

Frequently Asked Questions: Pre-Dental Track

Q. How long is dental school?

A. In general, doctors will spend 4 years in dental school before becoming eligible for dental licensing

Q. What do I need to know if I am considering a DDS/PhD?

A. There is a great deal to know about what it takes to get into a DDS/PhD program as well as what is required once accepted into one. Much of this will need to be researched by the student as certain aspects of these programs may vary from program to program. In short, students considering these programs must meet all the same requirements as students who are applying to traditional DDS programs and in addition to having a significant amount of undergraduate research experience, to include having conducted their own research projects. Additionally, programs often require both a personal statement and a research statement as part of the primary application. For a list of DDS/PhD programs, students can refer to the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools.

Q. When do I need to decide my specialty?

A. While you may already be thinking about a specialty, most dental school admissions urge students to primarily view themselves as general practitioners as many students who think they know what specialty they would like to pursue more often than not end up changing their minds once they get into dental school and learning more about what it takes to pursue those specialties. If you do have a particular area of interest, however, then consider seeking an opportunity to shadow a professional in that area as well as other areas to round out your base knowledge of the profession.

Q. Do dental schools accept AP credit or classes taken Pass/No Pass?

A. Policies regarding AP credit and Pass/No Pass credit may vary from program to program. We encourage students to review the policies at each school they plan on applying to in order to determine whether AP credits may be used to meet prerequisite course requirements. Note: At UCSB, AP credits earned that have been applied to certain degree requirements *will not appear* on the official UCSB Transcript, which is required by many schools that do accept AP credit. In order to cover all bases, we encourage students to take all prerequisite courses at UCSB or another 4-year institution for *graded credit*. We do not suggest students take prerequisite courses Pass/No Pass.

Q. If I believe I am going to get a C- in a class, should I intentionally get a D or F so I can retake the class and get a better grade? What do I do if I am going to get a low grade in a class?

A. UCSB has a number of campus resources designed to help students who are struggling. We strongly encourage students to seek assistance as soon as possible to try to avoid these situations. We do not encourage students to purposefully fail courses, for any reason. If you believe that you may earn a grade that you feel is unsatisfactory, then please stop in to see a pre-health advisor during drop-in advising to discuss other options.

Q. Can courses I take abroad count as medical school prerequisites?

A. Courses taken abroad that have direct UCSB equivalents may be taken in order to meet professional school requirements; however, we caution students on taking a large number of science prerequisite courses abroad.

Q. Will participating in more experiences make up for a low GPA?

A. No.

Q. Does all prerequisite coursework have to be completed prior to applying?

A. No, but most programs do require that all prerequisite coursework be completed prior to matriculation.

Q. When should I take the DAT?

A. The ADA suggests that, in order to be able to adequately prepare for the DAT, students should have completed full-year sequences in general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, as well as a quarter/semester introductory course in biochemistry, psychology/sociology.

Q. When should I start studying for the DAT?

A. That is up to you; however, we suggest studying during a time when you have very few distractions and can ensure that you are able to dedicate, at least, 8 weeks of studying, during which you also complete several full-length practice tests under simulated test-taking conditions.

Q. Do I need a test prep course?

A. Test prep needs vary from student to student. Some aspects to consider when determining which types of test prep materials you will need include the costs associated with purchasing materials/courses as well as your own preferred learning style(s).

Q. When should I apply?

A. When you are ready and feel that you are at your most competitive as an applicant. This will be different for each student, so we encourage you to schedule an appointment to discuss with a pre-health advisor.

Q. Should I take a gap year?

A. Reasons for taking a gap year vary for each student, and choosing to take a gap year or not requires weighing a number of factors, such as current/anticipated GPAs (AO and BCPM), DAT score, and experiences, to name a few. Please schedule an appointment with a pre-health advisor to discuss your individual needs further.

Q. Will taking a gap year hurt my application?

A. No.

Q. When should I begin writing my personal statement?

A. Students should begin considering—and possibly writing a response to—the question, “Why do I want to be a dentist?” as soon as they begin considering the pre-dental track. In some cases, this becomes the precursor to a personal statement. Beyond that, students should begin drafting their personal statement as early as during the fall prior to their application season (following summer) because most personal statements will go through several edits and revisions.

Q. What is the average cost of dental school?

Prep: DAT prep, primary/secondary applications, interviews, deposits (DAT exam \$320, AADSAS \$245 (1 school; + \$102 for each additional school)

Attendance (Tuition, Room/Board, Other Expenses):

- A. According to the American Dental Education Association, it may cost as much as \$285,000 (or more) to become a dentist, which includes the cost of an undergraduate degree.
- B. In 2017-18, the average first-year cost of dental school (including tuition and mandatory general fees) was \$50,770 for residents and \$68,403 for non-residents. Results also vary by institution type. In 2017-18, the average resident first-year cost of public dental school programs was \$37,877 while the cost of private dental school programs was \$67,087. Source: 2017-18 survey of Dental Education-Report 2.

Q. Is an undergraduate degree required?

A. Typically, yes.