

Syracuse University

College of Arts & Sciences

Advising and Career Services

Dentistry as a Career

Dentistry is an ideal career option for individuals interested in providing direct patient care and devoted to the promotion and advancement of oral health. With advances in technology and techniques, the field is dynamic and rewarding. Dentists are often involved in the early detection of diseases and ailments which manifest in the mouth and surrounding areas. While most dentists are engaged in general dentistry in the private sector, there are opportunities available in hospitals, community clinics, research, dental education and public health fields. Dental specialties include endodontics, oral and maxillofacial pathology, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, and prosthodontics. A student may wish to have clinical exposure to several of these fields.

Dental School

There are currently 65 accredited dental schools in the United States and 10 in Canada represented by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). Graduates of dental school are awarded either a **Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)** degree or a **Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD)** which is determined solely by the dental school awarding the degree. There is no difference with respect to curricular aspects of the program or in the practice of dentistry. The dental school curriculum is divided into two years of classroom training in the basic and clinical sciences and two years of clinical practice. Before applying for licensure, dental students are required to complete the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE). The NBDE is composed of two parts. Part one assesses biomedical knowledge and part two includes the dental and clinical sciences. Licenses are state-issued and licensing requirements vary by state.

The Pre-dental Curriculum

Academic Prerequisites

General Biology & Labs (BIO 121, 123/124)
General Chemistry & Labs (CHE 106/107, 116/117)
Organic Chemistry & Labs (CHE 275/276, 325,326)
Biochemistry I (BCM 475)
Physics & Labs (PHY 101, 102 or PHY 211/221, 212/222)
Statistics I (MAT 221)
Calculus I (MAT 285 or 295)
Expository Writing (WRT 105, 205)

Additionally Recommended courses

Genetics and Cell Biology (BIO 326, 327)
Microbiology/Immunology (BIO 409, 447)
Anatomy/Physiology (BIO 216, 217 or 316,317)
Psychology (PSY 205, 315, 335, 336, 337, 382)
Ethics & Bioethics (PHI 593, 594)
Epidemiology (HTW 401)
Public Health Ethics (HTW 415)
Nutrition (NSD 225)

Notes:

- Students majoring in Biology (B.S.), Biochemistry or Biotechnology may substitute upper division biology requirements for BIO 123/124.
- PHY 101 & 102 is sufficient, however PHY 211 & 212 may be required by individual majors
- While Physiology and Microbiology are not prerequisites, a number of schools require these courses, so be sure to check specific school requirements, and know the prereqs for these courses at Syracuse.

The Pre-dental Curriculum (continued)

Non-academic Prerequisites

Certain activities will help students become familiar with the profession of dentistry, and improve one's standing as an appropriate candidate. The non-exhaustive list includes: Clinical Experience, Research, Leadership, Community and Public Service, Letters of Recommendation, and Interviewing Skills. These suggestions are additionally beneficial for students preparing for other health professions.

Entrance Exam and Application

Dental Admission Test (DAT)

Students should take the DAT before June of the year prior to their anticipated matriculation year. The DAT is composed of four sections, including natural sciences (biology, chemistry, and organic chemistry), perceptual ability, reading comprehension, and quantitative reasoning, and is expected to last approximately five hours. Arrangements can be made to take the DAT at an approved testing center and it is not confined to specific administration dates. Preparation should begin early and should consist of both study/review and practice. It is recommended that students begin preparing at least six months in advance.

American Dental Education Association, Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS)

Students should plan to start their application in May or June one year prior to their anticipated matriculation to dental school and submit their application in June or July. Application to dental school is based on a rolling admissions process, so it is advantageous to apply as early as possible. Applications for public colleges in Texas are processed through the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS.)

Additional Resources

[American Dental Association \(ADA\)[®]](#)

[American Dental Education Association \(ADEA\)](#)

[American Student Dental Association \(ASDA\)](#)