

Dental School Requirements

Preparation for dental school requires, first and foremost, that certain prerequisite courses be completed and that applicants take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). After meeting these basic requirements, students with diverse backgrounds and records apply to dental school and are accepted. Although there is no "formula" or direct path that leads to acceptance, the most competitive applicants are well prepared in several areas.

Major

You can major in any undergraduate degree area provided that you include the required pre-dental prerequisite classes in your course of study. In the past, successful applicants have majored in many non-science areas, as well as the more common majors (e.g., physiology, biochemistry, biological sciences). You should major in what interests you. Most students, however, major in science since that ensures there will be a great deal of overlap between courses required for the major and those required for dental school. It makes course planning easier but is not necessarily the best choice for all students. Note: Transfer students from community colleges should take a solid load of science courses at UC Merced, regardless of major.

Course Requirements

Requirements vary by school but the following courses are generally required. Please see individual catalogs or the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools for more specific information.

One Year of Inorganic Chemistry w/ lab	CHEM 2 – General Chemistry I (includes lab) CHEM 10 – General Chemistry II (includes lab)
One Year of Organic Chemistry w/ lab	CHEM 8/L – Principles of Organic Chemistry with lab and CHEM 100 – Organic Synthesis and Mechanism CHEM 100L – Organic Chemistry lab
One Year of Physics with lab	PHYS 8 – Principles of Physics I (includes lab) or PHYS 18 – Introductory Physics I for Biological Sciences or ICP 1B – Integrated Calculus and Physics: Physics and PHYS 9 – Principles of Physics (includes lab) II or PHYS 19 – Introductory Physics II for Biological Sciences
One Year of Biology w/ lab	BIO 1/L – Contemporary Biology BIO 2/L – Introduction to Molecular Biology

Additional Required or Recommended Courses in Biology	BIO 120/120L – General Microbiology BIO 140 – Genetics BIO 141 – Evolution BIO 161 – Human Physiology (includes lab) BIO 164 – Human Anatomy (includes lab)
One Year of English Composition	WRI 10 – College Reading and Composition and WRI 100 – Advanced Writing or WRI 116 – Science Writing in Natural Sciences
One Semester of Psychology	PSY 1 – Introduction to Psychology
One Semester of Biochemistry	BIO 101 or CHEM 111 – Biochemistry I
Additional Courses in Humanities & Social Sciences	Courses from anthropology, art, cognitive science, foreign language, literature, music, psychology and sociology will strengthen your application and are required by some schools.

All required courses must be taken for a grade, not on a Passed/Not Passed basis. If courses are repeated, both grades go into your AADSAS GPA; grades below C (or C-) not acceptable.

Dental Admissions Test (DAT)

The Dental Admission Test is a lengthy, comprehensive examination administered on computer throughout the United States and its territories. The DAT consists of test sections in biology, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, reading comprehension, perceptual ability and quantitative ability. In addition to these sections, you are given an overall science score and an academic average. The actual test time is 4 hours and 15 minutes. As a general guideline, you should not take the DAT until you have completed the general science prerequisites (except physics as it does not appear on the DAT); you may also want to complete courses in Genetics (BIO 140), Physiology (BIO 164), and Biochemistry (BIO 101) prior to taking the DAT.

Candidates may schedule the computerized DAT on almost any date throughout the year but must wait 90 days to retake the exam. There are no application deadlines for the DAT but some popular dates may fill up early so plan ahead. Ideally you should take the DAT before you apply since your application won't be complete until dental schools have your scores and being an early applicant is important due to rolling admissions. Check with individual schools for information on their absolute deadlines for taking the DAT.

Extracurricular Activities

It is very important for a competitive applicant to have extracurricular activities. Fortunately, there is a wide range of possibilities available to each applicant. Some students must support themselves and work becomes their primary (but not only) extracurricular activity. It is very important that you have some type of dental experience, whether through an observational internship or actual work for a dentist since dental schools want to be certain that you have knowledge of the field. Most UC Merced students have research experience in addition to clinical dental experience. Clinical and research experiences that you initiate or develop yourself are particularly rewarding and are viewed very positively by admissions committees. Additionally, community and campus service, leadership experience, participation in organized sports or arts, and well-developed personal interests can be very important in the admission process.

Application Process

Virtually all dental schools belong to a centralized application service, the American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS), which allows you to apply

to them through one initial application. Applications usually become available in mid-May of each application cycle, and can be accessed and submitted electronically through the official [AADSAS](#) web site. You can obtain applications for any non-AADSAS schools by writing to them directly.

Applications are submitted approximately one year before enrolling in dental school and you should make an appointment with the health professions advisor to go over your individual timeline and the application process.

"Secondaries" are requests by AADSAS schools for additional information and school application fees. Some schools require that you send supplemental materials at approximately the same time that you submit your AADSAS application; other schools do not want you to send supplemental materials until you are invited to do so (selective secondaries). You will find complete instructions in the AADSAS application materials. Non-AADSAS schools do not require secondaries. The final stage of the application process is the interview. If a school offers you an interview, it means they are seriously considering you.

At each stage of the application process the health professions advisor will work with you through printed material, workshops and individual advising.

Dental Schools in California

Loma Linda University - School of Dentistry
University of California, Los Angeles - School of Dentistry
University of California, San Francisco - School of Dentistry
University of the Pacific - School of Dentistry
University of Southern California - School of Dentistry
Western University of Health Sciences – College of Dentistry