

Technical Standards for Dental Hygiene

The Dental Hygiene Program, as part of the Southwestern Community College District, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The Dental Hygiene Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, disabled veteran, or Vietnam era veteran status. In that spirit, admission to the Dental Hygiene Program is open to all qualified individuals and complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As an accredited Dental Hygiene Program, Southwestern College adheres to the standards promulgated by the American Dental Association, Commission on Dental Accreditation. *Technical standards are not requirements of admission into the program.* Those interested in applying for admission to the program may review these standards to develop a better understanding of the physical abilities and behavioral characteristics necessary to complete the program. When requested, the College will provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified students with properly verified disabilities.

Education of a dental hygienist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in dental hygiene practice.

The Dental Hygiene Program has the responsibility to the public to assure graduates are fully competent dental hygienists, capable of delivering quality care in a timely manner and preserving the health

and well-being of the patients they serve. Thus, it is important that persons admitted, retained, and graduated possess the intelligence; integrity; respect for patient rights, privileges, and property of others; compassion; humanitarian concern; and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice dental hygiene.

Retention decisions are based on satisfactory academic achievement and non-academic factors that serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the technical standards of the program required for graduation.

Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required of all students at graduation.

With these principles in mind, students must be able to meet the following technical standards, without accommodation, or with reasonable accommodation. The use of a trained intermediary is not acceptable in clinical situations. A student's judgments and skills may not be mediated or relied upon another person's power of selection and observation, or clinical ability.

Fundamental Program Requirements

Southwestern College (The College) recognizes the award of an Associate of Science (A.S.) in Dental Hygiene degree carries with it the full authority of the institution and communicates to those who might seek the services of the bearer that he or she is competent to practice dental hygiene. The A.S. degree implies the graduate is eligible for national, state, and regional examination leading to licensure, which allows the practice of dental hygiene.

This requires that the student acquire didactic knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to the profession and agreed upon by the faculty as requisite for graduation.

Essential Functions

The College is mindful of the unique nature of the dental hygiene curriculum. Applicants must possess the skills and abilities that will allow successful completion of their course of study and receive the full benefit of the education. In the process, the student is required to perform treatment on patients accepted into the Dental Hygiene Clinic. The Dental Hygiene Program has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the patients. This includes the safe completion of treatment within an acceptable amount of time. With this in mind, the student must be able to meet the following technical standards with or without accommodation.

1. Motor Skills

General: Students ordinarily should have sufficient motor function such that they are able to execute movements reasonably required to provide general care and treatment to patients.

Specific: It is required that a student possess the motor skills necessary to directly perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers, basic laboratory tests, and diagnostic procedures. Such actions required coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional uses of the senses of touch and vision.

Specific: A student must be able to perform basic life support (including CPR), transfer and position disabled patients, physically restrain adults who lack motor control, and position and reposition self around patient and chair in

a sitting or standing position. The student must be able to operate foot controls utilizing fine movements, operate handpieces requiring controlled dental movements of less than one millimeter, and utilize hand instrumentation.

2. Sensory/Observation

General: A student must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic and dental sciences.

Specific: This includes but is not limited to information conveyed through physiologic and pharmacological demonstrations through microbiological cultures and microscopic images of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A student must be able to acquire information from written documents and to visualize information presented in images from paper, films, slides, or video. A student must interpret x-ray and other graphic images, with or without the use of assistive devices. A student must have functional use of visual, auditory, and somatic sensation while being enhanced by the functional use of sensory modalities.

General: A student must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance and close at hand, and observe and appreciate nonverbal communications when performing dental procedures or administering medications.

Specific: A student must be able to perform visual and tactile dental hygiene examinations and treatment including use of visual acuity, accommodation, and color vision to discern differences and variation 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 student must also possess the visual acuity to read charts, records, small print and handwritten notation, and distinguish colors intra and extra orally.

3. Communication

General: A student must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients; 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. Communication includes speech and writing. The student must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team.

Specific: A student must have sufficient facility with English: to retrieve information from tests and lectures and communicate concepts on written exams and patient charts; elicit patient backgrounds; describe patient changes in moods, activity, and posture; and coordinate patient care with all members of the health care team.

Specific: In any case, where a student's ability to communicate through these sensory modalities is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or ability to acquire and demonstrate the essential information conveyed in this fashion.

4. Cognitive

General: A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize."

Specific: In addition, a student must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial

relationships of structures. Problem-solving, a critical skill demanded of dental hygienists, requires all of these intellectual abilities. A student must be able to perform these problem-solving skills in a timely fashion.

5. Behavioral

General: A student must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, 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.

Specific: A student must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. He or she must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical care of patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interests, and motivation, are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the educational process. Further, a student must be able to manage apprehensive patients with a range of moods and behaviors in a tactful, congenial, personal manner so as not to alienate or antagonize them. A student must reasonably be expected to accept criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior.

This policy has been modified from the American Dental Educators' Association to meet the needs of the SWC Dental Hygiene Program.