PRE-DENTAL PRIMER

WHAT DOES A DENTIST DO?

- Remove decay from teeth and fill cavities; Repair cracked or fractured teeth and remove teeth
- Straighten teeth to correct bite issues; Place sealants or whitening agents on teeth
- Write prescriptions for antibiotics or other medications
- Examine x-rays of teeth, gums, the jaw, and nearby areas for problems
- Make models and measurements for dental appliances, such as dentures, to fit patients
- Teach patients about diet, flossing, use of fluoride, and other aspects of dental care

From the online Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012

WHAT DEGREE DO I NEED TO BE A DENTIST?

Generally, a degree in dentistry requires four academic years of study. The first two years usually cover the basic sciences and the last two years, diagnosing oral disease, surgery, and clinical study. At the completion of the curriculum, students are awarded either a Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) or Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) degree.

WHAT CLASSES DO I NEED TO TAKE TO GET INTO DENTAL SCHOOL?

Typical Prerequisites:

- **Biology (BISC 1111-1112)**
- **Chemistry (CHEM 1111 & 1112)**
- **Organic Chemistry (CHEM 2151-2154)**
- **Physics (PHYS 1011 & 1012 or 1021 & 1022)**

- **Biochemistry (CHEM 3165 or BISC 3261)**
- **College English course (UW 1020 & 2 WIDs)**
- **Mathematics course (Calculus or Statistics)**

Other recommended courses include Anatomy, Physiology, Cell biology, Histology, Immunology, Microbiology, and Genetics. To find out about what specific schools require, go to their individual websites, or consider purchasing ADEA’s Official Guide to Dental Schools.

WHAT TEST DO I NEED TO TAKE FOR ADMISSION?

The Dental Admission Test (DAT) is designed to measure comprehension of natural sciences, perceptual ability, reading comprehension, and quantitative reasoning. Examinees who have tested three times must apply for permission to take the test again.

The DAT is administered on the computer, and takes four hours and fifteen minutes of multiple-choice test items. If you are applying to a dental program in Canada, be sure to check whether you will need to take the Canadian DAT.

WHAT DOES A COMPETITIVE APPLICANT LOOK LIKE?

Admission to dental school is competitive and rigorous. The DAT is measured on a range from 1 to 30, and the mean for dental school enrollees is about 20. In 2013, the mean science GPA was 3.47 and the mean overall GPA was 3.55. Dental school applicants must demonstrate a thorough exploration of the field through shadowing, assisting, and volunteering activities. It is also very helpful to demonstrate manual dexterity through classes in the arts such as learning an instrument, pottery, painting, etc. Getting research experience is also of great value.

HOW DO I APPLY?

The Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS) is a centralized application service sponsored and administered by ADEA. At least 56 of 59 U.S. dental schools, including Puerto Rico, participate in AADSAS. One Canadian school also participates. The application requires the following: biographical information, colleges/coursework information, DAT scores, personal statements, and letters of evaluation.

DON’T PROCRASTINATE! Applications are normally available on or around late May/early June. And AADSAS processes all applications received by a school’s deadline. But applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their application, official transcripts, and fee payment well in advance of application deadlines. Many schools have rolling admission policies.

WHAT SITES DO I NEED TO CHECK OUT?

American Dental Education Association: [www.adea.org](http://www.adea.org)

Associated American Dental Schools Application Service: [http://www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Applicants/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Applicants/Pages/default.aspx)

GW’s Pre-Dental Student Group: [http://studentorgs.gwu.edu/merlin-cgi/p/so_printRegisteredOrgDetail/d/1544](http://studentorgs.gwu.edu/merlin-cgi/p/so_printRegisteredOrgDetail/d/1544)