility and equipment; patient record keeping; patient bookings; stock control; correspondence; bookkeeping; occupational health and safety legislative requirements.
5. Provide fundamental oral health education to patients, the public and community of all age groups.

Critical Cross-Field Outcomes:

- Identifying and solving problems by using critical and creative thinking skills are demonstrated in the learner's ability to anticipate the needs of the oral health practitioner during a treatment.
- Working effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation or community is demonstrated in the smooth running of a oral health practice.
- Organising and managing self and own activities responsibly and effectively is demonstrated in the efficient managing of patient bookings and stock control.
- Collecting, analysing, organising, integrating and critically evaluating information is demonstrated in successful delivery of health education.
- Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical, and language skills in the modes of oral and written presentations is demonstrated effectively in the efficient management of the administrative duties and patient turnaround.
- Effective use of science and technology, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others is demonstrated in all the actions required in providing dental assistance.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that the problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation is demonstrated in all the ongoing actions required in providing efficient and effective dental assistance.

ASSOCIATED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**Associated Assessment Criteria for Exit Level Outcome 1:**

- 1.1 All communication with patients is delivered in the context of an oral health care facility and is relevant to the subject of oral health.
- 1.2 Due recognition is given to the differences caused by multiculturalism, with consistent regard for human dignity and patient confidentiality.
- 1.3 Interaction and teamwork within the practice context reflect understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Associated Assessment Criteria for Exit Level Outcome 2:

- 2.1 The relevant Scope of Practice of the Health Professions Council of South Africa for dental assisting is explained.
- 2.2 Patient rights are acknowledged and adhered to at all times according to the Bill of Rights and Patient Charter.
- 2.3 Patient confidentiality is maintained at all times within the clinical oral health facility and in communication with the multidisciplinary healthcare team.
- 2.4 The role of the dental assistant in patient advocacy is explained in terms of the relevant current legislation.

Associated Assessment Criteria for Exit Level Outcome 3:

- 3.1 The oral health care facility is prepared for clinical dental procedures to be carried out on the incoming patient.
- 3.2 The oral health practitioner is assisted in the examination of the patient's oral cavity through the effective handling of appropriate instruments, suctioning and other apparatus.
- 3.3 The required local anaesthetics and other sedation are prepared and handled as required by the oral health practitioner.
- 3.4 Assistance in all other dental procedures is efficient and appropriate and the patient's needs are anticipated and attended to with confidence and reassurance.
- 3.5 Signs and symptoms of an impending medical emergency are recognised and managed in accordance with the required First Aid procedures.
- 3.6 Radiographic images are processed efficiently and appropriately mounted or forwarded electronically for immediate use by the oral health practitioner.

3.7 Infection control measures are applied in terms of personal hygiene, practitioner protection, appropriate sterilisation of instruments and equipment and suitable disposal of used surgical sharps.

Associated Assessment Criteria for Exit Level Outcome 4:

4.1 Cleanliness of the clinical oral health facility is maintained through adequate supervision of the cleaning assistant and personal management of professional equipment and instruments.

4.2 All equipment is regularly checked for efficient working and faulty equipment is timeously sent for repair.

4.3 Booking registers and patient records are maintained in a manner that ensures patient confidentiality and efficiency of practice.

4.4 Stock is classified and controlled to ensure currency of all medication and efficiency of availability.

4.5 Accounts, receipts, petty cash and banking are managed in a manner that ensures safety and efficiency and maintains patient confidentiality.

4.6 Hazardous and noxious materials are kept in controlled storage and appropriate inventory checks and records are regularly updated.

4.7 Disposal of medical waste is catered for and the appropriate disposal requirements are diligently overseen.

Associated Assessment Criteria for Exit Level Outcome 5:

5.1 Educational material used is appropriate for the culture and age group of the target audience.

5.2 Patients are informed of immediate care required and long term measures to be followed following dental interventions.

Integrated Assessment:

Integrated Assessment must be appropriately incorporated into the Qualification to ensure that the purpose of the Qualification is achieved. Formative and Summative Assessment methods and combinations of practical, applied, foundational and reflective competencies should be used.

Formative Assessment will be continuous and developmental. It will include but is not limited to tests, assignments, case studies, practical work and competency evaluation of practical skills.

Summative Assessment will include both theoretical and practical aspects to evaluate the learners' ability to integrate a larger body of knowledge and to achieve the stated outcomes of the Qualification.

The assessment process used must be suitable for the Recognition of Prior Learning.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARABILITY

Dental Assisting is a relatively young profession in South Africa. Up until 2007, dental assistants could be employed without having to undergo any formal education and training and were not required to register with the HPCSA. In analysing the required field of work for such dental assistants, the emphasis was placed on the needs for this country. However, in comparing the final product with equivalent categories of workers around the world, it is clear that these workers are not generally recognised in a formal way. In those countries where formal recognition is given, the work for which they are responsible hardly varies from that indicated in this Qualification.

For the purpose of this report, dental assistant training was examined across the globe, in countries such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom, Germany,

Singapore for the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and Namibia. It is evident that, as far as dental assisting is concerned, relatively few countries give it formal recognition, but many employ such categories of workers. Where formal recognition is given, it seems that most countries have followed the model laid down by the USA, which has the longest record in the world of formal recognition for dental assistants.

The American Dental Association (ADA), represents various dental societies in the United States. The ADA has more than 156,000 dentist members 53 constituent (state-territorial) and 545 component (local) dental societies.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation, which operates under the auspices of the ADA, is recognized by the US Department of Education as the national accrediting body for dental, advanced dental and allied dental education programmes in the United States, and indicates the following for dental assistant training:

The duties of a dental assistant are among the most comprehensive and varied in the dental office. The dental assistant performs many tasks requiring both interpersonal and technical skills. Although state regulations vary, responsibilities may include:

- Assisting the dentist during a variety of treatment procedures.
- Taking and developing dental radiographs (x-rays).
- Asking about the patient's medical history and taking blood pressure and pulse.
- Serving as an infection control officer, developing infection control protocol and preparing and sterilizing instruments and equipment.
- Helping patients feel comfortable before, during and after dental treatment.
- Providing patients with instructions for oral care following surgery or other dental treatment procedures, such as the placement of a restoration (filling).
- Teaching patients appropriate oral hygiene strategies to maintain oral health, e.g., tooth brushing, flossing and nutritional counselling.
- Taking impressions of patients' teeth for study casts (models of teeth).
- Performing office management tasks that often require the use of a personal computer.
- Communicating with patients and suppliers (e.g., scheduling appointments, answering the telephone, billing and ordering supplies).
- Helping to provide direct patient care in all dental specialties, including orthodontics, paediatric dentistry, periodontics and oral surgery.

It takes a relatively short period of time to become a dental assistant. Dental assistants receive their formal education through academic programmes at community colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, universities or dental schools. Graduates of these programmes usually receive certificates. Although the majority of academic dental assisting programmes take nine to eleven months to complete, some schools offer accelerated training, part-time education programmes or training via distance education.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association is responsible for accrediting dental assisting programmes.

Conclusion:

This Qualification, although geared towards the particular needs of the South African dental scene, is on a par with, or slightly above, those formally recognised around the world, as this Qualification is a full academic qualification and allows formal access to other Qualifications in the dental bouquet.

ARTICULATION OPTIONS

This Qualification articulates horizontally with the:

- ID: 66389: Higher Certificate: Diagnostic and Procedural Coding, NQF Level 5.

This Qualification articulates vertically with the:

- Diploma: Dental Technology, NQF Level 6.

MODERATION OPTIONS

Both internal and external moderation mechanisms of learner competence must be indicated by the provider, in accordance with the approval of the relevant ETQA.

CRITERIA FOR THE REGISTRATION OF ASSESSORS

Assessors must be accredited as such by the relevant ETQA and be in possession of an HPCSA-approved relevant qualification at the level of or above that of the Qualification.

NOTES

All qualifying learners must be in possession of a relevant First Aid Certificate by the end of the period of learning-which Certificate has been acquired during the duration of the learning programme.

UNIT STANDARDS

This qualification is not based on Unit Standards.

LEARNING PROGRAMMES RECORDED AGAINST THIS QUALIFICATION

None