



The National Dental
Examining Board of Canada
Le Bureau national d'examen
dentaire du Canada

®



ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024

Supporting quality dental care through the evaluation of competence.



Annual Report

2023-2024

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Mission

Contributing to the oral health of Canadians by providing a fair, valid and reliable evaluation of competence for the certification of dentists.

Mandate

Created by an Act of Parliament, the National Dental Examining Board of Canada (NDEB) has been given the mandate to establish a single national standard for general dentists in Canada and to develop and administer examinations to confirm individuals who apply for registration as dentists have met the national standard.

The NDEB works in collaboration with the Canadian Faculties of Dentistry, the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, and the provincial Dental Regulatory Authorities to support quality dental care in Canada.

Letter from the President and Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year, we are pleased to share an overview of our activities, achievements, and the ongoing commitment to our mission of contributing to the oral health of Canadians by providing a fair, valid and reliable evaluation of competence. It has been a year of strategic growth, operational refinement, and thoughtful adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

Strategic Planning: A Blueprint for the Future

This year, we embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning initiative. This effort has been instrumental in setting a clear direction for our organization, ensuring that we align our resources and capabilities with our long-term goals. Strategic planning is critical as it allows us to anticipate future needs, respond to emerging trends, and continue to serve our candidates and stakeholders effectively. By setting clear objectives and measurable goals for the coming years, we are better positioned to navigate the evolving landscape.

Enhancing Candidate Support and Examination Access

A key focus over the last year has been reviewing and improving the internal processes and policies that impact candidates. We understand that the journey to certification can be demanding, and we are committed to providing the support needed to help candidates navigate this journey. This year, we have made significant strides in reducing our credential verification timelines, and refining our registration processes in response to candidate needs.

Addressing Challenges in Electronic Exam Delivery

While we have made progress in many areas, our journey has not been without challenges. One of the more significant hurdles we continue to face is in the realm of electronic exam delivery. Throughout the transition of our exams to a digital platform, we have continued to encounter technical issues that impacted the delivery experience. We have taken these challenges seriously, working diligently to resolve them and improve the reliability of our electronic exam delivery.

Engaging with Stakeholder Groups

During the year, we have also focused on increasing awareness and understanding of our work. We have actively engaged with stakeholders and other groups that advocate for individuals trained in international non-accredited dental programs. Through a series of meetings, we have sought to understand their concerns and gather their insights. Through these engagements, we have emphasized the importance of competency-based testing and highlighted the value of assessing the knowledge, skills and abilities of all dentists before they can enter practice. During a time when many organizations consider ways to speed up access to professions, we continue to reflect on the mandate of the NDEB and how we support the regulators in their role to protect the public. We are committed to being part of a solution that balances the need for assessment of competence for all dentists in a timely manner, without sacrificing patient safety.

Looking Forward
As we move forward, we remain committed to continuous improvement and innovation. The achievements of the past year, while significant, remind us that there is always more work to be done. We will be investing more resources in research and technology and using our data to drive decision making. We will continue to listen to our stakeholders, adapt to new challenges, and strive to uphold the highest standards in everything we do.

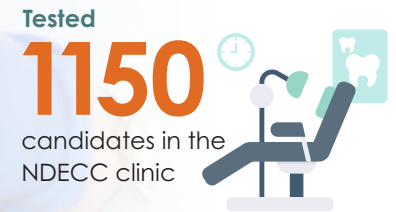


Amarjit Singh Rihal
President



Marie Dagenais
Executive Director
and Registrar

Year in Review



Strategic Initiatives

2019-2024

The NDEB made significant progress in achieving the key result areas of its five-year strategic plan.



Transition all paper-based exam to electronic delivery

All NDEB examinations are now available through electronic delivery. Two formats are available for electronic delivery and are offered based on exam type. While there continue to be challenges with the delivery, a series of changes have been adopted to provide test takers with the best possible exam experience while investigation into the root causes continues.

1



Review the Equivalency Process Blueprint

The review of the Equivalency Process was completed in 2021. The result of the review was a series of changes to examinations in the Equivalency Process that were implemented in 2022. The NDECC, introduced as an outcome of the blueprint review, has been running successfully since the fall of 2022.

2



Strengthen communication with stakeholders

Over the last five years, the NDEB has worked diligently to maintain strong relationships with its stakeholders and seek opportunities to engage with different stakeholder groups, particularly those representing the candidates in the examination programs. Information gleaned from these engagements has informed the development of new tools and processes that will assist candidates on their journey to certification. Maintaining strong communication with stakeholders will continue to be a priority.

3



Manage Risk

The development of a risk management program and framework for evaluating risk was completed in the early part of the five-year plan. The program is used to identify, evaluate and plan for possible risks for the organization and for individual projects.

4



In the last few years there have been tremendous changes in the environment.

Developing a new strategic plan for the next several years is an important process to assist the NDEB in maintaining a high level of exam development and delivery while keeping pace with and adapting to rapid changes in the health-care environment. Work on a new strategic plan began in the 2023. The plan will be presented to the NDEB Board for adoption at the 2024 Annual Meeting.

Governance

The Board brings a wide range of perspectives and skills to the organization. Comprised of representatives from the provincial Dental Regulatory Authorities, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CDAC), and from the public, the Board oversees the mission and strategic direction, financial management, sustainability, and relationships with stakeholders through committees with specific tasks and full Board meetings.

The Board governs through policy creation and oversight, ensuring compliance with our By-laws, overseeing the management of our resources, and ensuring accountability to our stakeholders for the operation of the NDEB.



Amarjit Singh Rihal
President
Manitoba Dental Association



James (Jim) Richardson
Past President
British Columbia College
of Oral Health Professionals



Sneha Abhyankar
Newfoundland and Labrador
Dental Board



Gurminder Singh
(Mintoo) Basahti
College of Dental Surgeons
of Alberta



Tanya Cook
Provincial Dental Board
of Nova Scotia



Noha Gomaa
Royal College of Dental Surgeons
of Ontario



Stefan Haas-Jean
Ordre des dentistes du Québec



Stéfán Piché
College of Dental Surgeons
of Saskatchewan



Alan Robinson
Dental Council
Prince Edward Island



Andrew Rowe
New Brunswick Dental Society



Debora (Deb) Matthews
CDAC Representative



James (Jim) Posluns
CDAC Representative



Jan Sheppard Kutcher
Public Representative

Committees

Appeals Committee:

The Appeals Committee meets on an as needed basis to hear appeals on the conduct of an examination and appeals of misconduct decisions. This Committee ensures that candidates who feel that their examination result was affected by something beyond their control can be heard at the highest levels of the NDEB.

Membership 2023-24

Lise Payant /Chair
Maureen Bourgeois
Claire Deschamps
Doug Mackey
Michel Moreau
Stéfan Piché

By-laws Committee:

The By-laws Committee is responsible for reviewing the By-laws and recommending to the Board changes for implementation. This keeps the NDEB By-laws clear and up to date, and in compliance of internal practices, processes, and policies.

Membership 2023-24

Gurminder Singh (Mintoo) Basahti /Chair
Alan Robinson
Andrew Rowe

Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee meets regularly between meetings of the Board to ensure the timely continuity of business and administrative affairs. In addition, the Executive Committee is responsible for hearing compassionate appeals and special consideration applications from licensed dentists who graduated from an accredited program more than sixty months prior to the date of the Virtual OSCE they intend to take.

Membership 2023-24

Amarjit Singh Rihal /President
James Richardson /Past President
Stefan Haas-Jean /Vice President/Treasurer
Sneha Abhyankar
Gurminder Singh (Mintoo) Basahti

Finance and Audit Committee:

The Finance and Audit Committee oversees the external audit, the financial planning process, and the development and compliance with financial policies and processes. This committee ensures that the NDEB remains viable and sustainable as a Not-for-Profit corporation and has been responsible for the recommendations to reduce exam fees both last year and this year.

Membership 2023-24

Stefan Haas-Jean /Chair
Sneha Abhyankar
Gurminder Singh (Mintoo) Basahti
Jimmy Mui
Amarjit Singh Rihal

Examinations Committee:

The Examinations Committee is responsible for making recommendations that will provide for the conducting of examinations in a fair and equitable manner for all concerned. Our examinations are not static; therefore, this committee is charged with ensuring that the exams remain relevant and up to date so that Canadians can be confident that candidates who pass them demonstrate a level of competence consistent with that of an entry level dentist in Canada.

Membership 2023-24

Cristina Ionescu /Chair
Tanya Cook /Vice Chair
Lara Friedlander
Keven Hockley
Jim Yuan Lai
Pierre Éric Landry
Steven Patterson
Lise Payant
Amarjit Singh Rihal
Jan Sheppard Kutcher
Laurie St-Pierre

Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee assists the Board by identifying and nominating people to serve on the Standing Committees and any ad-hoc committees consistent with the NDEB's By-laws.

Membership 2023-24

Jim Richardson /Chair
Amarjit Singh Rihal

Senior Leadership Team:

The leadership team enables us to achieve consistently high levels of performance, meeting our standards for professionalism while maintaining a high degree of morale and employee satisfaction.



Marie Dagenais
Executive Director
& Registrar



Caroline Nguyen
Director of Examinations



Christine Desbiens
Director of Human Resources



Kim Phillips
Director of Communications



Greg Scharf
Chief Financial Officer



Travis MacCuish
Manager Finance



Grace Manaog
Manager NDECC



Rachel Pyka
Manager Credential
Verification & Legal



Monica Rodriguez
Manager Examinations



Karen Frost
Manager IMIT

Key Activities

Examination Blueprint Mapping

In the spring of 2024, a revised series of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of beginning dental practitioners in Canada was adopted by the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation (CDRAF), NDEB and the Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry (ACFD). As part of an ongoing process to ensure the fairness, job relatedness, and defensibility of its examinations, the NDEB held a workshop in April 2024 to review the document, and review and revise the blueprints for all its examinations to ensure alignment with the new KSAs.

The workshop was led by Dr. Marie Dagenais, Executive Director and Registrar and was attended by the Director of Examinations, key exam team members, Chief Examiners, and observers from dental regulatory authorities. During the workshop, Veronica Velle, Acting CEO of the Australian Dental Council (ADC) was invited to present an overview of their written examination for dentists trained in non-accredited programs that assesses knowledge of the science and practice of dentistry, and clinical judgement and reasoning skills relevant to dental practice.

NDECC Consultation and Review

The NDECC is designed to test both the clinical skills and situational judgement of candidates.

Following feedback and concerns about the new exam, the NDEB initiated a review process. The review including consulting with a psychometric expert and various stakeholders involved in the examination and licensure of dentists in Canada.

The review focused on four areas: the time allotted for the Clinical Skills component of the NDECC, the passing standard for the Clinical Skills component, the requirement to pass at least one station in each blueprint area of the Situational Judgment component, and the inclusion of amalgam restorations in the Clinical Skills component. The review was completed in the fall of 2023.

The review confirmed the passing standard for both the Clinical Skills component and the Situational Judgement component were the minimum required to demonstrate competence in the areas being tested. Additionally, the allotted time for the Clinical Skills component was deemed appropriate as it is double the time recommended by the experts during the exam development stage.

The inclusion of amalgam restorations was a multi-faceted review and involved assessing the materials provided, the type of restoration presented, and the appropriateness of amalgam restorations in today's environment. An environmental scan of the Canadian Faculties of Dentistry curriculum indicated that amalgam restorations are still taught in all Canadian dental schools, and there is evidence that amalgam is the material of choice in specific high-risk populations in Canada. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to continue to include amalgam restorations in the NDECC. The review did result in changes to the materials provided to candidates to complete the restorations, and a determination to continually assess the difficulty of the requirements and adjust as necessary.

The outcomes of the consultation and review were made available through the website and circulated to stakeholder groups.

Reducing the Duration of the Equivalency Process

The pathway to licensure for graduates of non-accredited dental programs has changed over the last 20 years. In the late 1990s into early 2000 individuals who received their education from dental programs outside of Canada or the United States were required to complete a series of examinations, including two clinical examinations, one on typodonts, and one on live patients, before qualifying to take the certification examinations. In 2000, this examination process was phased out to be replaced by accredited Qualifying and Degree Completion Programs at Canadian universities. For several years, these programs represented the only pathway for a dentist trained in a non-accredited program to pursue licensure in Canada. Spaces in these programs were limited by the resources available at the Canadian Faculties of Dentistry, and enrollment often capped around 100 places across the country each year. Over time, it became evident to those involved in the education programs that not all dentists trained in these programs required two or more years of education and this became the impetus for the Equivalency Process. An examination process that would assess the knowledge, skills and abilities of those individuals who did not need further education in dentistry prior to being licensed. In tandem with the development of a second pathway toward certification, more international schools were being recognized as equivalent to Canadian dental programs. In 2010, 2011, and 2012 graduates from programs in Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland were deemed equivalent and could move directly to the certification examination.

When the Equivalency Process was implemented in 2011, the intent was that a competent candidate could obtain NDEB certification within 18 months. In the following years, it became evident that this timeline was not reasonable as application numbers increased substantially, and many candidates required repeat testing at one or more examinations in the process. These factors coupled with exam capacity challenges have made the duration of the Equivalency Process significantly longer for many candidates.

The NDEB is committed to substantially reducing the timeline for people to complete the process and in early 2024 proposed a series of initiatives to achieve this goal.

The first step was to assess the status of seats available for the NDECC. Capacity for the exam is determined by the size of the test centre and exacerbated by repeat test takers. A series of registration changes were implemented to facilitate access to the exam and options for expanding the test centre were explored. With changes to registration and increased capacity in the test centre the timeline for candidates who pass the prerequisite exam, the ACJ, to secure seat is expected to be reduced to six months by spring 2025.

While making changes to the NDECC test centre and registration process will help shorten the duration of the Equivalency Process for the competent candidate, the NDEB is exploring other initiatives to bring the overall timeline of the Equivalency Process down, including accepting alternative pathways to certification, changes to the examinations, updated eligibility requirements, and prioritizing candidates who have established themselves in Canada.

While there is no single solution that will shorten the duration of the Equivalency Process for all candidates, a combination of approaches that considers eligibility, increasing capacity, prioritization and examination blueprints will have a positive impact, particularly for those candidates who are able to demonstrate competency on their first examination attempt.

Applications and Credential Verification

Every individual who participates in an NDEB examination must apply and go through credential verification prior taking an exam. Credential verification is the process of confirming that an applicant has obtained the appropriate credential to practice in their field and that the individual who has made the application is the one who was awarded the credential.

Equivalency Process Applications

Application and credential verification for the Equivalency Process requires that applicants provide a substantial amount of documentation supporting their education, practice history, and identity. The credential is verified with the issuing organization (source verification) to confirm the information from the candidate is authentic, accurate and valid. The complexity of the NDEB's credential verification process coupled with the volume of applicants can mean that verification times vary throughout the year. During this past year, the credential verification process team has decreased credential verification times.

Applications Created

Fiscal year
2022-2023

1746



1984

Fiscal year
2023-2024

Applications Reviewed

Total

2244

Incomplete*
884

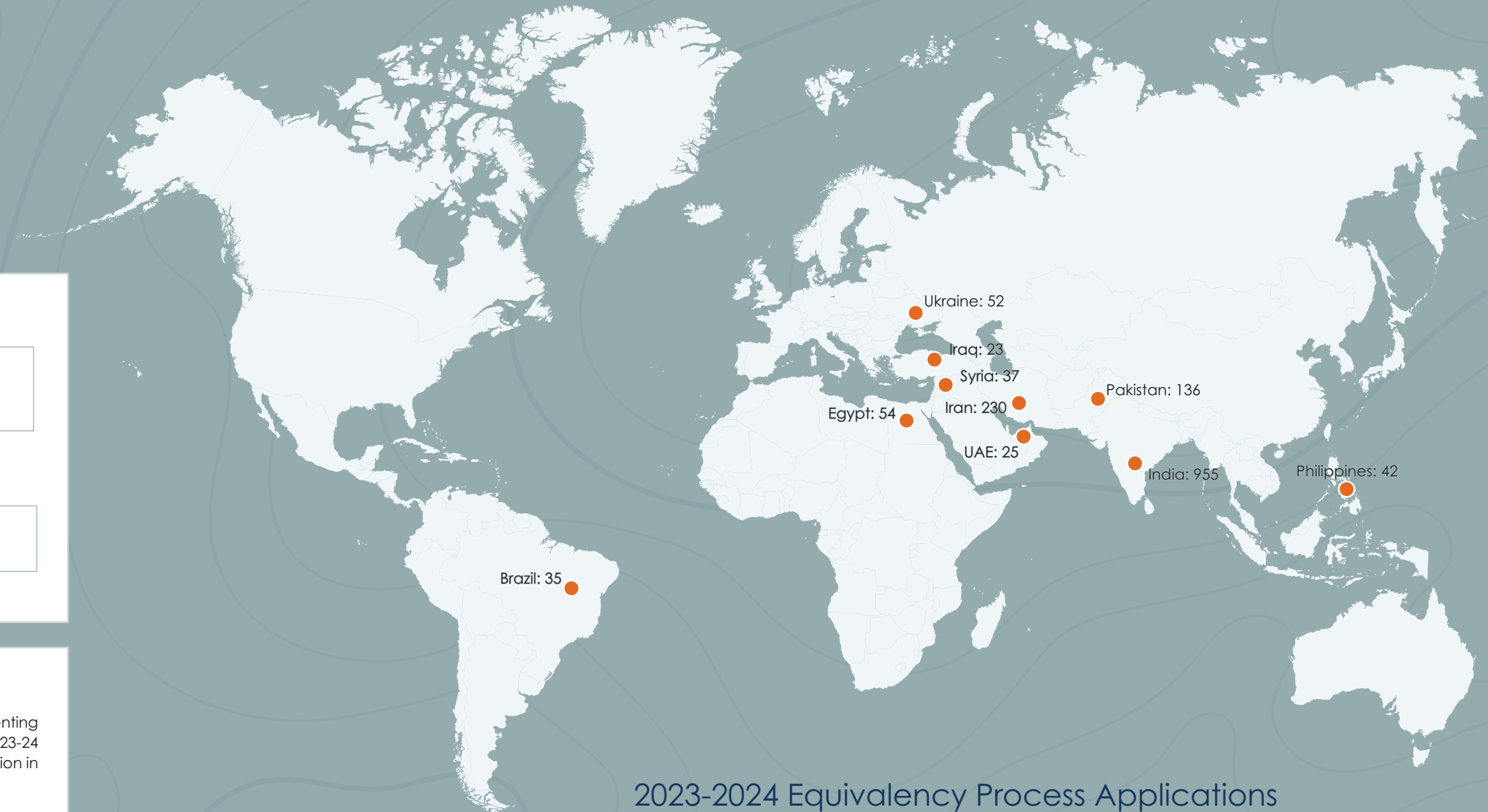
Approved
1360

*Applications reviewed that required submission of additional documentation.

Alternative Document Submission

Current geopolitical events have changed the face of credential verification for the NDEB. The team continues to adapt to the evolving situations and find new ways to authenticate credentials. The submission of alternative documents provides an avenue to

apply for the individuals who may face circumstances beyond their control, preventing them from submitting all required documents for NDEB processes. In fiscal year 2023-24 alternative document submissions from candidates who received their dental education in Afghanistan, Algeria, Belarus, Iran, Palestine, Sudan, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Yemen.

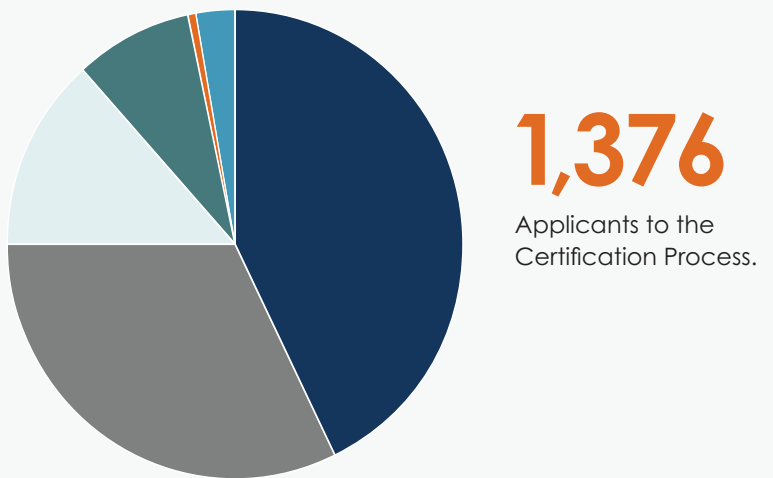


2023-2024 Equivalency Process Applications

*Countries with under 20 applications are not displayed

Certification Process Applications

The chart below shows the number of applications received by educational demographic.



Graduates of Canadian accredited programs:	590
Graduates of non-accredited programs that completed the Equivalency Process:	445
Graduates of CODA accredited programs in the US and International:	184
Graduates of accredited programs in Australia:	113
Graduates of accredited programs in New Zealand:	6
Graduates of accredited programs in Ireland:	38

Examinations

Examinations serve as a mechanism to assess an individual's competence prior to their entry into the workforce. Unlike some health care professions, dentists often work independently or unsupervised. A third-party assessment to evaluate minimal competence of a beginning dental practitioner provides assurance to dental regulators and the public that the safety of the practitioners is being evaluated.

For dental programs in Canada, the United States, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, the system of accreditation has confirmed that the dental programs are based on the knowledge, skills and abilities required of a beginning dental practitioner, that the programs are comparable in duration, and students receive similar clinical experience. As a result, all graduates from these dental programs go directly to the certification examination.

In recent years, the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), has accredited two international predoctoral dental (DDS/DMD) education programs. King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia was granted accreditation in 2019, and Yeditepe University in Türkiye was granted accreditation in February of 2024. As a result, graduates from these programs, after the date of accreditation, are considered graduates of CODA accredited programs.

As dental education is not homogeneous around the world, individuals who graduate from international non-accredited dental programs must either return to school to complete a degree completion program or enroll in the Equivalency Process to complete the AFK, ACJ and NDECC. Successful completion of these examinations allows individuals to progress to the Certification Process.

Certification Process

The Virtual OSCE is the examination that leads to NDEB certification and is required for licensure in Canada. The Virtual OSCE is a summative examination that assesses problem solving and critical decision-making skills required of beginning dental practitioners in Canada. The Virtual OSCE is the national standard of competence for dentists in Canada.

Virtual OSCE Statistics / Fiscal Year 2023-24

Total Candidates	Pass %	Test Takers	# of Candidates	# Passed
1461	90.69	1st time	1353	1245
		Repeat	108	80

445

candidates successfully completed the Equivalency Process in this fiscal year.

Equivalency Process

The Equivalency Process is a three-exam series designed to assess individuals who have completed a dental program from a university that is not accredited. The process comprises the AFK, ACJ, and NDECC, which evaluate minimal competence in the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a beginning general practitioner in Canada.

Equivalency Process Statistics / Fiscal Year 2023-24

Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge (AFK)

Total Candidates	Pass %	Test Takers	# of Candidates	# Passed
1893	33.96	1st time	1220	431
		Repeat	672	204

Assessment of Clinical Judgement (ACJ)

Total Candidates	Pass %	Test Takers	# of Candidates	# Passed
1112	69.15	1st time	918	663
		Repeat	194	106

NDECC Situational Judgement

Total Candidates	Pass %	Test Takers	# of Candidates	# Passed
929	60.71	1st time	613	368
		Repeat	316	196

NDECC Clinical Skills Statistics

Total Candidates	Pass %	Test Takers	# of Candidates	# Passed
1150	42.61	1st time	613	249
		Repeat	537	241

Dental Specialty Core Knowledge Examination and National Dental Specialty Examination

Beginning in 2020, the National Dental Specialty Examination (NDSE) was administered by the NDEB. The purpose of the NDSE was to assess the entry-level competencies of dental specialists. Over the past 12 months, the responsibility for administering the NDSE has fully transitioned to the Royal College of Dentists of Canada (RCDC).

The Dental Specialty Core Knowledge Examination (DSCKE) was the examination for non-accredited dental specialists seeking entry into a Dental Specialty Assessment and Training Program (DSATP) at Canadian universities. Administered by the NDEB for 11 years, it was phased out following the CDAC's revision of DSATP admission requirements, which removed the DSCKE as a requirement. The last DSCKE was administered in September 2023.

The elimination of the DSCKE and transfer of the NDSE to the Royal College of Dentists of Canada (RCDC) has allowed the NDEB to reallocate resources to other examinations and projects.

DSCKE Statistics		
	Total test takers	Mean Score
September 2023	19	82.68

As the DSCKE is an admission test, it has no defined passing score.



Certification

Obtaining certification by the NDEB means that the individual has met the minimum standard of competence expected of an entry level dental practitioner in general dentistry. Each year, over 50% of the dentists certified receive their primary dental education outside of Canada.

Stream	Certified
Canadian accredited dental programs	584
Other accredited dental programs	303
Successfully completed the EP	447

Operations

Focus on Risk and Security

Risk Management continues to be of high importance to the NDEB as it navigates through exam security, access to certification, electronic exam delivery and the increased volume of applications.

Over the last year, the NDEB contracted a third-party provider to complete a strategic review of NDEB's security threats and to provide recommendations and strategies to address overall security as well as specific security concerns relating to loss of its intellectual properties. Recommendations will assist the NDEB to prioritize areas requiring security enhancements.

Testing capacity and the timeline to certification continues to be at the forefront of NDEB's objectives. We are actively working on strategies to optimize testing capacities and assess eligibility requirements.

Project Based Resources

The NDEB continues to collaborate with stakeholders on ways to facilitate entry to practice for general dentists. To this end, the NDEB is in the preliminary stages of developing a National Repository of credentials. As a first step in the repository project, the NDEB has engaged a third-party consultant to conduct research and gather information in support of this initiative. The next phase will include a project manager to identify technical requirements, establish a budget and identify sources of funding, before engaging in the final software development phase. This initiative will leverage our expertise in credential verification and facilitate information sharing between the NDEB and the Dental Regulatory Authorities.

Health workforce planning has been a topic of discussion around many tables. In response to requests from both internal and external stakeholders and our desire to analyze our current large data set, a statistical analyst has been added to the team. This project-based role will focus on analyzing data trends and patterns which in turn will help the NDEB gain insight and make informed decisions while supporting strategic planning.

Summary Financial Statements

The following summary financial statements include the summary statement of financial position as at June 30, 2024, and the summary statement of operations for the year then ended. These summarized statements are derived from the financial statements of The National Dental Examining Board of Canada.

Summary Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2024	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
Assets		
Cash	4,819,105	5,103,378
Accounts Receivable	—	5,537
Prepaid Expenses	325,693	271,603
Accrued Interest	130,026	90,453
Investments	21,731,660	16,440,162
Capital Assets	3,240,109	3,700,578
	30,246,593	25,611,711
Liabilities		
Trade and other Operating Liabilities	1,083,435	979,014
Deferred Revenue	5,987,329	3,833,733
Lease Inducements	1,979,307	2,137,652
	9,050,071	6,950,399
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	11,783,245	9,053,661
Internally Restricted	9,413,277	9,607,651
	21,196,522	18,661,312
	30,246,593	25,611,711

Summary Statement of Operations: Year ended June 30, 2024	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
Revenue		
Application Fees (accredited, non-accredited, DSCKE, NDSE)	2,150,200	2,130,000
Examination Fees (accredited)	3,098,057	2,407,283
Examination Fees (non-accredited)	12,003,175	11,538,175
NDSE Examination Fees	3,935	1,046,040
DSCKE Examination Fees	72,200	75,670
Other income	1,184,686	513,093
Payment processing fees	(1,009,770)	(1,134,615)
	17,502,483	16,575,646
Operating Expenses		
Direct expenses		
Certification (accredited, non-accredited)	94,179	112,836
Examinations (accredited)	1,462,537	1,715,346
Examinations (non-accredited)	7,378,826	6,230,943
DSCKE	3,789	10,465
Other	—	—
Administrative expenses	5,833,568	5,473,291
	14,772,899	13,542,881
Internally Restricted	194,374	42,693
	14,967,273	13,585,574
Excess of Revenue over Expense	2,535,210	2,990,072



The National Dental
Examining Board of Canada
Le Bureau national d'examen
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