

Technical Standards for Dental Education Programs School of Dentistry

Purpose

This document defines the nonacademic criteria for advancement through and graduation from the dental (DDS), dental hygiene (BS), or advanced dental education (certificate or degree) programs at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry.

Background

The School of Dentistry provides this description of technical standards to inform prospective and enrolled students of the skills required in the provision of oral health care services. These technical standards reflect the performance abilities and characteristics that are necessary to successfully complete the requirements of the dental, dental hygiene, or advanced dental education programs at the school. These standards are not requirements of admission into the programs. People interested in applying for admission to the programs should review these standards to develop a better understanding of the physical abilities and behavioral characteristics necessary to successfully complete the programs. The School of Dentistry complies with the requirements and spirit of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Therefore, the School will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified.

The School recognizes that the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) 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 dentistry. Similarly, the certificate of graduation or an MS degree from an advanced dental education program communicates competence in a dental specialty, while a BS degree in Dental Hygiene communicates competence in dental hygiene practice. Therefore, the student must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the faculty has determined are essential for the practice of dentistry, its specialties, or dental hygiene. The student must acquire both cognitive and technical skills to negotiate the curriculum. All courses in the curriculum are required to assure graduates are competent clinicians.

The following technical standards describe the essential functions that students must demonstrate in order to fulfill the requirements of a dental education program, and thus, are required for advancement through and graduation from the program. Students must possess the skills and abilities that will allow them to successfully complete the course of study and receive the full benefit of their education. While

enrolled, students must perform treatment on the School's patients. The School has the responsibility for ensuring the safety of the patients. Treatment must be completed safely and within an acceptable time.

The technical skill areas include motor, sensory/observation, communication, cognitive, behavioral and ethics/professionalism. Continued enrollment and graduation will depend on the successful demonstration of both the knowledge and the skills listed below. The Academic Performance Committees will monitor each student's demonstration of such knowledge and skills.

Standards

1. Motor Skills

GENERAL: A student should have sufficient motor function to execute movements essential to providing oral health care to patients.

SPECIFIC: A student must possess the motor skills to perform palpation, percussion, auscultation and other diagnostic maneuvers, basic laboratory tests, and diagnostic procedures. Such actions require coordination of 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 patients with disabilities, physically restrain adults and children who lack motor control, and position and reposition himself or herself around the patient and chair in a sitting or standing position. A student must promote and support the ability of coworkers to perform prompt care. A student must be able to operate controls, use high-speed or low-speed dental handpieces for tooth preparation procedures, and use hand instrumentation including scalpels for surgical procedures.

2. Sensory/Observation

GENERAL: A student must be able to acquire a predetermined level of required information through demonstrations and experiences in basic and dental sciences courses.

SPECIFIC: Such information includes, but is not limited to, information conveyed through: 1) physiologic and pharmacological demonstrations in animals; 2) microbiological cultures; 3) microscopic images of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states; and 4) demonstration of techniques using dental models. A student must be able to acquire information from written documents, and to evaluate information presented as images from paper, films, slides, or video. A student must be able to interpret x-

ray and other graphic images. A student must be able to benefit from electronic and other instrumentation that enhances visual, auditory, and somatic sensations needed for examination or treatment.

GENERAL: A student must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance and close up, interpreting non-verbal communications while performing dental operations or administering medications.

SPECIFIC: A student must be able to perform dental examinations and treatments that require the use of sight and touch. He or she must be able to see fine detail, focus at a variety of distances, and discern differences and variations in color, shape, and texture that are necessary to differentiate normal and abnormal soft and hard tissues. He or she must be able to use tactile senses to diagnose directly by palpation and indirectly by sensations transmitted through instruments. A student must also possess the visual acuity to read charts, records, radiographs, small print and handwritten notation.

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; explain alternative solutions; and give directions during treatment and post-treatment. A student must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with all members of the health care team.

SPECIFIC: A student must have sufficient facility with English to: retrieve information from texts 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. A student must be able to communicate in lay language so that patients and their families can understand the patient's conditions and, thereby, be more likely to comply with treatment and preventive regimes.

4. Cognitive

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

SPECIFIC: A student must be able to comprehend three dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Problem solving requires all of these intellectual abilities. A student must be able to perform these problem solving skills in a timely manner.

5. Behavioral

GENERAL: A student must possess the emotional health required for full use 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 endure physically-taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. He or she must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interests, and motivation are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the admissions and educational processes. 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 be able to accept criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior. A student must be able to interrelate among colleagues, staff, and patients with honesty, integrity, respect, and nondiscrimination.

6: Ethics and Professionalism

GENERAL: A student must maintain the standards of conduct for ethics and professionalism as set forth in the American Dental Association's ***Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct***, ***Principles of Ethics of the American Dental Hygienists Association***, ***VCU School of Dentistry Code of Professional Conduct***, ***VCU School of Dentistry Dress Code*** and ***VCU Resource Guide***.

SPECIFIC: A student must always act in the best interest of the patient and society even when there is a conflict with the student's personal self-interest. The student must conduct oneself as a trustworthy and responsible citizen and act with impeccable integrity in their interactions with students, faculty, staff and the public. A student must refrain from actions that detract from the professional atmosphere or orderly appearance of the School of Dentistry or University, including personal appearance or other actions. This expectation would also apply when attending any school-sponsored or related activities such as preceptorships, externships, MOM and Jamaica projects.

Approved by Administrative Committee: July 11, 2007