PRESCRIBING INTERIM GUIDELINES ON THE CONDUCT OF THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PHASES OF THE BOARD LICENSURE EXAMINATION FOR DENTISTS IN DENTAL SCHOOLS PER REGION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, Section 7 (d) of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 8981 or the “PRC Modernization Act of 2000” empowers the Professional Regulation Commission (Commission/PRC) to administer and conduct the licensure examinations of the various regulatory boards in accordance with the rules and regulations it may promulgate and to determine and fix the places and dates of examinations;

WHEREAS, the Professional Regulatory Board of Dentistry (Board) issued Resolution No. 02 (s. 2021) wherein it prescribed and promulgated that an examinee needs to take a complete Board Licensure Examination for Dentists (BLED), both written and practical phases, with a weight of 60% and 40%, respectively. As stated in Art. III Section 16 of R.A. No. 9484, otherwise known as “The Philippine Dental Act of 2007”, an examinee must obtain a general weighted average of at least seventy-five percent (75%), with no rating below fifty percent (50%) in any subject, in order to pass the examination;

WHEREAS, Proclamation Order No. 922 (s. 2020) was issued declaring a state of public health emergency throughout the Philippines due to Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19);

WHEREAS, Proclamation Order No. 929 (s. 2020) was thereafter promulgated placing the entire country under a State of Calamity for a period of six (6) months due to COVID-19, unless earlier lifted or extended as circumstances may warrant. This period of state of calamity was extended, upon issuance of Proclamation No. 1021 (s. 2020), for a period of one (1) year, effective 13 September 2020 to 12 September 2021, unless earlier lifted or extended as circumstances may warrant;

WHEREAS, the Commission, upon recommendation of the Professional Regulatory Board of Dentistry (Board) and the Philippine Association of Dental Colleges, had postponed the May 2020, December 2020, and May 2021 BLED due to the uncertainties in the conduct of the examinations brought by the threat to health and safety of the stakeholders and the state of preparedness to accommodate the growing number of examinees, among others;

WHEREAS, on 3 September 2021, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) issued Resolution No. 136-A (s. 2021) which provided for, among others, the shift in the policy of classifying provinces, highly urbanized cities, and independent component cities for purposes of community quarantine;

WHEREAS, in the new classification framework, focus is on the imposition of granular lockdown measures, wherein community quarantine shall be reduced to either Enhanced Community Quarantine or General Community Quarantine, the latter having an alert-level system (Alert Level 1 to 4) with each alert level limiting restrictions only to identified high-risk activities;

WHEREAS, on 7 October 2021, the IATF issued the Guidelines on the Pilot Implementation of Alert Level Systems for COVID-19 Response in the National Capital Region to enjoin and proactively advocate the principles of 3C’s (Close, Crowded, and Close Contact) strategy against COVID-19 to curb the further spread of infection;
WHEREAS, it should also be noted that on 10 September 2021, the President issued Proclamation No. 1218 (s. 2021) which further extended the declared State of Calamity throughout the Philippines for a period of one (1) year, effective 13 September 2021 to 12 September 2022, unless earlier lifted or extended as circumstances may warrant.

WHEREAS, as of 29 October 2021, the total number of BLED applicants is 1,869.

WHEREFORE, to ensure the orderly administration of BLED in the regions, the Board RESOLVES, as it is hereby RESOLVED, to prescribe the following guidelines on the conduct of the theoretical and practical phases of the BLED in dental schools per region during the COVID-19 pandemic:

I. OBJECTIVE

This issuance will serve as a guide for the PRC Licensure Office, PRC Regional Offices, Board, dental schools that will serve as testing venues, examination personnel, and examinees in the conduct of the Theoretical and Practical Phases of the BLED during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to get the support and cooperation of all concerned through willingness to assume responsibilities based on their capability to comply with health and safety protocols and to retrofit the testing venues as stated in this guideline.

II. APPLICABILITY OF EXISTING GUIDELINES

The Board highly recommends the strict observance of health protocols especially in the practical phase since there is a possibility of close contact among examinees and the examination is done in a close area with long exposure time.

1. In the Application Procedure, the existing process of the Commission shall be observed.

2. The health standards for examinees and PRC Examination Personnel stated in the PRC-Department of Health-Philippine National Police (PNP) Joint Administrative Order No. 01 (s. 2021), entitled “Revised Standard Guidelines on the Strict Observance of Health Protocols in the Conduct of Licensure Examinations during Public Health Emergency and/or Pandemic”, shall be observed.

III. HEALTH PROTOCOLS IN THE CLASSROOMS/LABORATORIES/DENTAL CLINICS AS TESTING VENUES

1. Occupancy Capacity (number of examinees per room) - Each room should be able to accommodate a number of examinees in accordance with the implementation of the two-meter distance or one dental chair apart requirement. If a dental clinic is utilized as an examination room, the number of examinees therein will depend on the size of the clinic, observing the physical distance requirement.

2. Number of proctors and watchers needed for the practical phase - At least one (1) head and two (2) roaming watchers shall be designated in a room of fifty (50) examinees. In a room of twenty-five (25) examinees, only one (1) head and one (1) roaming watcher shall be designated.

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Board shall coordinate with the proper offices for the orientation of the involved regional offices and shall disseminate through the PRC website information regarding such orientation for the guidance of the examinees.
2. Each assigned examination personnel and proctors shall ensure that all health protocols are observed during the examination proper.

   a. Proctors must be knowledgeable in every aspect of the materials or any related items being used by the examinees.
   b. Proctors must be prudent in handling the finished cases especially before checking.
   c. Proctors must observe the same protocols in searching and body checks for every examinee.
   d. There should be close monitoring by the proctors in every examinees’ actual preparation.

3. For PRC Regional Directors/Officers-in-Charge (OIC):

   a. Conduct of the Practical Phase
      i. Materials to be used in the practical phase

         i.1. The approved supplier will provide the materials to be used in the Practical Phase of the examination (Typodonts for Class 1 and Class 2 Preparations, Typodonts for the FPD Preparation, casts, and articulated casts for Complete Denture exercise).

         i.2. For materials such as typodont articulators which cannot be sufficiently provided by the suppliers, examinees shall be required to submit their own material/s at the examination site at least five (5) working days before their scheduled practical phase examination for checking.

         i.3. Dental schools that will be selected as a testing venue for the practical phase need to assign faculty members who will check if the dental materials brought by the examinees are in good condition or of good quality for use in the licensure examination.

         i.4. The assigned faculty members will likewise be closely oriented by the Board of the specific guidelines of the examination and for standardization purposes.

         i.5. These materials will then be properly packaged and labeled, as follows: (a) site of examination; (b) number of examinees; and (c) type of exercise. These packages shall then be sent to the respective Regional Offices.

   ii. After the conduct of each exercise, the materials used by the examinees (Typodonts for Class 1 and 2 cavity preparation, Typodonts for FPD preparation, and casts for RPD design) shall be submitted to the proctor and properly identified as to the number of the examinee. The same shall be done with the Complete Denture Exercise (Casts models and articulated casts with teeth arrangements).

      ii.1. Boxes will be provided by the approved supplier even for examinees who will bring their own materials.

      ii.2. After finishing the exercises, examinees need to pack their own materials as instructed, in the presence of a proctor. Prior to
Submission, the proctor will sign the sealed materials and label them with the proper identification number of the examinee.

iii. The Regional Offices will then send these packages to the PRC Main Office at the Philippine International Convention Center, where the Board will personally check in a properly ventilated and disinfected room.

Note: The opening of the package should be done strictly in the presence of the Board and a representative of the Licensure Division. The package should be properly disinfected prior to opening.

iv. Once the package is opened, the contents should be verified and counter-checked.

v. Before the materials are given to the Board for checking, they should be adequately disinfected.

vi. After all the exercises have been checked and graded by the Board, personnel should be assigned to remove the typodont teeth prepared by the examinees from the typodont model (Restorative and FPD exercise) and also the wax denture on the articulator and casts (Complete Denture Exercise). RPD casts shall be properly disposed. The typodont model and the empty articulator for CD will then be retrieved by the supplier and the examinee’s articulator be sent back to the Regional Offices to be returned to the examinees.

4. For Examinees
   a. Examinees shall bring their own disinfectants, Lysol, alcohol 70% Isopropyl, and shall disinfect their own respective areas and all materials needed under the supervision of the proctor.
   b. Talking and murmuring are not allowed during the examination.
   c. In case of malfunctions of devices, the watchers should be called for assistance.
   d. Articulators and hand instruments should not have identifying color or mark.
   e. Examinees shall exercise great caution with the use of alcohol as disinfectants since they are highly flammable and also in the use of torches in the complete denture exercise.

5. Deans of the dental schools used as testing venues shall ensure compliance with the guidelines and prioritize the safety of all the examinees, proctors/watchers, and staff at all times. The Deans of schools shall see to it that there is a readily available technician in case of mechanical problems.

   Note: The Deans can only coordinate on the use of the venue but will not have an active participation in the process. Instead, it shall be the PRC Regional Director or the PRC employee/official who shall have active participation.

6. The Director/OIC of the Licensure Office shall ensure that all information and instructions are well-disseminated to all regional offices and that processes are carried out well.

V. VIOLATIONS

1. Any violation involving the examination proper shall be governed by PRC Memorandum Order No. 57 (s. 2020) regarding Examination Measures, as well as other related PRC issuances.
2. Any violation involving health and safety ordinances, quarantine-related violations, and other related violations during the period of public health emergency shall be governed by Department of the Interior and Local Government-PNP-Department of Justice Joint Memorandum Circular No. 001 (s. 2021) and other subsequent and related issuances, laws, and rules.

VI. EFFECTIVITY

This Resolution shall take effect immediately after its full publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Done this 29th day of November, 2021 in the City of Manila.

CARLITO D. PARAGAS
Officer-in-Charge

MELINDA L. GARCIA
Member

ROBERTO M. TAJONERA
Member

MARIA JONA D. GODOY
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TEOFILO S. PILANDO, JR.
Chairman

JOSE Y. CUETO JR.
Commissioner

VACANT
Commissioner

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