What does it mean to be Pre-Dentistry at WWU?

Western does not offer a "Pre-dental" major, and there is no formula for getting into dental school. Selection committees evaluate applicants across multiple areas through a holistic review process. Important components include DAT scores, GPA (both cumulative and science), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, community service, diversity awareness, manual dexterity, and an interview, as well as background checks (including legal, conduct, and social media records).

Pre-Dental Education

Dental schools emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education and do not recruit students from one specific major or discipline. This gives you flexibility in planning your 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. Dental school admission is competitive, so make every effort to maintain high scholarship. Align with a major in which you both excel and enjoy. While Biology and Chemistry are popular choices, Pre-dental students have majored in a diverse range of disciplines including Anthropology, Behavioral Neuroscience, Business, Kinesiology, Languages (i.e. Spanish), and Sociology. Some pursue combined majors such as Anthropology/Biology, Biochemistry, and Cellular & Molecular Biology.

Core Courses

Regardless of your major, certain prerequisite courses expected by most dental schools include:

**CHEMISTRY** (a sequence of eight courses)

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

- General Chemistry series (includes labs): CHEM 161, 162, 163 [or Honors equivalent]
- Organic Chemistry lecture series: CHEM 351, 352, 353;
  - with two accompanying labs: 354 and either 355 or 356 (depending upon major)
- Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472

**BIOLOGY**

- General Biology series (includes labs): BIOL 204, 205, 206
- Microbiology: Consult with Pre-healthcare Advising regarding options
- Additional courses under advisement

**PHYSICS**

- Physics series (includes labs): PHYS 114, 115, 116 [or PHYS 161, 162, 163 series]

**MATHEMATICS** (varies by school)

- Calculus: MATH 124, 125
- Statistics: MATH 240 [or major equivalent; i.e. BIOL 340 for Biology majors]

**OTHER (NON-SCIENCE)**

- One year of English is highly recommended or required by some schools
- Introductory Psychology: PSY 101 (varies by school)

*This document is for preliminary advising purposes only.*

We encourage you to meet with a Pre-Healthcare advisor on a regular basis to determine a plan that is best for you.

Keep informed

- WWU students may join the Advisor’s Pre-dental Listserv. To join, e-mail Anna.Tognazzini@wwu.edu with the following SUBJECT information: Pre-dental listserv, Last name, First name, WWU student number, and major (if declared).
- Pre-Dental Club: Join this and other WWU Associated Students clubs at www.as.wwu.edu/clubs/
ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) & COMMUNITY COLLEGE COURSES: About 1/3 dental schools do not accept pre-requisite content earned through AP coursework and a few limit or exclude community college prerequisite coursework. It is better to view any of these earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as “testing out” of prerequisites. Consult with Pre-healthcare advisors to clarify your qualifications.

DECLARING A MAJOR: Departments vary in how to declare majors. Behavioral Neuroscience, Biology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, and others allow students to declare as a “pre-major” while addressing their specified prerequisites. Some majors require a specific GPA across foundational courses. Declare early, even as a “pre-major”, to help shorten your time to degree. While working on any pre-major content, explore many disciplines to keep your options open.

ACCESS TO CLASSES: High demand exists for upper-division courses, especially in the sciences. Many departments grant enrollment priority to students declared in specific majors over those seeking enrollment for professional school purposes. Registration access procedures for courses can change, and departments generally provide updates via their websites and email notifications, or by checking with the department’s program coordinator.

REPEATING/DROPPING COURSES: When you repeat a course, only your most recent grade is used when Western calculates your GPA. However, the class still shows up on your transcript. Although some students think that repeating a course will help them get into professional schools, this is almost always untrue. Dental schools will take into account ALL college-level coursework when performing their own calculation of your GPA, and this will include any courses you have repeated at Western. Still, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to repeat a course so talk to an advisor to be sure. Also, dropping a course can have an impact on eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and athletic participation so consider your options carefully and speak with an advisor before making a decision.

SHADOWING: Dental shadowing/observation in the range of 50-100 hours is commonly required by most dental schools. This helps you gain exposure to the field and generate a professional letter of recommendation. Discuss your options with Pre-healthcare advisors.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The University of Washington requires a minimum of 50 hours. Exposure to diversity is beneficial.

DENTAL ADMISSION TEST (DAT): Scheduling to take the DAT occurs with the American Dental Association. The test is conducted at Prometric Test Centers. Applicants should take the exam no later than August of the year preceding anticipated admission. DAT information is available at www.ada.org/dat.aspx.

Additional Resources
WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth
WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/
The American Dental Education Association (ADEA): www.adea.org
Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

Pre-Healthcare Advising Events

Typical programming events offered by Pre-Healthcare Advising include (but are not limited to):

**Fall:**
Orientation Session: Getting you from WWU to professional school (DECAY)
Health Professional & Grad School Info Fair, October 18 in MAC gym
Winter Registration Walk-in Advising: Nov 14 and Nov 15, 12–2 in BI 415

**Winter:**
Kaplan-sponsored practice MCAT in late January/February
Spring Registration Walk-in Advising: Feb 27 and 28, 12–2 in BI 415

**Spring:**
The Healthcare Professional School Application: A session overviewing the process
Fall Registration Walk-in Advising: May 15 and 16, 12–2 in BI 415