

DENTAL HYGIENE

Associate of Applied Science Degree

A dental hygienist is a vital member of a team of dental professionals dedicated to improving oral health and supporting the general health of individuals and groups. As licensed professionals, dental hygienists provide educational, clinical, and therapeutic services and may be involved in research, administration, client/patient advocacy, marketing or consulting. Dental hygienists may practice in a variety of settings such as private dental offices, public health facilities, schools, nursing homes and hospitals. They may also work in correctional facilities, business and industry and other settings.

Dental hygienists in a clinical setting perform oral and general health assessments and provide oral health instruction, as well as counseling regarding nutrition and healthy lifestyle and their impact on oral and general health. Dental hygienists take and interpret radiographs and provide many types of preventive services such as removing deposits from teeth, applying fluoride, placing sealants and more. Infection control and emergency management are also important functions. In New Mexico and other states, dental hygienists may be certified to provide local anesthesia.

Dental hygienists enjoy working with people, have good manual dexterity and enjoy working with their hands. They possess the maturity and critical thinking skills to provide current, quality, professional care. They have strong interpersonal skills to motivate and educate patients of all ages. Dental hygienists are lifelong learners and are dedicated to continuing education, enhancing the profession and practicing ethical decision-making and behavior.

Dental hygienists are generally well paid and are respected professionals in their communities. Job opportunities in the field are expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through 2022. Graduation from this program qualifies students to take national and state examinations to become licensed dental hygienists anywhere in the country, and there are international employment opportunities for dental hygienists educated in the U.S.

Students wishing to pursue a Bachelor's degree should consult with an advisor regarding transferability of courses in the prerequisite list as well as the dental hygiene curriculum.

Webpage: <https://dacc.nmsu.edu/academics/programs/dental-programs/>

Required Skills and Abilities

Students will need to demonstrate good oral expression (speech clarity) and written comprehension in English, critical thinking skills, near vision, and physical stamina (e.g., the ability to sit for long periods of time and move about freely), as well as the ability to manipulate dental/medical equipment, move/lift equipment up to 30 pounds without assistance, and perform patient care procedures with manual precision.

Program Admission Special Requirements

This is a limited entry program. Successful candidates generally have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Faculty student ratio in the clinical setting is 1-to-5. All science courses must be taken within 5 years before admission to the program.

Core Requirements

General education and related classes are required prior to applying to the Dental Hygiene Program and are identical to those offered at New Mexico State University Las Cruces (main) Campus (29 credits):

Prefix	Title	Credits
BIOL 2310 & 2310L	Microbiology and Microbiology Lab ¹	4
BIOL 2210	Human Anatomy and Physiology I for the Health Sciences ¹	4
BIOL 2225	Human Anatomy and Physiology II ¹	4
CHEM 1120G	Introduction to Chemistry Lecture and Laboratory (non majors) ¹	4
CHEM 2120	Integrated Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry ¹	3
ENGL 1110G	Composition I ¹	4
MATH 1220G	College Algebra ¹	3
NUTR 2110	Human Nutrition ¹	3
Total Credits		29

¹ Courses are identical to those offered at New Mexico State University Las Cruces (main) Campus.

Course Fees

In addition to tuition, a fee of \$400 is charged for each of the following courses:

Prefix	Title	Credits
DHYG 122	Clinical Dental Hygiene I	3
DHYG 132	Clinical Dental Hygiene II	2
DHYG 212	Clinical Dental Hygiene III	4
DHYG 222	Clinical Dental Hygiene IV	4