



Australasian Council of Dental Schools  
Position Statement

Clinical Education and COVID-19 pandemic  
11/5/20

The Australasian Council of Dental Schools (ACODS) is the peak academic body in Australia and New Zealand providing informed decision-making dental education and research advice to government and non-government sectors. ACODS is committed to leadership, innovation and continuous improvement of dental education and the advancement of research that will benefit the oral and general health of individuals and communities in Australia and New Zealand and broader internationally. ACODS members have expertise in oral health education and research, national oral health planning, workforce projections and needs, academic standards, clinical placements, rural and remote dental access, health care delivery systems, speciality training and national regulation and accreditation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the closure of or a reduction of dental services all over the world, with the re-introduction of services posing an equally complex challenge. ACODS recognises that institutions engaging in dental education must respond appropriately to the epidemiologic profile of COVID-19 and follow official directives. This position statement has been produced in response to the need for dental education to take place safely and effectively in the COVID-19 context.

Due to the majority of ACODS members representing Australian institutions, ACODS has developed this Position Statement in the Australian context. The Council considers that for New Zealand there are similar principles articulated by the NZ Government and their bodies, such as Ministry of Health, the Dental Council (NZ), and various NZ professional bodies.

*Governing principles*

ACODS recognises the role that National and State Government and their official bodies, such as Dental Board of Australia, Australian Dental Council, have in regulating clinical dental practice and ACODS will respond to directives.

ACODS holds the safety of students, staff and patients as a prime objective.

ACODS is committed to continuing to support the highest quality education and clinical training for the next generation of the dental workforce.

ACODS will review and be informed by the literature related to SARS-COV-2 and COVID-19; the Council recognises that there is a lack of sound scientific basis behind some recommendations.

ACODS recognises that during times of restricted clinical placements there is value for students and the health system in undertaking voluntary opportunities which may be extra-curricular or documented to contribute to program objectives, where it is deemed safe to do so.

At all levels of restriction, ACODS recognises that individual students may have circumstances that prevent their ability to participate in clinical placements. While this remains an individual student choice, non-participation may impact on the student's progression through their program of study.

*Framework for ACODS' opinion on the ability to deliver clinical education.*

Australian Dental Association Dental Service Restrictions in COVID-19-

<https://www.ada.org.au/Campaign/COVID-19/ADA-Dental-Service-Restrictions-in-COVID-19/ADA-dental-restriction-levels-in-COVID-19-Publishe.aspx>

as these have been accepted by the Australian Health Protection Principle Committee (AHPPC) as a decision framework related to the epidemiologic profile of COVID-19 and the Dental Board of Australia approval of AHPPC directives.

Australian Government and the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum-

[National principles for clinical education during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Australian Dental Council/Australian dental practitioner program providers- [COVID-19](#)

[dental practitioner program accreditation principles](#)

National Health and Medical Research Council- [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Health Care \(2019\)](#)

Dental Board of Australia- <https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/>: Standards, Policies, Codes, Guidelines, including Guidelines on Infection Control- <https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Infection-control-obligations-of-dental-practitioners.aspx>

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care- COVID-19: elective surgery and infection prevention and control precautions

<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/covid-19-elective-surgery-and-infection-prevention-and-control-precautions>

CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units

[https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FC\\_A2584F8001F91E2/\\$File/COVID-19-SoNG-v2.10.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FC_A2584F8001F91E2/$File/COVID-19-SoNG-v2.10.pdf)

*Position*

ADA Dental restrictions	Clinical educator provider response
Level 5	Full scope of clinical education suspended.
Level 4	Full scope of clinical education suspended.
Level 3	<p>Scope of clinical education suspended or reduced for pre-registration students.</p> <p>Restricted emergency clinical education may be possible for some registered practitioners undertaking advanced training or final year dental students. Additional related requirements to be implemented such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- PPE (National standards), patient pre-screening and pre-operative protocols, additional operatory disinfection time for droplet infection.</li><li>- Social distancing, including reduced numbers in clinics, in accordance with general Government social distancing directives, respiratory hygiene.</li></ul> <p>Simulation clinics and other pre-clinical practical classes may be operated when staff and students are pre-screened for clinic and epidemiologic COVID-19 criteria, PPE is used and social distancing standards are implemented and monitored.</p>
Level 2	<p>Clinical education involving non-restricted clinical tasks can be conducted for all dental students following Level 2 restrictions and requirements. Additional related requirements to be implemented such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- PPE (National standards), patient pre-screening and pre-operative protocols, additional operatory disinfection time for droplet infection.</li><li>- Social distancing, including reduced numbers in clinics, in accordance with general Government social distancing directives, respiratory hygiene.</li></ul> <p>Simulation clinics and other pre-clinical practical classes can be operated when staff and students are pre-screened for clinic and epidemiologic COVID-19 criteria, PPE is used and</p>

social distancing standards are implemented and monitored.

#### Level 1

Clinical education involving all clinical tasks for patients who do not meet the clinical or epidemiological criteria for COVID-19 can be conducted for all dental students. Additional related requirements to be continued such as:

- PPE (National standards), patient pre-screening and pre-operative protocols, additional operatory disinfection time for droplet infection.
- Social distancing, including reduced numbers in clinics, in accordance with general Government social distancing directives, adherence to contact and respiratory hygiene protocols.

Simulation clinics and other pre-clinical practical classes can be operated when staff and students are pre-screened for clinic and epidemiologic COVID-19 criteria, and social distancing standards are implemented and monitored.

#### No Restrictions

Clinical education involving all clinical tasks for all patients can be conducted for all dental students. Additional related requirements that can be considered as new processes to be continued such as:

- patient pre-screening and pre-operative protocols, additional operatory disinfection time for droplet infection.
- adherence to contact and respiratory hygiene protocols.

Simulation clinics and other pre-clinical practical classes can be operated. Staff/student pre-screening and social distancing should follow Government or Institution requirements.

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