

A Handbook for Pre-Dental Students



Biology/Allied Health Department
Southern Adventist University
Collegedale, TN 37315

<http://southern.edu/biology>





Pre-Dental Program

Southern Adventist University

General Information:

Admission requirements are published annually by the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (<https://portal.aadsasweb.org/>) and this is an excellent source for all types of pertinent information.

Entrance into dental school has five essential requirements. These are:

1. **A four-year bachelor's degree.** Dental schools do not require any specific major. The student is free to major in any area of study ranging from the sciences to the humanities. Traditionally, the great majority of students throughout the country who apply to dental schools come from biology or chemistry majors because these majors best prepare the student for the rigorous basic sciences that must be mastered during the first two years of dental school. A student who is weak in the sciences and takes a major outside of the sciences to boost their GPA is defeating their goals. A student must be strong in the sciences to handle the rigors of dental school. If another major is chosen, it is best to take additional courses in the sciences to strengthen the student in this area. Loma Linda University recommends at least 3 additional upper division biology classes. Courses in accounting, intro to management, and ceramics or sculpture are also very helpful.
2. **Good academic GPA.** Dental schools characteristically compute two GPAs for the students who apply to their schools, the overall GPA and the science GPA. The science GPA carries much more weight as an indicator of the student's ability to meet the academic challenges of dental school. A high GPA in non-science subjects and a mediocre GPA in science will not cut it. The average GPA for acceptance into many dental schools is about 3.4 and the lowest GPA is about 3.1. GPA's are calculated on all classes taken. If you get a "C" in a class, retake it and get an "A", it is calculated as two "B's". You want to make sure to do well the first time you take a class.
3. **Four full-year college basic science classes plus Biochemistry:** General Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, General Physics and one semester of Biochemistry without the lab. These are the absolute minimum number of classes required. Additional classes are highly recommended. It is expected that the student do well in these classes with grades in the A-B range. The science GPA that most dental schools use to evaluate a student will include these classes and any other science courses that have been taken in college. It is not advisable for a student to shop around to find "easy A" basic science summer classes at other colleges. Dental school admission committees are suspicious of students who take their basic science classes at schools other than their primary college or university because of that practice.
4. **The Dental Admission Test (DAT).** This test is administered online by the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service. The content of the DAT examination is described on the Association's website. The DAT can be taken after finishing General Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry. However, you must finish one semester of Biochemistry and one year of General Physics before entering dental school. This examination is taken anytime throughout the year online through an accepted testing center. You will get your score immediately after finishing the test. The DAT scores must be available to dental schools to evaluate the year **before** the student is expecting to begin dental school. Taking a DAT review such as that offered by Kaplan (<http://kaplan.com>) or Princeton Review Centers (<http://www.princetonreview.com>) is sometimes recommended in preparing to take this important exam. Eight-ten weeks of eight-ten hours a day of individual prep either taking a course or studying by yourself is recommended.
5. **Good written recommendations** from the Pre-professional Recommendations Committee of the applicant's undergraduate university or college. Dental schools are most interested in applicants who show good "non-cognitive" traits of integrity, leadership, compassion, and community involvement as well as being well rounded with interests in areas such as music, sports, etc. It is very important that a pre-dental student get to know the science professors at the college in which they are taking pre-dental studies. They form the core recommendations committee and their impressions of the student are the basis of this important component of the student's application. It is not advisable for students to go "off campus" to take the required basic science courses for this and other reasons. Regardless of the degree pursued, it is critical that pre-dental students frequently consult the

University's pre-dental advisor in the Biology department for advice on the selection of courses and preparation for admission requirements.

6. Fifty hours of shadowing, with at least 20 of these with a general dentist, are now required at Loma Linda University. Knowing what dentistry is all about helps students know if this career is right for them.

TIMETABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES FOR DENTAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS:

Freshman Year

1. GPA is calculated from your first semester as an undergraduate. Keep your academic record competitive! GPA is the first critical factor in determining your application's success. Begin now to get involved in some extracurricular activities, especially those which reach OUT to others.
2. Get to know your advisor. If you have a major other than in the sciences, "adopt" the pre-dental advisor in Biology to work with you throughout your time at Southern.



3. By the second semester, think about working either paid or as a volunteer in a dental setting. Experience in this type of setting will let the dental school admissions committee know that you are serious about a career in the health sciences. Getting to know a dentist in this context will also add a positive element to your recommendations when you apply.
4. Join Southern's Pre-Dental Club and be an active part of it.

Sophomore Year

1. Begin or continue to work either paid or as a volunteer in a dental office or other location where you can gain some clinical exposure. Make sure you have requested a personal letter of recommendation from those who will support you in your application.
2. By this time you should have at least one of the basic science courses completed, perhaps two.
3. Remember to be active in the Pre-Dental Club. Now is a good time to think of participating in the club as an officer.
4. A number of dental schools consider research an important part of undergraduate preparation for a dental career. This is a good time to check with the department's research coordinator or your academic advisor for research opportunities during the summer or school year.

Junior Year – Fall Semester

1. Begin review for DAT (Nov, Dec).
2. Continue to work or volunteer in a dental setting.



3. Think about who your writers of supplementary recommendation letters are going to be. In addition to a recommendation from the pre-professional recommendations committee, you will need three others for the supplementary application to dental school.

Typically, the following are suggested:

- a) Dentist you have shadowed.
 - b) Work supervisor (diligent, on-time, etc.) or professor for whom you have worked.
 - c) Pastor, friend (character reference).
4. Set up an appointment with your pre-dental advisor to discuss your application as well as a research experience to strengthen it.

Junior Year – Winter Semester

1. If you have decided to take the DAT this summer, you should start your application now and pay attention to the deadline dates. Apply early!
2. Continue to review for the DAT.



February

1. Make sure DAT application is received.
2. Begin to consider schools that you are going to apply to; consult your pre-dental advisor. Typically, you choose a few “wished for” schools, a few “in-state” schools, and a few “last hope” schools.

May

Begin work on your personal essay for the AADSAS application. Submit it as soon as possible.

Senior Year

July

1. Complete your application for AADSAS with your final AADSAS personal essay. This takes awhile so start early!
2. Obtain a personal information sheet from the Associate Vice President’s office to fill out for the pre-professional recommendations committee so they can write a more complete and supportive letter for you.

Mid August

Turn in your completed personal information sheet to the Associate Vice President’s office with a list of the dental schools to which you are applying. Also, tell this office which dental schools need the committee letter. Otherwise, only Loma Linda will receive it.

October

1. Be patient, interviews will come.
2. Begin to think of alternatives (just in case).
3. Update your application to the schools as you accomplish more in your senior year.
4. Thank you letters to interviewers and recommendation writers.

December Try to schedule interviews during winter break for convenience.

January Send updated transcripts if requested by schools.

February If you have no responses by mid February, speak with your pre-dental advisor. He/she may be able to call on your behalf.

March If wait-listed, send letter expressing continued interest.

April-August A few acceptance letters are still sent out, so stay calm. Make sure dental schools can reach you or a family member by telephone at all times.

YOU ARE ACCEPTED!

Be sure to let your major department and advisor know. A thank-you letter for all that was done on your behalf is very appropriate and appreciated.

