

An exciting change for NEBDN



Kate Kerslake,
CEO at
NEBDN, has answered

some questions on what Ofqual recognition means for NEBDN and future dental nurses/employers.

Introduction

The National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN), a Lancashire based charity, achieved Ofqual recognition in January 2023. This means they are formally regulated as an Awarding Organisation by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). NEBDN has been examining and awarding dental nursing qualifications for 80 years, and ensure that learners' knowledge, understanding and practical skills are assessed by highly experienced practitioners.

Who are Ofqual?

Ofqual are a non-ministerial government department, regulating qualifications, exams, and tests in England. Their purpose is to regulate for the validity and safe delivery of all applicable qualifications and assessments.

What is Ofqual recognition and what does it mean for NEBDN?

Joining a list of over 178 Ofqual recognised institutions, NEBDN will now join the register as a regulated Awarding Organisation. Being recognised by Ofqual offers future potential benefits to the users of NEBDN qualifications through the Regulated Qualifications Framework, including attaining UCAS points, building credits, attracting public funding,

and holding a qualification regulated by an internationally recognised organisation. Being recognised by them will increase the quality on what NEBDN develops. It also means we are one step closer to achieving our goal of being an End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).

What is an End-Point Assessment (EPA)?

An EPA is the final test for apprentices during their apprenticeship. It is designed to be an objective and impartial assessment of an apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviours. Activities are different for every apprenticeship, but they all follow the same overall structure. NEBDN has applied for Ofqual recognition primarily to become an EPAO, which will allow us to offer an apprenticeship in dental nursing.

How will this benefit dental nurses and those getting into a dental nursing career?

NEBDN offering an apprenticeship product will provide two types of training routes to qualification and General Dental Council (GDC) registration, the Dental Nursing Apprenticeship as one product and the National Diploma as the other. Through government apprenticeship funding, employers can now potentially offer a fully funded training package, removing the need for trainees to financially contribute to their course.

What qualifications do you currently offer?

NEBDN offer the National Diploma for trainee dental nurses, alongside seven post-registration qualifications for dental care professionals who are GDC registered. These qualifications are in Implants, Radiography, Sedation, Fluoride Varnish, Oral Health, Orthodontics and Special Care.

Why is NEBDN joining the Ofqual register so unique?

As previously mentioned, there are only 178 recognised institutions on the Ofqual

register and NEBDN successfully passing the criteria to join is a huge achievement that not all organisations can fulfil. We are also the largest Awarding Organisation in the UK to offer this many dental nursing qualifications, allowing us the opportunity to expand and develop our products to suit the growing needs of the market.

Your flagship National Diploma qualification is very successful and has been around for several decades – in fact you are celebrating NEBDN's 80th anniversary this year! Why do you now want to enter the apprenticeship market?

It's something that our customers have been asking for and we recognise the importance of apprenticeships for those developing their careers. As an Awarding Organisation specialising in dental nursing qualifications, we want to support this route to registration alongside the National Diploma.

How have you found coping with the challenges in the healthcare sector?

Like most organisations we have had to adapt. We moved to online exams and had to provide increased support to centres and learners to enable them to continue their studies during a time when many were facing changing restrictions in practice or were often redeployed.

What would you say are the priorities for NEBDN and the dental nursing profession looking forward?

The focus has to be on encouraging more people into dental nursing and retaining these skills by providing access to additional qualifications. NEBDN will continue with developments like Ofqual regulation to ensure we support career development and wider opportunities for dental nurses across the profession.