

DA Program Overview

Application Process:

Students can apply online through the University of Utah's Professional Education portal. Eligible applicants will be contacted to schedule an interview, during which they can inquire about the program. Accepted applicants will receive an email confirming their acceptance, contingent upon tuition payment and the successful completion of a national background check and a 10-panel drug screen, as well as completion of required immunizations. Enrolled students will participate in a hybrid course comprising 36 hours of online self-paced modules, three in-person hands-on workshops totaling 24 hours, with optional open lab sessions, and 80 hours of clinical training (externships) at either a University of Utah School of Dentistry clinic or an approved external location.

Orientation:

All students must attend a mandatory orientation scheduled during the first week. Orientation is scheduled for 9:00 am on a Monday morning and lasts around 3 hours. Further details will be sent in a welcome letter. During this orientation, we will discuss:

- Course Overview, introduction to the role of a Dental Assistant and tips to succeed.
- Workshop Overview, including a tour of the labs and clinic space as well as expectations of students.
- Access to Canvas and other resources for online modules and open lab sign-up
- Information on obtaining badges and UID.

Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification

Students must complete American Heart Association (AHA) BLS training—including an online module and an in-person session—before their first workshop. Classes are offered at many local facilities and organizations. Those with valid AHA BLS certification lasting through clinical training are exempt. This training is not provided by the DATP and must be arranged independently.

Online Coursework:

Students have 24-hour access to online training modules in Canvas for a total of 6 months. Students will access the content through Canvas for the National Entry Level Dental Assistant exam bundle which includes 3 courses totaling 12-course hours per section: Infection Control, Radiation Health and Safety, and Anatomy, Morphology and Physiology. Each course will provide you with the information needed to complete the RHS and ICE exam, 2 of the 3 exams required to become a Certified Dental Assistant under the Dental Assisting National Board. The 3rd exam required is the General Chairside Assisting Exam and can be taken once the student obtains 3500 hours of chairside assisting.

Hands-on Workshops:

There will be three (3) mandatory hands-on workshops, one each month, from 8:00am to 5:00pm. Some workshops may have assigned modules to be completed before attending. (See curriculum framework).

All workshops are held at the School of Dentistry at 530 Wakara Way, and students can sign up for open labs with morning and afternoon availability throughout the program. Open labs are intended to give students additional time to practice skills and meet with the instructors. Once students have completed their second workshop on Radiology Training, they are welcome to start their externships.

Month	Class
January	Orientation
February	Workshop 1: Core Skills of a Dental Assistant
Mid February Group A Mid February Group B	Two Assisting rotations at South Main Clinic (1/2 day)
Mid February Group A Mid February Group B	Epic Training to alternate Assisting Rotation (1/2 day)
Mid March	Workshop 2: Medical Emergencies & Dental Radiology
Mid March	Start Clinical Externships
April	Workshop 3: General Chairside
May	Course Completion

Mandatory Clinic Sessions

February 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3 Workshop 1	4	5 1 PM Open Lab 1-5PM	6
9	10 8 AM Open Lab AM	11 SMC Assisting Rotation 8 AM Group A Epic Trainin	12 1 PM Open Lab 1-5PM	13
16	17 8 AM Open Lab AM	18 SMC Assisting Rotation 8 AM Group B Epic Trainin	19 1 PM Open Lab 1-5PM	20
23	24 8 AM Open Lab AM	25	26 1 PM Open Lab 1-5PM	27

Example dates for a student starting in January. Two mandatory clinic sessions will take place to give assisting students the opportunity to work chairside and apply skills they've learned in the first workshop. These sessions will take place at 2 of our external clinics. Liberty Community Dental Clinic and South Main Dental Clinic. Specific rotation schedules will be assigned by the instructor.

Example Schedule: The calendar shows the typical structure of a monthly schedule. Open labs are entirely optional, though encourages to increase confidence on skills learned throughout workshops. Once students complete their second workshop, they can begin their externships to obtain 90 hours.

Program Sections

The didactic portion of the program is split into 3 sections. Students are on track to complete this coursework in 3 months, with the 4th month dedicated to clinical training (externships). Students are permitted to progress through the online curriculum at an accelerated pace relative to the recommended schedule. However, certain sections may present additional challenges if the corresponding material has not yet been addressed in the hands-on workshops.

- ❖ Online: **Infection Control Review**- Complete this 12-hour course review prior to 1st workshop.
- ❖ Online: **AMP- Anatomy, Morphology and Physiology**-Complete this 12hr course review prior to 1st workshop. You do not need to complete the exam portions of these, just the review.

- ❖ *Hands-on workshop 1: **The Scope of the DA.*** Infection Control Processes; handwashing, PPE, Operatory Set-up and Break-down. HIPAA guidelines, Basic Dental Anatomy, Classifications and Dental Charting, Basic Instrument Transfer, Alginate Impressions, Trimming Models. Retraction and Isolation Techniques, Coronal Polishing, Flossing Techniques, Seating and Dismissing Patients.
- ❖ Online: **Radiation Health and Safety**- Advised to complete content UP TO MODULE 5 prior to 2nd workshop. The instructor will review the rest of the content in hands-on workshop, then you can complete the remainder of the 12-hour course.
- ❖ *Hands-on workshop 2: **Medical Emergencies in the Dental Clinic, Dental Charting and Dental Radiology:*** Discuss medical emergencies, obtaining patient vitals, gathering patient information, medical history review, dental charting. Radiology positioning techniques and devices, intra-oral and extra-oral radiology, proper x-ray mounting. Capturing Alginate Impressions, Retraction Techniques and digital scanning on a partner.
- ❖ *Hands-on Workshop 3: **General Chairside:*** Dental Procedures, respective instruments and tray-set up. Anesthetics, continued Instrument Transfer Methods, Transfer Zones. Dental Materials and Mixing techniques.

Externships: 90 hours-IN PERSON

After completing the radiology workshop (workshop 2) and meeting the skills requirements, students become eligible to start their clinical training. The DA Program manager will assign each student to a specific clinic or department for their externships and provide contact information for the designated manager or supervisor. Students are responsible for reaching out to this “point of contact” to arrange their externship schedule. Clinic managers/supervisors will complete an externship rubric to gauge students’ performance in clinical training. While students can submit their clinic preferences, we will strive to accommodate their requests, but this is not a guarantee. Each student must complete training in certain specialty departments, including Oral Surgery, Endodontics, Pediatrics, Sterilization and optional specialties such as Oral Pathology, Prosthodontics, Periodontics, and Orthodontics. Students should plan accordingly, as most clinics operate from 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. Externship hours must be obtained by the final week of the program.

Externship Hours Tracking:

Students are responsible for tracking their clinical externship hours on a provided log sheet. Each clinical shift should be documented on the log and signed by a designated clinic member. After the externship experience, the student will submit the hours log to their instructor.

Program Completion:

Upon completion of all online modules, workshops and externship hours, the student will “graduate” from the program and receive a Certificate of Program Completion. This certificate acts as proof of completion to take their final General Chairside Exam and receive their CDA, students will receive instructions on how to register for these exams. To be eligible to take the General Chairside Assisting (GC) exam, students need a minimum of 3,500 hours of approved work experience as a dental assistant and a current CPR, BLS, or ACLS certification from a DANB-accepted provider.

