PRE-DENTISTRY
Pathway Information

GSW GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

There is no “best” major for pre-dental students. Biology is the most common major, as it provides a strong foundation and more of the required course work applies toward the major. However, other majors can be acceptable. Pursue a major that helps you excel.

Consult a pre-health advisor about your individual plan, and to check with your dental school for their requirements. While at GSW, be sure to build credentials in scholarship, leadership, community service, and clinical experience, as well as shadowing in the various settings of the profession.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Pre-Dental Requirements:

- Principles of Biology I & II
  BIOL 2107K & 2108K (8 hrs)
- Principles of Chemistry I & II
  CHEM 1211/L & 1212/L (8 hrs)
- Organic Chemistry I & II
  CHEM 3301/L & 3302/L (8 hrs)
- Intro to Physics I & II
  PHYS 1111/L & 1112/L (8 hrs)
- Composition I & II
  ENGL 1101 & 1102 (6 hrs)
- Biochemistry
  CHEM 4410 (3 hrs)
- Elementary Statistics
  MATH 1401 (3 hrs)

Note: All lab courses should be taken face-to-face.

Recommended Pre-Dental Courses:

- Animal Physiology*
  BIOL 4400 (4 hrs)
  *This is the most helpful course prior to the DAT.
- Human Anatomy and Physiology I & II
  BIOL 2251K & BIOL 2252K (8 hrs)
- Genetics
  BIOL 4200 (3 hrs)
- Foundations in Microbiology
  BIOL 2260K (4 hrs)

ADVISOR INFORMATION

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TIMELINE

Many of the required courses are sequence courses that have prerequisites and are not offered every semester. For example, you cannot take Organic Chemistry without successfully completing both Principles of Chemistry courses and their associated labs. You can’t take Principles of Chemistry I without the pre-requisite/co-requisite Mathematics course. Organic Chemistry I is only offered in Fall and the Organic Chemistry II only in Spring.

DENTAL ADMISSION TEST (DAT) AND GPA EXPECTATIONS

The Dental Admission Test (DAT) is offered multiple times per year at a cost of $475. It is computer-based and around five hours in length. The test is multiple choice and includes the following six areas: Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Reading Comprehension, Perceptual Ability and Quantitative Reasoning. Reading the DAT Guide at ada.org/DAT is an important part of test preparation, especially the “Test Content” or “Scope of the Test.” A new guide is due out at the end of December every year.

You should **always plan to take the DAT only once**. Retakes are available, but you must think very carefully about signing up for one. Remember, you must do better on your second attempt. Consider what message you are sending to an admissions committee if you retake the exam only to achieve roughly same score or even something lower. Since it is no longer an isolated incident, it raises questions about your knowledge and skill in the areas being tested and also about your judgment. In addition to this, many dental schools do not accept scores after three attempts. The ideal DAT (AA/PA/TS) score is 20/20/20.

Since there is intense competition for getting into dental school, a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) is the minimum GPA required to stand a chance in the competition. Having a GPA of around 3.3 or higher would give you an advantage, also for the science courses the same GPA is desirable. Getting into dental school does not depend on your grades alone though.

The ideal dental school applicant will have a 3.6 cumulative GPA or higher. There are many schools that average Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (BCP) GPAs together. For these science courses, the average applicant should strive for a 3.5 GPA or higher.

SHADOWING, VOLUNTEERING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

You are expected to spend time shadowing a dentist to experience the doctor/patient interaction and should plan to begin shadowing as soon as possible. This experience demonstrates that you understand the profession, but there is no specific hour requirement. Ideally, you should build a good relationship with at least one dentist so that you may request a letter of evaluation.

Volunteering in the community is another important part of the application. Being involved in service shows commitment to your community and is an opportunity to learn about social issues. Dental schools want to see depth of commitment and substantial involvement and leadership in the community.

There are many benefits to getting involved in undergraduate research, and the majority of successful applicants to dental programs have research experience. You are highly encouraged to pursue research opportunities. You should plan to dedicate at least a year to a specific project or lab, and you must be able to discuss your research at various levels. For biology majors, the required capstone research project fulfills is expectation.

For more information, visit gsw.edu/PreProfessional.

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LETTERS OF EVALUATION

Most dental schools require at least three letters of evaluation, but specific requirements vary between schools. Ideally, you should aim for two letters from hard science faculty since this is a common requirement. Research mentors do not always count for these letters since some schools draw a distinction between mentorship and classroom instruction. Regardless, you should always plan to include a letter from your research mentor.

At GSW, it is easy to build close relationships with faculty due to the small class sizes. You have the opportunity to work one-on-one with faculty both inside and outside the classroom. A letter of recommendation has a greater value if it is from faculty that can address more than your grades in a course. You must be mindful of this and do your best to foster a strong relationship with faculty.

A letter from a dentist with whom the student has shadowed or volunteered is strongly encouraged from a non-science faculty member. For additional letters, ask someone who will write the most compelling letter (volunteer coordinator, faculty, employer, etc.).