

Bill Summary

The National Dental Commission Bill, 2023

- The National Dental Commission Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 24, 2023. The Bill repeals the Dentists Act, 1948 and constitutes: (i) the National Dental Commission, (ii) the Dental Advisory Council and (iii) three autonomous Boards for regulating dental education and standards of dentistry. Key features of the Bill are:
 - **National Dental Commission:** The central government is required to constitute a National Dental Commission consisting of 33 members. It will be chaired by an eminent and experienced dentist. The Chairperson will be appointed by the central government, upon the recommendation of a search-cum-selection committee. The Search Committee will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. Ex-officio members of the Commission include: (i) Presidents of the three autonomous Boards, (ii) the Director General of Health Services, (iii) Chief of the Centre for Dental and Educational Research, All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Part time members of the Commission include: (i) faculties of dentistry from government institutes and (ii) representatives of states and union territories.
 - **Functions of the Commission** include: (i) regulating governance standards for dental education, examination, and training, (ii) regulating dental institutions and research, (iii) assessing infrastructure requirements in dental healthcare, and (iv) ensuring that admissions to Bachelor of Dental Surgery happen through the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).
 - **Autonomous Boards:** The central government is required to constitute three autonomous Boards under the supervision of the Commission. The Boards are: (i) the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dental Education Board - responsible for determining education standards, developing curriculum, and granting recognition to dental qualifications, (ii) the Dental Assessment and Rating Board - responsible for determining compliance assessment procedure for dental institutions, granting permission to establish new institutions, and conducting inspections and ratings, and (iii) the Ethics and Dental Registration Board – responsible for maintaining online national registers of dentists/dental auxiliaries, suspending/cancelling licenses, and regulating standards of conduct, ethics and the scope of the practice. Establishing a new dental institution would require prior permission of the Assessment and Rating Board. Qualifications in dentistry recognised under the Dentists Act, 1948 will continue to be recognised.
- **State Dental Council:** Within one year of the enactment of the Act, state governments are required to institute State Dental Councils. The Councils are required to receive grievances related to professional/ethical misconduct against registered dentists. They are also required to maintain state registers of dentists/dental auxiliaries. The National Commission may also direct a State Council to carry out provisions under the Bill. State governments will appoint the Chairperson of their respective Dental Councils. Two or more state governments may form a Joint Dental Council to discharge the stated functions.
- **Entrance examinations:** Admission to the Bachelor of Dental Surgery course will be done through NEET. The Commission will specify the manner of conducting common counselling for undergraduate and postgraduate admissions. A National Exit Test (Dental) will be held in the final undergraduate year for: (i) granting licence to practice dentistry, (ii) enrolment in state/national registers, and (iii) for admission to postgraduate dental education. Until the passage of the Bill, postgraduate admissions in Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) will be conducted through NEET.
- While clearing the National (Exit) Test would be sufficient in granting a license to practice dentistry, the practice would have to be registered in the state/national register before commencement.
- **Dental Advisory Council:** The central government is required to constitute a Dental Advisory Council. The Council shall advise the Commission on education, training, and research standards, and enhance equitable access to dental education. The Council will also be the primary platform through which the states/union territories can raise concerns before the Commission. The Council will be chaired by the Chairperson of the National Dental Commission. Ex-officio members of the Commission will also be ex-officio members of this Council.

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