

## **HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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

#### **EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

##### **1.1 Mandate of the Board**

The implementation of the examination is in line with the objectives of the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene, as outlined in section 15A of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), which entails, amongst others, the control and exercise of authority in respect of all matters affecting the education and training of persons in, and the manner of the exercise of the practices pursued in connection with, any health profession falling within the ambit of the professional board. In terms of section 15B of the Act the boards may appoint examiners and moderators and conduct examinations and charge such fees in respect of the examinations as may be prescribed.

In terms of the Act the primary mandate of the HPCSA and professional boards is the protection of the public and therefore, the HPCSA and boards are obliged to ensure the registration of competent and appropriately and properly qualified health practitioners and the Board examination is implemented as one of the measuring instruments in this regard.

##### **1.2 Registration is a prerequisite for professions under the ambit of the Board**

Registration is a prerequisite for practicing as a Dental Assistant and in terms of section 17 of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), no person shall be entitled to practice within a Republic as a Dental Assistant or any profession registrable in terms of the Act, unless he/she is registered. The professions under the ambit of the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene are the following:

Dental Assistants  
Dental Therapists and  
Oral Hygienists

##### **1.3 Challenges regarding registration of Dental Assistants and Solution by the Board**

In view of the lack of distance learning for Dental Assistants, and the perceived high number of persons that are required to obtain the Higher Certificate in Dental Assisting, the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene resolved to implement a Board examination for Dental Assistants, who are registered under the grandfather clause (i.e. persons with more than 5 years experience at the time of registration) and unable to obtain a formal

qualification in Dental Assisting. Dental Assistants who are successful in the Board examination may apply for registration with the HPCSA as Dental Assistants.

## **2. THE BOARD EXAMINATION**

The South African Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) framework requires that examinations and/or assessments are based on minimum objective criteria/outcomes. The examination is predicated on minimum competency and ethical standards within the South African context, legislation and international best practices in the profession.

The Board examination tests competency and knowledge of Dental Assistants registered under the grandfather clause for registration as Dental Assistants. The examination focuses on the application of theoretical knowledge in practice and will also include issues relating to ethics, human rights and HIV/Aids. No qualification certificate will be issued to candidates who are successful in the examination, as the Board is not an education institution.

## **3. STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD EXAMINATION**

The examination of the Board is not an open book examination. It is a 3-hour on-line or written assessment of 100 marks and contains multiple questions and true and false questions.

The prescribed duration of an examination session is indicated on the assessment and no candidate may exceed the time limit. In the case of a paper-based examination the question paper **AND** answer sheets must be handed to the invigilator immediately after expiry of the time of the examination. In the case of an online assessment the system will close after three hours, or after you submit your answers.

The examination will be conducted in English only and candidates should note that grammar will not be taken into consideration when marking the papers or during the online assessment, as the focus of the examination is on theoretical and clinical I issues and not on grammar.

The pass mark for the examination is 50%.

Those candidates who apply to undertake the online examination must have access to a smartphone or computer (tablet/desktop or laptop) that is able to access the internet. Additionally, the candidate should ensure that he/she has sufficient data and in an area that has good quality internet coverage. The HPCSA will not be responsible for instances of data-dropping, load shedding, no internet access etc. or any other data and equipment related failures. If a candidate starts an examination and logs out (either on purpose or due to a service issue such as poor coverage, battery dying, electricity outage etc) then the candidate will forfeit the examination and have to reapply and pay for a subsequent examination.

The online examination will be offered using an online data and assessment collection application, such as Microsoft Forms, or an online learning platform such as Moodle. The appropriate software will be decided by the HPCSA.

## **4. EXAMINATION DATES AND VENUES**

The closing date for applications to sit the examination is **6 weeks prior to date of the examination**, but this is subject to change based on prevailing circumstances and at the discretion of the HPCSA.

The Professional Board shall assume no responsibility for incorrect information on examination arrangements, given by unauthorized persons. The day and time determined for an examination should be carefully observed and adhered to. In the case of an online examination the link to the assessment

site will be e-mailed and short message service (SMS) to the candidate. It is essential that the correct and updated mobile number and e-mail address is provided. Should you not receive the link by at least three days prior to the examination then it is your responsibility to contact the examinations administrator, ([DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za](mailto:DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za)) by at least one day before the examination.

If candidates undertaking the paper-based examination wish to change their examination centre after they have applied, their written application to do so must reach the Professional Board **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination**.

## 5. REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

Applicants must be registered as Dental Assistants under the “grandfather clause” (i.e. persons registered with more than 5 years’ experience as Dental Assistants) or in the category “Limited Registration”.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that all the requirements for admission to sit for the Board examination are complied with.

## 6. APPLICATION TO SIT FOR THE EXAMINATION AND CANCELLATION

- a. All candidates who intend sitting for the Board examination are required to submit a duly completed application form (**Form 324**). This application form must be accompanied by:
  - i. proof of payment of the **examination fee of R710,00** (deposit slip). The proof of payment (deposit slip) must reflect the candidate’s initial surname, HPCSA registration number and contact telephone number. The Professional Board will not accept responsibility for exclusion of a name of a candidate from the list of candidates due to non-receipt of proof of payment by the HPCSA.

The banking details of the HPCSA are as follows:

Bank:	ABSA
Account name:	HPCSA
Branch:	Arcadia
Branch code:	33-49-45
Account number:	0610-000-169,
<b>REF NO:</b>	<b><u>REGISTRATION NUMBER AND INITIALS AND SURNAME OF THE CANDIDATE</u></b>

- ii. The HPCSA has for safety reasons implemented “a no cash on premises policy” and payments have to be made at the bank or through the internet;
  - iii. incomplete application forms will not be processed and will be returned to candidates;
  - iv. applications received after the closing date will not be considered;
  - v. an admission letter issued by the Board will be the only acceptable proof that a candidate is registered for the examination. In the case of paper-based examinations candidates are required to show the Board’s examination admission letter **AND** their ID document to the invigilator on the day of the examination. In the case of online examinations candidates will have to complete an online declaration.
- b. Cancellation of an application to sit for the examination must be in writing e-mailed to [DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za](mailto:DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za)

Notification of cancellation or deferment of an examination must reach the Board **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination**, whereafter the examination fee will be forfeited.

- c. If the applicant changes either his/her address or contact details before the examination for which an application has been made, the applicant shall notify the Board in writing of such change of address or contact details **at least 3 weeks prior to date of the examination**.

## **7. SETTING OF THE EXAMINATION PAPER**

- i. The responsibility for setting of the examination paper for Dental Assistants rests with the Professional Board or relevant Committee established by the Board. The Professional Board reserves the right not to disclose the names of the examiners;
- ii. the Board or relevant Committee established by the Board will appoint examiners and moderators in accordance with the criteria and guidelines, as determined by the Board from time to time;
- iii. examiners and moderators will abide by the Professional Board's policies, rules, guidelines and code of conduct and declaration of confidentiality for examiners and moderators.

## **8. PUBLICATION OF THE EXAMINATION RESULTS**

The results of the examination will be available within 6 weeks after date of the examination and will be communicated to candidates in writing.

## **9. RE-EXAMINATIONS**

Candidates who are unsuccessful in the examination will be allowed to sit **for 3 redo examinations**. The candidates are required to advise the Board in writing **6 weeks prior to date of the examination** of their intention to re-write the examination. Candidates will have to apply for a further examination and pay the relevant examination fee as if this was a new examination. Proof of payment of the examination fee (deposit slip) must be submitted together with the written application.

The re-marking of examinations shall be subject to the following conditions:

- i. receipt of a written application for a re-mark and proof of payment of the remark fee within the set time frame;
- ii. the person appointed to re-mark a script shall not be the same person who conducted the marking of the candidates' script.

## **10. COMPLAINTS AND/OR REQUESTS FOR REMARK OF EXAMINATION PAPER**

- i. Candidates may apply for a remark of their examination papers once only. The written application has to be submitted to the Board within **2 weeks** of date of receipt of the examination results;
- ii. the fees payable for a remark is **50% of the examination fee (R355)**;
- iii. candidates who have any complaints/grievances regarding the examination are at liberty to submit their complaints/grievances **in writing** to the Board within **1 week** after date of the examination;

- iv. results of the examination remark shall be availed to the candidates within 6 weeks after date of receipt of the application for a re-mark.

The complaints process aims to be fair to all parties involved with the complaint. All complaints will be treated as legitimate and investigated without prejudice.

Complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously and in accordance with their urgency within the Board's set timeframes. Complaints will be resolved in a maximum of 30 working days where possible. Complaints handling shall be at no charge to the complainant, subject to statutory requirements. However, the normal charges relating to Access of Information requests will apply.

Complaints have to be lodged in writing and may be submitted by fax or e-mail to-

The Deputy Company Secretary  
Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene  
P.O Box 205  
Pretoria  
0001

E-mail : [DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za](mailto:DOHexams@hpcsa.co.za)

## **11. FRAUD DISHONESTY AND OTHER MISCONDUCT**

If it shall appear to the Board that there is credible evidence of the following misconduct and/or fraudulent activities, the Board shall serve written charges on the specific candidate by mail at the last address provided to the Board by the candidate, stating with particularity the facts upon which such charges are based. The candidate's examination results shall be withheld pending the outcome of the investigation. This is especially applicable in the case of the online examination. Online proctoring may be used to assess if any cheating or misconduct has occurred.

:

- i. Either by omission or commission falsified the application or proof required for admission to the Board examination or misrepresented the applicant's eligibility to sit for the Board Examination;
- ii. either by omission or commission falsified documentation submitted in support of a special request or served such documentation under false pretences;
- iii. brought unauthorised items or materials into the examination room or otherwise violated the Board's examination security policy by accessing material, whether it be in a digital format or otherwise;
- iv. opened a question paper or reviewed the questions prior to the announcement that the examination has begun, or otherwise violated any of the oral and/or written instructions given by the invigilators in connection with the administration of the Board examination;
- v. possessed in any manner, reviewed and/or utilised any unauthorised notes, books, recordings, electronically retrievable data or other unauthorised materials during the Board examination;
- vi. written or designated any answers to questions on the Board examination prior to the announcement of the beginning of the examination session or written any answers or other information on the answer sheet after the announcement of conclusion of the session;

- vii. sought copied or used answers or information from or given answers or information to other candidates during the Board examination;
- viii. removed any examination materials or notes made during the examination from the examination room;
- ix. memorised questions for the purpose of reporting and or reported the substance of questions to any person associated with any person or organization engaged in the preparation of the applicants to take the Board examination or otherwise violated the copyright protection to the Board examination materials; and in the instance of the online examination make use of screengrabs/screenshots, took pictures of the questions or recorded the contents of the examination in any other format whatsoever;
- x. engaged in fraud, dishonesty in connection with the administration of the Board examination;
- xi. compromised or disrupted the process for admission to or administration of the Board examination.

Candidates shall be granted an opportunity to respond to the charges within a period of 21 days after date of the letter which contains the charges. Such a response shall identify with specificity the charges disputed by the candidate, who shall set forth any evidence which can be adduced by the candidate in the contradiction of such charges. The applicant may include in such written response a request that a hearing be held.

In the event of the candidate not submitting a written response within the set timeframe, the Board shall deem the facts presented in the written charges to be true. In the event of the candidate not requesting a hearing and the Board does not on its own accord determine to conduct a hearing, the Board shall make a determination based on the evidence submitted.

The Board shall have the authority to determine a sanction to be applied based on the severity of the allegations/ offences and inform the candidate accordingly.

Sanctions to be applied by the Board may include but not be limited to:

- i. nullification of the examination taken by the candidate;
- ii. disqualification of the candidate from sitting for another examination for a period not exceeding five years from the date of such determination;
- iii. invalidation or striking off one or more answers of the examination taken by the candidate, or reduction of the candidate's final score by one or more points.

The Board shall notify the candidate of its decision in writing within a period of 30 days from the date of the hearing of the charges.

The candidate shall be entitled to representation by an attorney at his/her own expense at every stage of the proceedings.

## **12. SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL**

- i. Examination Preparation Guide (Form 322)

- ii. Ethical rules, relevant legislation, e.g. Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974), regulations relating to the scope of practice, etc. (obtainable from Council's website [www.hpcsas.co.za](http://www.hpcsas.co.za) /Health Related Acts/ scope of practice)
- iii. any reading material and/or textbooks of the candidates' own choice that address the core competencies of the relevant registration category, as well as contextual issues such as HIV/AIDS, multi-culturalism, child abuse, human rights, etc.
- iv. Any dental assisting textbook. The Board currently recommends the following textbooks:
  - Torres and Ehrlich Modern Dental Assisting by Bird D L and Robinson
  - Delmars Dental Assisting: A Comprehensive Approach. Phinney D J and Halstead J H
  - Modern Dental Assisting by Bird Robinson

### 13. DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Assessment / Examination-** means a method of assessing the standard and/or the skills and knowledge level achieved by a candidate in a discipline and/or profession.

**Examiner-** means a person appointed by the Professional Board to ascertain whether the specific outcomes of a qualification and its underpinning programme have been achieved.

**Invigilator-** means any person who supervises candidates during examinations, including any member of the Board or HPCSA staff member. The primary task of the invigilator is to ensure that the examination rules are adhered to at all times.

**Misconduct-** means any unacceptable/fraudulent act or deed (examples indicated above).

**Moderation-** means the process that ensures that the assessment of outcomes has been fair, valid and reliable.

**Moderator-** means a person appointed by the Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene or relevant Committee established by the Board for measuring the specific outcomes achieved for registration as a Dental Assistant.

**Re-marking-** means the re-marking of an examination answer sheet/book by the moderator and is subject to the payment of a fee (50% of examination fee) by the candidate.

### 14. CONTACT DETAILS FOR ENQUIRIES RELATING TO THE EXAMINATION

The Executive Company Secretariat  
HPCSA  
P O Box 205  
**PRETORIA**  
0001

**Email:** [DOHexams@hpcsas.co.za](mailto:DOHexams@hpcsas.co.za)

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