

**General
Dental
Council**

Guidance for providers seeking to set up a new dental school in the UK

January 2025



Introduction

All UK dental education providers need to have Dental Authority Status (DAS) before they can set up a new dental school. DAS is a legal status described in the Dentists Act 1984 and awarded to organisations by the Privy Council. Providers apply to the Privy Council for “medical authority status for the purposes of the Dentists Act 1984” so they can set up a dental school. This process has no fee attached to it.

If a provider had their medical authority status granted before 2008, or already has DAS, they can directly approach the General Dental Council (GDC) via qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org to start the submissions process.

This guidance has been put together to help organisations navigate the process of obtaining DAS. It has been prepared by the GDC in coordination with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

1. Who is this guidance for?

1.1. This guidance is for:

- organisations that intend to offer a new dental programme that leads to a registrable degree in clinical dentistry, such as a bachelor’s degree in dental surgery (BDS/BChD).
- organisations that intend to offer a postgraduate programme in clinical dentistry to an individual who is not registered as a dentist in the UK, where the organisation does not hold DAS.

1.2. Organisations with DAS that offer new dentistry programmes, or those offering new programmes that lead to dental care professional (DCP) GDC registration, can follow the GDC’s [guidance on new programme submissions](#).

1.3. This guidance is not intended for universities or other organisations who, by virtue of their entitlement to choose General Medical Council members on 31 December 2008, are medical authorities with the power to hold examinations and grant licenses in dentistry. Further information regarding this eligibility can be found [in the Health Care and Associated Professions \(Miscellaneous Amendments and Practitioner Psychologists\) Order 2009](#) and [the General Medical Council \(Constitution\) Order 2002](#).

1.4. Please note, “medical authority status for the purposes of the Dentists Act 1984” does not alone guarantee a provider will deliver government-funded dentistry training places. More information on what is required for this can be found below ([point 5.2](#)).

2. Why is Dental Authority Status required?

- 2.1.** The only way a UK dentistry graduate can register as a dentist with the GDC is for them to hold a bachelor's degree in dental surgery (BDS/BChD) from a programme awarded by an institution that holds DAS. It is a criminal offence to study and practise dentistry in the UK at an unauthorised under- or post-graduate programme.
- 2.2.** DAS allows students to practise dentistry despite not being a registered dental professional. This is an exemption granted to students in [sections 37 and 38 of the Dentists Act](#). It also means students cannot be found guilty of illegal practice of dentistry and protects GDC registrants who may supervise students in their studies from any fitness to practise concerns that might arise.

3. How to check Dental Authority Status?

- 3.1.** Please contact the GDC's Education Quality Assurance team via qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org, who will be able to confirm if providers hold DAS or not.
- 3.2.** Providers should also make other stakeholders aware of their intention to begin a new programme. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- DHSC and/or other relevant government departments of the country in which it will be located;
- the Chief Dental Officer of the country in which it will be located;
- the [local postgraduate dean](#);
- local/neighbouring dental schools.

4. How to apply for Dental Authority Status

4.1. Providers should follow the steps below to apply for DAS.

Step 1 – Contact the Privy Council via enquiries@pco.gov.uk and provide a formal letter of application.

- This letter should include:
 - The case for awarding DAS to the organisation, including why they are seeking DAS, an outline of the plans if DAS was awarded, timelines for these plans and the anticipated benefits/impacts.
 - Evidence of stakeholder engagement that the organisation has carried out and the level of support for the ambition to be awarded DAS.
 - Contact details for key personnel involved in the application.
- Applicants should make stakeholders aware of their intention to seek DAS and gather evidence of the support for the letter of application. These stakeholders should include, but are not limited to:
 - DHSC and/or other relevant government departments of the country in which the school will be located.
 - The Chief Dental Officer of the country in which the school will be located.
 - The GDC - it will greatly assist the GDC's ability to provide information to the Privy Council if the provider has already been in touch with them.
- The Privy Council will review the application and will advise the provider if it can proceed to the next stage, which is a full programme submission to the GDC. The GDC will need to approve this before the Privy Council can begin the process to award DAS.
- The Privy Council may ask for advice from stakeholders, including the GDC, when considering the application for DAS.
- The specific feedback the Privy Council requires may depend on the status of the awarding body and where the programme will be delivered.

Step 2 – Send the submission paperwork to the GDC to continue the application process for a new programme if providers intend to offer a new dental programme that leads to a registrable qualification in clinical dentistry.

- This helps the GDC provide the right advice to the Privy Council regarding an application.

Step 3 – The GDC Registrar provides advice to the Privy Council based on expert evaluation of the submission.

- The GDC's [guidance on new programme submissions](#) contains more information about the new programme submission process.
- The timescale for providing advice will vary according to the level and quality of information provided in the submission and the length of time that it takes providers to respond to requests for further information.
- For a straightforward submission which requires limited additional evidence at any stage of the process, the GDC would endeavour to provide advice to the Privy Council within six to nine months of receipt of the initial submission.

Step 4 – The Privy Council will start the legislative process to award DAS through an Order of Council.

Step 5 – If DAS is granted by the Privy Council to a provider delivering registrable qualifications, the GDC will undertake quality assurance in accordance with its normal process as described in its [guidance on new programme submissions](#).

Step 6 – If the provider intends to offer postgraduate programmes to individuals that are not registered as a dentist in the UK, they should contact the GDC's Education Quality Assurance team and the relevant UK Chief Dental Officer of the country where the training would be delivered.

- The GDC will request information on how they intend to meet the relevant requirements within the Dentists Act 1984 regarding the supervision of students, as well as plans around the conduct of students.
- Other stakeholders (such as the Office for Students (OfS), DHSC and Privy Council) may require additional or different information.
- It is the provider's responsibility to liaise with them directly to ensure that they understand, and meet, these requirements.

5. What happens after Dental Authority Status has been granted?

5.1. Without government funding for allocated training places:

- Providers are eligible to offer new dentistry training places to prospective students in a private capacity once they have been awarded DAS. They should liaise with the GDC on start dates for the programme.
- The GDC will quality assure the provider every year until the first academic intake year reaches graduation. The GDC's Registrar will award them sufficiency if the provider is successful in the quality assurance process.
- The dental school will then be routinely quality assured by the GDC, which will include annual monitoring that may lead to risk-based inspection activity.

5.2. With government-funded training places:

- If a provider with DAS wants to offer government-funded dentistry training places, they will have to engage with the allocation process. Currently, this process is run annually by the OfS (under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)). Under HERA, the OfS decisions are independent, although allocation outcomes are based on guidance issued to OfS by the UK Government alongside an assessment of provider capability. OfS will consult with providers on the criteria for additional dental school places and set out the process to be followed. Please refer to the [guidance from the government to OfS](#) on this and [guidance on the maximum fundable limit](#) set by OfS for medicine and dentistry.

6. Contacts

- 6.1.** For more information from the GDC, please contact qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org. For more information from the Privy Council, please contact enquiries@pco.gov.uk.



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