What does it mean to be Pre-Dentistry?

“Pre-Dental” is not a major at Western but rather a prescribed series of courses that are required for admission to dental schools. Students who identify themselves as “pre-dental” should work closely with academic advisors in their chosen major and with the pre-dental advisors to assure that GUR, major, and dental school requirements are incorporated into their overall plan of study. No formula for getting into dental school exists. Applicants are evaluated in multiple areas in a process known as holistic review. All aspects are important: DAT, GPA (both cumulative and science), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, interview, and personal characteristics as well as legal and social records.

Pre-Dentistry Education

Dental schools emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education and do not recruit applicants from one specific major or discipline. Thus, you have flexibility in planning your pre-dental educational program. Use your undergraduate years to explore many academic fields, to develop basic skills and knowledge, to demonstrate expertise and to experience a field of study (major) of your choice. Pick one in which you excel and enjoy. Admission to dental schools is competitive, so every effort should be made to maintain high scholarship.

Program Checkpoints (Note: each person’s path will look different; use this as a guide ONLY)

Freshman year:
- Take Math Placement Test; begin appropriate math sequence to complete Calculus I: MATH 124.
- Begin General Chemistry series as soon as possible: CHEM 121, 122, 123 [or Honors: 125, 126, 225].
- Begin General Biology series winter or spring quarter: BIOL 204, 205, 206.
- Work on GUR courses, including ENG 101.
- Begin prerequisite and co-requisite courses for possible major.
- Meet with Pre-Healthcare Advisors (OM 280) to develop a plan of study.

Sophomore year:
- Begin Organic Chemistry series: CHEM 351, 352, 353 with labs 354 & 355 or 356 (depending upon major).
- Begin Physics sequence fall quarter: PHYS 114, 115, 116 or 161, 162, 163 (depending upon major).
- Begin Microbiology with lab, or do junior year: BIOL 345, 346 {upper-division preferred} or BIOL 245 (depending upon major).
- Take a second English Composition course: ENG 201 or 202.
- Declare or apply for major.
- Begin shadowing Dentists sophomore and/or junior year.

Junior year:
- Research dental schools and graduate programs.
- Prepare for the Dental Admission Test (DAT) to be taken the summer after junior year.
- Begin Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472.
- Take a third English composition course: ENG 301 or 302.
- Begin primary application to the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS).
- Draft personal statement.
- Request letters of recommendation from professors and professionals.

Senior year:
- Prepare for possible dental school interview with a mock interview (or do spring of junior year).
- Complete major, GUR, WP, and other graduation requirements.
- Two quarters before graduation, meet with declared major advisor and apply for graduation.

NOTES:

- Advanced Placement may not be recognized by all dental schools as college-earned credit. Check with each school. [It is better to view any earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as “testing out” of prerequisites.]

- Community college coursework is not universally accepted for prerequisites by all dental schools. Check with each school.

- UW’s School of Dentistry requires 100 hours of dental volunteer/shadow/observation experience plus 100 hours community, extracurricular or leadership service. Manual dexterity is considered. An additional Microbiology course is required.
Core Courses
Course requirements for dental schools differ slightly; however, the following WWU courses are typical:

- General Chemistry series with labs: CHEM 121¹, 122, 123 (5 credits, 5, 4) or Honors: CHEM 125¹, 126, 225 (5 each)
- General Biology series w/labs: BIOL 204², 205, 206 (5 each)
- Physics series w/labs: PHYS 114³, 115, 116 (5, 5, 5) or PHYS 161³, 162, 163 (5 each)
- Organic Chemistry series w/labs: CHEM 351, 352, 353 (4, 4, 3); labs: 354 and 355 or 356 (3 and 3 or 2)
- Biochemistry & Molecular Biology: CHEM 471, 472 (4 each)
- Microbiology: BIOL 345, 346 (3, 2) {Upper-division preferred} or BIOL 245 (5)
- English Composition and Writing: Up to one year selected from ENG 101, 201, 202, 301, 302 (5 each)

¹Completion of MATH 114 or Math Placement into MATH 115 or higher is a prerequisite for CHEM 121 or CHEM 125
²CHEM 121 or CHEM 125 is a prerequisite for BIOL 204
³PHYS 114 requires MATH 115 or a suitable Math Placement score; PHYS 161 requires Math 124 or taken as a co-requisite

NOTE: It is imperative that students begin general chemistry as early in their program as possible.

DECLARING A MAJOR: Always check with the department of your intended major for clarification about how to declare. Many programs (such as Behavioral Neuroscience, Biology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, and others) do not allow students to declare a major until certain prerequisites have been met, such as having taken specific courses or maintaining a specific GPA. Many departments allow you to sign up as a “pre-major” which will keep you updated on major requirements as well as events happening within the department.

ACCESS TO CLASSES: Due to high student demand for many upper-division courses, especially in the sciences, many departments must give enrollment priority to students who are declared in the major over those seeking enrollment for elective credit or as a prerequisite for professional school. Registration details for heavily impacted courses and programs change frequently and as well as posted at department websites.

REPEATING COURSES: In general, this is not viewed favorably by professional schools but an isolated case may be acceptable. It will likely also require an explanation on your application, so discuss your options first with a Pre-Healthcare Advisor. Both dropping and repeating courses can have impact on eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and athletic participation. Speak to an advisor in each area that applies to you when making your decision.

Courses listed below apply to WWU GUR and as well as some prerequisites for dental schools.

ACOM: ENG 101
BCOM: ENG 202
QSR: MATH 124, 240
LSCI: BIOL 204, 205, 206; CHEM 121, 122, 123 or Honors: CHEM 125, 126, 225; PHYS 115, 116, 161, 162, 163;
SCI: PHYS 114

Resources
To join the advisors’ Pre-dentistry Listserv, e-mail Renee.Murray@wwu.edu with SUBJECT: pre-dentistry listserv, Last name, First name, student number, major and concentration (if declared).

Pre-Dentistry Club [Facebook: WWU Pre-Dental Club & Alumni]: Join this and other WWU Associated Students clubs at http://as.wwu.edu/clubs/

WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/

Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

Application: The centralized dental school application is available at these sources:

- Associated American Dental School Application Service (AADSAS) https://portal.aadsasweb.org
- GoDental www.GoDental.org
- The American Dental Education Association (ADEA) www.adea.org

Dental Admission Test (DAT): www.ada.org/dat.aspx

Scheduling to sit for the DAT is arranged by application with the American Dental Association (ADA) and Prometric Test Centers.

University of Washington School of Dentistry: http://dental.washington.edu [see also note on first page]