

Dentists work to prevent, diagnose, and treat conditions related to the teeth and surrounding structures. They examine x-rays, perform oral cancer screenings, restore and replace damaged or decayed teeth, straighten teeth, treat infections, and perform cosmetic enhancements. Some dentists also perform corrective surgery on gums and supporting bones to treat gum disease. It typically takes at least 8 years to become a dentist: 4 years of undergraduate college and 4 years of dental school. For some specialties, dentists need to train for additional time in a post-doctoral program. Check out this guide to find out if dentistry is a good fit for you: [Is dentistry right for me](#)¹?

Degree

Dental schools award either a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degree. While they have slightly different names, the education and training are the same. Some dental schools may also offer dual degree programs such as DDS/MBA (Masters of Business Administration), or DDS/MPH (Masters of Public Health). This is because many dentists will also become practice owners or business partners, and/or work in public health. In addition to a dental degree, dentists are required to pass board exams and hold a professional license to practice.

Note: Because the field of dentistry is ever-changing with new advancements, research, and technology, dentists are expected to engage in continuing education throughout their careers.

Admission

Acceptance to dental school is highly competitive. Students are advised to complete a bachelor's degree at an undergraduate institution with a reputation for academic excellence. Although students come from a variety of undergraduate degree programs, majoring in biology, chemistry, biochemistry or biomedical sciences is most common. It is important to contact a pre-health advisor at the four-year college you're interested in for further information.

MCC students are advised to prepare to transfer to a 4-year college or university for a science major such as Biology, Chemistry or Biomedical Sciences and then apply to dental school.

All U.S. dental schools require applicants to take the [Dental Admission Test \(DAT\)](#)². The DAT is designed to measure general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information, and perceptual ability. Applications to dental school are often made through the [American Association of Dental Schools Application Service \(AADSAS\)](#)³.

Typical Prerequisite Courses for Dental School

Two semesters of biology with labs; two semesters of physics with labs; four semesters of chemistry with labs, including organic; two semesters of English; additional science coursework such as biochemistry, microbiology, anatomy & physiology. It is also recommended to have a strong foundation in the social sciences and arts.

Check individual school websites for specific/recommended courses.

¹ "Is Dentistry Right for Me" webpage:

https://www.adea.org/GoDental/Dentistry_101/Is_dentistry_right_for_you_.aspx

² Dental Admission Test website: <https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-admission-test>

³ American Association of Dental Schools website: <https://www.adea.org/ApplicationServices/>

Examples of MCC Courses

- CHE 151 & 152 - General College Chemistry I & II
- CHE 251 & 252 - Organic Chemistry I & II
- PHY 154 & 155 – General Physics I & II *or*
- PHY 161 & 261 – University Physics I & II
- BIO 155 & 156 – Intro to Cell & Molecular Bio and Intro to Organismal Bio & Ecology

Dental Schools may prefer that some or all prerequisite courses be completed at a 4-year institution (AP & IB credit are not likely to be accepted for science coursework).

Additional Course Suggestions

Communication, foreign language, calculus, statistics, business, computer courses, ethics.

Important Criteria Considered for Admission

- Undergraduate GPA (grade point average)
- Demonstrated ability to handle a rigorous course load
- Dental Admissions Test (DAT) score
- Related and/or work experience (ex. volunteering at a dental clinic, working at a dental office)
- Research activities
- Good communication skills
- Evidence of maturity, integrity, service to the community
- Excellent manual dexterity
- Letters of recommendation from Pre-Health Advisor and/or professors at the undergraduate institution
- Personal Statement
- Personal Interview (by invitation)

Colleges in New York State Offering a Doctorate Degree in Dentistry

- SUNY at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine – DDS, DDS/MBA
- Columbia University College of Dental Medicine – DDS, DDS/MBA, DDS/MPH, DDS/MA in Science & Dental Education
- New York University College of Dentistry – DDS, DDS/MBA, DDS/MPH
- SUNY at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine – DDS
- Touro College of Dental Medicine – DDS

Note: The University of Rochester offers post-graduate programs for those who have already obtained a dentistry degree.

Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting

Dental hygienists and dental assistants work with dentists as part of a healthcare team. Hygienists clean teeth, take x-rays, examine patients for signs of oral diseases such as gingivitis, apply sealants and fluoride, and provide other preventive dental care. They also educate patients on ways to improve and maintain good oral health. Dental hygienists must have an associate's degree in dental hygiene as well as a professional license.

Dental assistants do not need a degree, but will often complete a certificate program. MCC offers both dental hygiene and dental assisting programs.

Some dental hygienists and assistants choose to continue their education to become a dentist, but will still need to meet the same requirements to compete for admission to dental school.

Additional Information

- [USBLS Occupational Outlook Handbook info for Dentists](#)⁴
- American Dental Education Association: [Information on Admission to Dental Schools](#)⁵

Note: While every effort is made to ensure that the information in this guide is accurate, students are advised to contact transfer institutions for specific course requirements and the most up-to-date information.

⁴ Occupational Outlook for Dentists webpage: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm>

⁵ Information on Admission to Dental Schools webpage: <https://www.adea.org/ApplicationServices/>