

SECTION I:  
FUNDAMENTALS OF  
PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION -  
UNDERGRADUATE DENTAL DEGREE

# FUNDAMENTALS OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION – UNDERGRADUATE DENTAL DEGREE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is committed to the highest standards of professionalism in dental practice. Accreditation of undergraduate dental degree programmes was introduced as a quality assurance mechanism. The aim is to promote public confidence as well as to assure society and the profession that the quality of dental education and standards for award of a degree in Dentistry are safeguarded and continually enhanced.

The accreditation process assists dental faculties/schools in the attainment of standards with regard to structures, functions, educational processes as well as the performance of graduates. It serves to provide a professional judgement of the quality of dental education and to encourage continued improvement thereof. In this context, accreditation is concerned with both quality assurance and quality enhancement. It seeks to maximise potential strengths of the programme whilst assuring quality dental education.

The document for accreditation of undergraduate dental degree programmes was first developed in 2002. Several revisions were made, particularly on the section “Standards and Criteria for Dental Degree Programme”. The Dental Deans’ Council had made several proposals on students learning time (SLT), competencies of new dental graduates in Malaysia and minimum clinical experience in competency-based assessment. These proposals were deliberated by the relevant committees and incorporated into the current edition of the accreditation document. This document outlines the policies, standards and procedures as well as the organisations and committees involved in the accreditation process.

## 2. AIM OF DOCUMENT

This document is developed for the advancement of the standards of undergraduate dental degree education in this country through the formulation of policies and principles for the purpose of making judgements and decisions on accreditation.

## 3. ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) which replaced the *Lembaga Akreditasi Negara* (LAN) on 1 November 2007 is the sole quality assurance agency in Malaysia. It oversees both public and private higher education providers (HEP).

The main role of MQA is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications. The MQA is also responsible for monitoring and overseeing quality assurance practices and accreditation of national higher education.

The MQA works closely with the Malaysian Dental Council (MDC) through the Joint Technical Accreditation Committee (JTAC) in accreditation of dental education programmes.

After having considered the recommendations of the JTAC, the MDC under Section 52 (1) of the MQA Act 2007 may approve or refuse the granting of accreditation.

## 4. THE JOINT TECHNICAL ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE (JTAC)

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The JTAC was established by the MDC to fulfil section 51(1) of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 [Act 679] “A *Joint Technical Committee consisting of representatives of the relevant professional body, an officer of the Agency and such other persons as may be deemed necessary by the relevant professional body shall be established by the relevant professional body*”.

“Agency” means the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) established under section 4 of the Act 679.

The relevant professional body in this context refers to the Malaysian Dental Council (MDC).

The JTAC is accountable to the MDC.

### 4.2 FUNCTION

The functions of JTAC are as follows:

- i. To consider applications for accreditation of dental programmes<sup>1</sup> under subsection 50(1)<sup>2</sup> of Act 679;
- ii. To make recommendations to grant or refuse an application for accreditation of a dental programme under subsection 52(1)<sup>3</sup> of Act 679;
- iii. To make recommendations for imposing conditions for accreditation under section 54<sup>4</sup> of Act 679;
- iv. To make arrangements to conduct an institutional audit under subsection 52(3)<sup>5</sup> of Act 679;
- v. To make recommendations for the revocation of accreditation of a dental programme under section 55<sup>6</sup> of Act 679;

<sup>1</sup>Dental programmes refer to dental undergraduate programmes. The definition of ‘dental programmes’ does not include postgraduate dental programmes.

<sup>2</sup>Subsection 50(1) Act 679: An application by a higher education provider for the accreditation of its local or foreign professional programme or professional qualification which complies with the Framework shall be made to the Agency within the specified period in the certificate of provisional accreditation in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

<sup>3</sup>Subsection 52(1) Act 679: After having considered the recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee under section 51, the relevant professional body may –

- (a) approve the granting of accreditation; or
- (b) refuse the granting of accreditation, stating the grounds for refusal.

<sup>4</sup>Section 54 Act 679: The relevant professional body may, upon recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee at the time of or at any time after a certificate of accreditation has been issued under subsection 52(2), impose such conditions as it may deem necessary or expedient and may vary, amend or revoke any such conditions or impose new or additional conditions from time to time.

<sup>5</sup>Subsection 52(3) Act 679: For the purpose of considering an application under subsection 50(1), any officer of the professional body and the Agency may conduct an institutional audit.

<sup>6</sup>Section 55 of Act 679 – see footer overleaf.

<sup>6</sup>Section 55(1) Act 679: Subject to the provisions of this section, the relevant professional body may, upon recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee at any time, withdraw the approval for accreditation granted to a higher education provider under paragraph 52(1)(a) and the Agency shall revoke the certificate of accreditation –  
(a) if the higher education provider fails to comply with the Framework or any part of it; or

- vi. Other functions as determined by the MDC that may include:
  - a. to regularly review the accreditation standards and procedures to ensure relevance to dental education before submitting them to the accreditation authorities;
  - b. to ensure an adequate pool of trained assessors;
  - c. to propose panel members for accreditation visits;
  - d. to respond to complaints or appeals concerning the accreditation process and to make proposals.

### 4.3 MEMBERS

The members of the JTAC shall be as follows:

- i. The Chairperson shall be the Principal Director of Oral Health, Ministry of Health by virtue of the post
- ii. The Deputy Chairperson shall be the Director of Oral Health Practice and Development, Oral Health Programme, Ministry of Health by virtue of the post
- iii. One (1) member from the Oral Health Programme, Ministry of Health
- iv. The Chairman of the Dental Deans' Council
- v. Three (3) Deans from the dental faculties of local Institutions for Higher Education
- vi. One (1) member from Malaysian Dental Council
- vii. One (1) member from the Malaysian Dental Association (MDA)
- viii. One (1) member from the dental profession
- ix. Two (2) representatives from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA)
  - One (1) representative from Accreditation Division (Science and Medicine) [*Bahagian Akreditasi (Sains dan Perubatan)*], MQA; and
  - One (1) representative from Coordination and Quality Reference Division [*Bahagian Koordinasi dan Rujukan Jaminan Kualiti*], MQA
- x. Two (2) representatives from Ministry of Education (Higher Education):
  - One (1) representative from the Academic Development Management Division, Department of Higher Education [*Bahagian Pengurusan Pembangunan Akademik, Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi*]; and
  - One (1) representative from the Registration and Standard Division, Department of Higher Education [*Bahagian Pendaftaran dan Piawaian, Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi*]

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(b) if the higher education provider breaches any condition for which the accreditation has been granted.

- (2) A written notice of the intention to withdraw the approval and to revoke the certificate of accreditation under subsection (1) shall be served by the Agency, upon the direction of the relevant professional body, on the higher education provider and the notice shall specify the grounds for such withdrawal and revocation.
- (3) The higher education provider shall be given an opportunity to make written representations within thirty days from the date of the notice in subsection (2).
- (4) After the expiry of the period of thirty days stated in subsection (3) and after considering any representation made under that subsection, the relevant professional body upon recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee shall—
  - a) issue a warning and give directions for the higher education provider to rectify the situation to the satisfaction of the relevant professional body within a specified period; or
  - b) proceed with the proposed action to withdraw the approval for accreditation.
- (5) If the higher education provider fails to rectify the situation as required under paragraph (4)(a), the Agency may, upon the decision of the relevant professional body, proceed to revoke the certificate of accreditation.
- (6) Where the certificate of accreditation has been revoked, the Agency shall enter the date of revocation into the Register and shall give notice of the revocation to the relevant authority.

The Secretary of JTAC shall be jointly held by the Secretary of MDC and the Deputy Director of the Accreditation and Globalisation Section of the Oral Health Programme, MOH.

Members who are unable to attend the JTAC meetings are not allowed to send their representatives, EXCEPT for members from MQA [4.3 (ix)] and MOE [4.3 (x)].

#### **4.4 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS**

The Chairperson shall request for representatives from the participating agencies (MOH, MQA, MOE and MDC)

The Chairperson shall request the Deans of Institutions for Higher Education to indicate their interest to be considered for membership in JTAC.

The President of the MDC shall make the selection and appointments.

The President of the MDC shall appoint one member from the dental profession.

The President of the MDC shall appoint the members for a term of 3 years; EXCEPT for the Chairman of the Dental Deans' Council, the Deans of the dental faculties of local Institutions and the Secretary of the MDC, who shall be members of JTAC for the duration of their term of office.

All members are eligible to vote on issues raised.

The Chairperson shall have the casting vote.

#### **4.5 SECRETARIAT**

##### **4.5.1 JOINT TECHNICAL ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE (JTAC)**

The Secretary of the MDC and the officers of the Accreditation and Globalisation Section of the Oral Health Programme, MOH shall be the secretariat for the JTAC. The Secretariat of the JTAC shall be located at the Oral Health Programme, Ministry of Health.

##### **4.5.2 OTHER COMMITTEES**

The MQA shall be the secretariat for the management of applications from local Institutions of Higher Education.

The Department of Higher Education (*Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi*), MOE shall be the secretariat for programme approval from local HEP.

The Coordination and Quality Reference Division (*Bahagian Koordinasi dan Rujukan Jaminan Kualiti*), MQA shall be the secretariat to manage local and foreign qualifications for the purpose of appointments in the public service.

## 4.6 FUNCTIONS OF JTAC SECRETARIAT

The functions of the JTAC Secretariat shall be as follows:

- i. Maintain documents  
The secretariat shall maintain the following documents:
  - a. guidelines on criteria and standards for accreditation of dental programmes
  - b. documents pertaining to the procedures and processes related to accreditation
  - c. documents relating to applications for accreditation and the accreditation process
  - d. the Terms of Reference for the JTAC
- ii. Facilitate the process of accreditation
- iii. Monitor the progress of accreditation
- iv. Prepare the minutes of JTAC meetings and reports
- v. Submit recommendations to the relevant authorities
- vi. Select and collate all relevant decisions and operational policy statements
- vii. Handle all correspondence relating to JTAC.

## 5. AREAS OF EVALUATION

The guidelines that were originally formulated were based on nine (9) areas as outlined below:

- Area 1: Vision and Mission and Educational Objectives
- Area 2: Curriculum Design and Delivery and Learning Outcomes
- Area 3: Assessment of Students
- Area 4: Student Selection and Student Support Services
- Area 5: Academic and Support Staff
- Area 6: Educational Resources
- Area 7: Programme Monitoring and Review
- Area 8: Leadership, Governance and Administration
- Area 9: Continual Quality Improvement

Over the years, these guidelines served the Panel of Assessors (POA) well in performing their tasks. However, it was noted that there were significant overlaps in the statements of the standards and criteria. Hence the document was revised and reorganised from nine (9) to seven (7) areas. This is consistent with the lead taken by MQA to review the Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA). The seven (7) areas are as follows:

- Area 1: Programme Development and Delivery
- Area 2: Assessment of Student Learning
- Area 3: Student Selection and Support Services
- Area 4: Academic Staff
- Area 5: Educational Resources
- Area 6: Programme Management
- Area 7: Programme Monitoring, Review and Continual Quality Improvement

This Document is not prescriptive or rigid that stifles initiatives, development and expansion in the field of dentistry. It provides a framework that enables dental faculties to develop aims

and objectives with the overriding goal to produce dental graduates who are able to practice safe and quality dentistry independently.

These standards are sometimes stated in a fashion that is not amenable to quantification or precise definition because the nature of evaluation is qualitative and can only be accomplished through the exercise of professional judgement by qualified persons. The guidelines focus on dental undergraduate education within the matrix of multiple activities in a dental faculty.

These Standards and Criteria for Programme Accreditation - Undergraduate Dental Degree as presented in Section II will be subjected to review from time to time by the JTAC and other relevant authorities.

## **6. PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITATION**

The procedures for accreditation require an integrated approach involving both the JTAC and the HEP.

The JTAC is concerned with monitoring and ensuring compliance to the standards by the HEP whilst the HEP is responsible for the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of its processes and standards. The accreditation process is beneficial to the HEP as it necessitates a demanding periodic review of its processes and standards which includes areas such as the selection of students, objectives, curriculum, design and delivery, methods of teaching and learning, facilities, financial and human resources.

The HEP can derive additional benefits from the accreditation process. Such benefits include obtaining feedback from experts in various fields of dental education and shared experiences from institutions and the leverage from local authoritative reports in rectifying deficiencies.

The process of accreditation of a new dental education programme involves two stages - Provisional Accreditation and Full Accreditation. The flowchart for the Provisional and Full Accreditation processes are as shown in Figure 1 and 2.

### **6.1 PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION**

The purpose of Provisional Accreditation is to establish whether the HEP has met the stipulated minimum standards to commence the programme in relation to the predetermined areas of evaluation as in Section II.

#### **6.1.1 SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS**

The HEP needs to submit documents comprising of programme information to the MQA as follows.

<b>No</b>	<b>Name of Document</b>	<b>Code/Form</b>	<b>Copies</b>
1	Application for Provisional Accreditation of Programme	Form A	1 copy

2	Database document containing - Part A: Programme Information Part B: Status of Programme Part C: i. Programme Standards according to the “Guide to Preparing a Database for Programme Accreditation of Undergraduate Dental Degree”	MQA 01- Dental	4 hardcopies and 5 softcopies (in CD)
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The guide to preparing the programme database document is given in Section III.

### 6.1.2 VERIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS

The MQA will verify the completeness of documents submitted by the HEP in accordance with the stipulated requirements. If the documents are complete, the MQA will submit one copy to the secretariat of the JTAC. If the documents are incomplete, the HEP will have to resubmit them as required by the MQA.

### 6.1.3 PANEL OF ASSESSORS (POA)

The JTAC will propose the names of the POA to the MQA as indicated in the “Guide for the Conduct of Programme Evaluation Visit” as in Section IV.

### 6.1.4 DESKTOP ASSESSMENT

The POA will assess the programme information submitted by the HEP for compliance to the standards stipulated in the “Standards and Criteria for Programme Accreditation - Undergraduate Dental Degree” (Section II). The HEP may need to submit additional documents as requested by the POA for assessment. If the information in the accreditation document complies with the standards, the POA may conduct a visit to the institution.

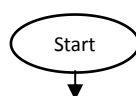
### 6.1.5 THE ACCREDITATION SURVEY VISIT

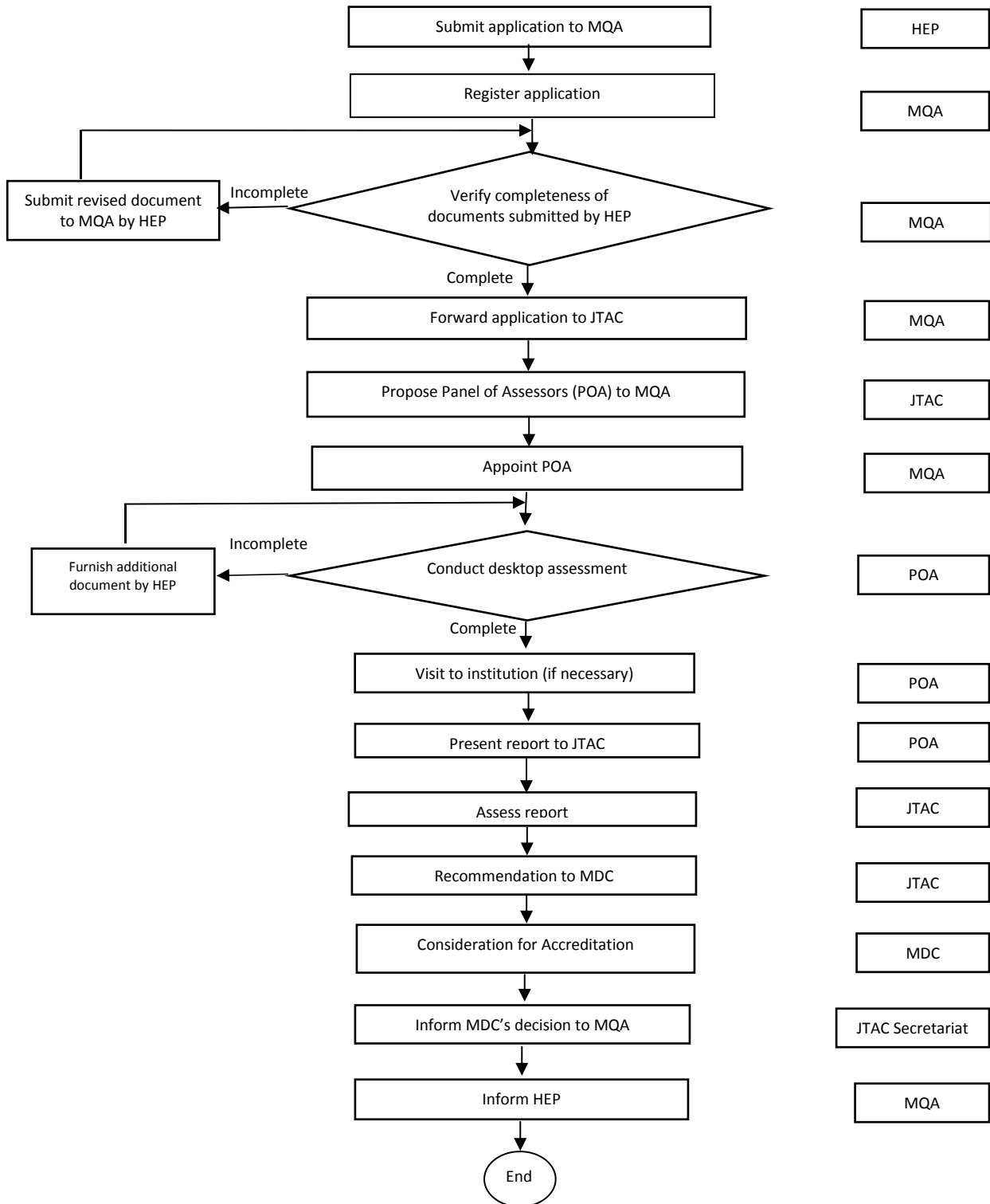
The POA will conduct a visit to the institution in accordance with the “Guide for the Conduct of Programme Evaluation Visit” to assess for compliance with the accreditation standards. The procedure for conducting the visit is outlined in the “Guide for the Conduct of Programme Evaluation Visit (Section IV).

### 6.1.6 THE ACCREDITATION REPORT

Based on the site visit and evaluation of the accreditation documents, the POA will prepare a report in accordance with the “Guide to Preparing Accreditation Report” (Section V). The chairman of the panel will then make a presentation to the JTAC. The JTAC will forward its recommendation to the MDC for consideration before decision by MQA. MQA will inform HEP of the decision.

**Figure 1: Flowchart for the Provisional Accreditation Process**





## 6.2 ACCREDITATION

The purpose of Accreditation is to attest whether the HEP has met the minimum standards set to conduct the programme in relation to predetermined areas of evaluation (Section II).

The term Accreditation is used when the HEP is granted accreditation for the 1<sup>st</sup> time following Provisional Accreditation. Subsequent to granting of Accreditation, it is mandatory for the HEP to renew its accreditation status.

Accreditation is granted for a fixed period of time and the date of the commencement of the accreditation period shall be from the day after the MDC decision is made or any other date that the MQA deems fit.

### 6.2.1 SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS

The HEP needs to submit documents comprising of updated programme information, a programme self-review report and other relevant supporting documents to MQA as follows:

No	Name of Document	Code/Form	Copies
1	Application for Full Accreditation of programme	Form B	1 copy
2	Database containing - Part A: Programme Information Part B: Status of Programme Part C: Programme Standards according to the "Guide to Preparing a Database for Programme Accreditation of Undergraduate Dental Degree"	MQA 02-Dental	4 hardcopies and 5 softcopies (in CD)
3.	Programme Self-review Report		
4.	Other supporting documents (e.g. Reports on actions taken on findings of previous accreditation visit & programme curriculum)		5 softcopies (in CD)

The Programme Self-review Report by the HEP should include the following:

- i. Strengths of the programme in meeting its goals
- ii. Areas of concern that need to be addressed
- iii. Strategies for maintaining and enhancing the strength of the programme
- iv. Steps that have been taken to address the problem areas
- v. Conclusion

The Guide to Writing a Programme Self-review Report is given in Section VI.

For Full Accreditation, the institution must submit the required accreditation documents when the first cohort of students reaches its final year (nine months before the students sit for their final professional examination).

For renewal of accreditation status, the institution needs to submit the accreditation documents to the MQA not less than nine months before the expiry of the current accreditation period.

### **6.2.2 VERIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS**

The MQA will verify the completeness of documents submitted by the HEP in accordance with the stipulated requirements. If the documents are complete, the MQA will submit one copy to the secretariat of the JTAC. If the documents are incomplete, the HEP will have to resubmit them as required by the MQA.

### **6.2.3 PANEL OF ASSESSORS**

The JTAC will propose the names of the POA to the MQA as indicated in the “Guide for the Conduct of Programme Evaluation Visit” (Section IV).

### **6.2.4 DESKTOP ASSESSMENT**

The POA will assess the programme information submitted by the HEP for compliance to the standards as stipulated in the “Standards and Criteria for Programme Accreditation - Undergraduate Dental Degree” (Section II). The HEP may need to submit additional documents as requested by the POA for assessment. If the information in the accreditation documents complies with the standards, the POA may conduct a visit to the institution.

### **6.2.5 ACCREDITATION VISIT**

The POA will conduct a visit to the institution in accordance with the “Guide for the Conduct of Programme Evaluation Visit” (Section IV) to assess for compliance to the accreditation standards.

### **6.2.6 THE ACCREDITATION REPORT**

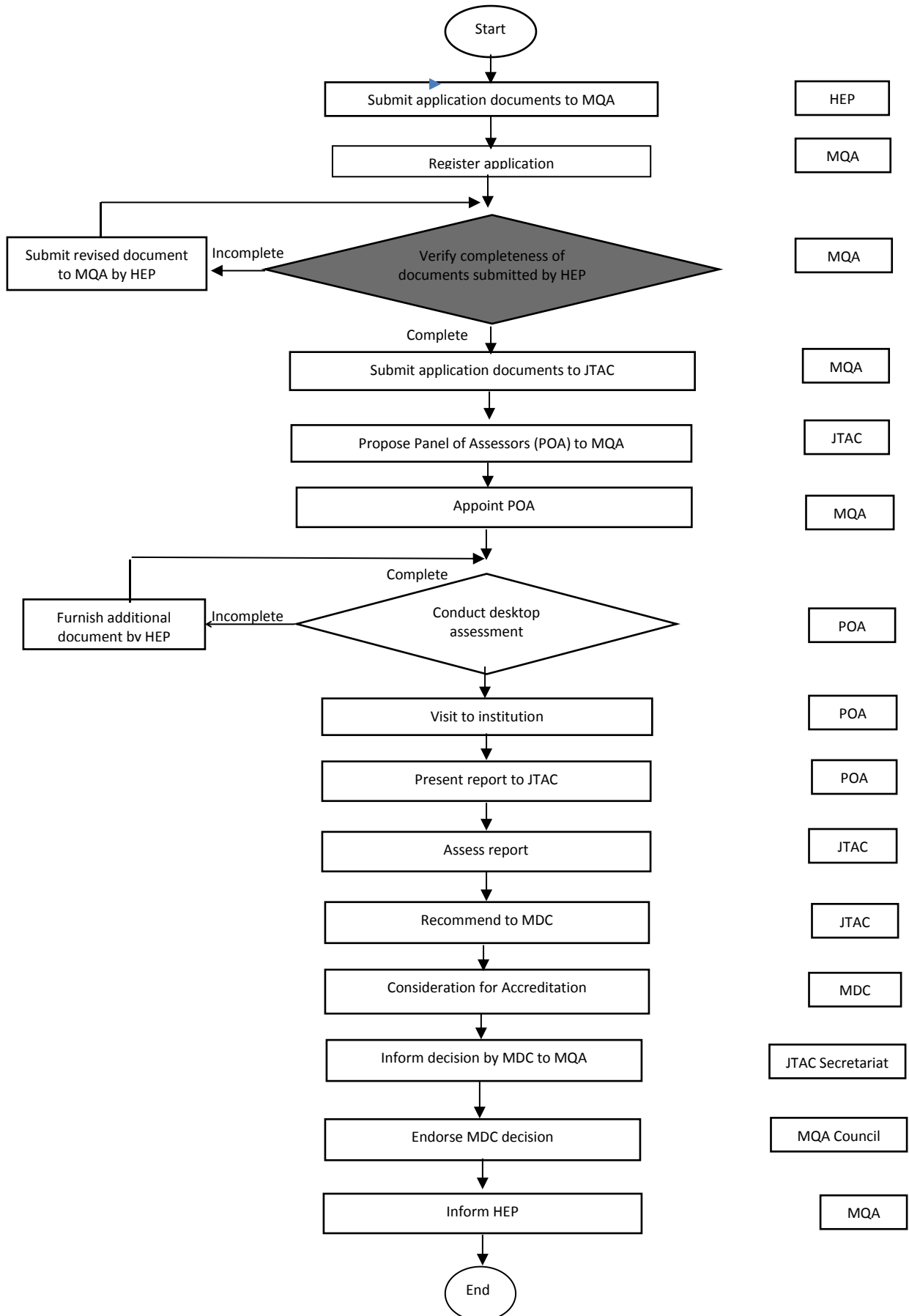
Based on the survey visit and evaluation of the accreditation documents, the POA will prepare a report in accordance with the “Guide to Preparing Accreditation Report” (Section V). The chairman of the panel will then make a presentation to the JTAC.

The JTAC will forward its recommendation to the MDC for approval. The MDC will inform the MQA of its decision. The MDC may (a) approve the granting of accreditation; or (b) refuse the granting of accreditation, stating the grounds for refusal as in the MQA Act 2007 Section 52(1). This decision will be forwarded to MQA for endorsement.

The maximum duration that can be granted for initial Full Accreditation is 3 years while the maximum period for renewal of Full Accreditation status is 5 years.

If there is a proposal for change of more than 30% in the curriculum, MQA must be notified of the changes. The MQA will request the JTAC to re-evaluate the programme.

**Figure 2: Flowchart for the Full Accreditation Process**



## **7. GRANTING OF ACCREDITATION**

### **7.1 PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION**

Upon issuance of certification of provisional accreditation by MQA, in order to start an undergraduate degree programme, the HEP needs to submit their application together with other relevant documents required by MOE for approval.

### **7.2 ACCREDITATION**

Upon issuance of certification of full accreditation for the first time, it is the responsibility of the HEP to submit their application together with other relevant documents to MDC for recognition of the qualification and institution.

## **8. SURVEILLANCE VISITS**

Surveillance visits are conducted in the period between the granting of Provisional Accreditation and Full Accreditation. The aim of these visits is to ensure the HEP meets the minimum standards required in relation to the predetermined areas of evaluation (Section II) for the pre-clinical and clinical phases of the programme.

Any HEP that has obtained Provisional Accreditation to start an undergraduate dental degree programme must work on the details of the Programme Self-review Report (PSRR) and the proposed programme information.

The JTAC holds the mandate to ensure that approved programmes are conducted in compliance to the predetermined standards.

A minimum of three surveillance visits are conducted for a dental undergraduate degree programme (DDS/BDS).

- i. Post-approval visit:  
This is conducted 3 months prior to intake of the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort  
The purpose of this visit is to monitor the readiness of the faculty to commence the dental degree programme as planned.
- ii. Pre-clinical phase visit:  
This is conducted in Semester 1 of Year Two  
The purpose of this visit is to ensure that the programme and facilities facilitates smooth transition from pre-clinical to clinical training
- iii. Clinical phase visit:  
This is conducted in Semester 1 of Year Four  
The purpose of this visit is to monitor and ensure the adequacy of clinical training

Monitoring at every phase of the 5-year course is essential to ensure the adequacy and appropriateness of the complex training required to produce competent dental professionals.

The JTAC will recommend the appointment of POA to conduct the scheduled visits. After the visits the panel will present its findings to the JTAC.

The JTAC will inform the MQA of any immediate actions/steps to be taken by the HEP to ensure efficiency and quality of the planned programme. Apart from the scheduled visits, the JTAC may request for additional visits as and when it deems necessary.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Accreditation of a dental education programme is one of the main approaches in quality assurance. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that graduates entering the healthcare system have achieved the required standards in their education. The accreditation process also reassures the public that dental degrees awarded are in accordance with established standards. The maintenance and enhancement of the achieved standards are ensured through regular visits to the institution as part of the accreditation process.

The first edition of these guidelines on accreditation of a dental degree programme was developed in 2002. Since then, intermittent enhancements to these guidelines were made in alignment with developments in the policies of the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), Malaysian Dental Council (MDC) and other related organisations.

This document is the second edition of the Code of Practice of Programme Accreditation – Undergraduate Dental Degree. It relates to dental degree programmes at undergraduate level only but excludes post-graduate and dental auxiliary programmes. All documents essential to the accreditation process has been consolidated and efforts have been made to harmonise this document with the MQA’s “Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation” (COPPA) and the requirements set by the MDC. It is expected that this document will serve as a reference for the HEP, POA, JTAC, MDC and others involved in the accreditation of dental education programmes.

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Accreditation - Undergraduate Dental Degree  
(Version 2)**

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