DENTISTRY, DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY (D.D.S.)/ORAL HEALTH RESEARCH, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) [DUAL DEGREE]

Dental students with an interest in academic and research careers are afforded the opportunity to undertake advanced degree training while in dental school. The D.D.S/Ph.D. (dual degree) program seeks to train students interested in translating oral research to the clinic. These clinician-scientists will help bridge the gap between basic and clinical science in the field of dentistry.

Students will have both a research and a clinical mentor. Students will complete the first two years (preclinical years) of dental school during which time they will select their Ph.D. dissertation laboratory. Following completion of their second year of the dental curriculum, students will focus on the requirements for their Ph.D. The main undertaking at this phase is laboratory research that leads to the Ph.D. dissertation. Students are exempt from certain didactic courses in the Ph.D. program in recognition of the content in the dental curriculum. This will improve time to degree for the dual degree program. Students will also take part in weekly clinical sessions to maintain their dental knowledge. After completion of doctoral degree requirements, students re-enter the dental curriculum in the third year.

School of Dentistry program policies

The School of Dentistry provides policies applicable to all programs administratively housed in the school. Information on the doctoral program (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-dentistry/oral-health-research-phd/) is available elsewhere in this Bulletin. Additional information on dental programs is available on the School of Dentistry website (https://dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dds/).

The requirements for a dual professional/graduate degree in the School of Dentistry are equivalent to those required of students seeking a graduate degree alone and are determined by the individual program. For additional information, please visit the program website (https://dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/research/).

Admissions requirements

Prospective students should submit applications to AADAS for admission to dental school. At the same time, they should apply directly to the Ph.D. in Oral Health Research program for admission to the Ph.D. program, stating their interest in the dual degree program. Those invited to Richmond for interviews will take part in the standard interview for the School of Dentistry and will spend a second day interviewing with members of the D.D.S./Ph.D. steering committee, as well as touring labs of faculty scientists.

Degree requirements

In addition to the VCU Graduate School graduation requirements, students can earn both the D.D.S. and Ph.D. in Oral Health Research degree by having eight credit hours counted toward both degrees. This dual degree program allows students to earn both the D.D.S. and the Ph.D. after completion of a minimum of 268 credit hours rather than 276 credits required for both degrees. Students must fulfill all requirements of the 195 credit-hour D.D.S. degree. Eight hours of D.D.S. basic science courses will be applied to the Ph.D. in Oral Health Research degree. Students in the dual degree program may be advised to take additional didactic courses to support their research.

Expected time to degree for the combined program is seven years as opposed to the nine years normally required for the two degrees. This time saving is achieved by students conducting some of their research requirements during the years they are taking the dental curriculum, thus shortening the time to degree for the Ph.D. component.

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