

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between a dental assistant and a dental hygienist?

A dental assistant works directly with the dentist. Duties vary according to the state. The assistant is responsible for helping the dentist with his/her procedures. This includes setting up for the procedure, suctioning, transferring of instruments and mixing materials. A dental assistant also takes radiographs, impressions and provides patient education. A dental hygienist's duties include cleaning teeth and applying sealants.

What is the job market for dental assistants?

Dental assisting has an expected growth of 43% in the next 10 years. For current Bureau of Labor Statistics please refer to

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes319091.htm#ind>

How can I obtain more information about the program?

You may make an appointment with a dental assisting advisor by calling 205-929-3440 or email the dental program director Dr. T Ray at trayconnell@lawsonstate.edu.

What is the process for being selected for admission to the program?

A GPA of 2.0 is required for admission. Students must be eligible to take ENG 101 to be accepted into the program. The program admits in the Fall semester only, so applications are due June 30 annually. Applications can be found on the website at Health Professions, Dental Assisting applications. We admit a maximum of 24 students to the program each year.

Do I have to complete all general required courses before applying?

It is not required to complete all general required courses before applying. However, the dental assisting curriculum is challenging, so it is difficult to finish in 1 year if all general required courses need to be completed.

Is it necessary to get letters of recommendation or observation hours before applying?

No, we do not require letters of recommendation or observation hours.

Can the general required courses be taken at other colleges?

Yes. Information on course equivalency may be obtained by contacting the Admissions office at 205-929-3414.

Do I have to have CPR certification before being accepted? CPR certification must be completed before beginning clinical courses. Clinical course begin in Spring semester or January.

When will I know if I've been accepted?

The deadline for applications is June 30th annually. Students are contacted in mid July to inform them of their acceptance/non-acceptance into the program. The letter will inform you of when to attend the mandatory orientation which is held the first week of classes.

What costs can I expect?

The costs are detailed on the website. During orientation you will get information about uniforms and supplies that need to be purchased in the first semester.

When do clinical rotations begin and where do they take place?

Students begin going to off campus clinical rotation sites in the Spring semester. You can expect to be at the rotation sites 3 days per week in the Spring and Summer semester.

Can I take any dental assisting classes online?

We offer a few hybrid courses in which most of the coursework is done online, but the majority of the program is administered in the classroom/clinic setting.

What type of class schedule can I expect?

You can expect to be in class 8:00-3:00 Monday-Thursday. There are some semesters in which you will have 1-2 days off during the week.

How long is the program?

The program is 3 semesters in length-Fall, Spring, and Summer.

What type of certification will I receive?

Upon successful completion of Lawson State Dental Assisting Program, you will be awarded a certificate and you have an option to continue one more semester and receive an associate's degree.

Our students are eligible to take the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB). Is it not required to be certified in the state of Alabama, but many states require certification by DANB.

Can I transfer other school's dental assisting courses I have taken to Lawson, and/or can I transfer Lawson's dental assisting courses to another school?

Currently, the Alabama Community College System has no policy for Dental Assisting Programs transferring credits between ACCS institution. Criteria for transfer to Lawson State's must follow the following criteria.

1. Must meet minimum admission standards for the dental assisting program and demonstrate competency as defined by the institution.
2. Must possess a grade of C or better in all dental assisting program required courses taken at another institution and possess a minimum of a 2.0 cumulative GPA at time of transfer.
3. Dean/Director of previous dental assisting program must provide a letter of eligibility for progression in previous dental assisting program.
4. Must comply with all program policy requirements at accepting institution.
5. Complete at least 25% of the dental assisting program required courses for degree /certificate at the accepting Lawson State.
6. Must meet acceptability criteria for placement at clinical agencies for clinical experience.
7. The last dental assisting course in which a student was enrolled cannot be more than 12 months old.
8. Acceptance of transfer students into dental assisting programs is limited by the number of faculty and clinical facilities available. Meeting minimal standards does not guarantee acceptance.