



Dental Hygiene Program

Higher Education Center at National City

880 National City Blvd., National City, CA 91950 (619) 216-6665 Extension 4862

www.swccd.edu/dentalhygiene

Dental Hygiene Program Information Packet

Introduction

The Dental Hygiene Program provides basic education and entry-level experience, to prepare graduates for licensure as dental hygienists. Approximately 36 students are accepted and begin each fall semester for a two-year program. Dental hygiene didactic and clinical courses are conducted at the Higher Education Center at National City. Classes are held five (5) days per week. The program is full time (see page 7 for semester unit load).

General Career Description

A dental hygienist is a licensed, preventive oral health professional providing education, clinical, and therapeutic services to the public in a variety of settings. As the preventive specialist of the dental healthcare team, the dental hygienist promotes and maintains oral wellness through services such as oral health assessments, education, removal of soft and hard deposits from teeth, and use of adjunct services such as sealants, fluorides, and chemotherapeutic agents.

As a healthcare professional, the dental hygienist is responsible for protecting and maintaining the confidentiality of information pertaining to the health status of individuals.

Career Options

Dental hygienists can provide preventive and therapeutic services in a dental office or clinic setting. They may also work in public health settings, schools, skilled nursing facilities and mobile clinics. Clinical practice requires a minimum of an associate degree education.

The dental hygienist may also serve as an administrator/manager for community or state dental health programs; may provide sales and education for dental product companies; may be an educator in a dental hygiene or dental school program; or a researcher in a university or corporate setting. Many of these roles require a baccalaureate or graduate level degree.

Admissions & Application Process

The dental hygiene education curriculum is a post-secondary scientifically oriented program, which is rigorous and intensive. Because enrollment is limited by facility capacity, special program admission criteria and procedures are necessary. Applicants for the Dental Hygiene program must be proficient in several subject areas. Prerequisites include courses in Life Sciences, Oral and Written Communication, Psychology, Sociology, Nutrition and Math. All the required prerequisites are mandated by the Dental Hygiene Board of California (DHBC) and the Commission of Dental Accreditation (CODA).

Southwestern College Dental Hygiene (DH) Program Prerequisites

All DH prerequisites must be completed by the time of application (January). ***All the required prerequisites and admission requirements are mandated by the Dental Hygiene Board of California (DHBC) and the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).***

It is the policy of our accrediting institutions to require all prerequisite course work be completed and recency requirements met prior to applying for program admission. No “In Progress” coursework can be accepted.

Prerequisites

- BIOL 260 HUMAN ANATOMY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: BIOL 100 & 101 or equivalent)
- BIOL 261 PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: CHEM 100 or 170 or equivalent; BIOL 260 or equivalent)
- BIOL 265 GENERAL MICROBIOLOGY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: BIOL 100 & 101, or equivalent; CHEM 100 or 170 or equivalent)
- CHEM 100 INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL CHEMISTRY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: Elementary Algebra, as determined through the Southwestern College)
or
CHEM 170 PREPARATION FOR GENERAL CHEMISTRY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: Intermediate Algebra as determined through the Southwestern College)
- CHEM 102 GENERAL, ORGANIC, AND BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY 5 UNITS
or
CHEM 110 ELEMENTARY ORGANIC & BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY 4 UNITS
(Prerequisite: CHEM 100 or 170 or 200 or equivalent)
- HLTH 204 FUNDAMENTALS OF NUTRITION
- COMM 103 or COMM 104 ORAL COMMUNICATION (Recommended)
PUBLIC SPEAKING
- PSYC 101 GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY
- SOC 101 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY
or SOC 110 CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS
- ENGL 115 COLLEGE COMPOSITION: READING & WRITING ANALYTICALLY
- MATH 119 ELEMENTARY STATISTICS
or PSYC/SOC 270 * (or higher) STATISTICS FOR BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

For each of the 5 science courses

- *Must be at least 4 semester units with an in-class lab component (quarter and semester units are not equivalent; 6 quarter units = 4 semester units)*
- *Must be taken for a letter grade, “C” or better. Pass/No Pass and Credit/No Credit grades are not accepted.*
- *Exam scores of any kind will not be accepted for substitution.*
- *Must meet a **seven**-year recency requirement at the time of application to the program*
- *Together they must have a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.00*

Southwestern College limits the number of times a student can repeat courses for credit and/or to improve GPA

*See additional details on page 3 to satisfy Math prerequisite requirement.

*All General Education courses must be completed before entering into the program.

*Catalog year Fall 2025-2026 tentative General Education updates will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Please Note: Starting Fall 2025 new course number and title will be implemented for the following courses:

Current Course Number and Title (Prior to Fall 2025)	New Course Number and Title (Effective Fall 2025)
COMM 104 - Public Speaking	COMM C1000 - Introduction to Public Speaking
ENGL 115 - College Composition: Reading and Writing Analytically	ENGL C1000 - Academic Reading and Writing
MATH 119 - Elementary Statistics	STAT C1000 - Introduction to Statistics
PSYC 101 - General Psychology	PSYC C1000 - Introduction to Psychology

Additional Details on Satisfying Prerequisites

1. Students must demonstrate requisite **math proficiency** by means of one of the following:
 - a) earn a “C” or better in MATH 119 or PSYC/SOC 270 or more advanced course with equivalent content, no support courses.
 - b) a transcript indicating an earned associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college/university and completion of a Math course with equivalent or more advanced content, indicating a grade of “C” or better.

For DH Prerequisites taken at another college/university:

The Dental Hygiene Program only does an informal evaluation of your transcript if/when you apply to the program and cannot make any pre-determination via email or phone.

DH prerequisites taken at another college/university NOT LISTED on the DH prerequisite equivalency grid (page 8 of this packet), can be reviewed in advance to confirm that the course will be accepted by the DH program. Courses listed on the grid do not require a petition, as they have already been determined as equivalent.

Submit a Petition for Major Substitution for each course along with supporting documentation (course descriptions from the catalog year in which the course was taken, or course syllabus and copy of transcript). A Petition for Major Substitution will only be reviewed **after** the course has been completed, not before.

Petitions **must** be submitted by the summer prior to applying (or sooner) in case a course is not approved, allowing the student to take a course during the fall semester. Any petitions submitted by Fall semester before application period is considered late.

[Petition for Substitution of Major Requirement Form](#)

General Education and Graduation Requirements

Please note that general education and Southwestern College graduation and proficiency requirements need to be met **before applying to the dental hygiene program**. Students must consult with a counselor to assist in developing a Student Educational Plan (SEP) to ensure requirements are met on schedule.

The Dental Hygiene Program counselor is Antoinette Nagai. To schedule an appointment, contact the Higher Education Center in National City at (619) 216-6665 Ext. 4851, 4852, 4853 or hecnc@swccd.edu.

IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO MEET WITH A COUNSELOR TO REVIEW ALL PREREQUISITES AND TO COMPLETE A STUDENT EDUCATION PLAN (SEP), PREFERABLY BY THE EARLY SUMMER, PRIOR TO APPLYING.

Admissions Process

A separate application is required for this program and is available online during the application filing period. It is important to review the Dental Hygiene Program website for detailed information about [filing period dates and the application process](#).

The dental hygiene program accepts 36 students who begin the program in the fall (August). To be considered a qualified candidate the applicant must:

- 1) *Complete all dental hygiene prerequisite and general education coursework. No “In Progress” work is accepted.(catalog year Fall 2025-2026 tentative general education updates will be reviewed on a case by case basis).*
- 2) *Obtain an SWC student identification number.*
- 3) *Completion of Aptitude Test (www.ada.org).*
- 4) *Complete the Dental Hygiene Rubric. (Rubric will be posted by 07/2025)*
- 5) *Copy of High School Diploma or GED certificate. (If you completed High School outside of the U.S., your diploma must be evaluated prior to applying. Applicants may use Southwestern College approved services listed as NACES member (www.naces.org)).*
- 6) *Official transcripts that confirm completion of prerequisites must be received at SWC Admissions by the application deadline. (We recommend for you to contact our evaluations office after sending your Official Transcripts for them to be evaluated).*
- 7) *Submit a complete dental hygiene online application with supporting documents, if applicable, prior to the deadline.*

Applications missing supporting documentation and/or transcripts deems application as incomplete.

Selection Process

Dental Hygiene Program candidates are chosen to fill 36 available positions per cohort (cohort begins in the Fall of the same year in which you apply). 10 alternate candidates will also be selected in the event a candidate (from the 36) declines acceptance.

Students will be admitted to the Dental Hygiene Program based on the Admissions Criteria outlined in the Point System Form. (form can be found on our official website)

Applicants not accepted as candidates or alternates must re-apply the following year.

The program has no waiting list.

ALTERNATES

Candidates placed on the alternate list are not guaranteed a position in the incoming class. Alternates who are not offered a permanent position in the class are required to complete a NEW application in the next application period (January).

Selection Process (continued)

The number of candidates accepted each year is subject to change at the discretion of the program director. This can be based on but not limited to state and local orders/mandates or student cohort obligations.

Additional Requirements

Once admitted to the Dental Hygiene Program, students must provide verification of the following:

- 1) Student Education Plan (SEP). Meet with an SWC counselor to develop SEP.
- 2) Current CPR Certification: must be Basic Life Support (BLS) for Healthcare Providers. Must include training with the AED. *Certification course must include hands on (in person) training.*
- 3) Physical Health Examination
- 4) Proof of Current Immunizations
 - a) Rubeola and Rubella Immunity Verification
 - b) Hepatitis B Immunity Verification

Important: Hepatitis B vaccine is done in a three-part series approximately two months apart (for each vaccination). **It is recommended that applicants visit their medical provider early to start the series if you don't already have it completed.**
 - c) Varicella Immunity Verification
 - d) Tuberculosis Screening/TB Blood test is accepted (IGRA)

More information on above list and related forms will be disseminated at mandatory new student orientation for accepted candidates only.

Notice of Occupational Hazards

Applicants should be aware that occupational hazards for the field of dental hygiene may include and are not limited to exposure to infectious diseases such as COVID-19, AIDS or hepatitis, hazardous chemicals or substances, accidental injury, neuromuscular problems, blood borne pathogens, radiation and allergic reactions to latex, anesthetic agents, or other chemical agents.

Estimated Program Cost

The cost of the two-year Dental Hygiene Program (for students who meet the California residency requirement) is currently estimated to range between \$ 13,000 – 15,000. **The greatest direct expense occurs in the first semester.** Instruments, instructional supplies, textbooks, and uniforms are the major cost items. **An estimated cost of \$9000 will be needed prior to the start of classes.** Living expenses and transportation costs are not included nor is the cost to complete prerequisite/general education courses for the degree. Visit the Dental Hygiene Program website to view a more detailed sheet of [estimated cost](#).

Financial Aid

Financial Aid may be available to those who qualify. The federal government and the state of California provides funds in the form of loans, grants, on-campus jobs, and scholarships. Find out more at [SWC Financial Aid](#).

Due to the commitment of class and study time, it is recommended that students limit outside employment to no more than 20 hours per week.

Persons with Disabilities

Learn more or request assistance in requesting accommodations at [Disability Support Services](#) or call (619) 482-6512.

Dental Hygiene Program Course Sequence

Each course in the Dental Hygiene program builds upon the previous course in the previous semester. To successfully progress through the two-year program, students are required to pass dental hygiene courses at 75% or better. Each Dental Hygiene course is offered only once during the academic year. Please meet with a counselor for correct and current information on policy.



Southwestern College

Dental Hygiene Program

Course Sequence

First Semester

Course	Course Title	Units
DH 101	Introduction to Clinical Concepts	2
DH 108	Introduction to Clinical Principles	2.5
DH 109	Dental Radiography and Interpretation	3
DH 114	Head and Neck Anatomy	3
DH 123	Oral Anatomy and Physiology	2
DH 125	Oral Health	2
Total Course Units		14.5

Second Semester

Course	Course Title	Units
DH 112	Clinic I	4
DH 113A	Clinical Concepts	1
DH 115	Periodontics	2
DH 121	Pain Control	2
DH 203	Pathology	2
DH 206	Dental Pharmacology	2
Total Course Units		13

Summer Session

Course	Course Title	Units
DH 118	Transitional Clinic	1.5

Third Semester

Course	Course Title	Units
DH 106	Special Need Patient Care	2
DH 113B	Clinical Concepts	1
DH 116	Dental Materials	2
DH 122	Clinic II	
DH 200A	Community Dental Health I	2
DH 205	Advanced Periodontics	2
Total Course Units		13

Fourth Semester

Course	Course Title	Units
DH 113C	Clinical Concepts	1
DH 200B	Community Dental Health II	2
DH 202	Clinic III	4
DH 211	Ethics and Jurisprudence	2
DH 214	Seminar	2
Total Course Units		11

Total Program Units: 53

Students receiving financial aid will be required to take one additional unit in their fourth semester (to be considered fulltime students). See the academic counselor for recommendations.



Dental Hygiene Prerequisite Course Equivalency Grid for Region 10 2025-2027 (March 3, 2026)

THIS GRID IS AN ADVISEMENT TOOL TO BE USED WITH A COUNSELOR, NOT A GUARANTEE OF COURSE EQUIVALENCY FOR PRIOR COURSEWORK.

College	BIOL 260 Course Equivalency ^	BIOL 261 Course Equivalency ^	BIOL 265 Course Equivalency ^	CHEM 100 or 170 Course Equivalency ^	CHEM 102 or 110 Course Equivalency ^	COMM 103 or COMM C1000 (COMM 104) Course Equivalency +	ENGL C1000 (ENGL 115) or 115H, ESL 115A Course Equivalency	HLTH 204 or HLTH 201 Course Equivalency	PSYC C1000 (PSYC 101) Course Equivalency	SOC 101 or 110 Course Equivalency	STAT C1000 (MATH 119) or PSYC/SOC 270 Course Equivalency
Southwestern	BIOL 260	BIOL 261	BIOL 265	CHEM 100 or CHEM 170	CHEM 102 or CHEM 110	COMM 103 or COMM C1000 (COMM 104)	ENGL C1000 (ENGL 115) or ENGL 115H or ESL 115A	HLTH 204 or HLTH 201	PSYC C1000 (PSYC 101)	SOC 101 or SOC 110	STAT C1000 (MATH 119) or PSYC/SOC 270 or BIOL 215
SDSU	BIOL 212	BIOL 261	BIOL 211 & BIOL 211L	CHEM 100	CHEM 102	COMM 103 or COMM 204	ECL 100 or RWS 100	NUTR 201	PSY 101	SOC 101 or SOC 102	SOC 201 or STAT 250 or PSY 280 or BIOL 215
*GCCCCD (Cuyamaca & Grossmont)	BIO 140	BIO 141 & BIO 141L	BIO 152	CHEM 115 or CHEM 120	CHEM 102 or CHEM 116	COMM 130 COMM C1000 (COMM 122)	ENGL C1000 (ENGL 120) or ESL 122	NUTR 155	PSYC C1000 (PSY 120)	SOCI C1000 (SOC 120) or SOC 130	STAT C1000 (MATH 160) or BIO 215 or PSY 215
Imperial Valley	BIOL 200 & BIOL 202 or BIOL 204	BIOL 200 & BIOL 202 or BIOL 206	BIOL 220	CHEM 100	None	COMM C1000 (COMM 100)	ENGL C1000 (ENGL 110) or ESL 108 or ENGL 105	HE 106	PSYC C1000 (PSY 101)	SOCI C1000 (SOC 101) or SOC 102	STAT C1000 (MATH 119) or PSY 214
MiraCosta	BIO 210/210H	BIO 220	BIO 230	CHEM 115/115H or CHEM 140	CHEM 112 or CHEM 116	COMM C1000 (COMM 101)	ENGL C1000 (ENGL 100) ENGL 100/H	NUTR 100/100H	PSYC C1000 (PSYC 101) or PSYC C1000H (PSYC 101H)	SOCI C1000 SOCI C1000H (SOC 101/101H) or SOC 102	STAT C1000 (MATH 103) or BUS 204/H or PSYC 104/H or BTEC 180
Palomar	BIOL 210	BIOL 211	BIOL 212	CHEM 100	CHEM 104	COMM C1000 (SPCH 100)	ENGL C1000 (ENG 100) or ENGL C1000E (ENG 100E) or ESL 110	NUTR 165 or NUTR 185	PSYC C1000 (PSYC 100)	SOCI C1000 (SOC 100) or SOC 110	STAT C1000 (MATH 120) or PSYC/SOC 205 or BUS 204 or SOC 180
SDCCD (San Diego City, Mesa & Miramar)	BIOL 230	BIOL 235	BIOL 205	CHEM 100 & CHEM 100L or CHEM 152 & CHEM 152L	CHEM 103 or CHEM 130 & CHEM 130L	COMM C1000 (COMS 103)	ENGL C1000 (ENGL101) or ENGL 105	NUTR 150	PSYC C1000 (PSYC 101)	SOCO 101 or SOCO 110	STAT C1000 (MATH 119) or BUSE 115 or PSYC 258 or BIOL 200

Additional Math prerequisites accepted: College Algebra, Trigonometry, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Biostatistics

***GCCCCD:** Southwestern College will accept Grossmont College's BIO 144 & 145 to satisfy the Anatomy and Physiology requirements; **both** courses must be completed to satisfy the prerequisites. GCCCCD Math 120 or 125 not accepted for math prerequisite.

^ All science prerequisites must include an in-person lab component, meet 3.00 GPA, minimum of 4 semester units each, "C" grade or better, and seven-year recency. General/non-science prerequisites must meet minimum 2.75 GPA.

+ COMM: Per Dental Hygiene Board of CA, Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication courses not accepted. Substitutions will not be accepted.

All General Education must be completed prior to starting the program. All prerequisites must have a letter grade.

Check the [SWC DH Program website](#) for External Exam and CPL limitations or email swcdentalhygiene@swccd.edu.

Starting January 2026, the DH admissions process is a point system. Check the [SWC DH Admissions Process](#) webpage.