

DENTAL ASSISTANT

Dental Assisting Mission Statement

It is our mission to promote the educational advancement of dental assistants and the dental assisting profession. The program aims to enhance quality dental health care delivery to our diverse community through credentialing and professional activities. The program seeks to provide dental assisting students with the most recent advances in technology, materials, techniques, and equipment to be prepared when entering or being employed in the workforce system as dental assistants.

Goals

Goal 1:

Prepare students to successfully challenge the Dental Assisting National Board Radiation Health and Safety Examination

Goal 2:

Prepare students to successfully challenge the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care (NMBODHC) Radiology Certification.

Goal 3:

Provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to gain employment in the dental assisting field within 6 months of graduation.

Certificate of Completion

Dental assisting is a rewarding profession. Dental assistants like helping others and enjoy working closely with patients and other dental team members. Dental assistants are frequently relied on as the dentist's "other set of hands." Thus constantly challenging the dental assistant to expand and grow their knowledge and skill sets.

There is no lack of variety in the types of tasks that dental assistants perform. Some of the skills dental assistants perform include:

- prepare equipment, materials, and instruments for patient care;
- perform sterilization and disinfection procedures;
- provide patients with instructions both before and after dental procedures ;
- create temporary crowns, bleaching trays, custom trays, & custom fitted sport mouth guards;
- provide coronal polishing and fluoride treatments
- place pit & fissure sealants;
- take impressions of teeth;
- take patient vital signs, record or review medical histories and medications;
- provide individualized oral hygiene instruction for patients and/or parents:
- create study casts (molds);
- expose, develop, and mount dental radiographs;
- anticipate dental provider needs for patient procedure
- perform a variety of other duties surrounding patient care, infection control, and radiology

They may also be responsible for administrative tasks, such as billing, patient verification, scheduling various treatment appointments, ordering, and material inventory.

Assistants may work in a general practice office where a dentist provides multiple types of treatment, including restorative/operative work (fillings), prosthetics (crowns, bridges, and dentures), and perhaps some surgery. They may want to specialize in assisting periodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, endodontics, pedodontics, or orthodontics.

In the state of New Mexico, dental assistants can become certified to perform the following expanded duties:

- radiology (taking x-rays),
- coronal polishing (polishing of teeth and removal of stains),
- fluoride treatments (the act of placing fluoride on a patient's teeth) and
- sealant placement (used to prevent decay).

These certifications are obtained through the State Dental Board and are part of the Dental Assisting National Board Certification Exam.

Important Facts About This Certificate Program

Course Fees

In addition to tuition, a course fee of \$250 is charged for DAST 1123 (<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/search/?P=DAS%20115>) Dental Radiology.

Effective July 1, 2024, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) does not accredit this program.

Students who graduate from this program can apply for licensure in the State of New Mexico after completing the program and completing their DANB or New Mexico Board Approved Radiation Health and Safety Exam. For additional details regarding licensure in New Mexico, students must contact the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care (<https://www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/dental-health-care/>)

Students must check the licensure requirements in other states.

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 stand for long periods of time).
- Students must be able to manipulate dental/medical equipment, move/lift patients and equipment up to 60 pounds without assistance, and perform patient care procedures with manual dexterity.
- Successful applicants usually have a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Must be able to operate dental X-ray units to expose radiographs.
- Must be able to participate in program-required events, including student club activities, community service learning, meetings, etc.
- Must understand and be aware of potential exposure to blood-borne pathogens in the dental environment and be aware that immunizations against blood-borne pathogens are highly recommended and or required for all dental professionals due to the risk of exposure.
- Must be able to assist with, and or perform CPR as needed.

- Must be able to participate in classroom, clinical, laboratory, and practicum activities according to program guidelines and requirements.
- Must adhere to all program guidelines and policies at all times.

Program Admission Special Requirements

The Dental Assistant program is a limited-entry, special-application program. When a candidate is considered for acceptance into the program, the following factors are taken into account:

- High school and/or college transcripts and a minimum GPA of 2.8; however, most admitted candidates have a 3.0 or higher.
- Proof of county residency
- Essay (following rubric and instructions included in the online application)
- Copy of current healthcare provider CPR card and proof of current immunizations
- Completing all program admission requirements as outlined in the program application.
- Complete the program application (submitted by deadline).
- Must participate in all program-required activities for admitted students.

Website: <https://dacc.nmsu.edu/academics/programs/dental-programs/index.html> (<https://dacc.nmsu.edu/academics/programs/dental-programs/>)