



**THE SOUTH AFRICAN DENTAL TECHNICIANS COUNCIL
DIE SUID AFRIKAANSE RAAD VIR TANDTEGNICI**

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Dear Registered Member

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2024. The Current Council started its journey four years ago when it was inaugurated in March 2020 by developing a strategic plan for its term of office which was divided into short-, medium- and long-term priorities. It is pleasing to look back and track the progress made over the past three years. While the progress made is appreciated, Council is aware that there is still a significant amount of matters that need to be addressed. The latter is evident from the feedback by practitioners through various platforms about their satisfactions and areas of concern that still need attention. Council is taking the industry's recommendations seriously. While many areas of concern receive immediate attention, others take longer to be addressed due to complexity, need for policy changes to effect change, or lack of resources. This, however, does not mean that it is not given priority or will not be addressed.

Some of the key strategic areas that Council has made progress on is the development of National Professional Examination Regulations, the review of most of the outdated regulations. Key to note in this newsletter is the ongoing discussion with the profession on Coding.

In this newsletter, I will be reporting on the following issues:

1. Correction / Clarity on some of the sections previously reported on the last newsletter of 2023
2. Annual Fees for 2024
3. Pipeline students
4. Dental technology codes

CLARITY ON EDUCATION MATTERS

Last year, Council reported on its newsletter about sample work that all lecturers have to submit to Council on an annual basis as part of the minimum requirements for exit level Exams. In that newsletter, Council reported that all sample work submitted by all the lecturers was deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Council wishes to point out that, according to the reports on file, there has not been a single year since 2019 that the full submission from any of the UoTs was approved without some resubmission required, although sometimes, in some disciplines, the resubmission was not in the practical aspects of the work. As regards the practical aspects, there was not one year from any of the UoTs in which a resubmission of at least one of the disciplines was required.

The discipline with the least number of resubmissions was Orthodontics. The discipline with the most number of resubmissions was Partial Dentures followed closely (by one) by Complete Dentures.

ANNUAL FEES FOR 2024

There are delays from the Minister's office in approving 2024/2025 Annual Fees. Invoices were supposed to be issued on the 1st of March 2024 for payment by not later than the 31st March 2024. We are hoping to receive the signed and gazetted fees by not later than the 22nd of March 2024.

PIPELINE STUDENTS

Council is having ongoing discussions with the National Department of Health to try to find a solution for these students. In 2022 Council submitted, at the request of the Minister, a compromise solution, which outlines the process whereby these students could gain registration. This solution was for the 2019 and 2020 cohorts of students, and was accepted by the Minister, but has yet to be initiated. Since then, the UoTs have graduated more students who were assessed by Council to have not reached a sufficient standard in the practical exit-level examination for registration. The fate of these students is being contested: Council is of the opinion that, as per the Regulations, they should re-take the final practical exit-level examination; the UoTs want these students to be added to the original pipeline students. Only the Minister can make this decision, as it is *ultra vires* the Regulations, so nothing has been resolved yet.

DENTAL TECHNOLOGY CODES

The Dental Technicians Act requires Council to appoint a Tariffs Committee. However, since the Competition Commission's decision in 2009 that no national reference price lists can be made, it was felt by previous Councils that there was no further role for the Tariffs Committee. However, since then, there have been many technology advances, mostly in the field of digital dentistry, such as CAD/CAM, Aligners, etc. Consequently Council was approached by DENTASA to assist with developing new codes and DENTASA had made suggestions in this regard.

On investigation, Council found that in fact there are many anomalies in the entire coding system, and after consultation with SADA and the BHF, Council is suggesting that the entire coding system should be overhauled, so that the codes better relate to the clinical codes (and especially those that carry an "L" for laboratory). Rather than go ahead with changing all the codes, Council has approached DENTASA to participate.

CONCLUSION

Council would like to thank the Profession for continued support to the work of the Council. We will continue to inform the profession of all the ongoing issues, of which there are many. Some of these are: the appointment of a new Inspector; the appointment of new members to the Education Inspectorate and examinations panel; Dental technology CPD policy and points: first, to identify those who are delinquent, and secondly, to use the website to assist members to gain points; the development of policies around the outsourcing of digital files for manufacture; the development of guidelines to the profession concerning guarantees; communication with the dental schools regarding training for Clinical Dental Technology; to investigate the registration of dentists who are producing dental appliances using in-house CAD/CAM; the preparation of suitable models for use in the final practical exit-level examination and for the National Professional Registration Examination; the development of a firm policy for foreign qualified technicians; and the development of a Guide to Assessment in dental technology for the UoTs.

