



College of Dental Medicine Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) Program

Personal Competencies for Admission and Matriculation

A candidate for admission to the Doctor of Dental Medicine program must possess, or be able to achieve through a reasonable accommodation, certain intellectual, emotional, and physical abilities, that would enable the individual to carry out the activities described in the sections that follow. Upon matriculation to the program, the student must continue to possess or be able to achieve through a reasonable accommodation, the personal competencies outlined below throughout their progression in the Doctor of Dental Medicine Program at Western University of Health Sciences. The practice of dentistry requires the performance of specific essential functions that fall into broad skills categories, which include but are not limited to: observation; communication; motor; interpretive, conceptual, and quantitative and behaviors/social.

For candidates or students who require a reasonable accommodation in order to meet the competencies outlines below, please contact the Harris Family Center for Disability and Health Policy/Accommodation and Resource Center (CDHP/AARC) at (909) 469-5297.

Under all circumstances, a candidate or student should be able to perform the following in a reasonably independent manner, with or without a reasonable accommodation:

Observation Skills

Basic Sciences: A candidate must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic and dental sciences. This may include, but is not limited to, information conveyed through physiologic and pharmacological demonstrations in animals and microscopic images of microorganisms and human or animal tissues in normal and pathologic states. A candidate must be able to acquire information from written documents and to visualize information presented as paper, films, slides, video and computer images, as well as online course material, blended learning environments, remedial education, and other assessment based activities. A candidate must be able to interpret radiographs (x-rays) and other graphic images. A candidate must have functional use of visual, auditory, and somatic sensation while using appropriate enhancement of sensory modalities (such as microscopes, stethoscopes, etc.).

Clinical Sciences: A candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance, and close at hand, and observe and appreciate non-verbal communications when performing general dentistry treatment or administering medications.

A candidate must be able to perform visual and tactile dental examinations and treatment including use of visual acuity to discern slight differences and variations in color, shape, and general appearance between normal and abnormal soft and hard tissues. Use of tactile senses may be either direct palpation or indirect through instrumentation. A candidate must also possess the visual acuity to read charts, records, small print and handwritten notation, and distinguish small variations in colors both intra- and extra-orally.

Communication Skills

A candidate must be able to communicate clearly and effectively with a degree of sensitivity with patients, parents, and/or guardians; establish good rapport, convey or exchange information at a level allowing development of a health history; identify problems presented; explain alternative solutions; and give directions during treatment and post-treatment. For effective patient treatment, the candidate must be able to communicate with patients, parents, guardians, faculty, staff, and all members of the dental and medical health care team effectively and efficiently. Communication must be culturally appropriate. Communication includes oral and written modes. This requires the ability to understand, write, and speak fluent English. The candidate must also be able to recognize nonverbal communication cues.

Motor Skills

A candidate should have a sufficient level of manual dexterity such that he/she is able to execute the fine movements required to provide general dental care and treatment to patients within a specified amount of time. It is required that a candidate possess the manual motor skills necessary to directly perform diagnostic and treatment maneuvers associated with the practice of general dentistry. Such maneuvers require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional uses of the senses of touch, hearing, and vision. A candidate must be able to perform basic life support; transfer and position disabled patients; and position and reposition self around patients in various treatment settings. The candidate must be able to operate dental equipment controls utilizing fine hand movements, position and move dental instruments, and move in all directions within one millimeter of tolerance. Candidates must be able to work in the proper ergonomic positions appropriate to the delivery of dental treatment for extended periods.

Interpretive/Conceptual/Quantitative Skills

A candidate must be able to measure, calculate reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize information. A candidate must be able to comprehend and mentally visualize three-dimensional relationship and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Problem solving and clinical decision-making and critical thinking skills demanded of a general dentist require all of these intellectual abilities. A candidate must be able to perform these problem-solving and critical thinking skills in a timely fashion for effective patient treatment.

Behaviors and Social Skills

A candidate must possess the emotional health and maturity required for full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, maintenance of patient confidentiality, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, faculty, staff, and fellow students. A candidate must recognize that the curriculum is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. She/he must be able to tolerate physically and emotionally demanding workloads, function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients

Physical Health

To insure compliance with California State Health Department requirements and exhibit exemplary commitment to the rights and integrity of all parties in the education of health care professional students, the College of Dental Medicine has established medical status credentialing requirements that must be completed prior to matriculation. In addition to the skills listed above, candidates for the Doctor of Dental Medicine degree also must be sufficiently free of any serious communicable diseases, e.g., Hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, and tuberculosis (see Student Health section in the University catalog for more details). Medical status credentialing (health clearance) is designed to ensure that the safety of patients is not compromised while protecting the rights and safety of students as well. For detailed information, contact stu-emphealth@westernu.edu.