



PRE-DENTISTRY

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Advising Center
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PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Dentistry is the branch of the healing arts and sciences devoted to maintaining the health of the teeth, gums, and other hard and soft tissues of the oral cavity. In addition to general dentistry, there are nine recognized specialties. Dentists must have good manual dexterity while working in a very limited space. They also must be very meticulous in their attention to detail.

Students interested in becoming dentists must complete a specific set of prerequisite courses before moving on to complete four years of dental school. Many dental schools require that students complete prerequisite coursework and a minimum of three years of college prior to matriculation. However, 90% of students entering dental school have completed four years of college and most have earned baccalaureate degrees. In fact, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) recommends that dental schools encourage students to earn a baccalaureate degree before beginning dental school.

Students can complete required prerequisite coursework and earn a baccalaureate degree at PSU before beginning their dental education at a professional school such as **Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)**. The prerequisite coursework requires good science and mathematics skills as well as sensitivity to the needs of others. Prerequisite course requirements for admission vary by dental school. **Portland State offers a strong pre-dental program** whereby students complete their prerequisite coursework, earn a baccalaureate degree (in a major of their choice), and obtain extensive assistance with the dental school preparation, selection, and application process.

Prerequisite Courses Required by Most Dental Schools:

- One year of General Biology (called Principles of Biology at PSU)
- One year of General Chemistry
- One year of Organic Chemistry
- One year of General Physics
- English/English Comp

NOTE: Science courses should be those designed for science majors.

Additional Prerequisite Courses Required by Some Dental Schools:

- Psychology (commonly required)
- Biochemistry (commonly required)
- College Math and/or Calculus and/or Statistics
- Microbiology
- Anatomy & Physiology
- Molecular biology
- Genetics
- Speech/Rhetoric

The above lists are not exhaustive. Check individual schools for requirements. Also note that most professional schools require that an **A, B, or C** be earned in all required preparatory courses, and that the average overall GPA and science GPA of dental school matriculants is typically 3.5 or higher.

Dental Admission Test (DAT):

Dental schools in the U.S. require applicants to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). The DAT is a half-day exam with sections covering natural sciences (biology, chemistry, organic chemistry), perceptual ability, reading comprehension, and quantitative reasoning. DAT scores range from 1 to 30. A separate score is given for each section. An Academic Average Score is also calculated; it represents performance on all of the sections except Perceptual Ability. A score of 17-18 typically signifies average performance on a national basis. Competitive scores are in the 20+ range. Students should complete general biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry sequences before taking the DAT. The DAT is administered nearly every day of the year at Prometric Testing Centers. It should be taken at least a year before a student plans to enroll in dental school. Canadian dental schools require a similar test called the Dental Aptitude Test (DAT).

Requirements for Admission to OHSU Dental School

Most PSU pre-dental students apply to the **Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) School of Dentistry**, along with a variety of other dental schools across the nation. The following is an outline of OHSU's prerequisite courses and other admissions requirements (subject to change at any time). Students should research the admissions requirements of additional dental schools in the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools*, the most authoritative reference guide to U.S. and Canadian dental schools.

Prerequisite Coursework

OHSU Prerequisite Courses	Equivalent PSU Courses
Required	
General Chemistry w/ labs: Three quarters or two semesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 221/227, CH 222/228, CH 223/229 (15) – General Chemistry (MTH 111 is a pre- or co-requisite for this course)
Organic Chemistry w/ labs: One sequence comprised of at least two quarters or two semesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 334/337, CH 335/338, CH 336 (16) – Organic Chemistry I, II, III w/ Lab (preferred sequence – fulfills requirements of more dental schools) or • CH 331/337, 332/338 (12) – Elements of Organic Chemistry I and II w/ Lab. Only offered summer term (accelerated format).
Biochemistry w/ lab: One quarter or one semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 350 (4) – Biochemistry (complete Organic Chemistry before taking this)
General Biology w/ labs: Three quarters or two semesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 251, 252, 253 w/ Lab (15) – Principles of Biology (recommend CH 221 be complete prior to or concurrent w/ BI 251)
Human Anatomy & Physiology w/ labs: One year sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 301, 302, 303 w/ Lab – Anatomy & Physiology (complete Principles of Bio & General Chemistry before taking this)
Physics w/ labs: One year (regular or calculus-based)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH 201/214, 202/215, 203/216 (15) – General Physics w/ Lab (MTH 111 & MTH 112 are recommended prereqs for Physics)
English Composition: Three quarters or two semesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of University Studies or University Honors (see note at end of page) and/or • WR 121 (4) – College Writing • WR 222 (4) – Writing Research Papers • WR 323 (4) – Writing as Critical Inquiry
Suggested Additional Preparation (Recommended, Not Required)	
Microbiology (strongly recommended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 480/488 (6) – Microbiology w/ Lab
Cell Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 336 (5) – Cell Biology
Molecular Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 334 (4) – Introduction to Molecular Biology
Genetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 341 (4) – Introduction to Genetics
Histology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 455 (4) – Histology
Neuroscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 462 (4) – Neurophysiology
Sculpture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ART 291 (4) – Sculpture I (instructor permission required for non-art majors)
3-D Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ART 131 (4) – Introduction to Drawing
Courses in fine arts, humanities, behavioral sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose courses from departments such as PSY, SOC, ANTH, PHL, and ENG. A popular choice for practicing fine-detail work is ART 199 (4) – Intro to Jewelry-Making
Limitations on Community College Work	
OHSU suggests that a student who begins a pre-dental program at the community college should plan to attend no more than one year and then transfer to an accredited four-year institution.	

NOTE: Although OHSU School of Dentistry does not require PSU graduates to complete three terms of writing (provided they have completed the University Studies or University Honors program), other dental schools may require up to a year of writing and/or English coursework so it might be necessary to not only complete University Studies, but also take some extra writing courses. In addition, although OHSU School of Dentistry does not technically require math, some dental schools require math coursework, possibly through calculus. Check the requirements of the dental school in which you are interested to ensure you are aware of what is expected.

Additional OHSU Admissions Requirements:

- A **minimum of 135 quarter (90 semester) credits** from an accredited institution in the U.S. or Canada. (Note: In recent years, all students accepted to OHSU School of Dentistry have had Bachelor's degrees.)
- Foreign course work will not be accepted.
- **Recommended 3.0** cumulative GPA and science/BCP (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) GPA.
- **Required minimum DAT score of 15** in each DAT category. Scores cannot be more than 3 years old.
- A **baccalaureate (BA or BS) degree** is highly recommended.
- **Minimum 50 documented observation hours** – recommend minimum 25 hours in general dental practice and minimum 25 hours in another dental setting such as a public health clinic or dental specialty. Most competitive pre-dental students significantly exceed the minimum 50 hour requirement. Visits to the School of Dentistry for shadowing or assisting are coordinated through Tammy Stange, School of Dentistry Clinic Administration, atstanget@ohsu.edu or 503-494-4817. Students will need to observe in settings outside of OHSU as well; we recommend that you inquire with dentists at area clinics regarding observation and/or volunteering opportunities.
- **It is also recommended** (though not required) that pre-dental students take **Aspects of Dentistry** (CH 199), a PSU course taught every spring term at OHSU by Mark Mitchell, Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, OHSU School of Dentistry.

Application Process in Brief:

The application process for dental school begins more than a year before the proposed matriculation date (expected date of entrance into dental school). Students apply to dental school by completing and submitting a **primary application** through the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS). AADSAS standardizes the information from the application and forwards it to the dental schools indicated by the student. The AADSAS application becomes available on June 1. It is recommended that students submit their AADSAS application fairly early in the application cycle, although it is important not to rush into the process. Many PSU students wait until spring term grades have posted to submit their AADSAS application and, therefore, submit their applications in mid to late June (which is still early in the application cycle).

After submitting the AADSAS application, applicants must have letters of evaluation sent to AADSAS. Students typically use PSU's **Health Sciences Advising Committee (HSAC) Letter** service. A Committee Letter of evaluation is essentially a cover letter written by the student's adviser followed by all individual evaluation letters submitted to the advising office by instructors and non-academic evaluators (such as work and volunteer supervisors and physicians). The cover letter includes the HSAC's ratings for the student in three categories: 1) academic accomplishment, 2) clinical exposure (exposure to dentistry), and 3) extracurricular, research, and community service activities. The Committee's ratings are based on the HSAC's review of the student's HSAC file, which includes information such as GPA, DAT scores, transcripts, relevant activities, and personal statement. Students must meet certain minimum requirements in order to request a Committee Letter. See a pre-dental adviser for more information on the Committee Letter service and the application process.

Many dental schools send applicants a **secondary or supplemental application**. The supplemental application may include a request for more background information, updated transcripts, and an additional application fee. Interviews normally take place between October and January for acceptance the following fall (although some schools continue to interview into the spring). Admissions offers are made beginning on December 1. Most offers are made by March but some schools continue to make offers through spring term (and even later in some cases for applicants who are pulled off of wait lists).

Central Application Service:

Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS)

<https://portal.aadsasweb.org/>

ADEA AADSAS

1400 K Street NW, Suite 1100

Washington, DC 20005

617-612-2045 (applicant inquiries only)

aadsasinfo@aadsasweb.org

Application Deadlines:

- The **AASDSAS application** becomes **available on June 1** at <https://portal.aadsasweb.org/>.
- AADSAS begins **accepting applications in June**, and the specific deadline for each dental school varies (deadlines are published in the AADSAS information booklet).
- The deadline for the OHSU School of Dentistry is **November 1**. The priority deadline is **September 1**.
- OHSU **interviews** selected applicants from **October through approximately March (sometimes later)**.
- OHSU typically begins to send out **acceptance letters in December**.
- OHSU contact details:

OHSU School of Dentistry
611 SW Campus Drive
Portland, OR 97239-3097
(503) 494-5274
Fax: (503) 494-6244
E-mail: sodadmit@ohsu.edu
Homepage: <http://www.ohsu.edu/sod>

Tips & Recommendations:

- **Meet periodically (ideally once a term) with a pre-dental adviser** to discuss course planning and activities, remaining requirements to meet, and application procedures. Call 503-725-3822 to schedule an appointment with an adviser. Call the same number to find out drop-in advising hours, which can be utilized for quick questions or updates (or emergencies).
- **Take Aspects of Dentistry (CH 199) early in your academic career.** Aspects of Dentistry is a recommended course taught every spring term to help pre-dental students better understand the field. This PSU course meets for the first time on the PSU campus and for the rest of the term at OHSU School of Dentistry.
- **Request letters of evaluation throughout your college program as appropriate.** Be sure to register for veCollect and use the Letter Request forms from the CLAS Advising Center when requesting letters. Do not wait until right before you are applying to request letters; rather, ask for a letter soon after a class has ended so the instructor's memory of you is fresh when he/she writes the letter. Do not ask every single instructor you have had to write a letter for you. Be strategic about whom you are asking to write letters for you. You should select instructors in whose classes you have performed well and who know you well enough to comment on more than just your grade and rank. You will also need to request letters from non-academic evaluators. Request these letters of evaluation at the end of your work, volunteering, or shadowing experience, or if you are still in the position at time of application, request the letter well in advance of the HSAC deadline. Ask a pre-dental adviser about veCollect and the Letter Request forms.
- **Ensure that one of your letters of evaluation is from a dentist.**
- **Personally read the Web site, admission brochure, and ADEA Guide to Dental Schools chapter** for each of the dental schools to which you plan to apply to obtain information on requirements, deadlines, mission, and curriculum.
- **Participate in paid, volunteer, and/or shadowing experience** in dentistry and in the community at large early on in your college experience. It is important that you understand the realities of dentistry and illustrate through action your commitment to serving the community.
- **Seek out clinical and/or research opportunities** with PSU and/or OHSU faculty.
- **Get involved with other pre-dental students on campus** – join the Pre-Dental Student Organization – for access to volunteering activities, dental lab visits, and more. See <http://predental.groups.pdx.edu>.
- **Take the DAT only when you are fully prepared to do so.** You should have completed general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and college math prior to taking the DAT. Include DAT study time in your academic planning. It is ideal to take the exam by late spring of your application year but common for students to take the exam in July or August; it is not recommended that you take the exam later than August, as schools will not receive your score until late in the application cycle.
- **Begin the application process early** - in the spring or early summer before your last academic year at PSU (about a year ahead of when you plan to start dental school). Submit your application as early as possible in the application cycle without compromising the quality of your application. Visit a pre-dental adviser at PSU to discuss the application process.
- **Utilize free university resources** such as your pre-dental adviser, the Writing Center, and the Career Center for help with your personal statement(s) and interview preparation.
- **Begin completing financial aid forms in January; the priority filing deadline is March 1.**