



Dental Hygiene Program Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Dental Hygienist?

A dental hygienist is a vital member of the dental team. In the dental office, the team works together to meet the oral health needs of patients. Each state has its own specific regulations regarding the responsibilities of a dental hygienist, so the range of services performed varies from state to state. Some services provided by dental hygienists may include:

- Patient screening procedures; such as assessment of oral health conditions, review of the health history, oral cancer screening, head and neck inspection, dental charting and taking blood pressure and pulse
- Taking dental radiographs (x-rays)
- Removing calculus and plaque (hard and soft deposits) from the surfaces of the teeth
- Applying preventive materials to the teeth such as sealants and fluorides
- Teaching patients appropriate oral hygiene strategies to maintain oral health such as tooth brushing, flossing and tobacco cessation
- Counseling patients about nutrition and its impact on oral health
- Making impressions of patients' teeth for study casts (models of teeth used by dentists to evaluate patient treatment needs)
- Performing documentation and office management activities

For more information, visit the [American Dental Hygienist Association](http://www.adha.org) at <http://www.adha.org>

Are there employment opportunities for dental hygienists? How much do they earn?

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook notes the 2021 average pay of dental hygienists in the United States as \$37.41 per hour and in Alabama, the average hourly wage is \$24.17. CCC dental hygiene graduates are finding jobs throughout our region.

What type of educational program does CCC offer?

Graduates of the CCC Dental Hygiene Program are awarded an [Associate of Applied Science degree](#). This qualifies them to sit for the National Board Dental Hygiene Exam and a clinical skills exam. Successful completion of these exams allows the hygienist to apply for licensure in any state.

Do dental hygienists have a license?

Licensure of a dental hygienist is granted by each individual state. Several steps are required:

- Graduation from an accredited dental hygiene program
- Successful completion of the written National Board Dental Hygiene Examination
- Successful completion of a regional or state clinical board examination

Typically, state boards have the authority to deny a license to an applicant who has committed certain illegal acts including a felony or serious misdemeanor. Most states conduct background checks, and on a case-by-case basis, may take into consideration the seriousness of an offense and other factors in making the decision to grant or withhold licensure.

Licensed dental hygienists are signified by the initials **RDH**, which stands for Registered Dental Hygienist.

What physical capabilities are required of a Dental Hygienist?

Students enrolled in the dental hygiene program are required to successfully complete both academic and clinical requirements. The purpose of the **Eligibility Criteria**, found on the DH webpage, is to delineate the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills deemed minimally necessary for admission, progression, graduation, and the provision of safe and effective client care. The Alabama Community College System endorses the Americans' with Disabilities Act. If a student cannot meet the Eligibility Criteria it is their responsibility to request appropriate and reasonable accommodations through the Student Disability Services Office.

When does the program begin?

A new class of fourteen (14) dental hygiene students is enrolled once a year, fall semester.

What courses must I take?

There are ten (10) **general education courses** in the DH curriculum plan.

| General Education Course Requirements | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|----------|
| ORI 110 | Freshman Seminar | 1 |
| ENG 101 | English Composition I | 3 |
| Mathematics | MTH 100 Intermediate College Algebra MTH 112 Precalculus Algebra Other acceptable MTH courses: 110, 113, 120, 125, 126, 227, 237, 238, or 265 | 3 |
| Speech | SPH 106 Fundamental of Oral Communication or SPH 107 Fundamentals of Public Speaking SPH 116 is not accepted | 3 |
| *BIO 201 | Human Anatomy & Physiology I | 4 |
| BIO 202 | Human Anatomy & Physiology II | 4 |
| *BIO 220 | General Microbiology | 4 |
| *Chemistry | CHM 104 Introduction to Inorganic Chemistry or CHM 111 College Chemistry I | 4 |
| PSY 200 | General Psychology | 3 |
| SOC 200 | Introduction to Sociology | 3 |

***Pre-requisite coursework**

Three (3) of the general education classes (**BIO 201, BIO 220, and CHM 104 or CHM 111**) must be successfully completed with a grade of C or higher in order to be considered for program enrollment. *However*, students are strongly encouraged to take all of the general education classes prior to beginning the program. Completion of foundational classes helps to

ensure student success in the rigorous dental hygiene curriculum. If a student is admitted to the DH program without having taken all general education coursework, it is their responsibility to successfully complete the requirements prior to the start of their 5th semester in dental hygiene. General education course scheduling cannot interfere with DHY course attendance.

After being accepted for enrollment, students complete 5 consecutive semesters of dental hygiene classes which are taught in-person on the CCC Decatur campus. All DHY courses must be taken in the scheduled term and passed with a C (75% or >) to progress to the next semester.

| Dental Hygiene Courses | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|---|----|
| Term 1 | DHY 110 | Dental Hygiene Theory | 2 |
| FA | DHY 112 | Preclinical Dental Hygiene | 3 |
| | DHY 114 | Dental Radiology | 3 |
| | DHY 116 | Dental Anatomy, Histology & Embryology | 2 |
| | DHY 118 | Anatomy, Embryology, & Histology of the Head & Neck | 2 |
| Term 2 | DHY 120 | Dental Materials | 2 |
| SP | DHY 122 | Clinical Dental Hygiene I | 3 |
| | DHY 124 | Dental Hygiene Theory II | 2 |
| | DHY 126 | Periodontology | 2 |
| | DHY 128 | Pharmacology / Medical Emergencies | 2 |
| Term 3 | DHY 130 | Biological Chemistry & Applied Nutrition | 1 |
| SU | DHY 132 | Clinical Dental Hygiene II | 2 |
| | DHY 134 | Dental Hygiene Theory III | 1 |
| | DHY 216 | Dental Research | 1 |
| Term 4 | DHY 210 | General and Oral Pathology | 2 |
| FA | DHY 212 | Clinical Dental Hygiene III | 4 |
| | DHY 214 | Dental Hygiene Theory IV | 1 |
| | DHY 217 | Community Dental Health | 1 |
| Term 5 | DHY 218 | Clinical Dental Hygiene IV | 4 |
| SP | DHY 220 | Dental Hygiene Theory V | 1 |
| Dental Hygiene Credit Hours = | | | 41 |
| General Education Credit Hours = | | | 35 |
| Total = | | | 76 |

Does the DH program accept transfer credit?

General education credit from other colleges must first be evaluated by the CCC Office of Admissions and Records. Transferred general education courses that appear on the student's CCC transcript are accepted for the DH program.

Each dental hygiene program individually determines course sequencing and requirements for completion. Therefore, it can be difficult to accept dental hygiene course transfer credit and ensure the coverage of all content, the development of necessary skills, and preparation for graduation and board examinations of transferring students. Requests for transfer of previously earned DH credit is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The applicant must:

1. Be accepted unconditionally as a student at CCC
2. Be granted admission to the CCC Dental Hygiene Program
3. Provide detailed course documentation

Transfer credit will be considered if:

1. The previously attended dental hygiene program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)
2. The student left the previous program eligible for progression
3. A grade of 75% or better was earned in the course
4. The course was completed in the past two years
5. The student can demonstrate knowledge and/or skills in a proficiency exams

How do I apply to the Dental Hygiene program?

Click **"How to Apply"** on the DH webpage to find the minimal application requirements and directions. A link on the same site will be open to apply online during a designated application period. Consider attending a program information session - dates and times can be found on the DH webpage.

What expenses are involved in the DH program?

In addition to tuition, health students have expenses related to the listed requirements below, plus textbooks and laboratory supplies. Approximate costs are discussed in information sessions and program orientation.

HEALTH SCIENCES STUDENT REQUIREMENTS:

- Retain reliable transportation to and from the campus and any assigned clinical education facilities
- Comply with a dress code that includes an assigned uniform
- Undergo a health examination, TB screening, and validate immunity to infectious diseases
- Submit proof of current certification in basic life support (CPR) at the healthcare provider level
- Purchase low-cost malpractice insurance through the CCC Health Sciences division
- Submit to a background check by a designated vendor
- Undergo drug and alcohol testing by a designated vendor

How will I gain clinical experience?

Students will complete a clinical course each semester. Clinical courses will be taught on the Decatur campus in the dental hygiene clinic. Students will be in clinic no less than two days per week and will provide a full range of preventive services for patients by scheduled appointments. Typically, the dental hygiene clinic will begin at 7:30 AM and end at 4:00 PM.

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

The dental hygiene program requires commitment. Students should be prepared to be on campus 7:30 am — 4:00 pm five days a week. Successful students report studying approximately 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.

Is the DH program grading policy different?

Yes, the dental hygiene program grading policy is more stringent than the general college grading policy. In order to pass a DHY 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 are not 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.

How can I find out more about the CCC DH program?

Begin with the DH webpage and attend a program information session. If you still have unanswered questions, please contact the department by telephone or email.

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|--------------------------|------------------|--|--------------|
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Is the DH Program accredited?

The CCC Dental Hygiene Program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), a specialized accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.

Commission on Dental Accreditation

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<https://coda.ada.org/>