

# Competencies for the Masters Degree in Dental Hygiene Program Graduate

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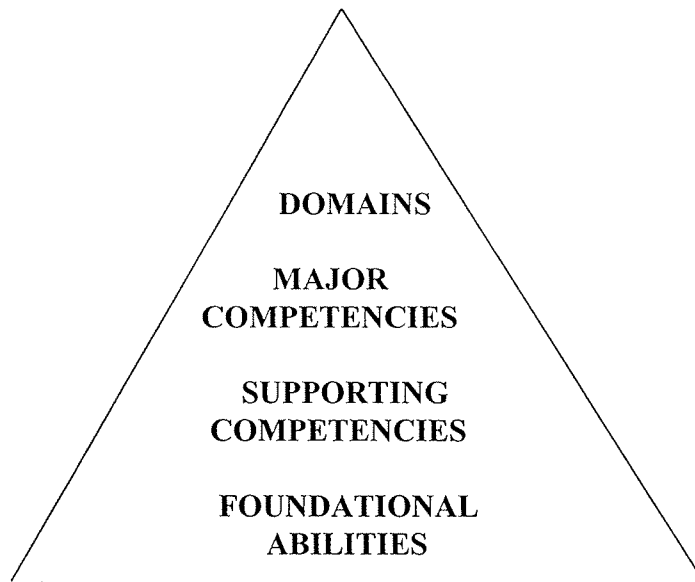
## Introduction

*Competence* is an acceptable, measurable defined level of special skill and knowledge derived from education, experience, role modeling and overall socialization. To be competent a person with a master of science in dental hygiene must perform at or above the acceptable defined standard.

*Competencies for the Masters Degree in Dental Hygiene Program Graduate* identifies and organizes the knowledge, skill, behaviors and attitudes that graduates must attain to assume roles as educators, administrators/managers, community health educators, marketers, and researchers in a variety of environments. The Competencies in this document serve as the foundation for the selection of course content, sequencing of courses, intra-and extra-mural learning activities, faculty communication and decision-making, and outcomes assessment. As such, the Competencies serve as a framework for curriculum development, implementation and evaluation. The document is viewed as a method of communicating and operationalizing the standards that the faculty, the profession, employers, and society have deemed important for a person with a master of science in dental hygiene degree to possess in order to assume leadership in the various dimensions of healthcare.

**Domains.** The organization of the document flows from the general categories that comprise the central domains of the curriculum, to the specific behaviors that reflect the foundational abilities expected of students at the course level( See Figure 1). The *domains* should be viewed as themes or broad categories of professional focus that transcend numerous courses and learning activities. The concept of domains is intended to encourage threads of consistency, emphasis and focus that develop and advance throughout the curriculum. In this document, domains are labeled:

- I. Professional Leadership and Advancement
- II. Role Specialization
  - A. Management
  - B. Education
  - C. Community Health
  - D. Marketing



**Figure 1. Organization of Competencies for the Masters Degree in Dental Hygiene Program Graduate.**

**Major Competencies.** Within each domain, major competencies expected of the program graduate are identified. A *major competency* is the ability to perform or provide a particular complex professional activity which is intellectual, affective and/or psychomotor in nature. For example, “the dental hygienist must be able to systematically collect, analyze and record data on a sample using methods consistent with research principles.” The complexity of this behavior suggests that multiple and more specific supportive and foundational abilities are required to enable the performance of any major competency. In this document, major competencies are numbered 1-14. An overview of the domains and the major competencies is displayed in Figure 2.

**Supporting Competencies.** Specific abilities, called *supporting competencies*, must be mastered in order to carry out major competencies. Examples of supporting competencies include the ability to “critique the professional literature,” “obtain consultations with a statistician as appropriate,” or “establish expected outcomes related to the investigation.” Mastery of all supporting competencies related to a service or task is a necessary condition for the acquisition and demonstration of a major competency. While less complex than a major competency, a supporting competency also requires more specific abilities termed foundational knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this document, supporting competencies are numbered 1.1 to 14.4.

**Foundational Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes.** *Foundational knowledge, skills and attitudes (foundational abilities)* are acquired through formal instruction and practica that provide the information, mentoring and experience needed for satisfactory mastery of supporting competencies.

