

CHAPTER VIII – DA I EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR DENTAL ASSISTING

ABHES does not programmatically accredit any dental assisting program, whether at a basic level or at a more advanced level of practice. However, as part of its accreditation of an institution, ABHES requires that each educational program offered by the institution separately demonstrate compliance with all applicable standards, including the specific evaluation standards of Chapter V. Accordingly, every Self-Evaluation Report (SER), institutional site visit, and Site Visitation Report evaluates each program individually against all ABHES accreditation standards. A program specialist is used to evaluate each individual program offered by an institution. Individual programs that do not demonstrate compliance with the standards, policies, and procedures set forth in the *Accreditation Manual* may be excluded from the institution's grant of accreditation or may cause the institution's accreditation to face adverse action.

ABHES may include either a basic level dental assisting program (identified as "Dental Assisting I"), a more expanded level dental assisting program (identified as "Dental Assisting II"), or both, within an institution's grant of accreditation. The practice of dental assisting has evolved so that in some areas of the country the broad field commonly referred to as "dental assisting" may now encompass more than one level of job functions and responsibilities. Consistent with the fact of the different levels of professional responsibility, ABHES recognizes that not all educational programs under the general rubric "dental assisting" have the same mission, but rather that some are intended to prepare graduates only for the more basic responsibilities while others are intended to prepare graduates for additional, greater levels of responsibility. Therefore, ABHES provides additional standards for the inclusion of a more expanded level dental assisting program ("Dental Assisting II").

An institution offering a dental assisting program demonstrates compliance with the evaluation standards contained in Chapters IV and V of the *Accreditation Manual*. If an institution seeks inclusion of a Dental Assisting II program within its grant of accreditation, then the institution in its request specifically identifies the program as such and demonstrates that the program complies with the standards of this Chapter VIII in addition to compliance with the evaluation standards of Chapters IV and V. The institution evidences that the "Dental Assisting II" program has as its mission the preparation of graduates with the knowledge and skills required for a dental assistant with expanded duties or an equivalent of that term recognized by the state regulatory agency for jurisdictions served by the institution, as applicable.

For purposes of this chapter, any program identified as "dental assisting" or any other name or designation that is reasonably understood by professionals in the field, students, or the public to have the same meaning complies with these standards. This chapter is equally applicable to any educational program offered by the institution that intends to prepare graduates for employment based on the knowledge and skills set forth in this chapter.

Many states have adopted specific requirements for education, experience or credentialing of dental assistants or of dental assistants with expanded functions or duties. ABHES accreditation of an institution offering a dental assisting or expanded dental assisting program means that the program has demonstrated compliance with the applicable ABHES standards. Institutions are responsible for knowing and abiding by applicable state requirements. Accreditation does not imply or guarantee that graduates necessarily meet the specific state eligibility requirements for credentialing, licensure or employment. An expanded dental assisting program that complies with ABHES requirements may not be comparable to state requirements for an expanded functions dental assisting program. Institutions are further responsible to be familiar with and to disclose to all prospective students all information related to graduates eligibility or credentialing, licensure and employment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSION

The **dental assistant** is trained in dentistry techniques and also performs general office duties, including a variety of patient care, office, and laboratory duties. Dental assistants work chairside as dentists examine and treat patients. Some duties may be performed under either general or direct supervision, as state dental laws provide.

Dental assistants acquire vital signs and dental and medical histories, prepare patients for examinations, treatments or surgical procedures, and work chairside as dentists examine and treat patients. They expose and develop dental radiographs, and prepare dental materials and injections.

Dental assistants possess a thorough knowledge of the equipment, supplies, instruments, and techniques required for every dental procedure, and proper disinfection and sterilization techniques for infection control. They sterilize and disinfect instruments and equipment, prepare trays of instruments for dental procedures, and instruct patients on postoperative and general oral health care. They apply topical anesthesia preoperatively if permitted by law, and understand the procedural steps necessary to successfully complete any dental procedure. During the procedure, dental assistants provide oral illumination, tissue retraction, and oral evacuation.

Dental assistants with laboratory duties make casts of the teeth and mouth from impressions, clean and polish removable appliances, and make temporary crowns. Dental assistants with office duties schedule and confirm appointments, receive patients, keep treatment records, send bills, receive payments, and order dental supplies and materials. Dental assistants should not be confused with dental hygienists, who are licensed to perform different clinical tasks. Only those procedures legally permitted to be performed will be taught to clinical competence; all other procedures will be taught to laboratory competence.

CREDENTIALING

Most states regulate the duties that dental assistants are allowed to perform through licensure or registration, which may require passing a written or practical examination. Licensure, certification, or registration is an acknowledgment of an assistant's qualifications and professional competence, and may be an asset when one is seeking employment. For annual recertification, individuals normally earn continuing education credits.

Individual states have adopted different standards for dental assistants who perform certain advanced duties, such as radiological procedures. Some states require completion of a state-approved course in radiology or advanced credentials from nationally-recognized credentialing agencies.

Curriculum, Competencies, Externship and/or Internal Clinical Experience

DAIA.1. *The depth and breadth of the program's curriculum enables graduates to acquire the knowledge and competencies necessary to become an entry-level professional in the dental assisting field.*

A. Clinical Sciences

Clinical science courses prepare the student for preclinical and clinical experiences. Students demonstrate competence in performance of the procedures that they will perform in the clinical setting. Competencies in the clinical skills listed below each subject area are attained by graduates for entry-level practice. Course development requires that learning strategies for these graduate competencies be imbedded throughout the curriculum to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Graduates will:

1. Employ crucial problem-solving skills for work-related problems.
2. Practice critical thinking to effect workplace solutions.
3. Promote practices for good health, and communicate these practices to patients.
4. Define “professional behavior,” and explain its importance for dental assisting practice.
5. Define the term “ethics,” and explain its importance for dental assisting practice.
6. List and describe potential ethical scenarios that may arise during dental assisting practice.
7. Comprehend and practice principles and procedures for patient safety.
8. Assess communication levels, lengths, and depths for specific audiences.
9. Assess the listener’s comprehension of the message conveyed.
10. Formulate written communications that utilize proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
11. Utilize listening skills and **behavioral observation** during the performance of the job.
12. Demonstrate verbal techniques that influence perception and enhance listening.
13. Describe and employ methods for bridging communication gaps for non-English speakers or those whose listening abilities are impaired.
14. Practice knowledge of interpersonal skills to enhance working relationships.
15. Exhibit an understanding of diversity (e.g., culture, religion, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability **or patients with special needs**, and economic status) and the ways that diversity influences **language and** communication.

B. Business Office Procedures

Course content prepares the graduate to manage telephone queries, appointments, supply inventory, insurance reimbursement, and office finances. In addition, the graduate operates computers and other office equipment, accesses the Internet, and constructs emails **for transmission of radiographic studies**.

Graduates will:

1. Handle office appointments in a professional manner.
2. Handle telephone queries in a professional manner.
3. Perform word processing on a computer.
4. Operate copiers, printers, and fax machines.
5. Access the Internet to assemble information.
6. Construct, send, and receive emails.
7. Identify and analyze patient confidentiality issues involving the collection and transmission of data.
8. Maintain inventory supply levels.

C. Infection and hazard control

Course content prepares the graduate to manage infection and hazard control procedures according to published OSHA-mandated professional guidelines.

Graduates will:

1. Comprehend and perform all relevant hand washing techniques.
2. Recognize the need for personal protective barriers, and perform their placement.
3. Recognize the need for surface barriers, and perform their placement.
4. Differentiate between sterilization and disinfection.

5. Understand and perform disinfection procedures and techniques.
6. Define ultrasonic cleaning and utilize ultrasound cleaning techniques
7. Utilize procedures for soaking of instruments.
8. Practice OSHA-approved techniques for hazardous waste management.
9. Perform gloving techniques according to established procedures.
10. Operate sterilizing equipment according to manufacturer's guidelines.
11. Assemble and prepare instruments for sterilization.
12. Utilize biological indicators to monitor autoclave effectiveness.
13. Handle all sharps (needles and blades) according to established procedures.

D. Clinical equipment function and maintenance

Course content prepares the graduate to operate and maintain dental equipment utilized in the clinical setting.

Graduates will:

1. Identify and control the various functions for dental equipment in a clinical setting.
2. Operate dental equipment according to manufacturer's guidelines and institutional policy.
3. Perform regular maintenance for dental equipment according to manufacturer's guidelines and institutional policy.

E. Ergonomics for the dental team

Course content prepares the graduate to understand ergonomic positioning of the dental team, and to prevent injury caused by repetitive motions. In addition, procedures for patient seating and dismissal, including those with special needs, are emphasized.

Graduates will:

1. Describe and understand the importance of ergonomic positioning for the dental team.
2. Utilize accepted techniques for prevention of repetitive motion injuries.
3. Seat and dismiss patients for dental procedures.
4. Appreciate the needs of patients with disabilities (**and other special needs**), and seat and dismiss them accordingly.

F. Medical/dental histories and vital signs

Course content prepares the graduate to assemble and record medical and dental histories, and understand their relevance to treatment and overall health care. Graduates are also prepared to obtain vital signs and understand differences between normal and abnormal readings.

Graduates will:

1. Assemble and record the medical and dental history of the patient.
2. Comprehend the relevance of medical and dental histories to treatment.
3. Obtain readings for body temperature, pulse rate, respiration rate, and blood pressure.
4. Assess and document the patient's level of pain.
5. Compare and contrast the normal readings of each of the vital signs, and understand deviations from the norm.
6. Notify the dentist of any deviation from the normal readings of any of the vital signs.

G. Instruments, tray set-ups, transfer methods

Course content prepares the graduate to handle dental instruments, and to understand **their functions** and parts. In addition, graduates are prepared **to transfer mixed materials**, select instruments for tray set-ups, and to utilize the various grasps for each instrument.

Graduates will:

1. Identify the name and parts of each dental instrument.
2. Recognize the function and use of each dental instrument.
3. Recognize and select the component parts of an instrument and its use.
4. Select instruments for a tray-set up for any given dental procedure.
5. Utilize the various grasps for all dental instruments.
6. Transfer of mixed materials and other items using four or six handed dentistry

H. Oral illumination

Course content prepares the graduate to comprehend the functions and operation of dental lights, and to position them for optimal illumination of the oral cavity during all chairside procedures.

Graduates will:

1. Understand the functions of dental lights.
2. Operate and maintain dental lights.
3. Position dental lights for optimal illumination of the oral cavity for all chairside procedures.

I. Tissue retraction and oral evacuation (as permissible by state law)

Course content prepares the graduate to retract tissue utilizing a high velocity suction, and to place the saliva ejector for maintenance of a dry field. In addition, graduates are prepared to protect patient's oral tissues and prevent aspiration of unwanted objects.

Graduates will:

1. **Understand and apply methods of tissue retraction, including retraction with a high velocity suction.**
2. Place the saliva ejector for maintenance of a dry field.
3. Recognize and assess the need for protection of the patient's oral tissues, and apply methods to prevent damage.
4. Identify the dangers of aspiration during dental procedures, and apply methods to prevent aspiration of unwanted objects.

J. Isolation methods

Course content prepares the graduate to place and remove dental dams and cotton rolls, and to assemble the armamentarium for dental dam placement. An understanding of the functions, uses, and necessities for dental dams and cotton rolls is emphasized.

Graduates will:

1. Comprehend and describe the functions and uses of dental dams.
2. Comprehend and describe the functions and uses of cotton rolls.
3. Define the term "armamentarium" as it applies to the practice of dentistry.

K. Chairside instrumentation for restorative procedures

Course content prepares the graduate to understand the functions and parts of restorative instruments, hand cutting instruments, burs, abrasion rotary instruments, and preset trays and tubs. In addition, the graduate is prepared to understand cavity nomenclature, and to prepare and remove caries prior to placing a restoration.

Graduates will:

1. List and describe the functions of various restorative instruments and their parts.
2. Describe and understand the function of all types of hand cutting instruments.
3. List and describe the names, numbers, and functions of burs.
4. Know and comprehend the function of abrasion rotary instruments.
5. Know and comprehend the function of preset trays and tubs.
6. Describe and understand cavity nomenclature.
7. Describe the steps necessary for removal of caries prior to placing a restoration

L. Dental charting

Course content prepares the graduate to understand cavity classifications and oral conditions using Universal, Federation Dentaire Internationale, and Palmer numbering systems. The graduate is able to use common abbreviations for cavities, dental charting terminology, and color indicators and charting symbols.

Graduates will:

1. Compare and contrast cavity classifications.
2. List and describe oral conditions using Universal, Federation Dentaire Internationale, and Palmer numbering systems and their charting
3. List and describe common abbreviations for simple, compound, and complex cavities
4. Employ appropriate terminology for basic dental charting.
5. List and describe color indicators and charting symbols.

M. Pain management

Course content prepares the graduate to recognize the patient's symptoms of pain and anxiety, and assist the dentist in their management. Injection sites, syringes, trays, and types of local anesthetics are covered, as are the various complications that can arise during anesthesia.

Graduates will:

1. Recognize and describe the symptoms associated with pain and anxiety.
2. Describe the methods for treatment of pain and anxiety during a chairside procedure.
3. Compare and contrast the types, indications, and contraindications of local anesthetics.
4. Describe the components and functions of the anesthetic syringe.
5. Assemble an anesthetic tray.

N. Patient management and care procedures

Course content prepares the graduate to prepare the patient for seating and dismissal, and present the patient with oral health and postoperative instructions. The graduate is also prepared to maintain accurate patient treatment records and perform their duties for emergencies.

Graduates will:

1. Prepare the patient for dental operator seating and dismissal.
2. Assess and recognize the indications for oral health instruction in accordance with state law, and instruct the patient when necessary.
3. Assess and recognize the indications for postoperative instructions, and administer to the patient when necessary.
4. Recognize the importance of accurate patient treatment record maintenance.
5. Explain the dental assistant's role for medical and dental emergencies.

O. Dentistry Ethics

Course content prepares the graduate to comprehend the legal and ethical aspects of dentistry practice, and to apply the professional responsibilities prescribed by the *American Dental Assistants' Association Principles and Ethics*.

Graduates will:

1. List and describe the legal aspects of dentistry.
2. Compare and contrast the ethical aspects of dentistry.
3. Describe the professional responsibilities as required in the *American Dental Assistants' Association Principles and Ethics*
4. Recognize and explain the signs that may compromise the dental assistant's ethics or professionalism.

P. Pre-Clinical Dental Assisting

Preclinical dental assisting is a fundamental course in dental assisting education, designed to provide a foundation for skills application. These curricular elements now focus on the practical application of specific skills necessary to perform as a professional dental assistant. Additional course content for pre-clinical dental assisting include ergonomics, illumination, armamentarium, and tissue retraction, which are covered in previous courses, but may be applied to this section.

Graduates will:

1. Understand and apply the techniques for four-handed or six-handed dentistry.
2. Explain the methods for oral evacuation and apply them.
3. Define the term "operator maintenance" as it applies to dentistry, and apply the methods necessary for achievement.

Q. Dental Sciences

Knowledge of dental sciences is integrated with dental materials, oral anatomy, infection control, and medical/dental emergencies. It is preferable that dental assisting students be concurrently enrolled in oral anatomy and introduction to dentistry during the presentation of the preclinical skills application.

1. Anatomy and Physiology of the Oral Cavity

Proper practice of dental assisting requires in-depth knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the oral cavity. In addition, an understanding of basic pathology requires knowledge of normal anatomy and physiology

2. Pharmacology of the Oral Cavity

Courses emphasize drugs relevant to the practice of dentistry.

3. Radiography of the Oral Cavity

Courses in radiography are designed to integrate theoretical and practical application of exposing and processing intra- and extra-oral radiographs. Graduates demonstrate knowledge of radiation safety measures and competency in producing radiographs in the laboratory on mannequins before they are allowed to take radiographs at clinical sites. Supervision and evaluation by faculty is essential for safety and proper instruction.

4. Microbiology

Courses in microbiology include basic principles of bacteriology, mycology, virology and immunology, with special emphasis on how they relate to the microbial flora of the oral cavity and to oral pathology. Concepts and methods of sterilization and disinfection are linked into concepts of Microbiology.

5. Nutrition

Courses in nutrition consist of concepts for diet assessment.

6. Pathology of the Oral Cavity

Pathology courses integrate both basic and clinical sciences and applies the knowledge gained to the recognition and understanding of deviation from normal.

*(a) **General Pathology:** the nature of disease, its causes, its processes, and its effects*

*(b) **Oral Pathology:** etiology, pathogenesis, identification, and management of diseases which affect the oral and maxillofacial regions. Basic knowledge in the above.*

*(c) **Environmental/Occupational Hazards:** any use or handling of tissue specimens that may be included as part of course or clinical instruction related to oral pathology follow recommended CDC and OSHA guidelines*

DAIA.2. An externship and/or internal clinical experience is required for completion of the program.

The following is considered in choosing, placing and maintaining externship site affiliations:

(a) Assignment

Externship sites include placement at a facility that performs various types of activities that will expose the student to the necessary skills required of the profession. Minimally the externship includes 160 clock hours. In all cases, the externship site used is properly approved and regulated.

Students may not be compensated while participating in externships and this fact is made known to the student.

(b) Activities

Students are oriented to the facility and the daily routine of the facility. They initially observe activities and procedures and then begin performing tasks and procedures. Students are monitored during externship to make sure that they are utilizing the skills they were taught.

A minimum of 60% of the time spent in the clinic or office is spent in assisting in general dentistry.

(c) Supervision

Programs clarify their role in how their students will be supervised, by whom and visited how often while at externship site. There is clear and documented communication between the program and the clinical externship site.

Students may not replace existing staff or be compensated while participating in externships and this fact is made known to the student. The student is clearly in addition to the staff/team and not a substitution.

(d) Requirements for Completion

Upon completion of the clinical externship, students demonstrate entry-level proficiency in all areas of the curriculum.

SECTION B – Program Supervision, Faculty, and Consultation

Subsection 1 – Supervision

DAI.B.1. The program supervisor possesses supervisory experience and is credentialed in the field.

A program supervisor:

- (a) Is a currently Certified or Registered Dental Assistant (CDA or RDA) or a licensed dentist, and is proficient in four-handed and/or six-handed dentistry principles.*
- (b) Has experience in the field*
- (c) Is sufficiently free from service and other non-educational duties to fulfill the educational and administrative requirements of the program.*

The responsibilities of the program supervisor include participation in:

- (a) Budget preparation*
- (b) Fiscal administration*
- (c) Curriculum development and coordination*
- (d) Selection and recommendation of individuals for faculty appointment and promotion*
- (e) Supervision and evaluation of faculty*
- (f) Determining faculty teaching assignments*
- (g) Determining admissions criteria and procedures*
- (h) Planning and operating program facilities*
- (i) Selection of extramural facilities and coordination of instruction in the facilities.*
- (j) Assessment of facilities and equipment periodically in relation to current concepts of dental assisting and recommends appropriate modifications*

Subsection 2 – Faculty and Consultation

- DAI.B.2.a.** *Faculty formal education/training and experience support the goals of the program.*
- (a) *Preclinical faculty members are Certified Dental Assistants or Registered Dental Assistants (CDA or RDA), licensed by the state, as required, and possess current knowledge and experience in dental assisting. Faculty is proficient in didactic and clinical four-handed and/or six-handed dentistry. Faculty members who are dentists are not required to hold the CDA or RDA credential.*
 - (b) *The institution ensures faculty is experienced in educational methods, testing, and evaluation.*
 - (c) *Faculty is aware of state requirements governing dental assisting programs, as applicable.*
- DAI.B.2.b.** *Faculty size/numbers support the goals of the program.*
There is an adequate number of faculty to support student needs, including tutorial support.
- DAI.B.2.c.** *A program is served by an individual consultant or advisory board of program related specialists to assist administration and faculty in fulfilling stated educational objectives.*

SECTION C – Educational Facilities and Resources

- DAI.C.1.a.** *The institution’s laboratory facilities are well stocked, sufficient in size, maintained, and include the following:*
- (a) *Student stations suitable to number of students*
 - (b) *Lighting, electrical outlets, ventilation and storage space*
 - (c) *Adequate lighting, electrical outlets, and storage space*
 - (d) *Adjustable chair*
 - (e) *Sinks and plaster control devices*
 - (f) *Adequate ventilation*
 - (g) *Sufficient number of lathes, model trimmers, and vibrators for proper instruction*
 - (h) *Sufficient variety of quality dental materials*
 - (i) *Power operated chairs*
 - (j) *Air and water syringes*
 - (k) *Dental units and mobile stools*
 - (l) *Adjustable dental light*
 - (m) *High and low speed handpieces*
 - (n) *Oral evacuating equipment*
 - (o) *Work surface for the assistant*
 - (p) *Sterilizing equipment and area for preparing, sterilizing, and storing instruments*
 - (q) *Dental radiography units that meet applicable regulations*
 - (r) *Teaching mannequins*
 - (s) *Sufficient number of view boxes and film-holding devices to accommodate several students*
 - (t) *Film developing devices or darkroom*
- DAI.C.1.b.** *Equipment and instruments are available within the institution’s laboratory facility to achieve the program’s goals and objectives. Instruments include, but are not limited to, the following types:*
- (a) *Diagnostic*
 - (b) *Surgical*

- (c) Operative*
- (d) Periodontal*
- (e) Orthodontic*
- (f) Endodontic*
- (g) Pediatric*
- (h) Prosthodontics (removable and fixed)*

Supplies, equipment, and instrumentation for laboratory instruction reflects actual clinical experiences

DAI.C.1.c. The institution's laboratory facilities are readily available for students to develop required skills with faculty supervision.

Radiography facilities are available for students to develop required skills with faculty supervision. Each is sufficient to accommodate instruction and practice in exposing and processing radiographs. Student to radiography machine ratio does not exceed 5:1.

DAI.C.1.d Clinical treatment areas are sufficient in size to accommodate an operator, patient, student, and faculty member during instruction.

DAI.C.1.e. Infectious disease and radiation management policies are provided to all students, faculty, and appropriate support staff and continuously monitored for compliance.

Programs document compliance with institutional policy and applicable local, state, and federal regulations that include, but are not limited to hazardous materials and blood borne and infectious diseases. Additionally, policies on blood borne and infectious diseases are made available to applicants for admission and patients. Radiation protection and monitoring devices are available for each student.

DAI.D.1. Adequate lecture classrooms exist with a chair and desk for each student.