

A plan to decrease the duration of the NDEB Equivalency Process

May 2024

Contents

- Introduction 3
- Registration Prioritization 3
- Revision of Eligibility Requirements..... 5
 - Prioritize Canadian residents and Permanent residents (PR)..... 5
 - Update Application Statuses..... 5
 - Require Currency of Practice 5
 - Limit Reapplication to the Equivalency Process 6
 - Accept the Australian Dental Council Equivalency Process..... 6
- Reducing the Number of Examinations in the Equivalency Process 6
- Supporting Alternative Pathways 6
- Increasing NDECC Capacity..... 7
 - Options Explored to Add Seats..... 8
 - Adding Simulators for Clinical Skills 8
 - Adding seats for Situational Judgement 8
 - Impact on Number of Seats Offered 9
- Projection of the Number of Seats Required..... 9
 - Clinical Skills Seat Projection 10
 - Situational Judgement Seat Projection..... 11
- Conclusion 11

Introduction

The NDEB recognizes that the duration of the Equivalency Process is long for many candidates. This is a result of many factors. This Equivalency Process was originally designed as an alternate pathway toward certification and licensure as a dentist in Canada. The original proposed duration of the Equivalency Process was 18 months from beginning to certification as compared to the two-year duration of the Qualifying/Degree Completion programs. Overtime, this period has significantly increased. We are committed to reducing timelines for individuals to complete this process and have been actively investigating options in all areas to accomplish this.

The purpose of this report is to outline our plan to accelerate candidates through the Equivalency Process.

Registration Prioritization

Up to now, NDECC seats have been assigned on a first arrived first served basis. The pass rate of the two components of the NDECC leads to many candidates having to repeat the Full NDECC or one component. Currently, there are a significant number of candidates who have failed the NDECC and are eligible to take it again, which leaves less seats for first-time test takers. Several candidates will have taken the NDECC 3 or 4 times in the first two years.

The following table shows the number of candidates needing seats for the NDECC and the type of seats needed as of April 9, 2024.

Cohort	Number of candidates	Number of candidates registered or waiting for their result	Number of candidates in need of a seat
Eligible for a full NDECC Seat (CS + SJ)	1,262	650	612
Eligible for a CS Seat only	289	249	40
Eligible for a SJ Seat only	75	74	1

Table 1

The NDEB has gained support for the concept of prioritization in recent discussions at the CDRAF Working Group to Review the Equivalency Process in February 2024, and discussion with the Internationally Trained Dentists Association of Canada (ITDAOC) in April 2024. Prioritization is based on the principle of facilitating the progression of candidates through the examination process based on when they pass the prerequisite examination.

In April 2024, staff reviewed the number of eligible NDECC candidates who had not yet been able to secure an NDECC seat. Out of the 1,262 candidates eligible for a full NDECC seats, 782

had never taken the exam. Of these 782, 221 candidates had not registered for an exam or had any activity in their NDEB account for two or more years. It was determined that the status of the 221 candidates would be set to inactive¹.

Following this, 561 candidates remained eligible and had not yet taken the NDECC. We offered priority registration to 179 candidates who passed the ACJ in May 2023 or earlier. To facilitate registration for these candidates, staff offered registration to the 179 candidates in the next available NDECC sessions in 2024. Of the 179 candidates, 80 chose to be registered for the NDECC in the fall of 2024. The remaining 99 candidates opted against registering at this time and continue to be eligible to register for the NDECC during a regular registration period.

The 224 candidates who passed the November 2023 ACJ and were unable to secure an NDECC exam seat in 2024 will be offered a seat in January and February 2025. Following this pattern for each ACJ examination, we expect to be able to start offering successful ACJ candidates an NDECC exam seat within 6 months of the ACJ by May 2025. The chart below highlights the predicted reduction in wait time to sit the NDECC for the first time after passing the ACJ from May 2023 to November 2025 due to prioritization.

Time to sit the NDECC for candidates that pass the ACJ

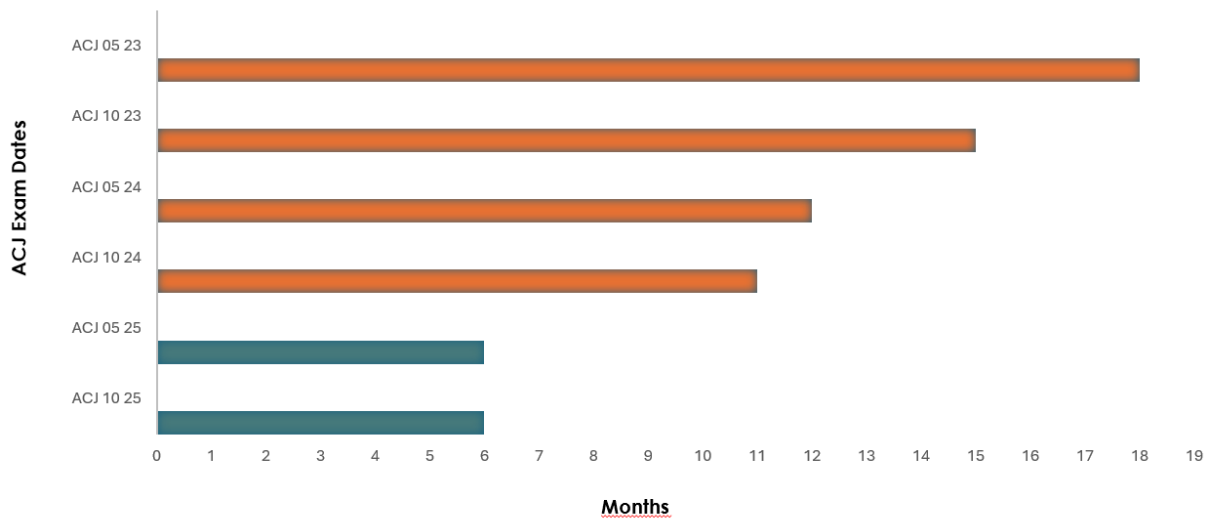


Chart 1

¹ Inactive candidates can be reactivated and enter the queue to take the NDECC at anytime within the 5 year window.

Revision of Eligibility Requirements

We have reviewed the NDEB By-laws and Equivalency Process eligibility criteria and are proposing to explore a series of changes. These changes would contribute to an improved timeline for competent candidates wanting to practice in Canada.

Prioritize Canadian residents and Permanent residents (PR)

Currently, the NDEB has no residency requirements for application or participation in examinations. It is recommended that we prioritize Canadian citizens or permanent residents at the time of registration for the NDECC. This change would align with the requirement to obtain a residency position for international medical graduates. This measure would have a positive impact for Canadian residents and Permanent residents (PR). The idea of prioritizing permanent residents was supported by the Internationally Trained Dentists Association of Canada (ITDAOC).

Update Application Statuses

Currently an approved applicant to the Equivalency Process will continue to have an “approved” status until they complete the Equivalency Process. A significant number of individuals apply to the Equivalency Process and do not take the initial examination. Others will take one or two examinations but do not continue to register for subsequent exams. Approved candidates who are not actively taking examinations skew reporting and introduce challenges when trying to determine the capacity needed for examinations.

We want to encourage candidates to apply when they are ready to start taking examinations in the Equivalency Process. With priority registration, candidates will be able to move through the Equivalency Process more quickly as they pass examinations.

It is recommended that candidates with approved applications who do not take the AFK within one year (12 months) of initial approval, be required to complete a reapplication process should they wish to continue in the Equivalency Process. The reapplication process will ensure that candidates continue to remain in good standing and that the information in their account is accurate and up to date.

Additionally, it is suggested that candidates with an approved status that have passed the AFK and have not taken the subsequent ACJ or NDECC within two years of passing the AFK be set to inactive and required to complete the reapplication process.

Require Currency of Practice

To be a candidate in the Certification Process, you must have graduated within the last 5 years or apply for special consideration to be a candidate. Special consideration requires that you show evidence of continuous practice for the last five years and continuing education for the last five years to be approved to be a candidate. There is no currency of practice requirement for the Equivalency Process. It is suggested that NDEB staff look into establishing a currency of practice requirement for applicants to the Equivalency Process (Appendix 1). This measure would support public protection and likely reduce the number of unqualified individuals in the Equivalency Process.

Limit Reapplication to the Equivalency Process

Currently By-law 11.06 states that, "A candidate who fails the NDECC subject to By-law 22.06 may apply to be reinstated as a Candidate one additional time. No person is eligible to petition the Executive Committee for reinstatement as a candidate to the Equivalency Process for a third time."

As of May 9, 2024, there are nine candidates who have taken the NDECC (full or single component) four times. Two of those candidates are currently registered for their fifth attempt. There are 176 candidates who have taken the examination three times. Of those 176, 68 candidates are registered to take the examination for a fourth time.

It is recommended that candidates who are unable to successfully complete the NDECC within a five-year period not be eligible to restart the Equivalency Process. Graduates trained in non-accredited dental programs who are unable to successfully complete the Equivalency Process would still have the opportunity to apply to an accredited degree completion program.

Accept the Australian Dental Council Equivalency Process

The ADC has an equivalency process for graduates trained in non-accredited dental programs that includes a written component and a clinical component. It is suggested that the NDEB compares the competencies tested in the ADC Equivalency Process with those tested in the NDEB process and if in alignment, accepts the ADC Equivalency for a candidate to be eligible for the Certification Process.

Reducing the Number of Examinations in the Equivalency Process

An NDEB working group consisting in Chief Examiners, academics with experience re-training dentists trained in non-accredited programs, a representative from the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation (CDRAF), a representative from the Dental Council New Zealand and staff met April 27-29, 2024 to review examination blueprints and discuss merging the AFK and the ACJ. Veronica Velle from the Australian Dental Council was invited to present an overview of their written examination that assesses knowledge of the science and practice of dentistry, and clinical judgement and reasoning skills relevant to dental practice. The working group agreed that if the AFK and ACJ were merged, the same content could be evaluated. A more complete report of the meeting, with recommendations, will be available for the Examinations Committee in September 2024. Merging the AFK and ACJ would have a significant impact in the timeline for candidates in the Equivalency Process.

Supporting Alternative Pathways

The NDEB is in support of the ACFD Gap Training Program, a new pathway for dentists trained in non-accredited programs with small gaps in their education. The NDEB has a member on the

ACFD Gap Training Program Steering Committee and on the ACFD Gap Training Program Admissions Committee.

Although in 2025, for the first year of the Program, the plan is to admit only 15 candidates, the expectation is to gradually expand to 100 candidates annually, which will have a positive impact for candidates and increase the availability of seats for the NDECC.

The NDEB will investigate providing access to the ACFD to the document repository we are developing for the DRAs. This would facilitate access to the credentials of applicants to the ACFD Gap Training Program.

Increasing NDECC Capacity

The NDECC consists of two components, Clinical Skills (CS) and Situational Judgement (SJ). It must be taken as a whole on the candidate's first attempt. If a candidate fails one component, they are only required to repeat the failed component. If a candidate fails both components they must repeat both components together.

The CS clinic holds 12 simulators, of which 10 are in use during examinations, and 2 are kept as spares in case of technical issues. The clinic hosts 10 candidates per day, from Monday to Thursday. Friday is used to prepare instruments, materials and typodonts for the following week.

The SJ component is administered in the morning and includes 10 stations. We currently offer seats to 10 candidates per day, from Monday to Thursday.

There are 4 NDECC evaluation sessions a year. For each evaluation session, we grade approximately 280 Situational Judgement candidates and 400 typodonts. Due to the number of examiners and the time required to grade, we are limited to a maximum of 320 situational judgement candidates, and 500 typodonts per evaluation session.

Table 2 shows the current capacity in seats for CS and SJ.

NDECC Component	# of Seats by Evaluation Session	Total Seats for the Year
SJ	280	1,120
CS	400	1,600

Table 2

Options Explored to Add Seats

Adding Simulators for Clinical Skills

The simplest option is to add two simulators to the current clinic (Appendix 2). This would require a minor remodel. The two simulators would be installed in the place of the invigilators' station. The lab would be opened up to become the new invigilator's station. We would have 14 simulators: 12 seats for candidates and two spares.

The two-simulator addition to the clinic would lead to minor disruptions of the examination schedule. We would expect the construction to begin in December 2024 and be completed early in 2025. The increased number of candidates tested could be evaluated during the existing four evaluation sessions.

Table 3 shows the increase in seats with adding 2 simulators to CS.

Clinical Skills Model	Seats by Evaluation Session	Total Seats per Year
Current clinic model 10 candidates	400	1,600
Adding 2 simulators 12 candidates	480	1,920

Table 3

Adding more than two simulators requires a major remodel of the NDECC Test Centre and NDECC evaluation session. Several floor plans were considered but the preferred option involved expanding the clinic into the examinee lounge and moving the examinee lounge into the classroom (Appendix 2). Additional space for a new classroom would have to be acquired elsewhere in the building. The maximum number of additional simulators that could be added is eight. We would have 20 simulators: 17 seats and three spares.

Such a testing center remodel would result in significantly more disruption than the previous option. After taking into account construction time needed for a larger expansion which would directly impact our testing capacity for 6 months to a year, projections show that adding more than 2 simulators would not improve candidate timelines.

Adding seats for Situational Judgement

Considering we can evaluate a maximum of 320 candidates per evaluation session, we can increase the number of seats offered (from 280) by opening an additional 4 afternoon sessions each evaluation block, or 16 afternoon sessions per year. Most of these afternoon session seats would be available to repeat candidates who have only failed the SJ component of the NDECC.

Table 4 shows the increase in seats if afternoon sessions are added for SJ.

Situational Judgement Model	Seats by Evaluation Session	Total Seats per Year
Current model SJ AM only	280	1,120
Suggested model Adding afternoon SJ	320	1,280

Table 4

Impact on Number of Seats Offered

Table 5 shows the current seat capacity, and the capacity with the addition of two clinical simulators and 16 afternoons of SJ.

NDECC Model	Full NDECC seats	CS only	SJ only
Current model 10 CS/day and 10 SJ/AM only	1120	480	0*
Suggested model 12 CS/day and 10 SJ/AM+ adding afternoons SJ	1152	768	128

Table 5

* SJ only seats are offered to candidates who have failed only this component of the NDECC. Currently, when SJ only seats are needed, we de-couple SJ and CS seats from Full NDECC seats. This increases the number of CS only seats, but reduces the number of Full NDECC seats.

Projection of the Number of Seats Required

Of the 612 candidates currently in need of a full NDECC seat (Table 1), 548 are on their first attempt, while 64 are repeat candidates.²

The NDEB currently offers 1,100 ACJ seats per year and will be standard setting the ACJ exam in May 2024. The pass rate in the year following a standard setting has traditionally been between 30% and 45%. Our projections assume an approximate pass rate of 40% on the ACJ exam which means that 440 new candidates will need Full NDECC seats every year.

² There are currently 435 "inactive" candidates that are eligible for the full NDECC. These candidates are not included in the projections but can at anytime choose to reactivate their account and register.

Projections for April 2028 do not take into account that the NDECC will have been in place for five years in August 2027. Candidates who were eligible for the NDECC in August 2022 and have not completed it by September 1, 2027 will become ineligible³.

Clinical Skills Seat Projection

The number of candidates in need of a CS seat in Table 6 are the candidates eligible for the NDECC who are not currently registered for the exam or waiting for results. The 652 candidates in the second column are calculated from the addition of the candidates currently needing a full NDECC seat and the candidates needing a CS only seats as of April 2024 in Table 1. The CS pass rate has varied from 16% to 48% and seems to be increasing from one administration to the next. Table 6 shows the CS seat needs assuming a pass rate of 40% on the ACJ exam and a conservative pass rate of 35% on the Clinical Skills component.

Clinical Skills Model	Remaining candidates in need of a seat as of April 2024	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2025	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2026	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2027	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2028
Current model 10 CS/day	652	532	412	292	172
Suggested model 12 CS/day	652	532	300	68	0**

*The numbers in this table include candidates needing a full NDECC and candidates needing a Clinical Skills only seat.

**There would be an estimated 164 empty CS seats.

Table 6

Because we expect the construction for the addition of the two simulators to be completed in early 2025, the projected number of candidates in need of a seat remains the same for both clinical skills models up to April 2025. If the construction was completed earlier, the additional two seats will be made available. The additional two seats will have a positive impact on the projected number of candidates needing seats thereafter.

Numbers in green in Table 6 show when we forecast that candidates in need of a CS seat will be able to register for a CS seat in the next block of NDECC sessions. Numbers in red indicate when we expect some CS seats to remain empty.

³ Four hundred and ninety-three (493) of those candidates currently have an “active” status.

Situational Judgement Seat Projection

The number of candidates in need of an SJ seat in Table 7 are the candidates eligible for the NDECC who are not currently registered for the exam or waiting for results. The 613 candidates in the second column are calculated from the addition of the candidates currently needing Full NDECC seats and the candidates needing SJ only seats as of April 2024 in Table 1. The SJ pass rate has varied between 49% to 68% since the start of the NDECC in 2022 and seems to be increasing from one administration to the next.

Table 7 shows SJ seat needs assuming a pass rate of 40% on the ACJ exam and a conservative pass rate of 50% on the SJ component.

Situational Judgement Model	Remaining candidates in need of a seat as of April 2024	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2025	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2026	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2027	Remaining candidates in need of a seat in April 2028
10 SJ/day	613	493	373	253	133
10 SJ/AM + adding some afternoon SJ	613	413	213	13	0**

*The numbers in this table include candidates needing a full NDECC and candidates needing a Situational Judgement only seat.

**There would be an estimated 187 empty seats.

Table 7

Numbers in green in Table 7 show when we forecast that candidates in need of a SJ seat will be able to register for a SJ seat in the next block of NDECC sessions. Numbers in red indicate when we expect some SJ seats to remain empty.

Conclusion

We are committed to taking steps to decrease the timelines for certification for graduates of non-accredited dental programs. 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.

This report demonstrates our commitment to reducing timelines by showing our plan to eliminate the backlog of candidates for the NDECC and accelerate the progression of candidates through the Equivalency Process. The limitation of the report is that the number of applicants and pass rates are estimations based on previous numbers and may vary.