

PRE-DENTAL FACT SHEET



Becoming a Competitive Applicant to Dental School

Applicants to dental school must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours (3 years) of college coursework, along with the pre-dentistry prerequisites. Most pre-dentistry students complete a Bachelor's degree prior to entering dental school. Competitive applicants for admission to dental school have a solid academic record, a well-rounded profile of co-curricular experiences, strong scores on the Dental Admission Test (DAT), supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing dentistry.

SELECTING A MAJOR

Applicants with a well-rounded education, a variety of interests and personal experiences are ideal candidates and are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong academic performance while focusing on developing a strong background in the sciences. Dental schools look for students who demonstrate a strong ability to handle a rigorous course load.

GPA

GPAs calculated on dental school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the GPAs calculated by the dental schools. **Aim for GPAs of 3.3 or higher.**

GRADES

C is an honorable grade, though most if not all grades should be higher! Multiple grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to dental school application, could interfere with admission to dental schools. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade; consult with your advisors as you decide. More than two W's, however, could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges

PRE-REQUISITE AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Pre-dental students should complete certain coursework to be prepared for the Dental Admission Test (DAT). In addition, students should research schools carefully to be aware of all pre-requisite courses and other admissions policies. Students are encouraged to meet with a Pre-Health Advisor to develop their timeline for application to dental school.

PRE-REQUISITES

Traditionally, dental schools have selected candidates for admission who possessed:

- Two semesters of General Biology with lab – BIO 201/205; BIO 202/206
- Two semesters General Chemistry with lab – CHM 203/204; CHM 205/206; CHM 285/286 also meets this requirement
- Two semesters Organic Chemistry with lab – CHM 321/322; CHM 323/324
- Two semesters of General Physics with lab – PHY 201/205; PHY 202/206
- (Note: Physics is not included in the DAT exam; students sometimes take Physics in Senior year – research schools to ensure this is acceptable)

BEFORE THE DAT EXAM:

Some Creighton pre-dental students report that a course in cell biology or physiology can be helpful for DAT preparation, although neither course is required for the DAT exam. It can also be helpful for some students to take a course that utilizes visual and spatial perception – such as drawing, sculpture, ceramics, 3-D art, painting, etc. – in order to prepare for the Perceptual Ability section on the DAT exam.

Some dental schools require additional courses, such as English composition, and additional upper-level biology courses, such as anatomy and physiology, microbiology and biochemistry. Many schools strongly encourage applicants to take courses in the arts and social sciences; Creighton students take many of these courses through the Magis Core.

Some schools, including Creighton School of Dentistry, may not regard credit earned through examinations (AP, CLEP, IB) as being equivalent to completing required courses, but they may accept higher-level college courses as substitutes. Research individual schools for their policies regarding AP/CLEP/IB credits for pre-requisite courses.

PRE-HEALTH GUIDES AND RESOURCES

EDGE PRE-HEALTH ADVISING:
Pre-Health Advisors in the EDGE are available to meet with students one-on-one about their pre-health goals and path.

EDGE PRE-HEALTH SEMINARS:
The EDGE seminars assist students in exploring the dental profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Students should participate in PHLC 200 in their sophomore year, and then PDDS in either the junior or senior year (depending upon the student's application timeline).

PRE-HEALTH LISTSERV: Subscribe at: <http://lists.creighton.edu/mailman/listinfo>

PRE-DENTAL SOCIETY: All pre-dental students should participate in the Pre-Dental Society. This student-run organization provides leadership opportunities to further explore and gain experience in the dental profession-
<https://creighton.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/predentalsociety>

CU SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY: Make an appointment with DENTAL admissions office personnel in the spring of the junior year to personalize the application process.

HELPFUL LINKS:
creighton.edu/edge - Creighton EDGE
Creighton School of Dentistry:
<https://dentistry.creighton.edu/>-
American Dental Education Association:
www.adea.org

Course Scheduling Considerations: Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

Chemistry: General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Students must have a sufficient chemistry background (completion of high school chemistry) and sufficient math background (an ACT math score of at least 24 or an SAT math score of at least 560) to be eligible take General Chemistry in the freshman year. Students may instead take additional math and/or CHM 105 Introductory Chemistry in freshman year to be better prepared for General Chemistry in the sophomore year.

Biology: General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring, respectively. Some Pre-Dental students might choose to take General Biology in their Sophomore year.

Physics: Students who have sufficient math and physics (a year of high school physics or a semester of college introductory physics such as our PHY 187; math through pre-calculus) are eligible to take General Physics I (PHY 201/205) and General Physics II (PHY 202/206). Prospective math, physics, and chemistry majors may take alternate sections of General Physics and additional math.

Math: Pre-dental students will need pre-calculus algebra and trigonometry knowledge; if those courses were not completed in high school, MTH 139 Precalculus should be taken (Note: MTH 139 does NOT meet the Magis Core math requirement; that would then be met by taking MTH 231 or 245). Math, physics, and chemistry majors will need more than one semester of calculus and usually should not take MTH 231.

Summer: Science courses may be taken in the summer by pre-dental students, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to “catch up”) and not at community colleges. Speak with a pre-health advisor about timelines!

Sample First Semester Schedule:

Course sequencing may vary depending upon a student's readiness.

- General Biology I with lab (4 sem. hours)
- General Chemistry I with lab (4 sem. hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 sem. hours) – ENG or Critical Issues + COM
- Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PSY or SOC, foreign language



Dental School Application Process

NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS: All applicants must take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) a national, standardized computer-based test. The DAT is typically taken approximately 12-15 months before starting dental school. Some students might consider taking the DAT exam after completion of Organic Chemistry. To do well on this exam, students need to take certain courses and allow for significant study and preparation before the exam.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: Students can submit up to four letters of recommendation with their AADSAS application. Many dental schools require at least two or three letters from professors, and ask that one or two of the letters be from professors who taught the student in a science course. Some schools may require that one letter be from a practicing dentist. Students are encouraged to research letter requirements by school.

INTERVIEWS: Many dental schools will interview promising applicants. The Creighton School of Dentistry does not require an interview, but students can request one. The Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Some dental schools might offer special consideration to applicants from socioeconomic groups underrepresented in the profession.

CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

Good grades and high DAT scores are not enough to get you into dental school. It is important that you are a well-rounded applicant that participates in meaningful activities on your college campus and your community. Dentistry is a service-focused profession and dental school admissions officers look for students who demonstrate their promise to serve the community throughout their lifetimes. Additionally, dental schools expect students will shadow professionals and also value skills gained from leadership, research, building relationships, and manual dexterity activities that can demonstrate readiness for dental school.

VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE

Students must have service experiences in both healthcare and non-healthcare settings, and it is important to show sustained commitment over time. Check out the Schelgel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities - <http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/>

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Dentists are called on to connect with and help people different from themselves, and make their patients feel comfortable during treatment. Seek out experiences that help you build interpersonal relationships and interact with people from many walks of life.

SHADOWING

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing current professionals in their field. It is highly recommended that students shadow both general dentistry and dental specialties, if possible. Students at Creighton are also offered an opportunity to shadow dental students at the Creighton School of Dentistry Community Dental Clinic.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership comes in many forms. Creighton has a number of resources to help you gain leadership experience through various organizations and student programming. Showing some leadership skills now demonstrates you can be a leader in your community later.

MANUAL DEXTERITY

Dentists do precision work on a small scale, and need excellent eye-hand coordination. You can fine-tune these motor skills through activities like Drawing, Painting, Sculpting, Ceramics, Jewelry-making, Sewing, Nail Technician, Learning Musical Instruments, Woodcarving, and more.

RESEARCH

Research experience is not a requirement for admission to dental school, but may add an extra layer to your application if the institutions you are applying to have a research focus, or if you are particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at <http://www.creighton.edu/curas/>.