



Dental specialties assessment strategy goes live

13 November 2024

The new assessment strategy for nine dental specialties has been published today by the four Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and Ireland.

The strategy outlines the different methods of assessment – both in the workplace and through examination – that will be in place for dental trainees from Autumn 2026.

It covers the following General Dental Council specialties:

- Endodontics
- Oral Medicine
- Oral Surgery
- Orthodontics
- Paediatric Dentistry
- Periodontics
- Prosthodontics
- Restorative Dentistry
- Special Care Dentistry

The assessment strategy for Dental Public Health is to follow shortly.

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland have worked together to deliver the joined-up approach to summative assessment, which has been compiled using the latest GDC curriculum.

Alan Mighell, Chair of the Royal Colleges' group working on the new assessment, said: "The four Colleges are pleased to share the assessment strategy today for nine dental specialties – an important milestone in our work to provide consistency, and a clearer training pathway, for dental trainees across the UK and Ireland.

"The strategy outlines the different methods of assessment in the workplace and through examination within the relevant training programme. These will be used, along with other evidence as outlined in the Dental Gold Guide, to determine a candidate's progression.

"Those successfully completing training will be eligible for the Certificate of the Completion of specialist Training and able to apply to join the GDC Specialist List of that specialty."

The new assessments have been developed in collaboration with education specialists, Specialist Advisory Committee (SAC) Chairs, and the Dental Deans.

The exam element will have two components: a single best answer (multiple choice) element, and a structured oral element.



Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations

Dental trainees who start their training in Autumn 2024 will be following the new curriculum and will sit the new examinations. Trainees who are already on the training pathway, having started specialty training before September 2024, will generally complete their training with the existing curriculum and the existing membership and fellowship examinations. Please refer to the COPDEND [transitional arrangements](#) for guidance.

The new assessment strategy is available on the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations [website](#)

Further updates will be shared in the coming months. If you have any questions, please contact your SAC Chair or info@dsfe.org.uk

The Colleges have also announced that they are recruiting for a Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Board Chairperson and Specialty Exam Board Chair who will support the development and management of the examinations and provide oversight on behalf of the four Colleges.

More information about the positions will be made available in due course.

Notes about the new approach to assessment:

- The new assessment strategy covers the nine GDC dental specialties listed above, with Dental Public Health to follow shortly. The remaining dental specialties (Dental and Maxillofacial Radiology; Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology; and Oral Microbiology) are not subject to the new assessment strategy and arrangements remain with the current non-surgical Royal College in each case.
- [Transitional arrangements](#) are in place for certain specialties; those who commenced their training before Autumn 2024 should refer to these.
- As the awards for the new examinations will be Fellowships, a model is being developed for review by the Dental Councils within each College to enable those on the specialist list who have passed one of the current specialty membership examinations to convert their qualification to Fellowship with their College.
- Dentists who are not training with either a UK National Training Number pathway or through the Irish Committee for Specialist Training in Dentistry (e.g. international dentists undertaking university-based courses either in the UK or internationally), may also be eligible to sit these new examinations subject to criteria to be published. Examination sittings run both in the UK and Ireland and internationally will use the same question bank.
- From September 2026, trainees will be required to have passed the MFDS/MFD examination before being eligible for entry to the new dental specialty fellowship examinations.