

The Safe Practitioner:

A framework of behaviours and outcomes
for dental professional education

Dental Nurse

Dental Nurse

Safe Practitioner domains

Domain	Sub domain
Clinical Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical knowledge and its application to patient management• Clinical/Technical Skills
Interpersonal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective communication• Teamwork and wellbeing of others
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethics and integrity• Leadership• Social accountability
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insight• Reflection, continued and self-directed learning• Adaptability, well-being, and personal growth• Organisation and time management

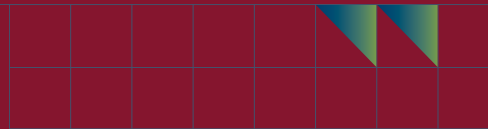
Explanatory notes on this framework

1. This is the framework for all UK education and training programmes that lead to registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) as a dental professional. The descriptions under the four domains in the framework together summarise the GDC's expectations for new dental professionals, or 'safe practitioners'.
2. The learning outcomes and behaviours within this framework have been designed to allow education providers flexibility to use their expertise to develop programme curricula and to amend these to reflect changes in practice over time.
3. Where a learning outcome sets an expectation for knowledge or skills in a certain area (for example diseases or medicines) the role of the education provider is to determine the right areas to teach and assess within the remit of that professional group at the level expected to be a safe practitioner.
4. Overlap of content in particular areas of practice, for example content covered in both knowledge and skills in the clinical domain, is deliberate to separate out and clearly define the purpose of each outcome and what is required to be assessed. There are some outcomes and behaviours which have aspects that apply across two or more domains. Providers should consider all aspects of the outcome/behaviour and not limit the teaching and assessment/monitoring to only those aspects that fall within the domain listed.
5. The behaviours and learning outcomes are not structurally dependant on each other. Content in some areas is replicated across outcomes and behaviours. Determining whether content is a behaviour or an outcome (or a behaviour in addition to an outcome) is based on how it should be assessed and/or monitored by the provider.
6. All expected behaviours are common across the dental professional groups. Many of the learning outcomes are also shared across all groups. Where the learning outcome number has an '*' against it, this means that this outcome a variant of an outcome shared with other groups, or it is specific to this group. Differences and gaps in the numbering reflect that professional groups are required to have demonstrated only those learning outcomes relevant to their profession.

Domain:	Clinical Knowledge and Skills
Description	Possesses the skills and underpinning knowledge to undertake routine clinical and technical procedures and tasks. This includes the ability to apply that knowledge and those skills to specific contexts and situations, patients, and stages of treatment including, where relevant, assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning and onward referral
Sub domain:	Clinical knowledge and its application to patient management
Learning Outcomes	
C 1.1	Explain the aetiology, pathogenesis and epidemiological trends of oral and dental disease and their application to patient management
C 1.2*	Describe and identify the clinical presentations of oral and dental diseases relevant to the role of a dental nurse and explain the principles underpinning their diagnosis, prevention, and treatment
C 1.3	Explain the variance in disease presentation across diverse cultural and social groups, and those with protected characteristics, and how this impacts diagnosis, prevention, and treatment
C 1.4*	Explain general and systemic diseases and psychological conditions, and their relevance to oral health and impact on clinical treatment, patient compliance, self-care, and outcomes
C 1.5	Identify relevant and appropriate dental, oral, craniofacial, and general anatomy (recognising the diversity of anatomy across the patient population) and explain their relevance to patient management
C 1.6	Describe relevant physiology and discuss its application to patient management
C 1.7*	Describe psychological and sociological concepts and theoretical frameworks of health, illness, behavioural change and disease, and how these can be applied in clinical practice
C 1.8	Explain the potential routes of transmission of infectious agents in dental practice, mechanisms for the prevention of infection, the scientific principles of decontamination and disinfection and their relevance to health and safety
C 1.9	Explain the need for effective recorded maintenance and testing of equipment and requirements for appropriate storage, handling, and use of materials
C 1.13	Evaluate the health risks of prescribed, non-prescribed and recreational drug use and misuse on oral and general health and how to provide appropriate advice and support including signposting or referral

Domain: Clinical Knowledge and Skills	
C 1.14	Describe the scientific principles underpinning the use of materials and biomaterials and evaluate their limitations and selection, with emphasis on those used in dentistry
C 1.15	Explain the scientific principles of medical ionizing radiation and statutory regulations, and how these are applied to clinical practice
C 1.16	Explain the principles of obtaining valid patient consent
C 1.17	Discuss the importance of each component of the patient assessment process
C 1.23	Identify the signs of abuse, neglect or emotional trauma, explain local and national systems that safeguard the welfare of children and adults and understand how to raise concerns and act accordingly
C 1.24*	Explain the principles of preventive care
C 1.25	Underpin all patient care with a preventive approach, that takes account of patient compliance and self-care, to contribute to the patient's long-term oral and general health
C 1.27	Explain how diet and nutritional status can influence oral and general health and how to provide appropriate advice and support
C 1.31*	Describe the common signs and symptoms of oral cancer and explain the importance of raising a concern and early referral
C 1.32	Identify the signs of normal and abnormal facial growth, physical, mental and dental development milestones and explain their significance
C 1.38	Explain the roles and organisation of various referral networks, clinical guidelines and policies and local variation
C 1.40	Explain the responsibilities of the dental team as an access point to and from wider healthcare
C 1.43*	Describe the common conditions and complications that may arise following dental implant therapy
C 1.44*	Explain the importance and components of a comprehensive and contemporaneous patient history
Sub domain:	Clinical/Technical Skills
Behaviours	
C (B)1	Adopt an evidence-based approach to clinical practice

Domain: Clinical Knowledge and Skills	
Assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning	
Learning Outcomes	
C 2.1.3	Assess patients' levels of anxiety, experience, and expectations in respect of dental care and oral health
C 2.1.5*	Contribute to relevant special investigations and diagnostic procedures
C 2.1.6	Undertake an orthodontic assessment
C 2.1.10*	Obtain valid consent from patients explaining all the relevant factors and taking into account the legal requirements where appropriate within scope of practice
C 2.1.12*	Record an accurate and contemporaneous patient history
C 2.1.13*	Accurately record an oral health assessment
C 2.1.14*	Accurately record dental charting as carried out by other appropriate registrants
C 2.1.15*	Prepare records, images, equipment and materials for clinical assessment
C 2.1.16*	Process and manage dental radiographs and images
Patient Management	
C 2.2.2*	Manage patient anxiety appropriately, effectively, and safely
C 2.2.6*	Monitor, support and reassure patients through effective communication and behavioural techniques
C 2.2.7*	Identify changes in the patient's reported oral health status and take appropriate action
C 2.2.8*	Make arrangements for follow-up care as prescribed by the operator
C 2.2.9*	Provide chairside support to the operator during treatment
C 2.2.10*	Prepare, mix and handle dental materials
Safe Clinical Environment	
C 2.3.1	Identify and explain the risks within and around the clinical environment and manage these in a safe and effective manner
C 2.3.2	Implement, perform, and manage effective decontamination and infection control procedures according to current guidelines
C 2.3.3*	Prepare and maintain the clinical environment including the instruments and equipment



Domain: Clinical Knowledge and Skills	
Acute Conditions	
C 2.4.1	Identify, assess, and manage medical emergencies
C 2.4.2*	Support the management of patients with acute oral conditions ensuring involvement of appropriate dental team members
Oral Health/Prevention	
C 2.5.1	Provide patients/carers with comprehensive, personalised preventive advice, instruction and intervention in a manner which is accessible, promotes self-care and motivates patients/carers to comply with advice and take responsibility to maintain and improve oral health

Domain:	Interpersonal Skills
Description	Uses interpersonal skills and emotional awareness to enable effective communication with all patients and colleagues which is underpinned by behaving in a caring, compassionate, empathic, and respectful way. Demonstrates effective team working and helps foster wellbeing of others.
Sub domain:	Effective Communication
Behaviours	
I (B)1	Communicate with care, compassion, empathy and respect in all professional interactions with patients, their representatives, the public and colleagues
Learning Outcomes	
I 1.1	Describe the use of a range of communication methods and technologies and their appropriate application in support of clinical practice
I 1.2	Describe the importance of non-verbal communication, including listening skills, and the barriers to effective communication
I 1.3	Communicate effectively and sensitively, tailoring to context, by spoken, written and/or electronic means with all patients, including patients whose first language is not English (using representatives or interpreters where necessary), in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patients with anxious or challenging behaviour or special considerations such as emotional trauma • difficult circumstances, such as breaking bad news, or discussing issues such as alcohol consumption, smoking, or diet
I 1.4	Communicate effectively and sensitively by spoken, written and electronic means with the public
I 1.5	Communicate effectively by spoken, written and electronic means with colleagues from dental and other healthcare professions in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the direct care of individual patients • oral health promotion • raising concerns when problems arise, including where patients cause distress to staff
I 1.7	Communicate appropriately and effectively in professional discussions and transactions
I 1.8	Give feedback effectively to other members of the team
I 1.9	Explain the professional expectations, potential impact, and consequence of using social media as a communication tool

Domain: Interpersonal Skills	
Sub domain: Teamwork and Wellbeing of Others	
Behaviours	
I (B)2	Respect the roles of dental and other healthcare professionals in the context of learning and working in a dental and wider healthcare team
I (B)3	Demonstrate effective team working
I (B)4	Contribute to your team in providing dental care for patients
I (B)5	Take a patient-centred approach to working with the dental and wider healthcare team
I (B)6	Where appropriate manage and refer/delegate work according to the scope of practice of members of the dental team, in line with competence and professional practice
Learning Outcomes	
I 2.1	Explain the responsibilities and limitations of delegating to other members of the dental team
I 2.2	Explain the role and professional responsibilities associated with appraisal; training and review of colleagues; provision of and receipt of effective feedback in the context of developing members of the dental team
I 2.3	Describe the roles of dental and other healthcare professionals in the context of learning and working in a dental and wider healthcare team
I 2.4	Explain the contribution that team members and effective team working makes to the delivery of safe and effective high-quality care, including the benefits of working in culturally diverse teams
I 2.5	Describe the team working guidance provided by the GDC and other relevant bodies
I 2.6	Describe the impact of Direct Access on each registrant group and the impact on the application of each group's scope of practice
I 2.7	Describe the scope of practice of each member of the dental team and how the roles interact for effective teamwork and patient care
I 2.8	Explain the need to ensure that those who raise concerns are protected from discrimination or other detrimental effects

Domain:	Professionalism
Description	Demonstrates professionalism and integrity by behaving ethically, shows leadership and social accountability. Is committed to advocating for oral health, promoting good oral health and understands the importance of sustainable service provision in the population and across communities, and addressing priority health needs for the communities.
Sub domain:	Ethics and Integrity
Behaviours	
P (B)1	Treat your patients, members of the public and your colleagues with dignity and respect and without discrimination
P (B)2	Support patients to make informed decisions about their care, making their interests your first concern
P (B)3	Demonstrate cultural competence, accepting and respecting the diversity of patients and colleagues
P (B)4	Provide the best possible outcome for your patients by using your knowledge and skills, acting as an advocate for their needs where appropriate
P (B)5	Speak up to protect others from harm
P (B)6	Raise concerns where appropriate about your own or others' health, behaviour or professional performance
P (B)7	Comply with systems and processes to support safe patient care
P (B)8	Act in accordance with current best practice guidelines
P (B)9	Act in accordance with national and local clinical governance and health and safety requirements
P (B)10	Act within the legal frameworks which inform personal behaviour, the delivery of healthcare and the protection and promotion of the health of individual patients
P (B)11	Maintain contemporaneous, complete and accurate patient records in accordance with legal requirements and best practice
P (B)12	Act with integrity and ensure your actions maintain the trust of colleagues, patients, and the public in you, your team, and the profession across all environments and media
P (B)13	Proactively address discriminatory language, behaviour and microaggressions from colleagues, patients and other professionals

Domain: Professionalism	
P (B)14	Demonstrate personal accountability to patients, the regulator, the team and wider community
P (B)15	Work in partnership with colleagues to develop and maintain an effective and supportive environment which promotes the safety and wellbeing of the patient and dental team
Learning Outcomes	
P 1.1	Explain the importance of contemporaneous, complete and accurate patient records in accordance with legal requirements and best practice
P 1.2	Describe the legal responsibilities of maintaining and protecting patients' information
P 1.3	Describe diversity, equality, inclusion and discrimination and the underpinning legislation, and explain how to apply these principles to manage patients with protected characteristics and work within the dental team (noting that this legislation may differ in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)
P 1.4	Explain cultural competence and its relevance in assessing the needs and planning care for patients from diverse backgrounds
P 1.5	Describe the GDC's expectations and requirements as set out in regulations and guidance and other relevant laws, ethical guidance and systems (In addition to the above legal frameworks)
P 1.6	Explain the importance of having appropriate indemnity arrangements in place for both the professional and patient
P 1.7	Explain the importance of candour and effective communication with patients when things go wrong or when dealing with a complaint
P 1.8	Explain how and where to report any patient safety issues which arise
P 1.9	Explain the personal responsibility and the mechanisms for raising concerns about your own or others' health, behaviour or professional performance as described in GDC guidance
P 1.10	Explain the attributes of professional attitudes and behaviour in all environments and media, including interaction with social media
P 1.11	Explain the principles and procedures for good complaints handling
P 1.12	Describe the responsibility that dental practices and individual practitioners have in compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks

Domain:	Professionalism
Sub domain:	Leadership
Behaviours	
P (B)16	Where appropriate lead, manage and take professional responsibility for the actions of colleagues and other members of the team involved in patient care
Learning Outcomes	
P 2.1	Describe the differences between management and leadership
P 2.2	Describe own management and leadership role and the range of skills and knowledge required to do this effectively
P 2.3	Describe how to take responsibility for the quality of services and devices provided to the patient as relevant to your scope of practice
Sub domain:	Social Accountability
Behaviours	
P (B)17	Contribute positively to the healthcare communities of which you are a part
Learning Outcomes	
P 3.1	Discuss the basic principles of a population health approach including demographic and social trends, UK and international oral health trends, determinants of health and inequalities in health, and the ways in which these are measured and current patterns
P 3.2	Describe the dental and wider healthcare systems dental professionals work within including local and national health policy and organisations, delivery of healthcare and equity
P 3.3	Describe and evaluate the role of health promotion in terms of the changing environment, community and individual behaviours to deliver health gain
P 3.4*	Describe methods of evidence-based prevention at a community / population level and evaluate their effectiveness
P 3.5	Explain the principles of planning oral health care for communities to meet needs and demands
P 3.6	Describe the principles and limitations of the currently available options for funding of dental healthcare provision for individual patients
P 3.7	Discuss the ethical challenges associated with providing patient care within the current dental healthcare systems

Domain:	Professionalism
P 3.8	Describe the considerations of the management of resources in provision of care decisions including appropriate use of primary and secondary care networks
P 3.9	Describe the importance of collaboration across the health and social care sector for the benefit of communities and individual patients
P 3.10	Describe and where appropriate support patients to negotiate the barriers and challenges which prevent sections of the population accessing oral healthcare, including patients from marginalised populations and patients with protected characteristics
P 3.11	Describe the main principles relating to sustainable oral health care, both environmentally and in terms of patient compliance, and the factors that might affect implementing a sustainable approach
P 3.12	Evaluate and apply the evidence base in relation to the environmental impacts of common treatment methods and approaches to the delivery of oral healthcare

Domain:	Self-management
Description	Can self-manage, adapt, and respond to different situations using insight and reflection. Plans and manages their time and keeps up to date with continued learning and development.
Sub domain:	Insight
Behaviours	
S (B)1	Accurately assess your own capabilities and limitations in the interest of high-quality patient care and seek advice from supervisors or colleagues where appropriate
S (B)2	Recognise personal assumptions, biases and prejudices and manage the impact of these on patient care and professional behaviour with colleagues, patients and wider society
S (B)3	Recognise the impact of contextual factors on the health care environment and patient safety and manage this professionally
Learning Outcomes	
S 1.1	Explain what is meant by the term insight in the context of professional practice
S 1.2	Explain why insight is important in ensuring safe and effective patient care, and to personal development
Sub domain:	Reflection, Continued, and Self-Directed Learning
Behaviours	
S (B)4	Demonstrate own professional responsibility in the development of self
S (B)5	Develop and maintain professional knowledge and competence
S (B)6	Demonstrate appropriate continuous improvement activities
Learning Outcomes	
S 2.1	Explain the principles of an evidence-based approach and evaluate an evidence base
S 2.3	Describe an appropriate model for self-reflection and how this process can be used to inform personal development, viewpoint, preconceptions, bias and behaviour
S 2.4	Explain the importance of assessment, feedback, critical reflection, identification of learning needs and appraisal in personal development planning
S 2.5	Explain the importance of and requirement for commitment to lifelong learning

Domain: Self-management	
S 2.6	Utilise the receipt of effective feedback in the professional development of self
S 2.7	Describe the principles of and demonstrate personal development planning, recording of evidence, and reflective practice
S 2.8*	Evaluate the impact of new techniques and technologies as they relate to dental nurse practice
S 2.9	Describe opportunities for improvement of a clinical service or to manage / mitigate risks
Sub domain:	Adaptability, Wellbeing, and Personal Growth
Behaviours	
S (B)7	Demonstrate engagement with systems and personal strategies which promote and maintain physical and mental wellbeing
S (B)8	Recognise when and how to take action if wellbeing is compromised to a point of affecting an individual's role or professional relationships
Learning Outcomes	
S 3.1	Describe ways of self-monitoring, self-care and routes of seeking appropriate advice in terms of personal wellbeing
S 3.2	Describe strategies to identify and manage the personal and emotional challenges of work, teamwork and workload
S 3.3	Describe strategies to identify and manage the personal and emotional challenges of uncertainty and change
S 3.4	Explain the role of coping strategies for practice, such as reflection, self-acceptance, debriefing, handing over to another colleague, peer support and asking for help in responding to challenges and setbacks
Sub domain:	Organisation and Time Management
Behaviours	
S (B)9	Effectively manage your own time and resources

General Dental Council
37 Wimpole Street,
London,
W1G 8DQ

Phone: 020 7167 6000
Email: information@gdc-uk.org
Web: gdc-uk.org

Published November 2023