What is a Dental Assistant?

Dental assistants are vital team members who serve as “generalists” in dental practices. Dental assistants must be detail oriented, adaptable, and possess excellent interpersonal and organizational skills in order to fulfill a variety of position responsibilities which may include: assisting the dentist chair side during treatment procedures, taking and developing x-rays, disinfecting and sterilizing instruments, mixing materials and taking impressions of teeth, obtaining and documenting dental histories, teaching patients about oral health, and performing office and managerial duties. Dental assistants may be exposed to infectious disease and are required to wear protective gear.

Dental assisting educational requirements, job titles and allowable functions vary from state to state. Some states require dental assistants to graduate from an accredited program and pass a state or certification exam.

In Alabama, dental assistants may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by the state dental practice act and legally operate dental x-ray equipment under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist. There are no education or training requirements for this level of dental assisting.

Though not required in the state of Alabama, dental assistants may become certified by passing examinations that evaluate their knowledge. Many employers and job recruiters prefer candidates who are certified and surveys have shown that certified dental assistants earn more per hour on average. Certification demonstrates a commitment to the profession and lifelong learning. The CCC dental assisting program prepares students for success on the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. examinations that earn the CDA credential. [http://www.danb.org/](http://www.danb.org/)

Most dental assistants are employed by general dental offices or specialty practices such as orthodontics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, or oral surgery and positions exist with hospitals, school programs, and dental supply companies.

According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor and Statistics, employment of dental assistants is expected to grow by 25% from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. Ongoing research linking oral health and general health will continue to increase the demand for preventive dental services. As dental practices grow, more dental assistants will be needed. In 2012, the median annual wage of dental assistants was $34,500.

What is a Dental Hygienist?

Dental hygienists clean teeth, examine patients for oral diseases such as gingivitis, and provide other preventative dental care including education on improving and maintaining good oral health. Dental hygienists typically must have an associate’s degree in dental hygiene. Many begin their career as a dental assistant, as some dental hygiene educational programs require a dental assisting certificate or clinical practice experience to apply. Every state requires dental hygienists to be licensed and the requirements vary by state. The median annual wage of dental hygienists in 2012 was $70,210.

For more information about dental team careers, visit the American Dental Association at [http://www.ada.org/284.aspx](http://www.ada.org/284.aspx)

What physical capabilities are required of a Dental Assistant?

Students enrolled in the dental assisting program are required to successfully complete both academic and clinical requirements. The program has adopted a list of Essential Functions to delineate the physical, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills deemed the minimal necessary for admission, progression, program completion and for the provision of safe and effective client care as a dental assistant. The Essential Functions can be found on the dental assistant website ([http://webnt.calhoun.edu/dentalassisting/FAQs.pdf](http://webnt.calhoun.edu/dentalassisting/FAQs.pdf)).

The Alabama College System endorses the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance, when requested, Calhoun Community College provides environmental and programmatic access for persons with documented disabilities as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Any student who desires information about or assistance in arranging needed services for a disabling condition such as accessibility/physical accommodations, assistance with acquiring special material or equipment, word processors, tape recorders, spell checkers, calculators, and so forth, should contact Ms. Ina Smith Wilson, Services for Special Student Populations, Decatur Campus, Wallace Hall, (256) 306-2635 (email [ina.smith@calhoun.edu](mailto:ina.smith@calhoun.edu)).
How can I find out more about the CCC DA program?
Begin by reviewing the curriculum plan and the Dental Assisting Program Application packet. The Allied Health Secretary, Misty Greene, can be contacted by email (misty.greene@calhoun.edu) with questions.

When does the program begin?
A new class of twenty-five (25) DA students is enrolled each fall semester. The program consists of three semesters of consecutive DAT courses which must be taken in sequence. Only students who have applied to the program and have been accepted are allowed to enroll in DAT courses.

How many students are admitted to the program each year?
Twenty-five (25) students are admitted once a year.

Can you start the program in spring or summer semester?
No. A new class of students begins each fall. The three semesters of sequential DAT courses build on the knowledge gained in the previous semester.

What classes or courses must I first take in order to apply to the DA Program?
No “prerequisite” classes must be taken prior to application to the program. However, completion of some or all of the general education courses required for the certificate or associates of applied science degree in DA will improve your application score, increasing your chances of being offered enrollment. Acceptance into the program is competitive and students are selected based on the published point system.

How long is the DA program?
The dental assisting coursework is 3 semesters in length. Students may complete the program with either a certificate or associates of applied science degree depending on the general education coursework completed (see below) in addition to DAT classes. Students may elect to take the general education classes in any order or complete all classes prior to enrollment in the DA program. General education courses must be taken and passed with a C or higher prior to graduating from the program.

Dental Assisting Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Term credit hour total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DAT 100: Introduction to Dental Assisting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 101: Preclinical Procedures I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 102: Dental Materials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 103: Dental Anatomy &amp; Physiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 104: Basic Sciences for Dental Assisting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term credit hour total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
<th>Term credit hour total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DAT 111: Clinical Practice I</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 112: Dental Radiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 113: Dental Health Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 116: Preclinical Procedures II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term credit hour total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summer Semester</th>
<th>Term credit hour total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DAT 114: Dental Office Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 122: Clinical Practice II</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT 123: Dental Assisting Seminar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term credit hour total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dental Assisting Credit hour total = 38**

All DAT courses must be taken and successfully completed in the order delineated by the curriculum plan. Three semesters are required even when all general education coursework has been completed prior to enrollment.

What general education course work is required for an associate of applied science degree in dental assisting?
- Orientation to College (ORI 100)
- English Composition I - (ENG 101)
- A mathematics elective - (MTH 100 or MTH 112 are the recommended choices)
- General Psychology - (PSY 200)
- Fundamentals of Public Speaking - (SPH 107)
- A natural sciences elective - (BIO 103, BIO 201, or CHM 104 are the recommended choices)
- A humanities elective - (Art, Music, Foreign Language, Philosophy, Religion, Theatre, Literature)
- A computer information systems elective – (CIS 146 is recommended)
- A history or a social science or a behavioral science elective: (PSY 210 recommended choice)

What general education course work is required for a dental assisting certificate?
- Orientation to College (ORI 100)
- English Composition I - (ENG 101)
- A mathematics elective - (MTH 100 or 112 are the recommended choices)
- General Psychology - (PSY 200)
- Fundamentals of Public Speaking - (SPH 107)
How can I apply to the CCC DA program?
Applications are available on-line. If you have problems submitting your application, please contact Allied Health Secretary, Misty Greene, at misty.greene@calhoun.edu

START THE APPLICATION PROCESS WELL IN ADVANCE

When can I apply?
Applications for the next class of dental assisting students starting fall semester will be accepted beginning February 1st via the online application (online application). Deadline for application submission is July 1st at 11:59 PM. No application submitted past this time will be considered.

What must I do to apply to the dental assisting program?
Applicants must:
1. Meet all admission requirements of Calhoun Community College
2. Submit a DA Program Application
3. Submit an ACT reading Score or COMPASS reading placement test score (within the past 3 years)
4. Submit documentation of 8 quality hours of dental assisting observation experience which is signed by dental office personnel
5. Submit a 1-2 page type-written essay discussing the observation experiences and reason(s) for application to the DA program

Admission to the dental assisting program is selective, as the number of students is limited by the number of faculty and availability of clinical experiences. Meeting minimal requirements does not guarantee acceptance.

How are students selected for enrollment in DA?
Because only 25 students can be enrolled each fall, a point system is used to evaluate each candidate. Completion of general education coursework as well as the grades obtained in these classes, is heavily weighted as students who have demonstrated academic success in these foundational classes will best be poised for success in the rigorous DA program. Points are also assigned for professionalism as demonstrated by dental observation experiences and a written essay. See the Application/Selection information.

DA APPLICATION SCORING SYSTEM
• Up to 60 points may be earned based on the completion of any or all of the required general education courses and the grades received in each course.
• Up to 15 points are awarded based on an ACT or COMPASS Reading Score from the past three years.
• Up to 5 points can be earned for completing and properly documenting 8 hours of dental assisting observation.
• Up to 10 points are awarded for an essay which discusses your dental assisting observation experiences.
• Certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation at the health care provider level is necessary at the time of application. Applicants who provide proof of CPR certification (a back & front copy of the physical card or .pdf of an ecard) valid through the end of the program will earn 5 points.
• Acceptable CPR certification:
  American Heart Association - Healthcare Provider, or
  American Red Cross – BLS for the Healthcare Professional, or
  American Health & Safety Institute - CPR Pro
• Up to 5 points can be earned for attending an Information Session. There are 3 scheduled for this admission period. We will meet in room 202 of the Health Sciences Building on the Decatur Campus at 3pm on:
  o November 7, 2018
  o March 6, 2019
  o June 5, 2019

Points are awarded on the basis of the information provided by the applicant. Candidates will not be awarded points if transcripts and/or reading scores are not on file with the CCC Admissions Office. Similarly, incorrect documentation of observation hours and hand written essays will not be considered for points.
READ ALL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WHICH ARE MISSING THE REQUESTED DOCUMENTATION WILL RESULT IN THE APPLICANT NOT BEING CONSIDERED.

What if I took some of the general education coursework at another college?
At least one month prior to application to the DA program, you should apply for general admission to CCC and under intended academic program select “dental assisting”. Have your transcripts from all other colleges you’ve attended sent to the Office of Admissions and Records as soon as possible. Admissions and Records will evaluate your previous college work to determine which, if any, courses fulfill the DA requirements.

Note: Only the CCC Office of Admissions and Records may determine if coursework transferred from other institutions meets the general education requirements for the DA degree. DO NOT SUBMIT TRANSCRIPTS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS WITH YOUR DA APPLICATION.

- **IF YOU HAVE TAKEN CLASSES AT CCC:** Classes accepted in transfer will appear on your unofficial transcript which is accessible via MYCALHOUN. Note: Your unofficial transcript will have your course grades with a “T” for transfer in front.

- **IF YOU HAVE NEVER ATTENDED CCC:** Once all of your transcripts from other institutions you have attended sent to Calhoun Community College (CCC) Office of Admissions and Records, they will need at least one month to complete a transcript evaluation. Office of Admissions and Records telephone: 256-306-2593.

How do I know if coursework taken at another college with transfer?

The only way to know if classes taken at another institution will transfer and apply to a degree in DA is to have your transcripts evaluated by the Office of Admissions and Records. A minimum of one month should be allowed for the evaluation of transfer credit.

What if some of my transfer credit is CLEP?
CLEP credit must first be accepted in transfer by the CCC Office of Admissions and Records. DA application points for CLEP credit are assigned by averaging the letter grades obtained in other completed general education courses.

What about the ACT, COMPASS, or Accuplacer reading score?
All applicants to the dental assisting program must submit an ACT, COMPASS, or Accuplacer Reading Placement Test Score regardless of academic achievement. Placement testing is available free of charge and by appointment on both campuses.

Call one of the Advising Centers to schedule an appointment:
- Decatur: 256-306-2648
- Huntsville/Research Park: 256-890-4770

You will be asked to present your photo I.D. at the time of your exam.

Do not wait until near the application deadline to schedule an appointment to take the placement test.

Preparing for the Placement Exam
There are two websites you may visit to help you prepare for the COMPASS exam. The websites provide types of questions you may expect, and sample questions are available to help you prepare for your exam. Visit Calhoun’s website at www.calhoun.edu

- From the home page click STUDENT SERVICES.
- From the menu, select ADVISING CENTERS and then STUDY FOR THE PLACEMENT EXAM.
- You may also make an appointment for testing on-line.

What if my placement reading assessment score is too low?
You must submit an ACT Reading Score or COMPASS Reading Assessment score when applying to the program regardless of the score. If your testing score was low, you may want to check with the Advising Office to see if you are eligible to (re)take the placement exam in an attempt to improve your previous score. Low scores will not be awarded application points, but you are still eligible to apply for admission to the DA Program.
What is the minimum grade point average I must have to be admitted to the DA program?

Applicant transcripts must exhibit a current composite GPA of 2.5 or greater.

How can I acquire dental assisting observation hours?
- Contact local dental offices to request an appointment to obtain the required hours. You may want to observe in a general dental practice office and one specialty office such as orthodontics or pediatric dentistry.
- Take the Observation Documentation Form in the DA Program webpage with you. Hours must be signed by a dentist or the office manager.
- Follow all directions on the Observation Documentation Form.
- Arrive on time and remember to look and act as a professional.
- Note that the 8 hours of observation experiences submitted with the DA Application should have been completed within 6 months prior to application.
- Dental offices may be contacted to verify observation experiences.

What if I am employed by a dental practice?
Applicants who are employed in a dental office may use regular work hours to fulfill the observation requirement. Your length of employment at the facility should be noted on the Observation Documentation Form and signed by a dentist or office manager.

How many observation hours do I need? Should I get more than the minimum?
Eight (total) hours are required, completed in at least two dental offices. Additional time spent observing the working environment, job duties, and dental team member skills may be personally helpful in making a vocational choice but surplus hours will not necessarily add to the strength of your DA program application.

What about the essay?
As noted in the application directions, the essay should discuss your dental assisting observation experiences. This may include the kinds of dental health problems you encountered, the types of treatments you observed, the role of the dental assistant and other dental team members, and any insights you gained as a result of your experiences. The essay should also state your reason(s) for applying to the program.
Your essay should be typed, with one-inch margins, double-spaced and in a size 12 font (Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri). When submitted in the online application, the document should be in a .pdf, .doc, .docx, or .txt format.

When will I be notified if I’ve been accepted into the DA program?
Each application is individually evaluated. The Admissions Committee verifies transcripts and observation hours, evaluates applicant essays, and points are assigned according to the published scoring system. Final decisions are made in early July, and all applicants will be contacted by mid-July at his/her calhoun.edu email address.

Is there a waiting list?
No. Twenty-five students will receive an acceptance letter to enroll in the dental assisting program in the fall. If there is an unexpected opening in the program because a slot is not taken, the next highest ranked applicant will be contacted and offered enrollment.
Applications are not “carried over” to the next year. If you are not accepted into the program, you must reapply the following year.

What expenses are involved in the DA program?
2019 current tuition and fees = $160.00/credit hour. Additional program costs:
(approximate & in addition to tuition):
- Textbooks $400.00
- Malpractice insurance 20.00
- Uniforms 150.00
- Lab supplies 125.00
- Drug testing & background check 75.00
- Health exam, PPD, immunizations varies
- National Certification Exam (DANB) 250.00/Semester
Do I have to have a background check, a physical examination, or drug testing to apply to the DA Program?

None of the above are required to apply to the DA program. However, all will be needed once you are enrolled to comply with the requirements of our clinical facilities. **DO NOT PROCEED WITH HEALTH EXAMINATIONS, or BACKGROUND CHECKS UNTIL DIRECTED TO DO SO.** If a background check or a confirmed positive drug screen renders a student ineligible to participate in clinical experiences, they will be dismissed from the DA Program.

**Background Check – General Guidelines**

CCC Health Sciences students will be accepted to participate in a clinical rotation if their background check reveals:

- No history of criminal offenses
- Misdemeanors for expired or failure to obtain a hunting or fishing license
- Misdemeanors for traffic or moving violations (excluding DUI)
- Any single misdemeanor over 2 years old

Students will not be allowed to attend clinical rotations if their background check reveals:

- Any misdemeanor less than 2 years old related to crimes against the person (such as assault and battery), crimes based on dishonesty or untruthfulness (such as theft or embezzlement), or drug and other substance abuse related crimes.
- A felony conviction less than 5 years old.
- A felony conviction that is a crime against a person such as battery or assault.

A student will be considered for clinical rotations on a case by case basis if their background check reveals:

- Any felony that is crimes based on dishonesty or untruthfulness (such as theft or embezzlement) or drug and other substance abuse related crimes AND more than 5 years old (all decisions made by the review committee are final and may not be appealed.)
- Multiple misdemeanors regardless of length of time since offense (all decisions made by the review committee are final and may not be appealed).

**What are “clinical practice experiences”?**

Students are assigned to four different dental offices for clinical practice rotations throughout the 3 semester program curriculum plan. In each rotation, the student spends two full-time days (16 hours) per week applying knowledge and practicing skills first acquired in the classroom and campus laboratory. Prior to assignment to a clinical facility a student must undergo a background check and drug screening, purchase medical malpractice insurance, and show proof of current CPR certification at the healthcare provider level.

**During clinical rotations, students are assigned to a dental office for two full days of experience each week. Clinical practice is usually scheduled on Tuesdays, Thursdays, &/or Fridays and the hours are generally between 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Dental office assignments are based on the learning needs of the student, not geographic proximity to the home, work or family commitments. Students must have reliable transportation, flexibility in their personal schedules, and the willingness to commute to clinical sites throughout north Alabama and southern Tennessee.**

**Will I be able to work and attend the dental assisting program?**

The dental assisting program requires commitment. Successful students report studying approx. two hours for each contact hour of lecture classes per week. Sound study skills and time management are critical to achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that students do not work more than 20 hours per week. Classes and clinical experiences may be scheduled during the day Mondays through Fridays and student attendance is required. See the CCC Catalog for Attendance Policies.

**The DA Program Application says the grading policy is different. Why is that?**

The dental assisting program grading policy is more stringent than the general college grading policy. In order to pass a DAT course the student must receive a grade of 75% or greater. Students who do not receive a minimum of 75% as a final grade in a course will not be allowed to progress in the program. It is the belief of the faculty that having a strict grading policy will help to better ensure student knowledge and competency.
Are DA classes at CCC offered by distance education or in the evenings?
   All DA classes will be scheduled during day time hours, Mondays through Fridays on the Decatur campus only.

Which campus?
   All DA classes will be held on the Decatur campus in the Health Sciences Center.

Is the DA Program accredited?
   The Calhoun Community College program in dental assisting is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) and has been granted the accreditation status of approval without reporting requirements. The Commission is a specialized accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.
   CODA will review complaints that relate to a program’s compliance with the accreditation standards. The Commission is interested in the sustained quality and continued improvement of dental and dental-related education programs but does not intervene on behalf of individuals or act as a court of appeal for treatment received by patients or individuals in matters of admission, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff or students. A copy of the appropriate accreditation standards and/or the Commission’s policy and procedure for submission of complaints may be obtained by contacting:
   Commission on Dental Accreditation
   211 East Chicago Avenue
   Chicago, ILL 60611-2678
   800-621-8099, extension 4653

State Approval
   The dental assisting program of Calhoun Community College is operated with the approval of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama.

BOARD OF DENTAL EXAMINERS OF ALABAMA
   Stadium Parkway Office Center-Suite 112
   5346 Stadium Trace Parkway
   Hoover, Al 35244-4583
   PHONE 205-985-7267
   FAX 205-985-0674
   E-mail: bdeal@dentalboard.org