



MAY 2014

// CED RESOLUTION

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

// INTRODUCTION

The Council of European Dentists (CED) is the representative organisation for the dental profession in the EU, representing over 340,000 practising dentists through 32 national dental associations. Established in 1961 to advise the European Commission on matters relating to the dental profession, the CED promotes high standards of oral healthcare and effective patient-safety centred and evidenced-based professional practice across Europe.

This resolution aims to contribute to policy development in the area of vocational training, in particular by clarifying certain aspects related to the definition, principles, structure and content of vocational training and by expressing the opinion of the dental profession in this regard.

The recommendations set out in this document do not aim to be a “one-size-fits-all” solution, but rather a tool which can be adapted and used on a voluntary basis according to each member’s national legal framework, higher education system and professional practice model and in line with Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/EU (hereinafter PQD).

// DENTAL TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE EU

Dental education and training are generally provided in accordance with the requirements established in the PQD and all graduates holding an EU diploma are entitled to practise Dentistry. In an attempt to bring the competence and self-confidence of newly qualified dental graduates up to the proper level of autonomy and independence required in dental practice, an increasing number of EU countries are implementing different systems of vocational training (VT).

Therefore, VT aims not to provide knowledge which is already part of basic training or question the ability of new graduates to practise dentistry, but rather to help them implement theoretical knowledge in practice and equip them with more clinical and managerial experience for better overall patient management in an independent environment.

// DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Resolution, VT is a supervised period of postgraduate practical training for newly qualified dental graduates, in dental practice (private or public) under a dentist’s guidance. Its main objective is to provide the complementary knowledge, skills and competence necessary for independent general dental practice, enhancing specific clinical and administrative competence in patient safety and quality of care, in line with the high ethical standards of the profession. A theoretical programme on ethics and discipline is highly recommended to supplement clinical VT.

Annex I of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning provides three definitions which will be used for the purposes of this Resolution:

- “*knowledge*” means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study;
- “*skills*” means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Cognitive skills involve the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking, and practical skills involve manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments;
- “*competence*” means the acquired ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. Competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

// AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

After the completion of basic dental training in accordance with the requirements established by the PQD, vocational training aims to deepen the knowledge, skills and competences of the newly qualified dental graduates to:

- a) understand their role in a structured and controlled environment such as the dental practice setting;
- b) be aware of their clinical limitations and to refer patients for a specialist opinion and treatment whenever necessary;
- c) undertake the administrative skills necessary for the dental practice setting;
- d) understand the importance of communicating with patients and working as a team within the practice;
- e) understand the organisation of the national health service and the responsibility of delivering healthcare to the community at large;
- f) understand the EU and national legal and ethical aspects of the practice of dentistry;
- g) be self-critical and conscious of the responsibility of applying new knowledge or different clinical options in a dental practice setting, as well as striving to maintain the best evidence-based practice in that area;
- h) understand that professional training and education should be a continuous and proactive process, covering technical, scientific, regulatory and ethical developments relevant to the profession in lifelong learning.

// STRUCTURE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

a) Who is responsible for the VT programme

The VT programme should be structured and the dental association(s) and/or chamber(s) representing the dental profession at national level should be responsible for designing, implementing and controlling the entire process.

b) VT programme components

The VT programme should take into account the different clinical and/or theoretical issues that fulfil the aims and objectives identified by each Member State as necessary to acquire the complementary competences for independent professional practice.

The VT programme should be structured in a way that helps the newly qualified dental graduates hone their knowledge, skills and competences which they have acquired during their university study. On this basis, they shall be allowed to participate in the VT programme in order to further deepen their knowledge, skills and competences.

This shall lead to an enhancement of clinical and administrative competences, by promoting high ethical standards, patient safety and quality of care, and by encouraging continuous professional development and lifelong learning in order to maintain a safe and effective practice and keep abreast of professional developments.

c) VT programme duration

The VT programme, in order to best achieve its objectives and each country's professional needs, should be for a period of at least 12 months.

d) Who is eligible for entering a VT programme

Candidates for a VT programme are newly qualified dental graduates, before starting their independent professional practice (private and/or public) or before entering in specialisation programmes.

Once in a VT programme, candidates are considered vocational dental practitioners and should be matched to a specific trainer.

e) Where can VT programmes be offered

Vocational dental practitioners should have their VT programme under the supervision of a trainer in a dental practice setting/environment (private and/or public). National provisions may affect the selection of dental practices

f) Who is eligible to become a trainer for VT

Trainers should fulfil the selection and quality criteria identified by each Member State, work as dentists in a dental practice setting (private and/or public), and have no disciplinary or criminal sanctions.

Trainers should be responsible for the supervision and mentoring of their trainees.

Trainers should accomplish the obligations identified as necessary by each Member State for the VT programme, and should participate in the further development of the structured programme.

g) Assessment of trainees

Each VT programme should lead to a final certificate of participation. If national provisions apply, other statements (e.g. reviews or assessments of participants) may be added to obtain the final certificate.

// **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ACHIEVED AT THE END OF THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

At the end of the vocational training period, the graduate should be able to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of and adherence to ethical and confidentiality guidelines within general dental practice;
- Knowledge to understand the need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning;
- Clinical skills, knowledge and values in a clinical setting;
- Communication skills and professionalism with colleagues, patients and their families in a clinical setting;
- Teamwork skills within the practice;
- Competence to make decisions in a independent and professional manner, taking into account personal strengths and weaknesses, and knowing when to refer the patient;
- Competence to organise and manage the dental practice and its staff;
- Competence in the implementation of guidelines and regulations so as to deliver patient safety practice;
- Competence to use different resources and support networks available to the general dental practice.

// RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 - The CED states that vocational training is helpful for newly qualified dental graduates who have concluded the minimum of 5 years and 5000 hours of theoretical and practical training as established by Article 34(2) of the PQD, before starting their independent professional practice (private and/or public);
- 2 - The CED advocates that a vocational training programme can provide complementary knowledge, skills and competences for newly qualified dental graduates and help them strengthen their self-confidence and their capabilities in a structured and controlled environment such as the dental practice setting under the guidance of an experienced dentist.
- 3 - The CED states that vocational training is a very important tool for approaching and understanding high professional ethical standards on patient safety and quality of care in a dental practice setting.
- 4 - The CED calls on national governments in collaboration with national dental association(s) and/or chamber(s) to acknowledge the paramount importance of having a structured vocational training programme.
- 5 – The CED recommends that the decision to introduce or remove dental vocational training shall not be taken on purely economic considerations.

Unanimously adopted by the CED General Meeting on 23 May 2014