



Dental Assisting Program Standard

The approved program standard for the Dental Assisting program of instruction leading to an Ontario College Certificate delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU funding code 41629).

Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security
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Introduction

This document is the Program Standard for the Dental Assisting program of instruction leading to an Ontario College Certificate delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU funding code 41629).

Development of system-wide program standards

In 1993, the Government of Ontario initiated program standards development with the objectives of bringing a greater degree of consistency to college programming offered across the province, broadening the focus of college programs to ensure graduates have the skills to be flexible and to continue to learn and adapt, and providing public accountability for the quality and relevance of college programs.

The Program Standards Unit of the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security has responsibility for the development, review and approval of system-wide standards for programs of instruction at Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

Program standards

Program standards apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology across the province of Ontario. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

- [Vocational standard](#) (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question),
- [Essential employability skills](#) (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction); and
- [General education requirement](#) (the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction).

Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate in order to graduate from the program.

Individual Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology offering the program of instruction determine the specific program structure, delivery methods and other curriculum matters to be used in assisting students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the standard. Individual colleges also determine whether additional local learning outcomes will be required to reflect specific local needs and/or interests.

The expression of program standards as vocational learning outcomes

Vocational learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, vocational learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified.

Expressing standards as vocational learning outcomes ensures consistency in the outcomes for program graduates, while leaving to the discretion of individual colleges, curriculum matters such as the specific program structure and delivery methods.

The presentation of the vocational learning outcomes

The **vocational learning outcome** statements set out the culminating demonstration of learning and achievement that the student must reliably demonstrate before graduation.

The **elements of the performance** for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the vocational learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the vocational learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements of performance are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the vocational learning outcome. The elements of performance do not stand alone but rather in reference to the vocational learning outcome of which they form a part.

The development of a program standard

In establishing the standards development initiative, the Government of Ontario determined that all postsecondary programs of instruction should include vocational skills coupled with a broader set of essential skills. This combination is considered critical to ensuring that college graduates have the skills required to be successful both upon graduation from the college program and throughout their working and personal lives.

A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

Updating the program standard

The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security will undertake regular reviews of the vocational learning outcomes for this program to ensure that the Dental Assisting Program Standard remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of students and employers across the Province of Ontario. To confirm that this document is the most up-to-date release, please contact the [Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security](#).

Vocational standard

All graduates of the Dental Assisting program have achieved the [seven vocational learning outcomes \(VLOs\)](#), in addition to achieving the essential employability outcomes and meeting the general education (GE) requirement.

Preamble

The Dental Assisting program provides students with the essential knowledge, skills, **attitudes**, and clinical judgment required to practice as dental assistants across various settings, including private practices, public health, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and the dental industry. Graduates will be prepared to perform clinical, educational, and administrative duties that support both oral health and overall well-being. Upon successful completion, graduates will receive an Ontario College Certificate.

The program's seven Vocational Learning Outcomes (VLOs) emphasize key competencies for entry-level dental assisting practice. To practice as a Level II intra-oral dental assistant in Ontario, the graduate must complete all professional certification requirements from the National Dental Assisting Examining Board. Graduates will be trained to support the development and delivery of oral and general health services that promote inclusive, **culturally sensitive** care and benefit both **clients/patients** and communities.

Graduates will acquire the skills necessary to implement quality assurance standards, ensure a safe working **environment**, and maintain confidentiality in the office workplace that comply with relevant legislation. They will also be prepared to communicate and collaborate* effectively with **clients/patients**, healthcare teams, and others to promote optimal health outcomes.

The program prepares graduates for a wide range of career opportunities in various settings, including private practices, public health, hospitals, community health and/or educational settings, long-term care facilities, insurance and the dental industry. Dental assistants may work as chairside assistants, Level II intra-oral dental assistants, administrators, practice managers, treatment coordinators, or educators, often in collaboration with other healthcare professionals or under the supervision of a dentist.

There may be opportunities for graduates to pursue further educational and professional qualifications through articulation agreements between the colleges, universities, or professional organizations. Students should contact individual colleges, universities, and professional associations for further information.

[See Glossary](#)

Note: The [Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer](#) (ONCAT) maintains the provincial postsecondary credit transfer portal, [ONTransfer](#).

Synopsis of the vocational learning outcomes Dental Assisting (Ontario College Certificate)

The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:

1. comply with **ethical**, legal, and professional requirements within the dental assisting practice.
2. use current and emerging technologies, techniques, and tools to help improve oral health care practices within the dental assisting field of practice.
3. compile and manage **client/patient** health information to inform personalized **care planning**.
4. promote **oral health services and programs** to foster inclusive, diverse, equitable and **culturally sensitive** care.
5. implement and evaluate quality assurance standards, protocols and guidelines which contribute to a safe **working environment**.
6. communicate and collaborate effectively with **clients/patients**, the interprofessional team, and others to contribute to positive health care outcomes.
7. maintain workplace processes ensuring confidentiality and compliance with legislation and regulations.

[See Glossary](#)

Note: The learning outcomes have been numbered as a point of reference; numbering does not imply prioritization, sequencing, nor weighting of significance.

The vocational learning outcomes

1. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: comply with **ethical**, legal, and professional requirements within the dental assisting practice.

Elements of the performance

- a. perform competent, safe, and **ethical** practices by adhering to relevant legislation, **scope of practice**, and the profession's Code of Ethics.
- b. be **accountable** for one's behaviour and decisions in the practice environment.
- c. engage in ongoing self-reflection to ensure compliance with **ethical**, professional, and workplace standards, fostering **competence** and **accountability**.
- d. recognize professional limitations and seek guidance or support with healthcare and other professionals when required.
- e. evaluate one's own role as a dental assistant in support of the **client's/patient's oral health services and programs**.
- f. Identify and implement strategies to enhance professional skills and performance.
- g. advocate for the **clients/patients** rights to safety, privacy, confidentiality, self-determination, and **informed consent**.
- h. develop and apply effective time management and organizational skills to accomplish personal and professional goals.
- i. engage in community activities and affiliations with professional organizations.
- j. **collaborate** with colleagues, **client's/patient's** and other healthcare professionals to ensure a coordinated approach to **client/patient** care.
- k. maintain privacy and **confidentiality of client** information.

[See Glossary](#)

2. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: use current and emerging technologies, techniques, and tools to help improve oral health care practices within the dental assisting field of practice.

Elements of the performance

- a. evaluate **client/patient** satisfaction with oral health care provided by the dental assistant.
- b. incorporate current technology to ensure safety and optimal oral care outcomes in the provision of dental assisting care.
- c. evaluate and self-reflect on one's role as a dental assistant in the provision of the **client's/patient's** oral **health services and programs**.
- d. assist in modifying dental assisting practices based on **evaluation** feedback, to enhance service delivery, and document these changes in the **client/patient** profile.
- e. contribute to the **evaluation** and improvement of oral health services by assessing effectiveness, gathering **client/patient** feedback, and staying informed about technological advancements to implement relevant modifications.
- f. participate in the ongoing review of **client/patient** information with other healthcare professionals.
- g. assist in performing intra-oral health procedures as directed by the dentist, ensuring patient safety and comfort during the procedure.

[See Glossary](#)

3. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: compile and manage **client/patient** health information to inform personalized **care planning**.

Elements of the performance

- a. gather and document health behaviours and oral health conditions to inform **client/patient** centred **care planning**.
- b. contribute to the assessment and implementation of a **care plan** by reviewing results and identifying needs to inform care.
- c. contribute to the identification of barriers and resources required for the provision of optimal **oral health services and programs**, and **collaborate** in the implementation of strategies to address these barriers.
- d. assist in the implementation and **evaluation** of **oral health programs and services**.

[See Glossary](#)

4. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: promote **oral health services and programs** to foster inclusive, diverse, equitable and **culturally sensitive** care.

Elements of the performance

- a. implement and assist with inclusive preventive and **therapeutic interventions** by following principles and techniques within the **scope of practice**, while ensuring **cultural sensitivity**.
- b. apply theory and **research** of health, disease, teaching and learning, and **preventive and therapeutic interventions** in the communication of the objectives of **oral health services and programs**.
- c. explain **preventive and therapeutic interventions** to **clients/patients** and healthcare professionals, considering **cultural values** and needs.
- d. contribute to the recognise the need for equitable management of oral health resources, to promote ensuring accessibility for all.
- e. **collaborate** effectively with **clients/patients** and professionals, integrating diverse perspectives to provide **culturally sensitive** care.
- f. assist other healthcare professionals with procedures that encompass the specific needs of the **client/patient**.

[See Glossary](#)

5. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: implement and evaluate quality assurance standards, protocols and guidelines which contribute to a safe **working environment**.

Elements of the performance

- a. apply health and safety legislation and standards relevant to the practice setting.
- b. adhere to current infection prevention and control measures to reduce risks to **clients/ patients**, and practitioners and self.
- c. apply principles of **client/patient** and practitioner safety.
- d. adhere to current health and safety legislation and standards, addressing potential risks to the practice environments.
- e. use, handle, and store materials and supplies according to the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- f. practise the safe management, storage, and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, according to guidelines and regulations.
- g. accurately document health and safety incidents in accordance with relevant health and safety legislation and standards.
- h. implement strategies to improve **client/patient** and personal health and safety, regularly evaluating and according to best practice.
- i. advocate for and promote best practices related to a healthy, safe and respectful **working environment**.
- j. participate in quality improvement initiatives.

[See Glossary](#)

6. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: communicate and **collaborate** effectively with **clients/patients**, the **interprofessional** team, and others to contribute to positive health care outcomes.

Elements of the performance

- a. assist in the planning of coordinated **oral health services and programs**, supporting the **interprofessional** team and the **clients/patients** needs.
- b. support the oral health team in assessing and addressing the **clients/patients** specific oral health needs.
- c. create an environment that fosters **client/patient** participation in their oral health planning and decision-making process.
- d. assist in the coordination of **oral health services and programs**, ensuring resources and timelines align to achieve optimal health outcomes.
- e. respect and acknowledge the expertise and contributions of the care team.
- f. reflect on one's role, collaboration, and performance within a team to actively contribute to positive team outcomes.
- g. recognize, address and resolve conflicts respectfully and professionally.
- h. integrate oral health-specific language to support professional and **interprofessional** communication.

[See Glossary](#)

7. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: maintain workplace processes ensuring confidentiality and compliance with legislation and regulations.

Elements of the performance

- a. maintain accurate and organized office functions, including business and financial information, inventory control, patient records, and appointments in compliance with applicable legislation and regulations.
- b. collect and document current and historical **client/patient** information, including contraindications to care.
- c. record the provision, processes, and outcomes of **oral health services and programs**, ensuring compliance with applicable legislation and regulations.
- d. foster a workplace culture of **shared values**, mutual respect, and effective communication to support business success and ensure a positive **working environment**.
- e. identify and avoid conflicts of interest to maintain the **ethical** standards of the practice.
- f. implement comprehensive workplace policies and protocols such as health and safety, workplace violence, human rights, accessibility, privacy protection, infection control, hazardous waste management, emergency response, and **client** consent that align with **legislative** requirements.
- g. use and maintain equipment and supplies to deliver oral health services that benefit **clients/patient*** in compliance with regulatory standards.

[See Glossary](#)

Glossary

Accountable/Accountability: dental assistants' obligation to accept responsibility for their professional knowledge, skills, attitudes* and judgment. Accountability includes self-evaluation*, compliance with legislation, standards and codes. Dental Assistants are also accountable to their clients/patients*. (*Adapted from College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice, 2012*)

Attitude: a person's mindset or approach toward their work and clients/patients*, including aspects such as professionalism, respect, and willingness to collaborate*. It is crucial for fostering a positive and effective working environment*.

Care plan/care planning: a structured approach to identifying, organizing, and delivering care based on the individual needs of a client/patient*. It includes setting specific goals and determining the appropriate interventions and referrals to improve or maintain health.

Client/Patient: a recipient of oral health services. This term is broad and inclusive and may refer to an individual, a family, a group and/or a community. In some contexts, the client may also be referred to as a patient.

Collaborate: to work together with others—such as members of the interprofessional* team—in the planning, delivery, and evaluation* of care to achieve common goals and improve client/patient* outcomes.

Competence: the knowledge, skills, attitudes* and judgment required of the dental assistant in order to provide quality oral health services and programs*. Competence is verified through the practitioner's performance in the practice environment.

Culturally sensitive: recognizing, understanding, and applying attitudes* and practices that are respectful, inclusive, and appropriate for individuals from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, as well as people of all ages, genders, health statuses, sexual orientations, and abilities. Cultural sensitivity goes beyond acknowledging diversity; it also requires healthcare providers to critically examine their own biases, attributes, and power dynamics that may create barriers to care and impact health outcomes. It is a two-way process that fosters respectful and reciprocal engagement to address power imbalances and promote equitable care. (*Adapted from College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice, 2012*)

Ethics/Ethical: the branch of philosophy dealing with distinctions between right and wrong, with the moral consequences of human actions. Much of modern ethical thinking is based on concepts of human rights, individual

freedom and autonomy, and doing good and not harming. The concept of equity, fairness and justice for every individual, is paramount. Finding a balance between the public health requirement for access to information and the individual's right to privacy and confidentiality of personal information may be a source of tension. (*Adapted from College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice, 2012*)

Evaluation: the process of reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness of a service, intervention, or care plan*. Evaluation helps determine whether goals have been met and identifies areas for improvement.

Informed consent: the act of providing a person with comprehensive information about a proposed treatment—including its nature, benefits, risks, alternative options, and potential consequences of refusal—to support their ability to make an informed decision. The individual must have the capacity to understand this information and appreciate its implications. If a person is unable to provide consent, a substitute decision-maker*, such as a legal guardian, must do so on their behalf. ([Health Care Consent Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 2, Sched. A; Federation of Dental Hygiene Regulators of Canada, Entry-to-Practice Canadian Competencies, 2021, p. 17](#))

Interprofessional: a collaborative approach involving healthcare professionals from various disciplines working together to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care. It refers to combining diverse expertise to address the overall health and well-being of the client*, recognizing that oral health is connected to general health. By working together, professionals contribute to a more holistic and coordinated approach to care, improving outcomes, enhancing communication, and ensuring the delivery of high-quality services. (*Adapted from the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice, 2012*)

Oral health services and programs: a broad range of care provided by health practitioners. Oral health services and programs are designed to achieve the desired goals and objectives to attain and maintain optimal oral health and general health. Oral health services and programs are client/patient*-centered, meaning they are individualized according to client/patient* needs and resources. These services and programs may be preventive and therapeutic.

Research: activities designed to develop or contribute to knowledge, e.g. theories, principles, relationships, or the information on which these are based. Research can be conducted through simple observation and inference or through experimentation, where the researcher alters or manipulates conditions to observe and study the effects. Quantitative research analyzes systematically collected numerical data. Qualitative research focuses on in-depth exploration of a group or issue, using

methods such as focus groups, interviews, life histories, etc. (*Adapted from the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice, 2012*)

Scope of practice: the range of duties and responsibilities that dental assistants are legally and ethically* authorized to perform. It defines the limits of their role within the profession.

Therapeutic interventions: medical and dental procedures or treatments designed to improve, restore, or maintain a client's/patient's* health. In dental assisting, therapeutic interventions may include procedures within their scope of practice*, such as assisting with fillings, providing fluoride applications, and supporting other treatments that promote oral health.

Values: core beliefs or principles that guide behavior and decision-making in the professional setting. In dental practice, values may include respect, integrity, compassion, and a commitment to quality care.

Working environment: the physical, social, and organizational conditions in which professionals perform their duties. A positive working environment is supportive, safe, and conducive to collaboration* and effective service delivery.

General education requirement

All graduates of the Dental Assisting program must have met the [general education requirement](#) described below, in addition to achieving the [vocational](#) and [essential employability skills](#) learning outcomes.

Requirement

The [General Education Requirement](#) for programs of instruction is stipulated in the [Credentials Framework](#) in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction.

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

This general education learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.

Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens students' essential employability skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance.

Themes

The themes listed below will be used to provide direction to Ontario Colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education Requirement for programs of instructions.

Each theme provides a statement of Rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each area. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall

goals of General Education.

Arts in society:

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

Civic Life:

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national and global level and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, as well as Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in a Canadian and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

Social and cultural understanding:

Rationale:

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person

to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content:

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic or linguistic characteristics.

Personal understanding:

Rationale:

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and vocationally.

Content:

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

Science and technology:

Rationale:

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the

human mind that is unique in human history. This and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing) and assorted computer-related technologies should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

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