

Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations

Special Care Dentistry Exam Syllabus

The exam syllabus is drafted based upon the curriculum [published by the GDC](#) as well as the [training syllabi](#) drafted by the Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC) which includes elements for the exam as well as elements being covered in the workplace-based assessments.

The curriculum is drafted by the Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC) and the GDC for use from September 2024.

On application to sit the examination, candidates will be asked to self-certify that have sufficient knowledge of the learning outcomes noted in this syllabus to attempt the examination.

1. Professional Legal and Ethical Context		Curriculum REF D1	
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	SO
1.1	Demonstrate and apply of the principles of current legislation relevant to disability, equality and diversity and human rights, when applied to clinical practice.	X	X
1.2	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of appropriate legal consent processes for people with special care dentistry (SCD) needs and capacity issues, within clinical practice including restraint and clinical holding.	X	X
1.3	Demonstrate understanding of the ethics of physical and pharmacological intervention and restraint, and the impact on the patients and carers.	X	X
1.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of guidelines, policies, and care pathways, relevant to SCD.	X	X
2. Impairment Disability and Oral Health		Curriculum REF D2	
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	SO
2.1	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the social and environmental barriers people with disabilities can encounter in society and methods used to promote equality.	X	X

2.2	Demonstrate and apply understanding of the prevalence of common causes of impairment and how these may result in disability and the direct/indirect impact on oral health.	X	X
2.3	Identify barriers an individual might encounter including attitudinal and organisational level and measures which could be taken to address these.	X	X
2.4	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to inclusion in dentistry and the wider health and social setting.	X	X
2.5	Demonstrate understanding of models of communication in health care settings.	X	X
2.6	Demonstrate when to employ specific communication styles/skills within a consultation e.g. breaking bad news.	X	X
2.7	Demonstrate understanding of the competing definitions of adherence and theories of health behaviour change.	X	X
2.8	Demonstrate understanding of psychological models of behaviour change and symptom perception and impact on health, behaviour change and oral health care use.	X	
2.9	Identify interventions to encourage and support behaviour change and oral health care.		X
2.10	Demonstrate an understanding of how to support health behaviour change in collaboration with health and social care partners using a common risk factor approach.		X
3. Oral Care of Complex Patients		Curriculum REF D3	
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	SBA	SO
3.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of definitions, epidemiology, pathophysiology, general clinical features and medical management of a range of systemic diseases and conditions.	X	X
3.2	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the features of oral manifestations of systemic disease, their management and therapeutic interventions used in their treatment.	X	X
3.3	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of oncological disease, its management and potential oral side-effects.	X	X
3.4	Demonstrate knowledge of medical scoring systems including American Society of Anaesthesiology (ASA) Scale for assessing fitness for anaesthesia and conscious sedation.	X	X

3.5	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the indications, routes of delivery, actions, metabolism, side effects, and precautions of commonly used groups of drugs.	X	X
3.6	Describe features, diagnose and manage oral side effects of interventions used in the management of systemic diseases.	X	X
3.7	Identify appropriate drug regimens for medically complex patients in the dental setting, taking account of possible adverse drug reactions and interactions with other prescribed drugs.	X	X
3.8	Discuss the process and principles underpinning medical, social and dental risk assessment and treatment planning for medically complex patients.		X
3.9	Discuss formulation of pre-operative, peri-operative and post-operative treatment modifications in relation to dental treatment provision for medically complex patients.		X
3.10	Demonstrate an understanding of the biology, physiology and psychology of aging.	X	X
3.11	Demonstrate an understanding of frailty and dependence in relation to aging and on the delivery of dental care, including measurement scales.	X	X
3.12	Recognise age related changes to the oro-facial system and dental disease risk.	X	X
3.13	Discuss the principles underpinning medical, social, and dental risk assessments for the frail older person.		X
3.14	Formulate treatment modifications for the delivery of dental care in relation to the frail older person.		X
3.15	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of mental health conditions, including acute presentations.	X	X
3.16	Demonstrate an understanding of legislation related to Mental Health.		X
3.17	Demonstrate understanding of the influence of poor mental health on oral disease risk and oral health related outcomes.	X	X
3.18	Discuss the principles underpinning medical, social, and dental risk assessments for people with mental health conditions.		X
3.19	Formulate treatment modifications in relation to dental treatment provision for people with mental health conditions.		X
4. Dental Public Health and Oral Health Promotion		Curriculum REF D4	
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	SBA	SO
4.1	Demonstrate knowledge of measures of general health, oral health and disease and their determinants on a local and national level for SCD patients.	X	X

4.2	Demonstrate an understanding of epidemiological tools used to profile oral health and disease and challenges for SCD.	X	X
4.3	Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between health and socio-economic circumstances of SCD patients and the relationship this has with oral diseases.		X
4.4	Demonstrate the links between oral health and general health in the context of disease and inequalities in minority ethnic SCD populations and the impact of language and cultural barriers.	X	X
4.5	Recognise approaches to health promotion interventions for SCD patient groups.	X	X
4.6	Identify whole population methodologies of health and oral health promotion interventions, adopting a CRF approach for SCD patient groups in differing settings.	X	X
4.7	Demonstrate an understanding of efficient use of resource and skill mix within dental and non-dental healthcare teams in oral health promotion for SCD patient groups.	X	X
5. Clinical Special Care Dentistry		Curriculum REF D5	
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	SBA	SO
5.1	Diagnose and devise appropriate management plans for SCD patients with endodontic, periodontic and/or prosthodontic treatment needs.	X	X
5.2	Demonstrate knowledge of when to refer to a restorative specialist.	X	X
5.3	Demonstrate a basic understanding of implantology and recognise the application and relevance of dental implants in SCD.		X
5.4	Diagnose and construct appropriate management plans for special care patients with oral surgery and oral medicine needs, including oral surgery of hard and soft tissues, oral mucosal changes and diseases, changes in saliva and salivary gland disease and orofacial pain.	X	X
5.5	Demonstrate knowledge of when to refer patients for management of complicated oral surgery/oral medicine conditions and early referral of suspected malignancy.	X	X
5.6	Diagnose and plan treatment for SCD patients with localised odontogenic infections and post-operative surgical complications.	X	X
5.7	Discuss histopathological assessment and diagnosis of non-suspicious lesions and treatment using soft tissue surgery.	X	
5.8	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the indications for and interpretation of imaging in SCD, including CBCT.	X	X
5.9	Demonstrate knowledge of how to adapt radiography techniques for specific SCD patient needs.	X	X

5.10	Demonstrate understanding of the requirement for, and considerations of, dental radiography during GA and conscious sedation for SCD patients.	X	X
5.11	Discuss the principles underpinning orthodontic assessment for SCD patients and identify when referral is required.		X
5.12	Discuss the principles underpinning joint treatment planning with paediatric dental teams to ensure effective transitioning care		X
5.13	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the indications for, aims of and practical requirements of dental care provided in domiciliary, mobile and/or secure settings.	X	X
5.14	Demonstrate an understanding of dental treatment planning in patients with palliative/end-of-life conditions.	X	X
5.15	Demonstrate an understanding of the indications for and requirements of safe handling, positive behavioural support and physical intervention for SCD patients.	X	X
6. Management of Pain and Anxiety		Curriculum REF D6	
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	SBA	SO
6.1	Demonstrate understanding of pain, mechanisms of pain and ways to measure pain for SCD patients.	X	X
6.2	Demonstrate understanding of dental fear, dental anxiety and dental phobia, causes and consequences, including the impact on dental attendance and oral health-related quality of life.	X	X
6.3	Demonstrate an understanding of measures of dental anxiety and be able to use them.	X	X
6.4	Demonstrate understanding of non-pharmacological interventions for example low and advanced level dental anxiety management techniques for SCD groups.	X	X
6.5	Demonstrate an understanding of pharmacological techniques to manage pain and anxiety including LA, CS, advanced CS and GA in SCD.	X	X
6.6	Assess and plan treatment for SCD patients, including appropriate method or combination of methods to achieve safe and effective pain and anxiety control and acceptance of care.	X	X
6.7	Demonstrate an understanding of clinical and electronic monitoring, recovery supervision, discharge and aftercare when using CS and GA with SCD patients.		X
6.8	Recognise and discuss appropriate management for commonly occurring complications of treatment using LA, CS, advanced CS and GA.	X	X

Version control

Version	Date	Changes made
1.0	9 November 2025	Document approved for publication
1.1	16 March 2026	Preface text added including noting source material for the syllabus.
1.2	8 April 2026	Minor formatting and branding updates, no content changes.
1.3	10 September 2026	Under 4.6 “ <i>adopting a CRT approach for SCD patient..</i> ” changed to “ <i>adopting a CRF approach for SCD patient.</i> ”