What is Dental School?

Dental School is a four-year Doctorate-level program in which students learn the science of oral medicine and patient care, and earn a DDS or DMD degree. Commonly students will complete a bachelors degree and the prerequisites from a regionally accredited institution and enter Dental School. Following graduation, students may choose to specialize in a specific area such as Endodontics, Orthodontics, Oral Surgery, Periodontics, or others, or they may decide to work in a general dentistry residency.

What should I know about Dental School?

Dental school begins similar to medical school—for approximately the first two years both medical and dental students share lab space, work closely together, and often share a lecture hall. After that, dentistry becomes more specific focusing in on dental care. Students should be prepared to have a keen eye for detail and particularly a strong ability to work with their hands as molding and crafting are large parts of their coursework.

Where can I study Dentistry?

Currently, there is one Dental School in Washington, at the UW, and approximately 66 dental schools across the country.

How do I get started?

While considering preparing for and attending Dental School, you should seriously and truthfully think about these questions and others. Is Dentistry the only profession you could ever see yourself doing? Are you willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Are you willing to accept that you might need to give up a significant portion of your social life, especially while in Dental School? While answering these questions, students pursuing Dental School can remember the acronym “S-T-A-R-T.”

Shadow

Shadowing is the act of working with, and observing a current professional practicing in their typical work setting. Often this can occur in a private practice, hospital, or possibly an experiential trip. Shadowing is a huge part of becoming a well-rounded and competitive applicant. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be a Dentist. Students will often work with Dentists in a variety of settings and specialties in order to gain a better sense of the day-to-day life of a Dentist. Shadowing opportunities are out there but they can be hard to find. Often students may find the most success with contacting their own Dentist to begin with, or through programs run through pre-health clubs or internships.

Talk

Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going to Dental School means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much as possible about the opportunities available to you to develop as a student. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in helping connect you with the resources you will need. A large part of being involved with a medical team is being able to rely on not only your own expertise, but also the skills and expertise of others. Therefore get started utilizing your communication skills early by consulting with friends, attending campus info sessions, and being involved in our pre-health community here on campus, such as joining the BC Docs and Dents student program.
**Academics**

Applying to a dental school generally requires that you have a bachelor’s degree and all of the prerequisites necessary. Every school will have slightly different prerequisite requirements, but in general you will complete:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Dental School Prerequisites</th>
<th>BC Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ One year of General Chemistry</td>
<td>CHEM 161, 162, 163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ One year of Biology</td>
<td>BIOL 211, 212, 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ One year of Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>CHEM 261, 262, 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ One year of Physics</td>
<td>PHYS 114, 115, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ English</td>
<td>ENGL 101</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Biochemistry</td>
<td>CHEM 405, 406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Anatomy and Physiology</td>
<td>BIOL 241, 242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*prerequisites are subject to differ depending on desired Dental School

* often math and science classes must be taken within 5 - 7 years of application

In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are two major things to note if you are a student pursuing your bachelor’s degree:

1. Most universities do not offer a “pre-dental” degree.
2. There is no particular major that “looks good” to a Dental School. You can major in whatever you would like and still be a competitive applicant. However, most students try and fit the majority, if not all of their pre-dental requirements within their initial bachelor degree (see diagram), thus Biology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Environmental Science/Health tend to be popular pre-dental major choices.

**Research**

It is necessary to thoroughly research the Dental schools you wish to apply to. Generally speaking, students tend to apply to anywhere between 10-12 schools per application cycle. Each school will most likely have a slightly different set of prerequisite courses they require. Therefore, it is important that you as the applicant have a clear vision of the type of education you will want in both your undergraduate and Dental School experience. To get this vision or background information try attending information sessions early, making connections with the dentists you shadow, and thoroughly exploring university and Dental School websites. Two general resources are the American Dental Education Association (adea.org) and the American Dental Association (ada.org)

**Test**

All students wishing to apply to a dental school should first complete a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution and take the Dental Admissions Test (DAT). This test covers a variety of life and physical sciences and should be taken at least few months before when the student is looking to apply for their first application cycle, which usually occurs one year prior to enrolling.

**What should I do now?**

Students interested in getting started with the road toward dental school can use a variety of resources here on campus. The Docs and Dents Club at BC is an excellent resource, as well as attending one of our quarterly pre-professional info sessions. Lastly you should consider meeting with an adviser. Schedule an appointment with an advisor by calling 425-564-2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the 2nd floor of the B building. You can also schedule an appointment at the Science Division, L200.

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This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student’s responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.

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