



HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR DENTAL ASSISTING, DENTAL
THERAPY AND ORAL HYGIENE**

**GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF OFF-SITE FACILITIES FOR
DENTAL THERAPY, ORAL HYGIENE AND DENTAL ASSISTING
STUDENT PLACEMENT**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Qualifications are increasingly designed to incorporate periods of work that integrate with and supplement the learning experiences offered at Higher Education Institution(s). Some Higher Education Institutions offer educational experiences to students in off-site facilities, which are outside of the traditional teaching and learning environment. Offsite facilities that support such experiences extend to, but are not limited, to other teaching and learning facilities, work integrated/experiential learning sites, service-learning sites, community-learning sites, and any other site wherein the student gains some type of training and/or experience that is part of the formal programme for which the student is registered. This placement is intended to add value to the overall development of the student, whether through their observation or operative participation and whether credit-bearing or not for the programme. Therefore, such placements must be appropriate for the professional programme concerned and in alignment with the relevant legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines that govern the professions.

As a quality assurance mechanism, any educational / work integrated/experiential learning that contributes to a qualification and that occurs at an off-site placement facility, should meet the minimum required accreditation criteria as indicated in this document. This document will provide guidelines for such accreditation.

It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Institution to develop the educational programme and to identify and/or assist students to identify the off-site facilities wherein clinical placements may occur. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Institution to accredit the off-site placement facility. The Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene will evaluate such off-site facilities through annual reporting and during accreditation visits to the Higher Education Institutions.

The Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene recognises that programmes that fall within its ambit, namely Dental Therapy, Oral Hygiene and Dental Assisting, need to utilize off-site facilities as clinical placements for several reasons:

- It provides opportunities to gain clinical experiences and to acquire a broad range of competencies that will support the student in clinical practice.
- It allows for an appreciation of the dynamic nature of the clinical setting as a learning environment within the multi-professional approach to patient care.
- It allows for a reflection of attitudes and skills required to practice optimally.
- It provides an introduction into the real world of oral health care.
- It supplements the resources of the institutions that are required for education and training.

2. DEFINITIONS

“Accreditation” means a process for evaluating educational programs including the facilities for teaching and training through a quality review process against a specific set of standards.

“Higher Education Institution” means any institution that provides Higher Education on a full-time, part-time or distance learning [Higher Education Act: 1 of Act 63/2002].

“An Off-Site Placement Facility” means a facility located away from the Higher Education Institution where students are placed and where their learning and experiences contributes to the curriculum outcomes for the qualification concerned. This includes but is not limited to private and public health facilities. An *off-site manager/coordinator* will be the practitioner / clinician in charge of managing the facility, supervising the student and reporting to the Higher Education Institution on the learning of the student during a particular placement period.

“Academic Staff”: means Oral Health educators of Higher Education Institutions who take direct responsibility for the quality of the theoretical and clinical teaching and learning of students.

“Clinical Teacher/Supervisor” means a practitioner/clinician who teaches and/or supervises students during off-site placements with the aim of developing a competent and independent practitioner and who hold similar and / or higher qualifications than the student.

“Professional Indemnity Cover” means security or protection by means of compensation or insurance cover for injury, harm, damages or loss for the patient against the student. The student is exempt from liability for damages through appropriate insurance cover by the Higher Education Institution. The cover is only applicable whilst a student is on official education and training business.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR OFF-SITE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- The off-site placement facility should espouse and demonstrate generally accepted standards of practice clinically, professionally and ethically. Good practice should be part of the learning experiences of the student.
- The composite experiences that the various off-site facilities collectively offer students during their education and training, should allow for the achievement of learning in all areas within the scope of practice of the qualification concerned.
- Clinical teachers/supervisors at off-site facilities should have an equivalent or higher dental qualification than the student in order to teach and/or supervise students.
- The learning outcomes and role of the supervisors/clinical teachers/staff involved in supervision and teaching should be clearly articulated.
- The off-site facility should offer opportunities for the achievement of specific learning outcomes, including appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Off-site placement facilities should meet the minimum standards as per the requirements of the Higher Education Institution so as to ensure a conducive learning environment that will support the development of the students.
- There should be some form of formal service level agreement, if not contractual obligation from all parties concerned, that is, programme coordinators / academics of the Higher Education Institutions, students, supervisors / practitioners and district and facility managers at the off-site placement facilities. This should be based on mutually agreed and written teaching and learning conditions and standards.
- A clear and mutually agreed upon code of conduct for students and staff needs to be set out, monitored and acted upon at the off-site facility.

- Clear communication lines that are transparent to all parties should be established, so as to enhance reflective reporting regarding student performance and adherence to the code of conduct.
- A review and evaluation of the off-site placement facility, as determined by the Higher Education Institution, must be routinely conducted to ensure that the principles and rules discussed above are maintained.

4. RECOGNITION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT OFF-SITE FACILITIES

Education and training enhanced through off-site placements can only be recognised if it takes place in an approved facility over a minimum period of time, as specified by the accredited Higher Education and Training Institution. An evaluation of such off-site facilities should ideally precede student placement and renewal of contractual agreements. Should there be numerous facilities to evaluate by the Higher Education Institution, telephonic contact with the facility manager, completed contracts and appropriate supporting and reporting documentation should be in place preceding any placement.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

5.1 *Aligning Off-Site Placement with the Educational Programme*

- The Higher Education Institution should provide evidence of an aligned teaching and learning programme with reference to off-site placements in terms of outcomes, content, teaching, assessment and evaluation.
- The alignment must relate to the scopes of practice and profession of the respective qualifications.
- A portfolio of evidence that includes the accreditation process of the off-site facility, the evaluation of the facility and renewal of contractual / formal agreements must be made available for evaluation by the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene during the five year accreditation cycle. A portfolio of evidence must be maintained for a minimum period of five (5) years from the date of such accreditation, so as to evaluate the quality and value of such placements.

5.2 *Schedules for Off-Site Placements*

The schedules for off-site placement should be made available to students and the off-site facility to ensure transparency and to allow for clarification of expected learning outcomes prior to undertaking the off-site teaching and learning engagement. The schedules for off-site placement should include:

- The dates and times of the placement, the number of hours allocated, activities to be performed, contact persons / supervisors and any other additional information relevant to the placement. Consideration must be given to the numbers of students allocated at any given site. Caution should be taken not to over-burden any given facility;

- Facility protocols such as for infection control, on-site injuries / medical emergencies, channels of communication; dress codes, guidelines on student conduct during the placement and any other guidelines that have a bearing on the student / off-site facility / Higher Education Institution;
- Include all the academic requirements, i.e. outcomes, assessment and evaluation and guidelines on the engagement with the Higher Education Institutions during the placement process.

5.3 *Educational Outcomes for Off-Site Placement*

There should be an indication of the relationship of outcomes to:

- The module/course/subject concerned;
- The professional programme outcomes;
- The attributes that the Higher Education Institution wishes to embed in its graduates; and
- The scope of practice of the qualification concerned.

5.4 *Activities/Procedures to be performed at Off-Site Facilities*

- The scope of practice of the programme concerned must be indicated to the off-site facility manager, clinical teachers/supervisors and staff involved.
- The activities/procedures that the students can perform must be within the scope of practice of the qualification concerned.
- The level of teaching/supervision thereof should be clearly outlined and communicated. The conditions under which these activities can be performed may differ across various placement facilities and these conditions should be clearly articulated to all stakeholders.

5.5 *Assessment of Student Performance*

- Assessments should be aligned to the expected learning outcomes, and appropriately weighted in terms of contribution to the programme.
- Assessments may be integrative, formative and / or summative and may include, but not be limited to the following: performance-based assessment of procedures/activities, portfolios, case studies, reflective reports, critical incident analysis and case discussions.
- Assessment practices should accommodate the differing views/needs of the student, the clinical supervisor of the off-site facility and the patient.
- Assessment methods must have clear assessment criteria and be made transparent to the students and discussed with the clinical teacher / supervisor.
- Good assessment practices is essential as it will inform Higher Education Institutions how prepared their students are for the workplace.

5.6 Evaluation of Off-Site Placements

- The students' placement should be monitored through regular communication with the student and the placement supervisor. The means of communication and times thereof must be indicated in the placement schedule as appropriate.
- There should be an opportunity for the student to reflect on both the teaching and learning processes, as well as the expected learning outcomes as applicable to the off-site facility. This should include a reflective reporting process. The purpose of this process is to alert the institution of any concerns that may indicate corrective action to be taken during or after the placement.

5.7 Supervision of Student/s at Off-Site Facilities

- There should be a service level agreement between the Higher Education Institution and the off-site facility regarding the supervision of the teaching and learning activities of the student.
- Effective collaboration between Higher Education Institutions and managers of off-site facilities is required to train, support and mentor off-site clinical teachers / supervisors in preparation for their roles.
- Mentoring may be given to administrative or other staff member(s) of the off-site facility responsible for guiding the student during the placement.
- Clinical teachers/supervisor(s) of off-site facilities should take responsibility for ensuring that the learning experiences of the student as indicated in the outcomes and activities are met.
- An academic staff member from the Higher Education Institution must be responsible for monitoring student placement to ensure that activities remain consistent with expected teaching and learning outcomes.
- Supervisors at off-site facilities are only allowed to supervise procedures within their scope of practice and that of the student.

6. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR OFF-SITE FACILITIES

- Minimum standards should be set to ensure that there is no risk of compromise to the off-site facility or to the Higher Education Institution, e.g. by students performing functions outside their scope of practice or being placed in an at risk environment.
- The clinical learning environment of the off-site facility should meet minimum standards in terms of providing clinical care to the public that is safe, appropriate and ethical.
- The clinical learning environment must have the resources to meet the outcomes of the placement. It is therefore expected that minimum standards may differ depending on the learning experiences as set out in the outcomes of the placement and appropriateness to the qualification.

- The Higher Education Institution must provide the necessary documentation with reference to the minimum criteria set out below as a prerequisite for accreditation of the off-site placement facilities. The criteria include, but are not limited to:
 - Sound infection prevention and control practices, including disinfection and sterilisation;
 - Sound environmental hygiene practices and general cleanliness;
 - Safe working environment for staff, students and patients, e.g. radiation protection and safety;
 - Appropriate functional dental equipment, instruments and materials;
 - Scope of services performed to meet set objectives;
 - Policies, protocols and standard operating procedures guiding the practice environment, such as what to do during on-site injuries / medical- and/or environmental emergencies; and
 - An environment that models best practice in terms of staff adherence to ethical rules and regulations, provision of appropriate and quality patient care and an encompassing clinical context relevant to the outcomes for the student's learning experience and qualification.

7. PROCESSES FOR OFF-SITE FACILITY ACCREDITATION

7.1 *Accreditation of the Off-Site Placement Facility*

- The Higher Education Institution is responsible for developing the required documents, such as service level agreements, schedules and the off-site credentialing criteria in terms of infrastructure and capacity that would be required to achieve teaching and learning outcomes relevant to the qualification.
- The Higher Education Institution should source or assist students to source placement facilities that would support off-site teaching and learning opportunities.
- The Higher Education Institution will furnish information to the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene in its' annual institutional report regarding clinical placements at off-site facilities. Education programmes that incorporate clinical placements at off-site facilities will be subjected to evaluation during accreditation procedures by the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene.

7.2 *Memorandum of Understanding or Contract with Off-Site Facilities*

- The identified off-site facility should meet the minimum standards outlined in this document. Once the off-site facility has been approved and accredited as a potential off-site placement facility, the educational programme and roles and responsibilities should be agreed upon by the facility manager and facility

teachers / supervisors and the representing academic/s of the Higher Education Institution.

- Prior to placement, the programme contract should be signed by the student, monitoring academic staff member, facility supervisor and other relevant party. On completion of the placement all required documentation should be signed off by the supervisor or facility manager and verified by the academic staff member monitoring the process.

7.3 Legal and Logistic Issues Informing Off-Site Placements

- The Higher Education Institution should furnish detailed information to the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene in its' Annual Institutional Report regarding clinical placements at off-site facilities. In addition the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene must be made aware through the annual reporting process of any significant changes to the use of off-site placement facilities or teaching and learning sites.
- Clinical placements at off-site facilities will be subjected to an evaluation during accreditation procedures conducted by the Board.
- A service level agreement (SLA) must be in place between the Higher Education Institution and the off-site facility. The SLA must set out the contractual obligations off all parties involved in management of the off-site placement.
- The Higher Education Institutions must take cognisance of any legal, logistical and other concerns that may impact on the off-site facility as well as student learning and take appropriate action i.e. patients in practice environments may refuse treatment / involvement by a student. A service-level agreement between the Higher Education Institutions and the off-site facility manager should provide details of necessary legal issues and recourse in the event of incidents involving students (e.g. injury on duty, malpractice, ethical breaches) and include how either party would respond to issues.
- Indemnity cover should be provided by the Higher Education Institution as a measure of security or protection by means of compensation or insurance cover for injury, harm, damages or loss for the patient against the student.

8. CONCLUSION

Higher Education Institutions have the responsibility to ensure that graduating students are competent and prepared for the world in which they will live and work in. Students have the responsibility to become life-long learners. Supplementing resources such as off-site facilities external to the Institutions allow for optimal learning experiences and work integrated learning opportunities. Off-site facilities are intended to use authentic professional contexts as learning environments that allow students to engage in meaningful and significant workplace activities that would promote their competence. Whilst the Professional Board for Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene encourages the use of off-site teaching and learning, it is imperative that quality assurance mechanisms are in situ, through the process of accrediting off-site facilities, as outlined in this document.