

**THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY
DEPARTMENT OF DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a dental hygienist?

A dental hygienist is a licensed healthcare professional, oral health educator and clinician who, as a co-therapist with the dentist, provides preventive, educational, and therapeutic services supporting total health for the control of oral diseases and the promotion of oral health.

What are employment statistics for dental hygienists?

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected employment prospects for dental hygiene to remain excellent, with the dental hygiene profession expected to be one of the fastest growing occupations through the year 2024. The 2016 median hourly wage was \$35.31 nationally and \$35.05 in Oklahoma. There is considerable freedom for dental hygienists to select work days and hours.

Why should I select The University of Oklahoma for my education in dental hygiene?

Graduates are awarded a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene and as a well-rounded academic background. The baccalaureate degree allows entry into positions in teaching, administration, public health, corporate positions that other types of dental hygiene education do not. The University of Oklahoma offers dental hygiene distance education that allows students to remain near their home for those unable to relocate.

Opportunities for professional growth within a college of dentistry exist that no other form of dental hygiene education can provide. The program has an excellent clinical program, but also excels in the areas of community health and research. There is a strong emphasis on developing critical thinking skills, the ability to self-assess, and interprofessional - hallmarks of a professional.

Dental hygiene and dental faculty members who are nationally and internationally recognized as experts in their disciplines teach all courses. Exit interviews and alumni surveys consistently rate the dental hygiene faculty as the greatest strength of the program.

What college should a prospective student attend?

In state or out-of-state applicants are afforded equal opportunity for admission. All coursework must be from accredited institutions.

Can I take my general education courses online?

Yes. General education courses may be taken online.

Beyond required courses, are there any other courses that will improve my chances of getting into the program?

Beyond the necessary prerequisite courses, no other coursework in a particular area is given preference. Areas for additional study should include courses that are of interest to the applicant. Some suggestions for courses that may improve one's knowledge for any health related career might include medical terminology, immunology or other biologic science courses, education or behavioral science courses, research, or any number of other courses that relate to a higher degree of knowledge.

How long does the dental hygiene program take?

A baccalaureate degree requires a minimum of 120 semester hours of work, including specific prerequisites. The sixty semester hours of prerequisite coursework can be completed in two academic years. Once in the program, students have an additional two years in the dental hygiene curriculum.

Is it possible to work part-time while enrolled in the dental hygiene program?

No. There are very heavy demands made on students' time. Attendance is mandatory and classes, labs and clinics are often scheduled from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, there is a significant amount of required study and at times projects that are very time consuming.

What is the deadline for admission?

The deadline for the application, letters of recommendation, personal statement, dental hygienist observation verification, and transcripts for coursework completed to date is **January 15** of the year in which the applicant wishes to begin the program.

What if I will still need prerequisite courses when I apply?

Acceptance is based upon completion of FOUNDATIONAL coursework by the end of the **spring semester** prior to admission. Ideally applicants should have completed the FOUNDATIONAL coursework before the January 15 application deadline. ALL other remaining pre-requisite courses must be completed by the time the fall semester begins. If you receive an offer of acceptance, it is contingent upon meeting the required "C" in all remaining pre-requisite coursework and a cumulative GPA of 2.5.

When will I know if I will be invited for an interview?

The interview process will occur in early spring. You will be notified by email if you are invited for an interview.

Are dental assistants given preference as applicants?

No. Applicants may be able to gain valuable information about the desirability of a career in dental hygiene as well as a better overall understanding of dentistry by working as a dental assistant. However dental hygiene requires different knowledge and skill sets from those of dental assisting.

What is a Foundational Grade Point Average (FGPA)?

A GPA computed to evaluate all applicants using the same prerequisite foundational courses that are critical for the dental hygiene program - especially those courses whose content is heavily used throughout the dental hygiene curriculum. The FGPA uses the averaged grade for the following eight required courses. English II, Human Physiology, Human Anatomy, Microbiology, Statistics, Psychology, Nutrition & General Chemistry I.

Why an FGPA?

We compute a Foundational Grade Point Average in order to be fair to all applicants regardless of previous college experience. The reasons for FGPA are twofold: to allow a fair comparison of all applicants regardless of how many semester hours completed and provide a means for an individual to improve academic performance in key courses that can be reflected significantly in

the applicant's credentials. **If FOUNDATIONAL courses have been taken through Advanced Placement or CLEP, the courses fulfill the Foundational prerequisite requirements, but are not calculated into the Foundational GPA.**

What is the most important factor in deciding whether an applicant is admitted?

One of the best predictors of future academic success is past academic performance. For that reason, the academic record of applicants is weighted rather heavily in the initial placement of applicants. A Foundational Grade Point Average (FGPA), last 60 hours Grade Point Average (L60GPA), ACT score, and Foundational Course Completion Status are used to compare applicants' academic qualifications.

Can you tell me more about the distance education sites?

The University offers a baccalaureate degree program that consists of a minimum of 60 hours of prerequisite coursework and two years of dental hygiene curriculum. Prerequisite courses may be taken at The University of Oklahoma or another accredited university or college. Procedures taught in the curriculum fall within the dental hygiene scope of practice in the State of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center College of Dentistry ensures that program expectations, learning objectives, and educational outcomes offered at the Oklahoma City campus and by distance at the following three sites, are consistent.

- Tri County Technology Center in Bartlesville, OK
- Southern Oklahoma Technology Center in Ardmore, OK
- Western Technology Center in Weatherford, OK

Program outcomes between the OKC campus and the aforementioned sites are evaluated yearly by course directors and reported to the department chair and dean of the college. All students attend the same classes via distance technology and have the same clinical and didactic requirements. Program competencies are provided in written form and discussed with students at orientation prior to beginning the academic program and are included in the Dental Hygiene Manual. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates from all sites receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene and are eligible to take examinations for licensure to practice as registered dental hygienists. The Higher Learning Commission and the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association accredit the program.

What if I'm interested in receiving my education at one of the distance sites?

Applicants to all sites go through the same procedures for admission. The application form has a place for you to prioritize where you would like to attend. You may prioritize from all four sites, from two or three sites, or select only one – it's your choice.

When will I know if I have been accepted?

The Admissions Committee aims for its decisions to be completed by mid-April. Candidates are notified of their status by email as soon as possible after the class is selected.

Why wasn't I selected for this year's class?

The top reasons applicants aren't selected are as follow:

- Foundational GPA not competitive
- Last 60 hours GPA was not competitive
- ACT score not competitive
- Incomplete foundational coursework
- Missing too many courses to be able to complete in time for fall admission
- Inappropriate dental hygiene observation experience. Observation of a dentist or dental assistant does NOT qualify. Nor does working in a dental office qualify as observational experience.

If I am not selected, how can I improve my prospects for the next class?

Applicants not selected are extended an invitation to schedule an appointment during the summer with the department chair to evaluate credentials and determine how to best improve foundational knowledge and increase possibility of admission. Ask yourself these questions: Did I have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5? That's the GPA that "opens the door" so you can even be considered. Were my FGPA and L60GPA competitive? For the past five years the average FGPA and L60GPA of entering students were around 3.5. Did you have enough hours completed (especially in foundational courses) to give the Committee a good picture of your academic capability and to be competitive? You will not be accepted if you cannot have all of your prerequisite coursework completed by the time the dental hygiene program begins in the fall. It is counterproductive for you to apply too early.

You should consider doing the following:

- Retaking foundational courses in which you did not do well, or which you took some time ago. Remember that we use the FGPA heavily for admissions decisions and that GPA can be improved!
- Doing whatever you can to improve study and test-taking skills. This will help you in learning better and improving your GPA.
- Examining your knowledge of dental hygiene, including observation a dental hygienist. You really do need to know what you're getting into – dental hygiene is well worth the effort if it is truly what you want to do.
- Reevaluating your personal motivation.
- Reevaluating your commitment to becoming a dental hygienist.
- Reevaluating your qualifications as a competitive applicant.
- Deciding whether or not you are willing to do what it takes to be competitive. Many applicants who were not successful the first time have gone on to be some of our best students ...and graduates; so **don't give up!!**