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## Policy Statement on Who may Perform Cosmetic Surgery

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7 October 2024

The following is a summary of statements and ethical rules from the HPCSA defining who may perform cosmetic surgery.

In 2009 the HPCSA issued a media statement on the *Definition on Who may Perform Cosmetic Surgery* (reference available on request). This was based on its April 2008 ruling that only specialists may perform cosmetic surgery.

“**Cosmetic Surgery**” was defined as an operative procedure in which the principal purpose is to improve the appearance. Cosmetic surgery was noted to be always elective.

“Cosmetic surgery is performed in the main by specialists in plastic and reconstructive surgery, but may be performed by other specialists which have formal structured training, assessment and ongoing professional development in certain aspects of cosmetic surgery relevant to those particular specialties.”

**Cosmetic medicine** is the field that deals with any non-surgical cosmetic procedures and is not confined to any specialty or discipline.

In an e-bulletin/blog sent from the **HPCSA** on 17 July 2024, it was stated that all registered healthcare practitioners are legally obliged “to act within the confines of their training and scope of profession in an ethical manner, so as to uphold the integrity of the professional category they belong to.”

<https://www.hpcsa-blogs.co.za/adhering-to-scope-of-practice-and-scope-of-profession/>

The scope of practice of each registered practitioner is defined in terms of ethical **Rule 21** of the HPCSA, which states that: “A practitioner shall perform, except in an emergency, only a professional act – (a) for which he or she is adequately educated, trained and sufficiently experienced; and (b) under proper conditions and in appropriate surroundings.”

[https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/professional\\_practice/ethics/Booklet\\_2\\_Generic\\_Ethical\\_Rules\\_with\\_anexures.pdf](https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/professional_practice/ethics/Booklet_2_Generic_Ethical_Rules_with_anexures.pdf) (Rule 21, page 16).

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**Appropriately Educated and Trained** is further defined in the above link, as well as here: <https://www.hpcsas.co.za/?contentId=79>. Appropriately educated and trained entails “(1) a period of training in an entity/institution/hospital that is accredited by the Board for training, (2) for a duration laid down by the Board, and (3) the trainee must have been evaluated and certified as having met the requirements of the training program by an entity accredited by the Board (eg, Colleges of Medicine, Universities).” Appropriately educated and trained is thus a specialist qualification.

“Short courses can only be recognised as *enhancing or maintaining* the skills within the field of practice and category of registration in which the practitioner had already been credentialed and registered by the Board.”

“Practice should be within the scope of the practitioner’s profession as laid down by the Board and is judged by the standards and norms considered reasonable for the circumstances under which the intervention took place.”

Cosmetic surgery, as defined by the HPCSA, may only be performed by registered specialists who are appropriately educated and trained.

Any practitioner who is not a registered specialist and who performs cosmetic surgery would be acting outside of their scope of practice and thus in violation of HPCSA ethical rules.

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**APRASSA President**

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