

NATIONAL DENTAL HYGIENE CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION (NDHCE)

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Jurisdictional Variances

In Canada, the level of government responsible for the registration or licensure for dental hygiene practice is the provincial or territorial dental hygiene regulatory authority. A license, certificate or permit issued by one jurisdiction is applicable only within the geographic confines of that jurisdiction. Requirements for registration or licensure as a dental hygienist vary among Canadian dental hygiene regulatory authorities. Those variations may include differences in educational requirements, clinical competencies, continuing education requirements, language competencies, and written and/or clinical practice examinations.

The National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination (NDHCE) is intended to fulfill the regulatory authorities' written examination requirement; however, acceptance of the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board (NDHCB) Certificate is completely at the discretion of the individual provincial or territorial dental hygiene regulatory authority.

On behalf of the participating Canadian Dental Hygiene regulators, the NDHCB is the agency responsible for the development, administration, scoring and reporting of the written NDHCE. Clinical practice examinations are presently conducted by some individual Canadian dental hygiene regulatory authorities.

1.2 Purpose

Certification examinations have a well defined purpose: to protect the public by ensuring that those who are certified possess sufficient knowledge and skills to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively (AERA, 1999). The purpose of the NDHCE is to assist the provincial and territorial dental hygiene regulatory authorities in determining whether or not an applicant for registration or licensure possesses adequate knowledge and/or skills related to entry-level dental hygiene practice standards in Canada.

1.3 Dental Hygiene Practice

Dental hygiene is a regulated health service profession encompassing the theory and practice of oral therapeutics interventions, preventive interventions and health promotion. It has a unique body of knowledge, distinct expertise, recognized standards of practice and a Code of Ethics. Dental Hygiene practice is a collaborative relationship in which the dental hygienist works with the client, other health care professionals, and society in general to achieve and maintain optimal oral health as an integral part of well being. The Dental Hygiene process (DHP) utilizes a systems approach to services which include DHP: Assessment and Diagnosis, DHP: Planning, DHP: Implementation and DHP: Evaluation. Throughout Dental Hygiene practice there are six primary responsibilities: administration, clinical therapy, change agent, health promotion, education and research. Regulation of dental hygiene services ensures protection of the public and a high quality of care through appropriate education and certification/registration/licensure processes.

1.4 Recognition of the National Certification Examination

Dental hygiene regulatory authorities in all Canadian provinces (except Québec) require the National Certificate as one requirement for initial registration and/or licensure.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following are eligible to write the NDHCE under the following conditions:

2.1 Student in a Dental Hygiene Program

2.1.1 Student in an Accredited¹ Dental Hygiene Program

A student in a dental hygiene program that is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA), may apply to write the NDHCE upon confirmation by the dental hygiene program director or designate, that the student, at the application deadline date, is **within four months of completion of the dental hygiene program**.

2.1.2 Student in the cohort of a Dental Hygiene Program that has been reviewed by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) and to whom CDAC has granted "Program Status Under Review".

Such student may apply to write the NDHCE upon confirmation by the dental hygiene program director or designate, that the student, at the application deadline date, is **within four months of completion** of the dental hygiene program **AND following verification of eligibility by the NDHCB**.

Students in subsequent cohorts of the program will be given the same consideration until such time as the CDAC notifies the NDHCB that "status under review" has been revoked or accreditation has been granted.

2.2 Graduate of an Accredited Dental Hygiene Program

An applicant who is a graduate of a dental hygiene program that was accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA) on the date of the applicant's graduation may apply to write the NDHCE.

2.3 Graduate of a Non-Accredited Dental Hygiene Program

An applicant who is a graduate of a dental hygiene program that was not accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC), or the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA) on the date of the applicant's graduation, may apply to write the NDHCE following verification of eligibility by the NDHCB.

3. APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION

3.1 Evaluation Standards

There is an established review process and application guide respecting the evaluation of academic qualifications of individuals from non-accredited dental hygiene programs for the determination of eligibility to write the NDHCE.

The evaluation standards are based on current:

¹ Accredited shall mean accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA).

- 3.1.1 Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada's *Accreditation Requirements for Dental Hygiene Programs*;
- 3.1.2 Canadian Dental Hygienists Association's Policy Framework for Dental Hygiene Education in Canada;
- 3.1.3 Canadian Dental Hygienists Association's Dental Hygiene: Definition, Scope and Practice Standards;
- 3.1.4 Curricula from accredited Canadian dental hygiene programs; and
- 3.1.5 Dental Hygiene Educators Canada's *2004 Learning Outcomes for Canadian Dental Hygiene Education*.

3.2 Principles of Evaluation

The Evaluation process reviews whether an applicant's education is substantially equivalent to the education of a graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program in Canada. The NDHCB evaluation process is built on the following principles:

- 3.2.1 Dental Hygiene is a regulated health profession encompassing the theory and practice of oral therapeutic interventions, preventive interventions and health promotion;
- 3.2.2 Dental Hygiene has a unique body of knowledge, distinct expertise, recognized education and practice standards, and a Code of Ethics;
- 3.2.3 The education and experience of dental hygienists must prepare them to work in a collaborative relationship with the client and other health care professionals and, depending on the jurisdiction, without the direct supervision of a dentist;
- 3.2.4 Dental Hygiene practice utilizes a systems approach to services which includes Dental Hygiene Process (DHP) Assessment and Diagnosis, DHP Planning, DHP Implementation and DHP Evaluation; and
- 3.2.5 Applicants for evaluation are not required to meet different standards than those required of dental hygienists from accredited Canadian programs.

3.3 Application & Eligibility Evaluation Policies

- 3.3.1 Applications will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- 3.3.2 The evaluation of academic qualifications does not establish the equivalency of a non-accredited dental hygiene program to an accredited dental hygiene program, but rather, recognizes that the applicant has achieved a level of dental hygiene education necessary to write the NDHCE.
- 3.3.3 Applicants must meet all of the general and educational program requirements to be eligible for evaluation.
- 3.3.4 Each applicant will pay the appropriate eligibility evaluation fee by credit card, certified cheque or money order in Canadian funds, for the evaluation of academic qualifications.

- 3.3.5** Applicants are responsible for all expenses for verification and translation of required documents.
- 3.3.6** No evaluation will be started until all required documentation has been received. Once all documentation is received and the evaluation is started, the review can take up to 8 to 10 weeks. The review might take longer if additional research, verification of documents or information is required. Applicants are advised that the NDHCB does not guarantee completion within 8-10 weeks and are encouraged to avoid taking action (e.g. jobs, move, etc...) in anticipation of a positive result or a result within a specific time period.
- 3.3.7** An application is valid for one year from the date the form was received. Thus, after one year, if an applicant has failed to meet ALL requirements for a completed application, the file will be closed and no refund will be issued. All contents of the applicant's file will be retained and not released. If the applicant wishes to re-activate the file, a new application form, appropriate fees, and additional documentation must be submitted.
- 3.3.8** If an applicant wishes to authorize a third party/agent to act on his/her behalf in any aspect of the application for evaluation process, a power of attorney will be required. Information, correspondence, and results will be given to the applicant OR to his/her agent. No information will be released over the telephone.
- 3.3.9** Original documents will be returned only to the originators and only if specified on the application form, accompanied by the applicable fee.
- 3.3.10** If an applicant submits forged or altered documents, an evaluation will not be completed, the fee will not be refunded, and all documents received become the property of the NDHCB. All provincial dental hygiene regulatory authorities and all recognized evaluation services will be notified. In such cases, the NDHCB reserves the right to notify the institution(s) and/or board(s), which had purportedly issued the documents.
- 3.3.11** The NDHCB reserves the right to contact any relevant institutions for verification purposes and to request any additional information needed prior to completing an evaluation.
- 3.3.12** The NDHCB determines eligibility to write the NDHCE, in accordance with pre-established criteria. One copy of the evaluation report result will be issued to the applicant. A successful evaluation result establishes eligibility for application to the NDHCE for three years. Once an applicant has been notified, in writing, of the result of the evaluation, the applicant's file is closed. If the applicant wishes to re-activate the file, a new application form, appropriate fees, and additional documentation must be submitted.
- 3.3.13** Upon verification of eligibility, applicants will be notified in writing of the next regularly scheduled examination date for which they are eligible to apply. The applicant must complete the NDHCE application process including payment of the appropriate examination fee.
- 3.3.14** If the applicant is deemed eligible to write the NDHCE, lack of language proficiency in either English or French shall not be grounds for review of examination results or for any form of special accommodations.

- 3.3.15** Those applicants evaluated as candidates not eligible to write the NDHCE will be advised where they fell short of the Canadian standards.
- 3.3.16** Evaluation reports of individuals may differ depending upon the time period in which they were completed. This results from new and updated information being made available on a continuous basis as well as revisions to evaluation standards. Educational evaluation decisions made by NDHCB are based on the most recent information available.
- 3.3.17** Each applicant's written request to forward copies of documents in his/her file to a third party will be assessed a non-refundable fee, payable by credit card, certified cheque or money order in Canadian funds, as determined by the NDHCB.

3.4 Educational Program Standards

The non-accredited dental hygiene program from which the applicant graduated must satisfy the following educational program standards for the applicant to be eligible for an evaluation. The dental hygiene program must:

- 3.4.1** be established as a separate school, faculty, division or department recognized by the appropriate government agency in the country where the program is established at a post secondary institution which is also recognized by the appropriate government agency.
- 3.4.2** require a minimum of two academic years (minimum 16 months) of formal education in a recognized Dental Hygiene program, including a clinical component supervised by dental hygiene faculty.
- 3.4.3** have learning outcomes set out in a clear, concise and detailed fashion to the satisfaction of the NDHCB.
- 3.4.4** deliver a dental hygiene diploma, certificate or degree at graduation..

3.5 Documentation Requirements

The applicant must submit or must have submitted in his/her name, all of the following documentation to the NDHCB prior to initiation of the evaluation process:

- 3.5.1** An eligibility application form - completed and signed;
- 3.5.2** The appropriate evaluation fee paid by credit card, certified cheque or money order only, in Canadian funds, payable to the NDHCB, as indicated on the application form;
- 3.5.3** A notarized copy of legal name change documents, if any document indicates a different surname than the name on the application form.
- 3.5.4** The proof of registration/licensure with a dental hygiene regulatory authority OR a letter of eligibility for dental hygiene registration/licensure in the country (jurisdiction) where the dental hygiene education was completed, submitted directly by the dental hygiene regulatory authority.

3.5.5 A legal description of the practice of dental hygiene in the country where educated. This document must be submitted directly by the agency which issues a certificate of registration/license to practice, and must describe exactly what a dental hygienist is permitted to perform for clients/patients in the country of education.

3.5.6 Demonstration of educational credentials through one of the following options:

3.5.6.1 For Graduates of a non-accredited program:

a. A notarized copy of dental hygiene diploma/certificate(s), submitted by the applicant. Simple photocopies are not acceptable.

AND

b. An official transcript of grades, submitted directly by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation.

3.5.6.2 For Students in the cohort of a program that has been granted "Program Status Under Review" by CDAC or a subsequent cohort:

a. A letter by the Dental Hygiene Program Director stating that the student, at the time of the application for eligibility evaluation, is within four (4) months of completion of the dental hygiene program (including confirmation of the projected program completion date).

3.5.7 An official statement of course description submitted directly by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation, which must include all of the following:

- i. Length of the program (years, months);
- ii. List of each course studied in the dental hygiene program, including all the information below:
 - detailed description of course content, including number of hours of each course and expected outcomes;
 - description of practical pre-clinical and laboratory experiences, including number of hours;
 - description of practical clinical experiences including location, number of hours, types of dental hygiene services provided and average number of clients/patients treated while a student; and
 - description of the method of evaluation of expected outcomes for each course (e.g. by examination, projects, weekly tests).

It is recommended that this information be submitted in electronic form if possible (CD, USB key, attachment, etc.)

Documentation must be submitted in the original language of instruction. All documents not in English or French must also be translated in either of Canada's official languages and must bear the seal of an official translator/translation service). All translations could be audited for acceptability.

3.5.8 Dental Hygiene Program standards must be demonstrated through one of the following options:

3.5.8.1 For applicants who graduated from a program outside of Canada or the United States:

A report for educational credential evaluation covering the country of education, name of the institution(s) attended, the year and the specific credential received (degree, diploma or certificate), the length of the program, the area(s) of specialization and the Canadian equivalency prepared and submitted directly by one of the following external credentialing agencies approved by the NDHCB. Approved agencies are listed on the NDHCB Website.

3.5.8.2 For applicants from a non-accredited program in Canada or the United States:

a. A true copy of the written notification confirming that you are part of the cohort (or a subsequent cohort) of a dental hygiene **educational program that has** “Program Status Under Review”, by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA), at the time of the application. This document must be submitted directly by the dental hygiene educational institution.

OR

b. An official statement confirming that the dental hygiene program is established as a separate school, faculty, division or department **recognized by the appropriate government agency** in the country where the program is established at a post secondary institution **which is also recognized by the appropriate government agency**. This document must be submitted **directly** by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation.

If the program has already applied to CDAC for accreditation and received a decision from them, it should provide a copy of the CDAC’s decision letter and the details regarding how the Program has addressed any issue identified in the letter.

3.5.9 A certified official translation must accompany all documents not in English or French (it must bear the seal of an official translator/translation service). All translations could be audited for acceptability. The National Dental Hygiene Certification Board will accept electronically submitted translations (on disk or thumb drive) if it is accompanied by a signed letter, embossed with the professional translator’s seal, mailed directly to the NDHCB from the office of the translator. Please note a print copy of the translated document is not required under these conditions.

4. EXAMINATION APPLICATION PROCEDURES

4.1 Completion and Submission of an Application

4.1.1 An application form for the NDHCE is available online or to download in PDF from the NDHCB website.

4.1.2 A new application form must be submitted each time a candidate wishes to be tested.

4.1.3 All information requested on the application form must be legibly provided. The NDHCB Certificate for a passing candidate is prepared in the name provided on the application. To avoid complications in qualifying for certification, registration or licensure, candidates must use their legal names.

- 4.1.4 A completed application form must be accompanied by the appropriate examination fee (credit card, money order or certified cheque in Canadian currency) and a digitized photograph (taken within the last 6 months). If the application is sent by mail, two passport-size photographs and all documentation required to establish eligibility must be submitted.
- 4.1.5 An application must be received on or before the application deadline date unless an extension is granted in writing by the Executive Director under exceptional circumstances.
- 4.1.6 The NDHCB will confirm, in writing, a candidate's eligibility to write the NDHCE.
- 4.1.7 An Identification Card including: candidate photo, the candidate's ID number, examination date, his/her coordinates and the name of the writing centre will be issued **at the exam site** for each candidate prior to the examination.
- 4.1.8 Any request by a candidate to change writing centre must be made through the Writing Centre selection Website a **minimum of three (3) weeks** prior to the examination. The change will be confirmed by email.
- 4.1.9 The Identification Card will be handed to the appropriate candidate as he/she appears at his/her designated writing centre on the date of the examination.

4.2 Examination Fees

- 4.2.1 The candidate to the NDHCE shall pay the appropriate examination fee as determined by the NDHCB.
- 4.2.2 Only valid credit cards (VISA or Mastercard) are accepted for online applications. Money orders or certified cheques payable in Canadian currency are also accepted with mailed-in applications. Cash and personal cheques will be returned with the application.

4.3 Documentation Required from Each Category of Candidate

4.3.1 Students in an Accredited Dental Hygiene Program

- a) Completed application form;
- b) Appropriate fee;
- c) Digital photo (online application) or 2 identical passport-size photos (application by mail) taken within the last 6 months;

Please note: the Statement of Reference (on page 2 of the mail-in form) must be completed and signed by the dental hygiene program director or designate stating that the candidate will complete his/her program within four (4) months for those applying by mail only.

4.3.2 Student in a cohort of Dental Hygiene Program that has been granted "Program Status Under Review" by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC)

- a) Completed application form;
- b) Appropriate fee;
- c) Digital photo (online application) or 2 identical passport-size photos (application by mail) taken within the last 6 months;

d) Having successfully obtained the NDHCB verification of eligibility;

Please note: the Statement of Reference (on page 2 of the mail-in form) must be completed and signed by the dental hygiene program director or designate stating that the candidate will complete his/her program within four (4) months for those applying by mail only.

4.3.3 Graduates of an Accredited Dental Hygiene Program:

- a) Completed application form;
- b) Appropriate fee;
- c) Digital photo (online application) or 2 identical passport-size photos (application by mail) taken within the last 6 months;

Please note: A notarized photocopy of their diploma/certificate in dental hygiene and an official transcript of grades submitted directly to our office by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation are also required for those applying by mail only.

4.3.4 Graduates of Non-Accredited Dental Hygiene Programs:

- a) Completed application form;
- b) Appropriate fee;
- c) Digital photo (online application) or 2 identical passport-size photos (application by mail) taken within the last 6 months;
- d) Having successfully obtained the NDHCB verification of eligibility.

4.4 Self-withdrawal from the Examination

4.4.1 If a candidate wishes to withdraw from the examination, he/she must notify the NDHCB in writing (by mail, email or fax).

4.4.2 Candidates who withdraw three (3) weeks or more prior to the examination date will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee.

4.4.3 Candidates who withdraw less than three (3) weeks prior to the examination date will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee and a withdrawal fee.

4.4.4 Candidates who withdraw from an examination, for which they have transferred fees from a previous application, will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee and withdrawal fee unless their original transfer request was made three (3) weeks or more before the original examination date, in which case they will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee.

4.4.5 Candidates who request a withdrawal from the examination, less than three (3) weeks prior to the examination date due to illness (doctor's certificate required) or death in the immediate family (death certificate required), must notify the NDHCB in writing (by mail, email or fax). These Candidates will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee once the additional documentation is approved.

4.5 Withdrawal from the Examination by the Dental Hygiene Program Director or Designate

4.5.1 Dental hygiene program directors or designate of student candidates who are registered for an examination under the eligibility criteria detailed in section 2.1 must inform the NDHCB in writing (by mail, email or fax) no later than two (2) weeks prior to the

examination date, should the students' status no longer be to complete their dental hygiene program requirements within four (4) months of the application deadline date.

- 4.5.2** Student candidates who find themselves in the situation described at section 4.5.1 will be allowed to transfer their examination fees to a future examination administration one time only, at no cost providing they immediately send a request to that effect in writing.
- 4.5.3** Candidates who find themselves in the situation described at section 4.5.1 who choose not to transfer their examination fees to a future examination administration, but instead elect to completely withdraw from the examination, will be refunded the examination fee less a non-refundable application fee.

4.6 Transfer of Examination Fees

- 4.6.1** A candidate who requests transfer of examination fees to a future date must notify the NDHCB in writing (by mail, email or fax) no later than two (2) weeks prior to the original examination date.
- 4.6.2** A candidate may have his/her examination fees transferred to a future examination administration one time only.
- 4.6.3** The refund of fees for withdrawal following transfer of examination fees to a new examination administration date is outlined in section 4.5.
- 4.6.4** A candidate who has withdrawn from a transferred examination date and who wishes to apply to write the examination at a future date must submit a new application form including payment of full fees (application and examination) prior to that examination application deadline date.

5. EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The main objective of the Examination Development process is to ensure that the examination is developed to achieve its stated purpose; to protect the public by ensuring that those who are certified possess sufficient competencies (e.g. knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes and judgment) to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively. A rigorous test development process is implemented that meets or exceeds all professional standards as specified in the most recent edition of American Psychological Association Standards for Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing including the requirements of periodic evaluation. This test development process is summarized below.

5.1 Competency Study

As the foundation for a criterion-referenced examination², the competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and judgments) required for the safe and effective practice of an entry-level dental hygienist were identified by Dental Hygiene SMEs (subject matter experts). The competencies undergo an extensive review by other SMEs from across Canada (i.e., educators, practitioners, administrators, researchers) and by DH regulators to establish their validity. The

² A criterion-referenced approach, as opposed to a normative-referenced approach was selected a-priori given that the criterion-referenced approach to testing is more appropriate for licensure/certification examinations (Crocker & Algina, 1986).

dental hygiene competencies undergo a regular periodic review to ensure that the competency profile for entry-level dental hygiene practice remains current.

5.2 Blueprint Development

An examination Blueprint outlining the content to be tested in the Examination was developed and is reviewed periodically by the NDHCB. The Blueprint includes the competencies - that is, the content domain that forms the basis for test development. It also specifies variables that provide structure for the examination, as well as guidelines and specifications for weighting the competencies to ensure that the Examination accurately reflects the domain of entry-level dental hygiene.

5.3 Item Development

Examination items are developed by subject matter experts who are trained in item writing. The examination items measure the specified competencies in accordance with the guidelines identified in the examination Blueprint. After an item is developed, it is reviewed by the NDHCB Dental Hygiene Advisor and then further evaluated and refined by the group. After this group review, it is then sent to a different group of SMEs for appraisal.

5.4 Item Review

Item Appraisers, from different regions across Canada review each new item to ensure that they measure content that is consistent with current Canadian entry-to-practice standards as well as regional standards of practice for entry-level dental hygiene practitioners. They also ensure that that stereotypes are not found in the items and that examinees are not disadvantaged by the examination content.

5.5 Professional Editing

All items are reviewed by the NDHCB testing agency to ensure clarity, consistency and appropriateness of the language used. The items are then entered into the official item bank for future retrieval.

5.6 Examination Monitoring & Approval

Each version of the examination is compiled by the NDHCB Testing Agency from items in the test bank in accordance with the Blueprint specifications. Final approval of the examination is given after the Examination Approval SMEs have reviewed the entire examination. Prior to granting approval, they complete a review of the complete examination to ensure that each item measures content that is consistent with current standards of practice for the entry-level dental hygiene practitioner.

5.7 Standard Setting

The standard for the examination is established by using the professionally accepted and widely used modified Angoff³ method and/or Statistical Equating. The Examination Approval SMEs will

³ The modified Angoff method is based on the concept of the borderline or minimally competent candidate. The minimally competent candidate is one who possesses the minimum level of knowledge and skills necessary to perform at a certified level.

set the specific passing (cut off) score for each version of the NDHCE using that method.

5.8 Translation

Examinations are translated by an official translator, and further reviewed and validated by a group of bilingual dental hygiene SMEs from provinces with Francophone candidates.

6. EXAMINATION FORMAT AND CONTENT (BLUEPRINT)

6.1 Scope of the Examination

The NDHCE is presented in both official languages and currently consists of a sufficient number of multiple choice test items to ensure validity and reliability. Experimental questions are included in the examination but are not counted toward the candidate's score.

The test items are developed from a comprehensive description of the content domain or competencies of the entry-level to practice dental hygiene. These competencies form the basis of the NDHCE. The classification of the competencies is based on the following:

Dental Hygiene Process of Care Model:

Assessment and Diagnosis:	Collects, critically analyses data and interprets data.
Planning:	Formulates goals and objectives, selects dental hygiene interventions/services, and validates the dental hygiene care plan.
Implementation:	Activates the dental hygiene interventions/services defined in the dental hygiene care plan.
Evaluation:	Appraises the effectiveness of the dental hygiene interventions/services and professional competence.

Item Classification Scheme:

Items on the NDHCE are categorized according to the following curriculum disciplines:

1. <u>BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE/SOCIAL SCIENCE:</u>	4.6	Interprofessional practice
1.1 Community epidemiology	4.7	Documentation
1.2 Community programming		
1.3 Communication principles	5. <u>DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTICE:</u>	
1.4 Psychology	5.1	Health/Dental/Personal histories
1.5 Sociology	5.2	Extraoral assessment
1.6 Behaviour management strategies	5.3	Intraoral assessment
1.7 Research/Statistics	5.4	Periodontal assessment
2. <u>BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES:</u>	5.5	Radiographic assessment/Interpretation
2.1 Anatomy and Physiology	5.6	Other diagnostic/Assessment strategies
2.2 General pathophysiology/General histology	5.7	Dental hygiene diagnosis
2.3 Nutrition/Diet counseling	5.8	Dental hygiene treatment planning
2.4 Oral Biology/Biochemistry	5.9	Pain control & management
2.5 Microbiology	5.10	Health promotion strategies
2.6 Infection prevention & control	5.11	Health education strategies
2.7 Pharmacology	5.12	Non-surgical dental hygiene therapy
	5.13	Caries management

3. DENTAL SCIENCES:

- 3.1 Dental and Oral anatomy
- 3.2 Head and neck anatomy and physiology
- 3.3 Oral embryology and histology
- 3.4 Dental materials
- 3.5 Radiography Biology/Protection/Technique
- 3.6 Oral pathology
- 3.7 Periodontology

4. PROFESSIONAL ISSUES:

- 4.1 Ethics
- 4.2 Jurisprudence/Regulations
- 4.3 Professional development
- 4.4 Quality assurance
- 4.5 Client advocacy

- 5.14 Sensitivity management
- 5.15 Stain management
- 5.16 Oral-self care strategies
- 5.17 Evaluation of outcomes
- 5.18 Management of continuing care
- 5.19 Restorative/Prosthodontics
- 5.20 Pedodontics
- 5.21 Endodontics/Surgery
- 5.22 Orthodontics
- 5.23 Gerodontology
- 5.24 Referrals
- 5.25 Practice management
- 5.26 Ergonomics
- 5.27 Care of special needs/Medically compromised clients
- 5.28 Prevention and management of emergency

6.2 Test Item Format

- 6.2.1** Multiple choice test items consist of a stem which poses a problem in question format, followed by a list of four possible answers. Only one of the possible answers is correct. The other possible answers are called distractors which may divert the inadequately prepared candidate.
- 6.2.2** Case study test items consist of a description of a client in a clinical or community health situation followed by a series of three to six multiple choice test items. The description in the case study will be entirely written information, and may include radiographic material.

6.3 Recommendations for Candidate Preparation

It is recommended that the candidate use textbooks and lecture notes as the primary source of studying. A list of some reference textbooks, several sample questions and two online preparatory tests are also available on the NDHCB web site.

6.4 Examination parameters

The FDI two-digit tooth numbering system is used in all examinations.

7. EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

7.1 Frequency of Examinations

The NDHCE is **currently** offered three (3) times per year, in or around the months of January, May and September of each year.

7.2 Examination Centres

Computerized examination centres are positioned across Canada. There is at least one located within 100km (1 hr) of every accredited dental hygiene school. A complete list of writing centres is available on the NDHCB web site.

7.3 Testing Schedule

- 7.3.1** Each candidate must present a photo ID (drivers' license, passport, school ID) to verify identification at the writing centre on the date and time of the examination.
- 7.3.2** The NDHCB Examination identification card is valid for one writing only.
- 7.3.3** Changes to a candidate's name or mailing address, for results, can be made on the correction stub on the identification card. The correction stub must be returned to the test invigilator at the end of the examination if any changes are required.
- 7.3.4** The examination questions are divided into two separate 2-hour sessions with a compulsory 15 minute break in between.
- 7.3.5** All candidates are required to attend both consecutive sessions. Partial credit is not given.
- 7.3.6** Candidates who report late are expected to complete the examination by the expiration time of the regular time period.

7.4 Testing Accommodations

Guidelines regarding candidate testing accommodations have been developed and are available on the NDHCB website.

7.5 Examination Regulations

- 7.5.1** In applying for the NDHCE, a candidate agrees to abide by all regulations, as well as oral and written instructions controlling the conduct of the examination. These regulations can be found on the NDHCB website in the Candidate Guide and in the Guide for the Administration of the NDHCB Examination.
- 7.5.2** Candidates must sign that they agree with the terms and regulations outlined in the "Statement of Understanding" on the examination application form and the one they will receive at the exam site, before the start of the exam.

7.6 Scoring of the Examination

The examination is computer scored by the testing agency contracted by the NDHCB. To confirm that the Examination meets or exceeds professional standards, a comprehensive statistical analysis is conducted on the Examination. Items that do not meet established criteria are not used in calculating candidates' scores. All scores may be the subject of further Data Forensics investigation.

7.7 Score Reports

- 7.7.1** The score of the NDHCE will be reported as a pass, a fail or "under review".
- 7.7.2** A list of the ID number of all the candidates who have written the most recent examination (with the caption "pass", "fail" or "Under Review") will be posted on the NDHCB website as soon as it is available from the Testing Agency. All candidates are warned that they must

avoid taking action (e.g. career, move, etc.) before receiving their official results.

- 7.7.3** Final results will be sent to the candidate within 6 weeks after the testing date. This period could be longer for candidates “Under Review” pending the results of further investigation by the NDHCB. The successful candidates will also get a copy of their certificate through regular mail while the unsuccessful candidates will get their results through email.
- 7.7.4** Candidates’ individual results will not be provided to any other agency or person except for data administration or forensics analysis purposes or upon the written consent of the candidate.
- 7.7.5** Information accumulated by the NDHCB through the certification process may be used for statistical purposes and for evaluating the certification program. All individual information will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purposes without permission.
- 7.7.6** A listing of successful candidates, including their NDHCB certificate number, will be forwarded to all participating dental hygiene regulatory authorities as soon as available.
- 7.7.7** A school specific aggregate school performance report will be sent to the candidate’s dental hygiene program director unless there are less than 5 (five) candidates who wrote a specific administration. This report will also indicate the number of candidates from that dental hygiene program who failed for the first time.
- 7.7.8** A summarized report of all aggregate school performances will also be posted on the NDHCB website.
- 7.7.9** A listing of successful candidates may be published by the NDHCB, at its sole discretion, in one or more publications throughout Canada.

7.8 Certificates

A National Dental Hygiene Certificate will be mailed to all successful candidates.

7.9 Rewrite Attempts

- 7.9.1** A candidate will be allowed a maximum of four attempts to write the NDHCE.
- 7.9.2** A candidate who fails his/her first or second attempt of the NDHCE will be sent a letter recommending strategies to help him/her prepare for subsequent attempts of the NDHCE.
- 7.9.3** A candidate who is applying for his/her fourth attempt of the NDHCE will be requested to return to the NDHCB office a signed written statement verifying his/her understanding that this fourth attempt is his/her final attempt of the NDHCE.
- 7.9.4** A candidate who has failed four attempts of the NDHCE is no longer a candidate for the NDHCE unless he/she successfully completes again all of the dental hygiene course requirements of a recognized dental hygiene program and meets the eligibility criteria in effect at the time of his/her new application to write the NDHCE.

8. EXAMINATION REVIEW

8.1 Background

This procedure allows a candidate **who has failed** the NDHCE or **whose result was cancelled** by the NDHCB, an opportunity to request that his/her examination result be re-verified.

8.2 Grounds for Review

A candidate's examination result will be reviewed only on the basis of suspected irregularities in the examination process (prior, during or after the exam), and not because of alleged errors in content of the examination or the data analysis that was conducted. The content of an examination and/or the details of the data analysis of the results are not subject for review at the request of the candidate either singly or as a group. A request to review the examination result on the basis of process must present evidence that the alleged irregularities materially affected the candidate's performance. The existence of irregularities, in itself, is not sufficient to change the result of the examination.

8.3 Types of Review

8.3.1 Rescoring of Answers:

A candidate may request rescoring of his/her answers by the NDHCB testing agency to verify that the examination was accurately scored. The rescoring of the answers is done by hand rather than through the normal electronic process. The rescoring process can be used to determine: a) if there was improper recording of the answers to one or more examination items; b) if one or more examination items were improperly scored against the answer key.

An application for rescoring (see www.ndhcb.ca/en/forms.php under "other") must be made to the NDHCB **within forty-five (45) calendar days** from the date of receipt of the examination results. There is an administrative fee for this service.

8.3.2 Formal Review:

If an unsuccessful candidate believes that he/she was treated unfairly or if there were any other significant irregularity in the examination process, he/she can request a formal review.

A written request for a formal review must be sent to the Executive Director of the NDHCB and received within forty-five (45) days of the candidate's **receipt of the official examination result**. The request for formal review must explain in detail the circumstances surrounding the alleged irregularity(ies) in the examination process and must include supporting or related evidence.

The Executive Director will acknowledge receipt of the request for formal review and conduct an investigation to determine if the alleged irregularity(ies) are sufficiently supported and if they significantly affected the outcome of the exam result.

The Executive Director will then render a decision in writing, within thirty (30) days of receiving the official request for formal review.

8.3.3 Appeal of Formal Review Decision:

Following receipt of the Executive Director's decision, if the candidate still feels that his/her request for a formal review was not accorded due consideration, the candidate can choose to submit an appeal to the NDHCB Board of Governors. This appeal must be sent by registered mail, accompanied by the appropriate administrative fee - certified cheque or money order in Canadian funds payable to the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board or by a valid Credit card number (VISA or MasterCard). This appeal of the formal review decision must be received by the NDHCB within thirty (30) days of the candidate's receipt of the Executive Director's formal review decision.

The NDHCB will forward the appeal request and the supporting documents to the NDHCB Board of Governors for its consideration and the Board of Governors will respond in writing to the candidate's appeal, with its decision, within forty-five (45) days of receipt by the NDHCB of the appeal letter.

The NDHCB Board of Governors will render one of the following decisions:

- 8.3.3.1 Confirm that the policies and procedures pertinent to the situation were followed and uphold the decision of the Executive Director;
- 8.3.3.2 Determine that the policies and procedures pertinent to the situation were either inadequate or not followed completely and refer the matter back to the Executive Director for a decision based on reviewing or following the policies and procedures completely.
- 8.3.3.3 Take whatever action the Board of Governors considers appropriate that is not inconsistent with the generally accepted principles of the NDHCB.