

# Dental Education

Dentistry involves diagnosis, treatment and prevention of dental disorders and diseases of the teeth, gums, jaws and its peripheral structures. It is a branch of medicine where students learn all facets of dental medicine and the influence of oral healthcare on the patient's health. The dental profession provides and advances high standards of dental treatment, oral healthcare delivery and management of related services to the public.

## Education:

Admission requirements and procedures for study and entry into professions in the US vary from those in home countries of international students.

Dental education is not offered at the undergraduate level in the United States. Students interested in dental study can major in any subject, but undergraduate courses in the biological sciences, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, as well as in the humanities and the behavioral and social sciences sets a strong foundation for entry into a dental school. Minimum course requirements vary from school to school.

**First professional degree in dentistry:** Dental study in the U.S. is generally pursued after a four-year bachelor's degree. The first professional degree in Dentistry is a four-year program from an accredited dental school which leads to the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or the Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD degree). The first two years involve classroom instruction and laboratory work in the basic and clinical sciences while the last two years focus on hands-on clinical study involving treatment of patients through rotations under the supervision of licensed dentists. All dental schools require the Dental Admission Test (DAT) administered by the American Dental Association (ADA), and a strong GPA among other requirements. Some US dental schools also offer combined degree programs along with the DDS or DMD programs.

**Advanced standing programs:** Students with partial dental training or dental degrees from non-ADA accredited schools may avail of advanced standing dental programs. Students generally enter in the second or third year. Graduates of foreign dental schools (non-ADA) may apply for such programs through the online ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID).

Some dental schools offer special intense, accelerated programs called the International Dentist Program for foreign trained dental graduates. The length of this program varies from 2 – 3 years and culminates in either a DDS or a DMD degree while some may grant a certificate of completion. Note: Program requirements and admission criteria of dental programs vary. Check [www.adea.org](http://www.adea.org) and individual program websites for admission procedures.

## Advanced Education Opportunities For International Dental Graduates

General Practice Residency (GPR), Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) and ADA-approved dental specialty programs are postdoctoral training opportunities designed to advance skills and develop competence for professional practice.

- GPR and AEGD are generally one year programs with an optional second year beyond the dental degree.
- The American Dental Association recognizes nine specialty programs: Dental public health, endodontics, orthodontics, oral and maxillofacial pathology, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, pediatric dentistry, periodontics and prosthodontics. The duration of these programs varies from two to four years beyond the dental degree.

Graduate degree programs: Students interested in careers in teaching, administration or research may consider degrees which include a Master of Science (MS), Master's in Public Administration (MPH), and Master's in Hospital Administration (MHA) or a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) among other options.



EducationUSA Centers provide advising services and a diverse collection of materials to assist students in their search for appropriate programs. To find the nearest EducationUSA Advising Center, visit [www.educationusa.info/centers.php](http://www.educationusa.info/centers.php)

**Occupations in Dentistry:** A degree in Dentistry gives opportunities as a general practitioner, community consultant, dental public health specialist, oral and maxillofacial surgeon, oral pathologist, oral and maxillofacial radiologist, endodontist, orthodontist, pediatric dentist, periodontist, prosthodontist. Some engage in private practice, while others choose teaching, research or administration in dental health, dental public policy, and international public health among other options.

**Licensure:** To obtain a license to practice dentistry, graduates must meet requirements outlined by the respective dental licensing authority in the state in which they wish to practice. Licensure requirements vary by state but generally includes graduation from a CODA-accredited dental program, satisfactory performance in the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE part I and II), evaluation of foreign credentials by Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE), proof of English language proficiency or TOEFL and a state clinical examination. For state specific requirements for international dentists, see [http://www.ada.org/sections/educationAndCareers/pdfs/licensure\\_state\\_requirements\\_intl.pdf](http://www.ada.org/sections/educationAndCareers/pdfs/licensure_state_requirements_intl.pdf)

**Choosing a professional Dentistry degree program:** Dental education programs in the US must be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). The Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS) is a single online application service that facilitates applications to participating US dental schools. For details on eligibility and application procedures, please go to <http://www.adea.org>. Note: Students are also advised to look up individual program websites for specific requirements and procedures. If the school of your choice is not among those participating in the AADSAS, then apply directly to the respective school.

Admission to a US dental school is extremely competitive. Learn the admissions requirements, trends, current developments in the profession and identify programs that meet your preferences and goals. International students must check in advance the prospects of acceptability and recognition of such programs in the home country. EducationUSA Centers provide advising services and a diverse collection of materials to assist students in their search for appropriate programs. To find the nearest EducationUSA Advising Center, visit [www.educationusa.info/centers.php](http://www.educationusa.info/centers.php)

**Associations & organizations affiliated with study of Dentistry:**

- American Dental Association [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)
- American Dental Education Association [www.adea.org](http://www.adea.org)
- Commission on Dental Accreditation [www.ada.org/117.aspx](http://www.ada.org/117.aspx)
- American Association of Public Health Dentistry [www.aaphd.org](http://www.aaphd.org)
- Academy of General Dentistry [www.agd.org](http://www.agd.org)
- American Student Dental Association [www.asdanet.org](http://www.asdanet.org)
- Joint Commission on National Dental Board Examinations [www.ada.org/JCNDE.aspx](http://www.ada.org/JCNDE.aspx)
- American Association of Dental Boards [www.aadexam.org](http://www.aadexam.org)
- Special Care Dentistry Association [www.scdonline.org](http://www.scdonline.org)

**References:**

- [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)
- [www.adea.org](http://www.adea.org)
- <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos072.htm>

**Some journals related to the study of Dentistry:** Journal of the American Dental Association, Journal of Dental Research, Dental Materials, Operative Dentistry, Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry, Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology and Endodontology, American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Journal of Clinical Periodontology

**Graduate program search print and online resources**

- Peterson's [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools
- Peterson's Graduate Programs in Business, Education, Health, Information Studies, Law & Social Work; Book # 6

**International students need to check with individual programs and funding institutions to ascertain eligibility for scholarships and financial aid.**