Application to American Board of Dental Specialties

A. Introduction. The American Board of Dental Specialties (ABDS) is the official certifying body of dental specialty boards. ABDS' Member Boards share a common interest in supporting independent verification and standardization of high-quality certification processes for national recognition of dental specialists. The ABDS offers standards and procedures for determining the quality of certifying boards and provides comprehensive support for evaluating the board certification examination process in coordination with the applicant board. Certification of a dental specialist through a Member Board assures the public that the dental specialist has completed a comprehensive educational process and has undergone verifiable evaluation of his or her knowledge, judgment and skills required to demonstrate expertise in the respective specialty area.

B. Member Boards. The ABDS is an independent, non-profit organization that includes approved dental specialty boards, officially referred to as “Member Boards,” with shared goals and objectives related to the certification of dental specialists. Member Boards are charged with the process of evaluation and certification of boards seeking certification as a dental specialty.

C. Specialty and Subspecialty. ABDS recognizes that there are varying levels of education and training required for board certification within specific areas of dentistry. Therefore, ABDS has established two (2) Dental Specialty Levels. The Levels and their specific requirements for education, training and experience are:

Level I – Dental Specialty
Certifying boards seeking Dental Specialty must require a minimum of two (2) full-time, formal, advanced educational programs that are a minimum of two (2) years in duration and are presented by recognized educational institutions; or require 400 didactic hours and the equivalent of one (1) year of clinical practice.

Level II – Subspecialty of General Dentistry
Certifying boards seeking Subspecialty of General Dentistry must require a minimum of six (6) months formal education presented by a recognized educational institution; or a minimum of 100 didactic hours plus the equivalent of a minimum of one (1) year of clinical practice.

D. Criteria for recognition of Dental Specialty Boards. A certifying board that is seeking membership in the American Board of Dental Specialties must:

1. Reflect a distinct and well-defined area of expertise in dental practice, above and beyond that provided at the level of pre-doctoral dental education, that is founded in evidence-based science, contributes to professional growth and education, and concerns the practice of dentistry.
2. Develop a rigorous standard of preparation and evaluation in the dental specialty area.
3. Provide evidence of psychometric evaluation of the written and oral examination processes for a period of time sufficient to ensure validity and reliability.
4. Provide an effective mechanism to maintain certification.
5. Exist as an independent, self-governing entity whose main purpose is to evaluate candidates for board certification.

**E. Documentation needed to determine eligibility and approval as a Dental Specialty Board of the ABDS.** The application should include all of the following information:

1. Definition of the dental specialty that reflects a distinct and well-defined area of expertise in dental practice with documentation that the field is founded in evidence-based science, contributes to professional growth and education, and concerns the practice of dentistry

2. Background and history of the board
   - The name of the certifying board
   - The objectives and function of the certifying board
   - A description of the history of the board including the date founded and the names and addresses of the founding members and their qualifications
   - The composition and governance structure of the certifying board, including committees and staff duties
   - A list of current directors and officers of the board, their education, experience and qualifications, and the date when their terms expire
   - Names and descriptions of each sponsoring organization or professional group including letters of support (Note: Sponsoring organizations may not have any governance control over the specialty board)

3. Board documents
   - Constitution and bylaws, including all amendments
   - Mission statement, if not part of the bylaws
   - Articles of Incorporation
   - Application form for candidates for certification
   - How qualifications for board eligibility are made available to applicants for certification
   - The board’s website address and any printed literature for the credentialing process
   - Approved minutes detailing any appeals, complaints, ethics issues or any legal or IRS encounters against the board within the last five (5) years
   - Evidence of appropriate corporate governance (e.g., policies regarding conflict of interest, whistleblower, document retention, gift acceptance, board insurance, financial audit)

4. Financial status
   - Documentation of an operational budget adequate to financially support a valid, objective program of candidate evaluation, including quarterly financial statements and balance sheets for the current year and previous two (2) years, most recent Form 990 submitted to the IRS
   - Financial audit policy and copy of the most recent audit (i.e., within last 5 years)
   - Current fees for diplomate renewal and examinations
5. Status of Advanced Education Programs
   - List all nationally recognized educational institutions providing residency training programs, as well as the duration of these programs and the total number of training positions available in each residency program.
   - For Level I Dental Specialty certification: A minimum of two (2) residency programs of two (2) years or more duration must be fully operational within recognized educational institutions at the time of application. Policies regarding alternative educational programs as an option for meeting partial requirements for board eligibility must explain how these programs are an acceptable alternative to on-site advanced educational programs.
   - For Level II Subspecialty of General Dentistry certification: A minimum of six (6) months of advanced education within a recognized educational institution at the time of application. Policies regarding alternative educational programs as an option for meeting partial requirements for board eligibility must explain how these programs are an acceptable alternative to on-site advanced educational programs.
   - Detail the goals, objectives and competencies required of the program.
   - Detail the core curriculum of the program that achieves the stated goals, objectives and competencies listed above.
   - Detail programmatic requirements of the certifying board, in addition to curricular guidelines listed above, for the advanced education programs (e.g., evaluation of residents, approval of faculty, etc.).

6. Current examination processes and eligibility criteria
   - Provide an overview of the current examination process and any changes in the last 5 years.

7. Examination development and administration processes
   - Describe the process used to develop content areas of the written examination, the total number of examination questions and percentage in each content area on the written examination.
   - Describe the procedures for administration of written examinations including scheduling, number of proctors, their qualifications, duration of examinations, security, rules during examination, and determining the cutoff for passing.
   - Provide a detailed report on the psychometric validity of the written examination.
   - Describe how the oral examinations are developed regarding types of cases, content areas examined, simulation if used, etc.
   - Provide a report by a qualified psychometrician that details the psychometric validity and reliability of the oral examination.
   - Describe the procedures for administration of oral examinations including scheduling, time allotted for examination, security rules, etc. Describe the qualifications of oral examiners, number of examiners per exam, and how inter- and intra-examiner reliability is promoted.
   - Describe the process of scoring and determining the success or failure of candidates who sit for the oral examination.
   - List the number and percent of board-eligible examinees that failed either the written or oral examinations in the last five (5) years.
   - Describe the process for retaking either the written or oral examination.
• Describe the appeals process.

8. Current composition of diplomates
   Describe the types of diplomates and their criteria (full diplomate, retired diplomate, other, etc.).
   • Provide a breakdown of criteria by which current diplomates attained board eligibility (e.g., two (2) or more years of full-time residency, one (1) year full-time residency with other requirements, continuing education with practice experience, etc.). The criteria should ensure that previous diplomates underwent a rigorous process to determine board eligibility.
   • If applicable, describe the process by which diplomates were not formally examined for diplomate status (e.g., eligibility requirements, year(s) these processes were allowed, number of diplomates granted diplomate status in this manner, etc.).
   • Provide an estimate of the total number of dentists engaged in full-time (> 80%) or part-time (> 50%) practice of the specialty with or without diplomate status.
   • Project the anticipated number of diplomates in the next ten (10) years.

9. Recertification
   • Describe when a candidate has to complete re-certification.
   • Describe the process for recertification.
   • Describe the consequences for lack of recertification or payment of fees
   • List the number of diplomates who have had their diplomate status revoked due to lack of recertification, lack of payment or other issues, described by year and reason, for the past 5 years.

E. Formal process for approving dental certifying boards
   1. Application Process
      a. An application for approval as a dental specialty certifying board is available through the ABDS’ Executive Director at 312-818-2070.
      b. The completed application together with a non-refundable application fee of $5,000 should be directed to:
         American Board of Dental Specialities
         Executive Director
         211 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 250C
         Chicago, IL 60611
         312-818-2070   Fax 888-37103695

   2. Approval as a Dental Specialty Board
      a. Following approval by the ABDS, the newly approved dental specialty board may announce through its members, its website or in press releases, that it has been certified as a dental specialty board by the American Board of Dental Specialties.
      b. The approved board will become a member of ABDS with all rights and privileges as outlined in the ABDS Bylaws.

   3. Denial as a Dental Specialty Board
      a. If the application is deemed incomplete, ABDS will send a letter outlining any perceived deficiencies after which the applicant board has thirty (30) days to respond and to address the deficiencies. Within ninety (90) days after receipt of the applicant board’s response/additional information, ABDS will issue its decision.
b. Should the decision of ABDS be to deny the application, the applicant board may file a written appeal to the ABDS Executive Director within three (3) months after receipt of the denial. The applicant board may request reconsideration and may be granted an informal hearing with ABDS.