What does a Dentist do?

Most dentists are general practitioners. This means they handle a wide variety of dental problems. For example, they fill cavities, pull teeth, and try to prevent dental disease. Dentists begin exams by looking at a patient’s teeth and mouth. They examine x-ray images of teeth for cracks and defects. They talk to dental hygienists to learn what they discovered while cleaning patients’ teeth. Dentists use this information to create a plan for how to treat patients and promote their dental health.

Common procedures for dentists are to apply sealants and repair fractured teeth or those with cavities. They may also make molds to replace missing or pulled teeth. Dentists sometimes apply crowns to strengthen teeth. They may perform surgery on gums or on the bones that support gums. Dentists use instruments such as drill, mirrors and scalpels.

The need for dental care is continuing to grow because the baby-boom generation is advancing into middle age. Many may need more complicated dental work, such as bridges. In addition, this generation of older adults is more likely to keep their own teeth. This will require more care than in the past when people had dentures. *

How do I prepare for a Dentistry Program? What Washington universities offer this program?

Students pursuing a profession in Dentistry should likely plan to complete the Associate of Science (AS) in Biology. Completing an AS in Biology is especially helpful to students who plan on pursuing a baccalaureate degree in biology or chemistry as it will help them earn an undergraduate degree in a timely manner. However, students pursuing a non-science major could complete the AA degree with calculus, chemistry and biology classes, leaving the organic chemistry series to take at the baccalaureate level. (Note: some schools require at least half of the prerequisite science courses be taken at a baccalaureate university)

*Source: Washington Occupation Information System (WOIS) wois.org
Admission into the School of Dentistry is highly competitive. The average overall GPA for the University of Washington entering class for 2006 was 3.59 and the pre-dental science GPA was 3.55. Each dentistry school is different so check the pre-requisites and admission standards early while you are starting your classes at Highline.

The UW has the only dental program in the State of Washington. There are approximately 56 dental schools nationwide. Although a bachelor’s degree is usually not required for admission, it is highly recommended that you have one to be competitive. You should also be developing strong written and oral communications skills.

To become a dentist, you will need to complete a four-year doctorate program from a dental school accredited by the American Dental Association. Before entering dental school, a student must have completed three to four years of undergraduate education. Pre-dental students must have completed the following Science/Math prerequisites before applying to the UW Dental School:

**Biology**& 211, 212, 213, 260  
**Chemistry**& 161, 162, 163, 261, 262, 263  
**Mathematics**& 151, 152, 153 or Math 146

In addition to the above science and math courses, the UW Dental School also requires one year of general physics with a lab. You can complete this class at your University.

Overall grade point average (GPA), and GPA of pre-dental required science courses are reviewed for admission and college grades are an important indicator of dental school performance and success. The Committee members review these grades for a strong, consistent GPA with very few withdrawals, incompletes, repeated courses or non-graded options. Some schools (for example, Oregon Health and Science University) also require Biology 241 (Human Anatomy & Physiology I) and Biology 242 (Human Anatomy & Physiology II). Be sure to check with dental schools to confirm admissions requirements.

All dental student applicants must also take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). The test covers four areas: survey of the natural sciences (biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry), reading comprehension, quantitative ability, and perceptual ability.

**What do the salaries in this field look like?**

In Washington, the average entry level wage for general dentists is $9,167 per month ($52.89 per hour). *

**How do I get a faculty advisor?**

Advisors in the Educational Planning and Advising Center (EPAC) can help you plan your prerequisite courses. You can request a faculty advisor online at [http://edplanning.highline.edu/request.advisor.php](http://edplanning.highline.edu/request.advisor.php)

Drop-in advising appointments are available in EPAC, building 6. To view our hours please visit the following link: [http://edplanning.highline.edu/contact.php](http://edplanning.highline.edu/contact.php)

*Source: Washington Occupation Information System (WOIS) wois.org*