CGDP Position Statement on the Certificate of Competency for Wisdom Tooth Surgery

22 October 2026

Dear Members,

On 29 July 2026, the Singapore Dental Council (SDC) introduced the Certificate of Competency (COC) for wisdom tooth surgery.

We share the aim

The College agrees that patient safety comes first. Every dentist must practise within their competence. We support continuing education, and have provided it for 25 years.

Our position

On 17 August 2026, the College sent SDC 36 questions seeking clarification on the COC. We told members we would await SDC's answers before taking a position.

We followed up on 8 and 24 September, asking for a full reply or a firm date for one. SDC has said only that it is "unable to provide a timeline at this point of time".

We are therefore setting out our position. The College does not support the COC in its current form. We remain committed to working with SDC and the Ministry of Health in a collaborative manner.

Closing the training gap at its source

The NUS undergraduate curriculum no longer includes hands-on wisdom tooth surgery. The NUS Faculty of Dentistry has said the COC can fill this gap (Lianhe Zaobao, 18 August 2026).

The COC asks practising dentists to make up for a change in undergraduate training. We urge the Faculty to restore supervised practical training in case selection, surgical technique, complication management and referral.

Any further supervised training should take place during the service bond that NUS dental graduates serve in public institutions.

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Continuing education should build on undergraduate training, not replace it. A curriculum gap should not lead to new requirements for dentists who already possess these skills.

Recognising experience fairly

Under the COC, grandfathering as a recognised supervisor is open only to dentists who graduated in 2005 or earlier, with 20 years in practice and 100 self-declared cases.

Dentists who graduated in 2006 or later cannot qualify, regardless of how many years of safe practice or documented cases they have.

This is unfair and arbitrary. Graduation year does not establish competence. While we respect our senior colleagues' experience, we believe the same recognition should be open to every dentist who has completed a set number of wisdom tooth surgeries.

Cases completed at any time should count, including those before the COC course or during postgraduate training. These dentists should not have to repeat training. We ask SDC to set these criteria with the profession.

Widening a restrictive scope

The COC covers only some lower wisdom teeth. For example, it excludes teeth with divergent roots, which members see often.

A single feature does not make a case difficult. Each case should be judged on its overall difficulty (depth, angulation, root form and nerve proximity) and the dentist's skill. We are not in favour of blanket exclusions that stop skilled dentists from treating cases they can safely manage.

Continuing education should not create ceilings. Dentists need a route to recognition for more complex work as their skills grow.

Keeping the COC voluntary

SDC says the COC is "currently" not mandatory. We have asked what "currently" means. Members deciding whether to enrol deserve a clear answer.

The COC should remain a voluntary pathway for professional development. It must never become a requirement that stops competent dentists from treating their patients.

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Keeping treatment affordable for patients

The framework must recognise the competence already present in the profession. Excluding competent general dentists creates unnecessary referrals, higher fees and longer waiting times. Each referral adds another consultation and specialist fees for a procedure their own dentist could have done.

Rising healthcare costs concern patients and the Government. We oppose restrictions that raise costs and reduce access without a clear benefit to patient safety. Referral should be based on clinical need. Patients should not pay more or wait longer because the framework fails to recognise their dentist's competence. The burden falls on patients, not on the system that created the gap.

What this means for you

The COC is not mandatory, and you do not need to apply. Keep practising within your competence, as you always should. Choose continuing education to suit your clinical practice, with or without the COC. Keep your clinical notes and case records accurate and up to date.

You are skilled and experienced clinicians. Any framework should build on that experience, not set it aside.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
The Executive Committee
College of General Dental Practitioners Singapore

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Sources
1. Lianhe Zaobao, 18 August 2026.
2. Singapore Dental Council. Circular No. 1/2026 (29 July 2026) and FAQ on the COC for Wisdom Tooth Surgery.

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