

DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM

VCU School of Dentistry
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The Dental Hygiene Program, established in 1969, offers courses leading to a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene. The program requires two years of liberal arts study, with a minimum of 60 semester hours, followed by two years of study focusing on basic and dental sciences, dental hygiene science and theory, community health, and pre-clinic and clinical experiences. The Dental Hygiene Program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates are eligible for national, regional and state board licensing examinations.

Curriculum notes

- As part of students' course of study and community education, travel to off-campus sites is expected. Students will be required to provide their own transportation to agencies used for clinical and community health rotation experiences.
- Licensing/certification: It is important for every student to understand that, while certain curricula are designed for the purpose of achieving registration or certification by an outside agency, completion of such an academic program in no way assures the student of successful registration or certification. No employee, agent or representative of this university is authorized or empowered to provide such assurances either directly or by implication.
- Individuals who have a felony or misdemeanor conviction may not be eligible for licensure in Virginia. The Virginia Board of Dentistry makes this decision. For questions regarding this issue, call the Virginia Board of Dentistry at (804) 662-9906.
- Criminal background checks are required prior to matriculation (<http://www.dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dentalhygiene/background/>).

Policy on blood-borne and infectious diseases

By the nature of the profession, oral health care providers are routinely exposed to blood and body fluids during the treatment of patients in a clinical environment. In accordance with Section 32.1-45.1 of the Code of Virginia, the School of Dentistry requires that if a health care provider is exposed to body fluids in a manner that may transmit blood-borne or infectious disease, both the health care provider and the patient will be tested for disease.

Mission, philosophy and program goals

Mission

The Dental Hygiene Program at VCU is committed to excellence in education by considering each student's individual abilities as future clinicians and by providing an environment where students can thrive and be inspired every day. The program will prepare a diverse student body to become future practitioners who deliver health care services and oral health education in an interdisciplinary, culturally sensitive manner. The

program will offer exceptional educational opportunities empowering students to become competent clinicians and lifelong learners devoted to scientific inquiry and service to the local, national and global community.

Goals

The following program goals reflect the mission of VCU, VCU School of Dentistry and the Dental Hygiene Program competencies:

Education

- Prepare dental hygiene graduates who possess the knowledge, skills and attributes to provide quality dental hygiene care
- Provide students with an interdisciplinary, evidence-based curriculum, reflective of contemporary health care delivery
- Educate a diverse population of learners in a patient-centered, student-friendly atmosphere that fosters active and self-directed learning, critical thinking and self-assessment

Patient care

- Prepare dental hygiene graduates who are competent to provide patient-centered, comprehensive, evidence-based dental hygiene care in an ethical and professional manner
- Provide a clinical education based on a model of prevention designed to promote optimal oral and systemic health

Service

- Prepare dental hygiene graduates to respond to the evolving oral health care needs of a culturally diverse society by demonstrating a commitment to civic engagement
- Provide students with opportunities for service-learning activities in the community that promote the mission of the school, university and profession

Professionalism

- Provide students with the skills to advance the foundation and practice of dental hygiene through a commitment to scientific inquiry and lifelong learning
- Prepare dental hygiene graduates to assume leadership roles in professional organizations
- Model professional behaviors consistent with ethical and legal expectations of the dental hygiene profession

Admission requirements

Two years of liberal arts study with a minimum of 60 semester hours of transferable quality academic course credits are required. For more information on the following prerequisites, please visit the Dental Hygiene Program website (<http://www.dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dentalhygiene/admission/>).

Course	Title	Hours
Prerequisite courses		
English		6
General biology with laboratory		3-5
College chemistry with laboratory		3-5
Anatomy and physiology with laboratory		5-8
Microbiology with laboratory		3-5
Humanities		3
Introductory sociology		3

Introductory psychology	3
Speech	3
Statistics	3
Visual or performing arts	3

The remainder of the 60 required credits can be chosen from any of the following areas of study: science, math, computer usage, first aid and CPR, and humanities. Science electives are strongly recommended.

For a list of prerequisite courses that can be taken in the Virginia Community College System or through Richard Bland College, refer to the VCU Transfer Center website (<https://transfer.vcu.edu/prospective/pathways/>).

Additional prerequisites are as follows:

- **GPA** – A minimum GPA of 2.5 based on a 4.0 scale in the cumulative courses and a minimum GPA of 2.7 in the math/science and designated prerequisite courses are required.
- **English proficiency** – To successfully complete the dental hygiene curriculum, students are required to communicate clearly (in English) with faculty, students, staff and patients. To assure such competence, the Dental Hygiene Program requires any applicant whose native language is not English and who has been educated primarily outside of the United States to submit official Test of English as a Foreign Language or International English Language Testing System scores. Applicants are required to submit an official score with the application packet. The test must have been taken within the past two years. The Dental Hygiene Program does not conditionally admit applicants who have not met the requirement for proof of English proficiency.

Applicants may be exempt from this requirement if:

- They have successfully completed 26 or more transferable semester credits at a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the United States and have completed the full freshman English (non-ESL) requirement at that school with a minimum grade of C
- or
- They have successfully completed 60 or more transferable semester credits at a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the United States

No student will be considered for admission until proof of English proficiency is determined.

TOEFL: VCU's Dental Hygiene Program minimum TOEFL score requirements is 550 (paper), 213 (computer) or 79-80 (internet-based). For more information about TOEFL testing, go to: www.ets.org (<http://www.ets.org/>)

IELTS: VCU's Dental Hygiene Program minimum IELTS score requirement is 6.0.

- **Deadline** – Complete the online application through the American Dental Education Association Dental Hygiene Centralized Application Service. All application materials must be received by the ADEA DHCAS by **Feb. 1**.

Any application that does not meet the above stipulations will not be processed.

For additional information on prerequisites or the application or admissions process, please visit the program's website for prospective students (<http://www.dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dentalhygiene/>).

Academic progress committee guidelines

The faculty of the VCU School of Dentistry has the responsibility for evaluating the student's academic progress. It is incumbent on the course directors or their designees to specify, at the time a course first convenes, the criteria to be used in student assessment and the standards by which the students will be judged.

Guidelines that govern the actions of the academic progress committee and the academic activities of the students are distributed to all students at the beginning of their studies. The guidelines are available upon request from the Office of Academics in the School of Dentistry.

Financial assistance

A brief description of financial aid based on demonstrated need is contained in the Financial aid (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/financial-aid/>) section of this bulletin. Scholarships and loans are available from various sources. Information on financial assistance is also available upon request from the Office of Financial Affairs, School of Dentistry, Virginia Commonwealth University, Box 980566, Richmond, VA 23298-0566.

Criminal background checks

As an applicant to the Dental Hygiene Program at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, all accepted candidates, prior to matriculation, will be required to submit to a criminal background check. A final decision about matriculation will be made after a review of the applicant's CBC.

The rationale for performing CBCs:

- To foster patient safety and well-being
- To bolster the continuing trust of the public in the dental hygiene profession
- To ascertain the ability of accepted applicants and enrolled dental hygiene students to eventually become licensed as dental hygienists
- To minimize the liability of dental schools and their affiliated clinical facilities

The CBC will not be a component of the application, interview or selection process but will be a mandatory component of the prematriculation process. The final decision regarding matriculation of an applicant will be based on the self-reported information in the candidate's application and information in the CBC report. Factors involved in the final decision may include, but are not limited to:

- The nature, circumstances and frequency of any reported offense(s)
- Length of time since the offense(s)
- Available information that addresses efforts at rehabilitation
- The accuracy of the information provided by the applicant

The information obtained through a CBC will not become part of a student's academic file and will remain confidential unless the findings result in an institutional action by the School of Dentistry.

Only candidates offered class positions and alternate-list candidates will be asked to provide a CBC prior to matriculation.

Candidates will be responsible for the cost of the CBC.

Preparatory study for dental hygiene

University Academic Advising provides programs in preparation for admission into health sciences programs. For detailed information on the pre-health major in dental hygiene (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/academic-advising/prehealth-majors/dental-hygiene/>), see the UAA section of this bulletin.

- Dental Hygiene, Bachelor of Science (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/dentistry/dental-hygiene-program/dental-hygiene-bs/>)

DENH 301. Dental Hygiene Theory I. 5 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture and 6 laboratory/clinical hours. 5 credits. Designed to familiarize the student with the scope, role and responsibilities of the dental hygiene profession. Topics include an introduction to the educational and therapeutic services as well as the philosophy of preventive oral health and its relevance to the practice of dental hygiene. Also introduces the clinical knowledge and skills needed to perform fundamental clinical dental hygiene procedures, instrumentation, patient education and preventive services.

DENH 302. Dental Hygiene Theory II. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Continuation of DENH 301. Designed to provide the student with knowledge and skills necessary to provide patient care and includes instruction in some more advanced dental hygiene skills, including dental hygiene diagnosis, treatment planning, oral signs of abuse/neglect, topical medicaments and use of sonic and ultrasonic instrumentation.

DENH 312. Community Oral Health Promotion. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture contact hours. 2 credits. Prerequisite: DENH 301. Enrollment restricted to students in the dental hygiene program. Introduces preventive oral health strategies, methods, materials and principles of instruction in health education and communication. Emphasizes oral health promotion as related to individual patients, community groups as well as professional peer-group presentations. Introduction to evidence-based decision-making in dental hygiene practice.

DENH 327. Clinical Dental Hygiene I. 5 Hours.

Semester course; 1 lecture and 4 clinic hours (3 clinical hours per credit). 5 credits. This service-learning designated course has two segments. The first introduces the clinical practicum and dental hygiene services as part of a comprehensive care model. Students apply basic instrumentation and patient treatment skills in a clinical setting. Weekly seminars provide opportunities for students to problem solve and critically discuss and assess clinical experiences. During the second segment, students are assigned rotations in clinical practice settings in underserved areas, where they are exposed to patients of varied ethnic, socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, as well as special patient populations not typically encountered in the School of Dentistry clinics. While continuing clinical education, students have the opportunity to make oral health care more accessible to marginalized groups. Throughout this unique learning experience, students are exposed to the benefits of potential practice in public health dentistry.

DENH 342. Nutrition. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Designed to provide students with an overview of the chemistry of the major nutrients as well as provide a practical approach to the concepts of nutrition. Emphasis will be placed on developing positive preventive health behaviors and providing nutritional education to dental patients in a clinical setting. The interrelationships of diet, nutrition and dental and systemic diseases will be discussed along with current food trends, consumer aspects of food choices and basic nutrition principles. A general review of dietary supplements also will be provided.

DENH 401. Dental Hygiene Theory III. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Dental specialty content is presented: concepts and techniques in specialty areas that will enable the dental hygienist to consider implications for dental hygiene treatment planning with relation to periodontics, orthodontics, endodontics, preventive, cosmetic and restorative dentistry, pain control, oral surgery, prosthodontics, pediatric dentistry and implantology. Through case scenarios students develop treatment plans with regard to the dental hygiene process of care. Students discuss patient education needed for each phase of care appropriate for the informed consent of the patient.

DENH 402. Dental Hygiene Theory IV. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. This course is designed to present the principles of dental practice, including dental team management strategies, business office management, increasing use of computers in dentistry, OSHA and its impact on practice management, insurance coverage for dental care, and employment opportunities and career options.

DENH 407. Research Methods and Study Designs. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Designed to guide dental hygiene students in becoming competent in the use of scientific literature as a part of lifelong learning and evidence-based decision-making in patient care. Covers foundational materials in research design and biostatistics, including the development of testable hypotheses, data collection, data summary, and evaluation and interpretation of data found in scientific literature. Students will critique scientific literature from peer-reviewed journals and participate in reflection of current literature on assessment of patients with special needs. Students will also take part in an online Collaborative Investigator Training Initiative for protecting human subjects in research.

DENH 411. Introduction to Public Health. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. This hybrid course is intended to provide the dental hygiene student with an overview of the broad field of public health. Topics include the sciences of public health, the controversial nature of public health, powers and responsibilities of the government, social and behavioral factors in health, environmental issues in public health, medical care and public health, and public health challenges in the upcoming century. The course serves as a foundation for DENH 412. The course will also provide students with experiences that foster positive attitudes and behaviors regarding their responsibility to care for underserved populations, thereby providing insights on the impact of social and economic factors on dental health. Field experiences place emphasis on special populations, including elementary school children; geriatric, institutionalized and hospitalized clients; and individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities. The course and its field experiences will prepare the dental hygienist for the role of dental public health practitioner, educator and consultant, as well as a resource person in community settings.

DENH 412. Community Dental Health. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 1 lecture and 3 clinical/service-learning project hours. 2 credits. This hybrid course is designed to provide dental hygiene students with an introduction and overview of basic concepts of dental public health, community dental health education and community program planning. Course topics include oral health trends, dental indices, water fluoridation, prevention and control of oral diseases in a community, and community dental health programs. Students become involved in the application of concepts such as program assessment, design, implementation and evaluation. This course will prepare the dental hygienist for the role of dental public health practitioner, educator, and consultant and resource person in community settings. Field experience is designed to prepare students to function in a variety of community health settings. Emphasis on special populations of elementary school children, geriatric, institutionalized, hospitalized and individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities.

DENH 422. Current Issues, the Law and Ethics. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. This online course is designed to explore the ethics, jurisprudence and principles of dental hygiene practice. Students explore ethical issues and dilemmas in dental hygiene and health care delivery. This course strives to provide students with the foundations of ethical reasoning and decision-making in practices. The course fosters professional development and an understanding of the legal and ethical aspects of oral health care.

DENH 437. Clinical Dental Hygiene II. 5 Hours.

Semester course; 1 lecture and 4 clinical hours (3 clinical hours per credit). 5 credits. Prerequisite: DENH 327. A continuation of the clinical practicum; seminars and clinical experiences continue to prepare students to provide oral health care services in the private and public sector. Students participate in comprehensive care clinical experiences within the School of Dentistry. Advanced dental hygiene procedures are initiated and patient assessment, management skills and self-assessment are emphasized. Skill development in dental hygiene procedures continues; patient management skills as well as decision-making and problem-solving in relation to patient assessment, treatment planning and evaluation are emphasized. Course sequence provides the student with the opportunity to use and further enhance the knowledge and skills of dental hygiene practice and procedures in a clinical model that emphasizes comprehensive patient care and a foundation for transference of those skills to the work environment in the private and public sector. Note: A grade of PR is required in this course for continuation in DENH 447.

DENH 447. Clinical Dental Hygiene III. 5 Hours.

Semester course; 1 lecture and 4 clinical hours (3 clinical hours per credit). 5 credits. Prerequisite: DENH 437 with a grade of PR. A continuation of the clinical practicum; seminars and clinical experiences continue to prepare students to provide oral health care services in the private and public sector. Students participate in comprehensive care clinical experiences within the School of Dentistry. Advanced dental hygiene procedures are initiated and patient assessment, management skills and self-assessment are emphasized. Skill development in dental hygiene procedures continues; patient management skills as well as decision-making and problem-solving in relation to patient assessment, treatment planning and evaluation are emphasized. Course sequence provides the student with the opportunity to use and further enhance the knowledge and skills of dental hygiene practice and procedures in a clinical model that emphasizes comprehensive patient care and a foundation for transference of those skills to the work environment in the private and public sector.

DENH 449. Clinics in Dental Hygiene. 1-5 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 credits. Clinical/laboratory experiences offering the opportunity to use and further develop the knowledge and skills of dental hygiene practice.

DENH 450. Independent Study. 1-5 Hours.

Semester course; 1-5 credits. Independent study projects planned to meet the learning objectives of the student.

DENH 457. Clinical Service-learning. 1 Hour.

Continuous course; 32 clinical sessions. 1 credit. Prerequisites: DENH 302, 327 and 342. Enrollment restricted to dental hygiene students only. Course must be repeated to fulfil requirements. (Requirement is for 32 clinical session over two semesters. Students will repeat for 2 credits.) This is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets community-identified needs. Students are assigned rotations in clinical practice settings in underserved areas, in which they are exposed to patients of varied ethnic, socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, as well as special patient populations not typically encountered in the School of Dentistry clinics. While continuing clinical education, students have the opportunity to make oral health care more accessible to marginalized groups. Throughout this unique learning experience, students are exposed to the potential benefits of practice in public health dentistry. Students will reflect on the service activity to increase understanding and application of course content and to enhance a sense of civic responsibility. Students will also provide guided reflections on designated reading assignments. Graded P/F.

DENH 460. Individual Plan of Study. 1-6 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours. 1-6 credits. This course is designed on an individual basis to accommodate remediation of a failed course. The course director will design course material to include self-paced learning, assignments, tests and clinic or lab activities necessary to equal the failed course content. Graded as pass/fail.

DENH 477. Special Topics in Dental Hygiene. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 credits. Designed around the interests of students, faculty expertise and availability of educational resources. Format may include intensive mini-courses or workshops.