

**NATIONAL DENTAL HYGIENE
CERTIFICATION BOARD**



**EQUIVALENCY ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK
FOR INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED DENTAL HYGIENE
APPLICANTS
AND
GRADUATES OF NON-ACCREDITED CANADIAN OR
AMERICAN DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAMS**

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1. General Information

1.1 Information on the Practice of Dental Hygiene in Canada

In Canada, dental hygiene is a regulated health profession. This means that in order to work as dental hygienists, individuals must register with the regulatory authority in the province or territory where they would like to work.

The regulatory authority in each jurisdiction is responsible for protecting and serving the public interest by ensuring that dental hygienists provide high quality, competent and ethical treatments and services.

In Canada, only individuals who are registered with a Canadian dental hygiene regulatory authority may refer to themselves as dental hygienists or use any short form (abbreviation) of this title. Each applicant must meet all the licensing or registration requirements of the province or territory of work.

The National Dental Hygiene Certification Board (NDHCB) is the agency responsible for the assessment of credentials and qualifications of dental hygiene applicants who did not graduate from a dental hygiene program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA/CODA) and who want to write the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board Examination (NDHCE). The NDHCB is also responsible for the development, administration, scoring and reporting of results of all NDHCEs to provincial and territorial dental hygiene regulatory authorities and to assist provincial and territorial dental hygiene regulatory authorities in fulfilling their mandate of protecting the public interest.

Applicants can find a list of all provincial and territorial dental hygiene regulatory authorities on the NDHCB website at www.ndhcb.ca.

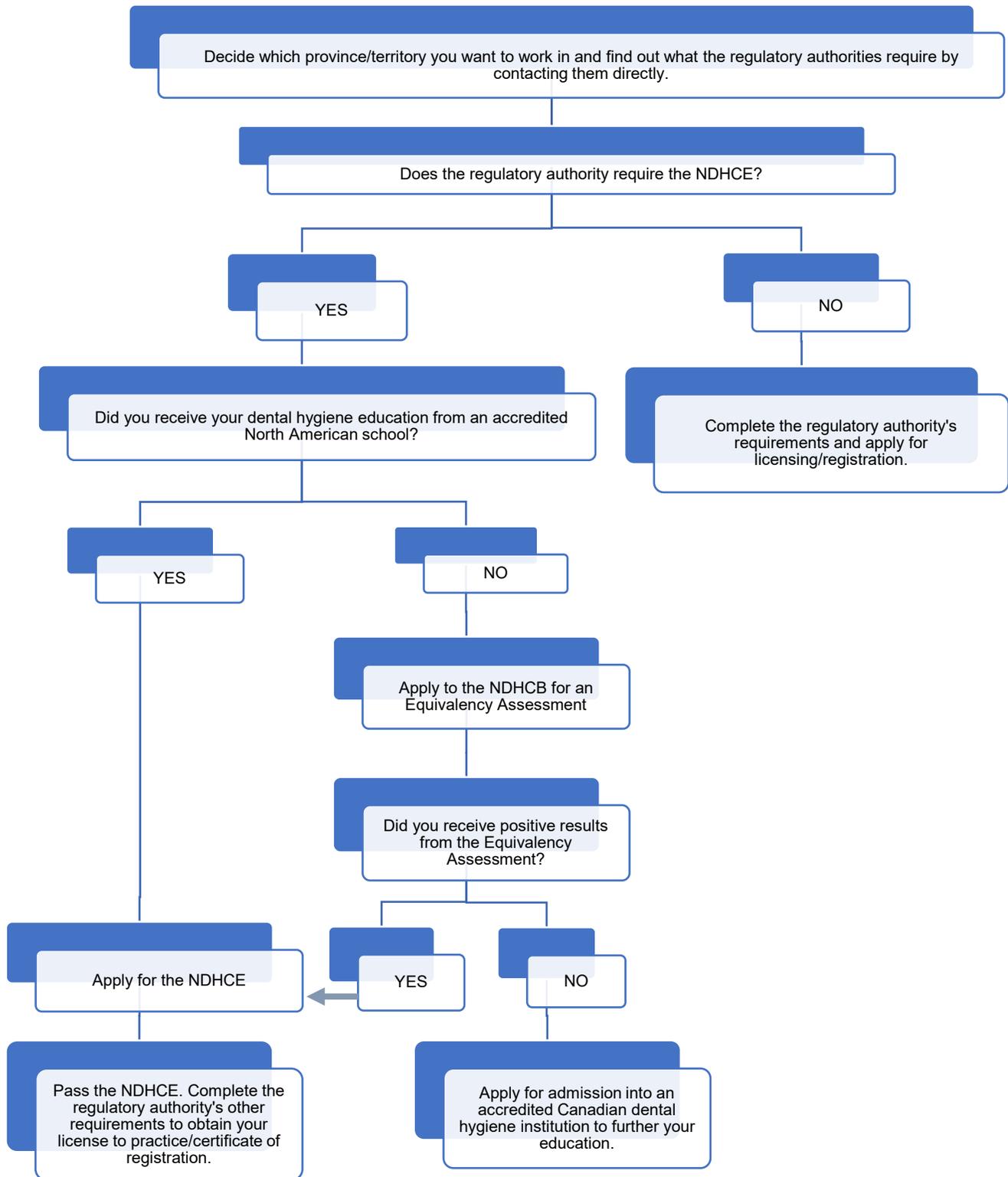
Please note that in Canada, the regulatory authorities are often called “Colleges”, but they are not to be confused with educational institutions.

2. Licensure/Certification/Registration Process in Canada

2.1 Licensure/Certification Examinations

Licensure/certification examinations protect the public by ensuring that individuals who are licensed/certified possess the required knowledge and skills to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively.

2.2 Licensing/Registration Process Map



Legend: NDHCE – National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination

2.3 Licensing/Registration Requirements of the Regulatory Authority

Applicants must contact the regulatory authority in the province or territory where they would like to work to find out what requirements are needed to fulfill to work there.

If National Certification is required, there are two (2) streams of application process:

- A. Individuals who graduated from an accredited¹ Canadian or American dental hygiene program, can apply directly to write the NDHCE without having to have their credentials and qualifications assessed.
- B. Individuals who graduated from a non-accredited Canadian or American dental hygiene program OR from an International dental hygiene program must have their credentials and qualifications assessed by the NDHCB before they can apply to write the NDHCE.

Further requirements may be needed in the province or territory an applicant wants to work before they can practice in that jurisdiction.

Please note that Canada has two official languages, English and French. Individuals may apply in either of those two official languages.

3. Assessment of Educational Credentials and Qualifications Process

The NDHCB assesses the educational credentials and qualifications of individuals who graduated from a dental hygiene program not accredited in Canada or the United States on behalf of the provincial and territorial regulatory authorities to determine their eligibility to write the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board Examination (NDHCE).

The NDHCB will assess an applicant's educational credentials and qualifications for NDHCE eligibility by determining whether their dental hygiene education and their qualifications are substantially equivalent to those of a Canadian educated dental hygienist as per an established process. The assessment standards are based on the following:

- A. CDAC Accreditation Requirements for Canadian Dental Hygiene Programs;
- B. Entry-To-Practice Competencies and Standards for Canadian Dental Hygienists (2010);
- C. CDHA Dental Hygiene Definition, Scope and Practice Standards;
- D. Curricula from accredited Canadian dental hygiene programs; and
- E. The latest NDHCB Blueprint.

3.1 Principles of Assessment

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

- A. Dental Hygiene is a regulated health profession encompassing the theory and practice in the areas of oral therapeutic interventions, preventive interventions and health education, health promotion and management of the dental hygiene practice;

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).

- B. Dental Hygiene has a unique body of knowledge, distinct expertise, recognized national competencies accompanied with national practice standards, and a national Code of Ethics;
- C. The education and experience of dental hygienists must prepare them to work independently and in a collaborative relationship with the client, other health care professionals and stakeholders and, in all jurisdictions but the province of Quebec, they work without the direct supervision of a dentist;
- D. The practice of Dental Hygiene utilizes a systematic approach to dental hygiene care called the Dental Hygiene Process of Care. It involves five key behaviours or steps: Dental Hygiene Assessment, Dental Hygiene Diagnosis, Dental Hygiene Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of treatment and services;
- E. An applicant for an assessment of educational credentials and qualifications is required to meet the same standards from those required of a dental hygienist graduating from an accredited Canadian dental hygiene program; and
- F. All applications for an equivalency assessment are reviewed on an individual basis.
- G. 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.
- H. Applicants are responsible for all expenses for verification and translation of required documents.

3.2 Who needs to apply for an Educational Credentials and Qualifications Assessment?

Any applicant who is a:

- 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; OR
- B. Graduate of a dental hygiene program outside of Canada or the United States.

3.3 Credentialing Standards

In order to be considered for an Assessment of Educational Credentials and Qualifications, any applicant must be able to provide evidence of minimum educational requirements. In its assessment process, the NDHCB uses four (4) minimum criteria that **MUST** be met before it can proceed further:

Criterion 1:

The applicant must have graduated with a **diploma/degree** or its equivalent, **in dental hygiene**.

Criterion 2:

The dental hygiene program must be established as a separate school, faculty, division or department recognized by the appropriate government agency in the country/jurisdiction where the program is established at a **post-secondary institution** which is also recognized by the appropriate government agency.

Criterion 3:

The program must be of a **minimum of two (2) full time academic years of formal dental hygiene education** in a recognized Dental Hygiene program, including a clinical component with direct client care supervised by dental hygiene faculty.

Criterion 4:

The program must have **learning outcomes/competencies and evaluation criteria** set out in a clear, concise and detailed manner to the satisfaction of the NDHCB.

4. Translation Policy

All documents must be submitted to the NDHCB **in the language of instruction**. If the language of instruction is not English or French, the applicant will have to have a copy of the original documents translated into either English or French at their own cost.

If the applicant's educational institution has an official translation in either English or French of the required documents, the institution must send the documents to the NDHCB in their original language of instruction and attach the official signed translation in either English or French.

If the applicant's educational institution does not have an official translation, and the NDHCB receives documents from the institution in a language other than English or French, the NDHCB will paginate these documents and send a copy back to the applicant for translation. It is then the responsibility of the applicant to have these documents translated **word for word** by a certified/official translator*.

The official translator must then send the translated documents directly to the NDHCB and not to the applicant.

IMPORTANT: *A certified/official translator is authorized to officially sign and stamp translations. All translated documents need to have the seal of a certified/official translator to be considered; and all translations can be audited for accuracy.

The NDHCB will accept electronically submitted translations (on disk or USB key) 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 that a print copy of the translated document is not required under these conditions.

The cost of any translation of documents into English or French is the responsibility of the applicant.

5. Application Process

5.1 Applying for an assessment of credentials

An applicant that graduated from a non-accredited dental hygiene program that wishes to become registered as a dental hygienist in Canada must first apply to the NDHCB for an Assessment of their educational credentials and qualifications to determine if they are substantially equivalent to the Canadian dental hygiene educational standards. The application form can be found under Appendix A. No assessment of credentials will be started until the applicant has fulfilled the minimum credentialing educational criteria 1, 2, and 3 (see [Credentialing Standards](#)) and paid all fees.

5.2 Fees

The current fees associated with an equivalency assessment can be found in the most current NDHCB Schedule of Fees.

The NDHCB ONLY accepts money order/certified cheque or credit card payment (VISA OR MASTERCARD) or VISA Debit card in Canadian funds for the appropriate fee and applicable taxes, payable to the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board of Canada. Personal cheques will not be accepted. The Assessment Fee is non-refundable unless the applicant cannot meet criteria 1, 2 or 3 from the [Credentialing Standards](#). If those criteria are not met, the NDHCB will NOT assess the applicant's dental hygiene credentials, will reimburse the eligibility application's fee minus a non-refundable administration fee of \$112.50 + applicable taxes, and the applicant will be denied eligibility to write the NDHCB Examination.

6. Documentation Policies

All required documents MUST be sent by mail or courier service or delivered in person (see [mailing address](#)). The NDHCB also accepts faxed or emailed applications and documents but only if the originator of the material can be determined without a doubt by the NDHCB.

In order to process any application, the NDHCB needs all the required documents listed on the Assessment for Eligibility Application Checklist (see Appendix C). As previously mentioned, if any of the documents listed are in a language other than English or French, they must be submitted in the original language and it will be the responsibility of the applicant to have a certified word for word translation done and sent to our office as per our [Translation Policy](#).

In order to complete the assessment of educational credentials and qualifications, the NDHCB reserves the right to contact any relevant institutions and its representatives listed on the signed Document Release Form (Appendix B) for verification purposes and/or to request additional information. If the applicant attended more than one institution in order to complete their dental hygiene studies, each institution must be sent a signed copy of the Appendix B to be filled out by the institution and returned to the NDHCB office with the requested supporting documentation.

If documents are not submitted properly, this will delay the processing of the application. Please note that some documents must be sent to the NDHCB by the applicant while others must be sent directly from the educational institution or another institution/organization directly to the NDHCB offices (see Appendix C).

IMPORTANT: No assessment will be started until all the required documentation and payment of fees have been received.

Once all documentation is received and the assessment is started, the entire process is usually completed within 8 to 10 weeks. The assessment will take longer if the assessor needs to do additional research, verify documents or requires additional information.

An application for an assessment of educational credentials and qualifications to determine eligibility to write the NDHCE is valid for one (1) year from the date the application form and payment was received by the NDHCB. After one (1) year, if the applicant has failed to meet ALL the 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 in the NDHCB office and will not be released to the applicant. Original documents will only be returned if specifically indicated on the Application Form and the applicable fees have been paid. If an applicant wishes to reactivate their file, they must provide the NDHCB with a new application form, pay the appropriate fees, and submit additional and/or currently required documentation.

If an applicant submits fraudulent, forged, altered or irregular documents, the NDHCB will neither continue nor complete the assessment of credentials of the applicant. A letter outlining our findings will be sent to the applicant or their agent, fees will not be refunded, and all the documents received will become the property of the NDHCB and will not be released to the applicant or their agent. All provincial and territorial Canadian dental hygiene regulatory authorities and all recognized evaluation services may also 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.

7. Documentation Requirements and Process:

Depending on whether an applicant graduated from a non-accredited dental hygiene program in or outside of Canada, the documentation needed to determine the applicant's eligibility to write the NDHCB Examination varies and is outlined below (please note that the numbering system is based on the Appendix C).

A. For a Graduate of a Dental Hygiene Program from outside of Canada (therefore not accredited by CDAC):

1. A completed **Application Form** for an Assessment of Educational Credentials and Qualifications (Appendix A) - signed and dated;
2. The appropriate **payment of fees** (see NDHCB Schedule of Fees);
3. **Proof of legal name change:** If an applicant has legally changed their name, they must send the NDHCB a notarized copy of proof of legal document showing the name change (for example, a marriage certificate). This is not required if the applicant has not changed their name, and all the documents that the NDHCB will receive reflect this;
4. An original or a notarized copy of **dental hygiene diploma/degree**, submitted by the applicant. Simple photocopies are not acceptable;
5. A **legal description** of the practice of dental hygiene in the jurisdiction/country of education. This document must be submitted directly by the dental hygiene regulatory authority from the country of graduation;
6. N/A;
7. An official **transcript** of grades/mark sheets/academic records, submitted directly to the NDHCB office by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation;
8. A report for post secondary **educational credential evaluation**, which includes the country of education, the 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:
 - World Education Services (WES) - wes.org/ca
 - International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) - bcit.ca/ices
 - International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) - employment.alberta.ca/immigration/4512.html

NOTE: Application forms are available on the websites listed above.

9. **Educational Documentation:** After completing page 1 of Appendix B, the applicant must have their educational institution complete the rest of Appendix B (Document Release Form). All official course syllabi/course outlines or official statement of course description from the

time/years of study of the applicant must be submitted to the NDHCB directly by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation. These documents must include all the following:

- i. Length (years, months) of the program;
- ii. A program catalogue or a list of each course taken in the dental hygiene program and the weighting factors for each course (total number of hours/hours per week);
- iii. Curriculum/course information including:
 - detailed course description;
 - detailed course content/objectives/learning outcomes/competencies;
 - number of hours for each course in terms of theory, laboratory, preclinical and clinical hours;
 - description of practical preclinical/laboratory experiences;
 - description of practical clinical experiences including location, number of hours, types of direct client care dental hygiene services provided and average number/types of clients/patients treated while a student and applicable clinical reports/evaluation report cards (NOTE that direct client care activities can be in the school dental hygiene clinic, specialty practices, in long-term care facilities, in hospitals, in public health settings, in educational institutions, etc.);
 - description of the methods of evaluation 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.)

The NDHCB will not accept any educational documents from any other source than the applicant's dental hygiene educational institution and its representative(s).

IMPORTANT: Documentation must be submitted in the original language of instruction.

10. N/A;
11. **Appendix D** – Applicant Self-Evaluation of Educational Credentials and Qualifications Form;
12. **Appendix E** – Applicant Continuing Competence Activities Report; and
13. **Appendix F** – Applicant Current and Former Employers Report.

B. For a Graduate of a Canadian Dental Hygiene Program not accredited by CDAC:

1. A completed **Application Form** for an Assessment of Educational Credentials and Qualifications (Appendix A) - signed and dated;
2. The appropriate **payment of fees** (see NDHCB Schedule of Fees);
3. **Proof of legal name change:** If an applicant has legally changed their name, they must send the NDHCB a notarized copy of proof of legal document showing the name change (for example, a marriage certificate). This is not required if the applicant has not changed their name, and all the documents that the NDHCB will receive reflect this;
4. An original or a notarized copy of **dental hygiene diploma/degree**, submitted by the applicant. Simple photocopies are not acceptable;
5. N/A;

6. An official statement confirming the dental hygiene program is established as a separate school, faculty, division or department **recognized by the appropriate government agency** in the province/territory 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 or the government agency;
7. An official **transcript** of grades/mark sheets/academic records submitted directly to our office by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation.
8. N/A;
9. **Educational Documentation:** After completing page 1 of Appendix B, the applicant must have their educational institution complete the rest of Appendix B (Document Release Form). All official course syllabi/course outlines or official statement of course description from the time/years of study of the applicant must be submitted to the NDHCB directly by the dental hygiene educational institution of graduation. These documents must include all the following:
 - i. Length (years, months) of the program;
 - ii. A program catalogue or a list of each course studied in the dental hygiene program and the weighting factors for each course;
 - iii. Curriculum/course information including:
 - detailed course description;
 - detailed course content/objectives/learning outcomes/competencies;
 - number of hours for each course in terms of theory, laboratory, preclinical and clinical hours;
 - description of practical preclinical/laboratory experiences;
 - description of practical clinical experiences including location, number of hours, types of direct client care dental hygiene services provided and average number/types of clients/patients treated while a student and applicable clinical reports/ evaluation report cards (NOTE that direct client care activities can be in the school dental hygiene clinic, specialty practices, in long-term care facilities, in hospitals, in public health settings, in educational institutions, etc.);
 - description of the methods of evaluation 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.)

The NDHCB will not accept any educational documents from any source other than the applicant's dental hygiene educational institution.

10. Letter from the educational institution with confirmation that it has applied to CDAC for accreditation including **CDAC's recommendations** and the institution's response as well as measures taken or to be taken since CDAC's report;
11. **Appendix D** - Applicant Self-Evaluation of Educational Credentials and Qualifications Form;
12. N/A
13. N/A

NOTE: FILL OUT APPENDIX C – ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND RETURN WITH YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION.

8. Communication with Applicants

If there are any questions during the application process, please contact the office by email at exam@ndhcb.ca or by phone at 613-260-8156.

8.1 Acknowledgment of Reception of Application and Supporting Documents

Once the NDHCB has received the application for an equivalency assessment and the documents, the NDHCB will send correspondence to the applicant confirming what has been received and what is still missing.

8.2 Tracking of Documents Received

If an applicant wants to track what documents the NDHCB has received on their behalf, they should ensure these documents are sent to the NDHCB office by registered mail, or by an international courier service that can confirm that the documents have been properly received. The NDHCB staff will also update the applicant's Eligibility Application Checklist Document (Appendix C) when documents are received on their behalf. The applicant may request by email a copy of the updated Appendix C from the NDHCB staff. They may also email or phone the NDHCB office to inquire about the completeness of their application file.

If the NDHCB receives all documents in the format required, the NDHCB will update the application status and begin the applicant's assessment. If the documents are not in the required format, the NDHCB will send the Eligibility Application Checklist Document (Appendix C) back the applicant with instructions on how to submit the documents correctly.

8.3 Release of Information to a Third Party

If an applicant wishes to authorize a third party/agent to act on their behalf in any aspect of the application process, a power of attorney will be required.

Information, correspondence, and results of the assessment report will be given to the applicant OR to their agent in writing. No information will be released over the telephone. Each applicant's written request to forward copies of documents in their 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.

9. Eligibility Assessment Policies and Decisions

The NDHCB determines eligibility to write the NDHCB Examination, in accordance with established criteria. One copy of the assessment report result will be issued to the applicant or their agent. A successful assessment result establishes eligibility for the applicant to apply to write the NDHCE within a period of **three (3) years from the date of approval**.

When an applicant's assessment of educational credentials and qualifications is deemed eligible to write the NDHCE, a letter to the applicant will outline the process on how to apply for the examination (NDHCE). The letter will also include the date of the next scheduled examination for which the applicant is eligible to apply. To apply for the NDHCE, the applicant must complete the NDHCE application form and pay the appropriate examination fee and applicable taxes (see NDHCB website at www.ndhcb.ca under How to apply for the NDHCE).

An applicant who did not have their educational credentials and qualifications deemed equivalent to those of a graduate of a Canadian accredited dental hygiene program will NOT be eligible to write the NDHCE. The assessment report sent to the applicant will outline specific deficiencies and suggest

other mechanisms that may be available to pursue eligibility to write the NDHCE in the future. Once an applicant has been notified, in writing, of their ineligibility to write the NDHCB Examination, the applicant's assessment of credentials' file is closed. If the applicant wishes to reactivate the file, a new application, appropriate fees, and proper supporting documentation must be submitted.

Assessment of educational credentials and qualifications decisions and reasons reports may differ over time as the NDHCB's dental hygiene program assessment decisions are based on the most recent Canadian educational standards for the profession.

The NDHCB assessment of educational credentials and qualifications exists for the sole purpose of determining eligibility to write the NDHCE. The fact that an applicant who graduated from a non-accredited dental hygiene program might be deemed eligible to write the NDHCE after an assessment of their educational credentials is completed, does not mean that the dental hygiene program from which the applicant graduated from is deemed accredited or equivalent to an accredited dental hygiene program in Canada. All assessments of educational credentials and qualifications are done on an individual basis.

10. Notice of Right to Formal Review

Any applicant who is denied eligibility and believes that they were treated unfairly can request a formal review.

A written request for a formal review must be sent to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NDHCB and received within forty-five (45) days of the date from which the assessment report was sent to the applicant outlining the reasons for denying eligibility to write the NDHCB Examination. The request for a formal review must explain in detail the circumstances surrounding the alleged irregularity/irregularities or perceived oversight(s) and must include supporting evidence.

The CEO will acknowledge receipt of the request for a formal review and conduct an investigation to determine if the alleged irregularity/irregularities/oversight(s) is/are sufficiently supported and if it/they significantly affected the outcome of the decision.

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

Following receipt of the CEO's decision, if the applicant still feels that their request for a formal review was not accorded due consideration, the applicant can choose to submit an appeal to the NDHCB Board of Governors. This appeal must be sent by registered mail, accompanied by a fee (see most recent NDHCB Fee Schedule) - 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 applicant's receipt of the CEO'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 applicant'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:

1. Confirm that the policies and procedures pertinent to the situation were followed and uphold the decision of the CEO;

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 CEO for a decision based on reviewing or following the policies and procedures completely; OR
3. Take whatever action the Board of Governors considers appropriate that is not inconsistent with the generally accepted principles of the NDHCB.

11. List of Appendices

APPENDIX A – APPLICATION FORM FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF CREDENTIALS

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENT RELEASE FORM

APPENDIX C – ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

APPENDIX D – APPLICANT SELF-EVALUATION OF CREDENTIALS FORM

APPENDIX E – APPLICANT CONTINUING COMPETENCE ACTIVITIES REPORT

APPENDIX F – APPLICANT CURRENT AND FORMER EMPLOYERS REPORT