

Graduate Dental Hygiene Program Aims and Outcomes

(As Approved by the 2021 ADEA House of Delegates)

Note: This document was developed as a collaboration between the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA).

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Preamble

Graduate education in dental hygiene is imperative to develop a cadre of dental hygiene specialists who advance the profession, assume leadership roles in health care and education, elevate the profile of dental hygiene on multidisciplinary teams, and develop scholars who generate and disseminate knowledge. Dental hygiene graduate education should be multifaceted, composed of theory and practical application, and be based on a body of knowledge specific to the discipline of dental hygiene and the roles of the dental hygienist. In addition, a master's degree program in dental hygiene must meet the diverse needs and interests of the profession and its students, as well as prepare graduates to meet the complex oral health needs of a diverse population. To that end, this definition of a master's-level dental hygienist was created as a foundation for master's level curricula.

A master's-level dental hygienist is a member of a multidisciplinary health care team who approaches the holistic care of patients from a foundation of evidence-based knowledge and theory. Advanced education and a higher level of mastery prepares the graduate to assume positions in academia, health care organizations, public health, government, research, corporate and dental insurance arenas. Graduates conduct translational research to improve teaching and practice, the health care industry, and oral health care delivery models. This professional is a transformational leader and advocate who drives change in the health care delivery system. Graduates are prepared for doctoral level education.

The former core competencies of graduate education were developed in 2011 by ADEA and ADHA. The current revisions reflect contemporary practice and current state, national, and global changes in the health care environment. Societal needs, scientific knowledge, and the role of the dental hygienist necessitate a rebranding of the profession, moving dental hygiene into multidisciplinary sectors. This necessitates a shift from the concept of core competencies to a framework of key broad aims and outcomes that integrate with the mission and vision of diverse graduate dental hygiene programs. The table identifies focus areas for advanced education in dental hygiene with specific aims and learning outcomes for graduates in master's- and doctoral-level programs. The inclusion of doctoral-level learning outcomes demonstrates the desire to establish doctoral education in dental hygiene and can serve as a framework for those programs who wish to develop a doctoral curriculum.

The focus areas and resulting aims depict a high level of specialized knowledge, current technology, clinical competence and professional behaviors necessary for the provision of care to patients and to promote the integration of dental hygienists as valuable contributors within our health care system. The aims recognize the responsibilities dental hygienists have in light of social justice issues, and assert they are well positioned to influence solutions aimed at reducing health disparities and improving health care delivery. The aims also recognize the need to cultivate leaders who participate in the creation and testing of new delivery models and oral health interventions aimed at preventing and managing oral diseases. Therefore, graduate education must socialize students to a research culture so they engage in scholarly pursuits. Finally, the aims recognize the need for graduate dental hygiene education to prepare educators, colleagues, administrators, and role models. This supports the creation of a cadre of competent faculty, and addresses program succession planning. The further development of

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professionalism is inherent in advanced dental hygiene education. Graduate education in dental hygiene cultivates professional identity, honing leadership skills, and embodying professional characteristics and values that enhance personal and professional growth while enhancing one's analytical and communication skills with evidence to connect theory to practice.

The intent of this document is to serve as a guide and support the educational quality of existing, developing, and future graduate education programs. The document provides a foundation for all graduate-level dental hygiene programs irrespective of areas of emphasis; for example, administration/management, advanced clinical practice, community health, oral health sciences, teaching/education, and/or research. The aims and learning outcomes for dental hygiene graduate education can be used as a framework and resource for programs to build curricula aligning with their program's mission and vision, while establishing a distinction among dental hygienists with the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degrees. Each focus area need not be a specific course within the curriculum. Threaded through multiple aims are themes related to critical thinking, lifelong learning, communication, collaboration, advocacy, evidence-based decision-making and ethics.

A dental hygienist with a Master's Degree specializing in Dental Hygiene:

A member of a multidisciplinary health care team who approaches the holistic care of patients from a foundation of evidence-based knowledge and theory. Advanced education and a higher level of mastery prepares the graduate to assume positions in academia, health care organizations, public health, government, research, and corporate and dental insurance arenas. Graduates independently conduct translational research to improve teaching and evidence-based practice, the health care industry, and oral health care delivery models. This professional is a transformational leader and advocate who drives change in the health care delivery system. Graduates are prepared for doctoral-level education.

Focus Area	Aim	Master's Outcomes	Doctoral Outcomes
Health Care Policy, Advocacy & Delivery	Evaluate health policy.	Identify public policy processes (legislative and regulatory) that influence health priorities and health care education.	Develop policy and regulatory practices that improve the professional practice of dental hygiene.
		Defend a solution to a problem that supports oral health and the oral-systemic link.	
		Analyze health policy initiatives and fiscal implications.	
	Improve the health care delivery system.	Integrate social determinants of health to improve health care access and delivery.	Evaluate the effectiveness of risk reduction and health promotion programs.
		Employ program development principles as a leader, advocate, manager, or administrator to improve health care delivery.	
		Create workforce planning models to support community-focused interventions that prevent and control oral diseases and reduce health disparities.	Implement workforce planning models and assess their effectiveness in preventing and controlling oral diseases and reducing health disparities.

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Focus Area	Aim	Master's Outcomes	Doctoral Outcomes
		Propose policy changes that promote health in diverse populations.	Assess the effectiveness of policy changes designed to promote health in diverse populations.
		Apply health informatics and current technologies to improve health care delivery and outcomes.	
	Participate in advocacy efforts.	Identify advocacy needs of vulnerable populations and communities and within the profession.	
Interprofessional Collaboration & Integrated Care	Integrate dental hygiene into multidisciplinary teams.	Establish partnerships to enhance health care and education.	Lead health care teams to deliver person-centered care.
		Design health care teams to deliver person-centered services.	
		Promote the medical/dental integration model.	
Access, Diversity & Inclusion	Integrate cultural competency and inclusion in all professional endeavors.	Provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care that is responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs, preferred language and health literacy	Develop policy and procedures to improve person-centered care in dental hygiene.
		Recognize one's implicit bias and how it impacts actions, decisions and social justice.	Integrate cultural humility, diversity and inclusion in research, teaching, service, advocacy, policy, administration, and public health.
		Promote diversity and inclusion in research, teaching, service, advocacy, policy, administration, and public health.	

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Focus Area	Aim	Master's Outcomes	Doctoral Outcomes
Scholarship & Research	Increase the dental hygiene body of knowledge through original research.	Conduct original research that supports the National Dental Hygiene Research Agenda.	Conduct dissertation research related to a systematic review.
			Conduct dissertation research that creates or validates a theoretical model.
			Conduct dissertation research that translates into policy or practice.
		Disseminate research findings through professional venues.	Disseminate research findings through publication and presentation.
Education	Model service, scholarship, and teaching to create a cadre of accomplished dental hygiene educators.	Apply learning theory in course development and instruction.	
		Use evidence-based educational methodologies for clinical, didactic, laboratory, and online learning environments.	
		Apply principles of curriculum development and program administration.	
		Fulfill the roles of the educator in an academic setting.	Advance skills in teaching, service, and scholarship.
		Apply strategies for mentoring and team building with students and colleagues.	Mentor students in program administration, curriculum design, and curriculum review.

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Focus Area	Aim	Master's Outcomes	Doctoral Outcomes
Leadership	Create change through leadership development.	Implement leadership models and applications to enhance innovation and change within health care, education.	Fulfill leadership positions within health care, education, and professional associations.
		Recognize leadership potential through active participation in professional associations.	
		Employ leadership skill sets to create and lead effective, collaborative teams.	Engage in service activities and professional association involvement to advance the profession.