



# Dental Hygiene Program Essential Functions

## Mission Statement

The Department of Dental Hygiene is committed to ensure an educational program of excellence to its students. The Department further pledges to provide the ongoing oral health care to all populations, especially to those underserved through community service with regard to cultural diversity. We pledge to continue the promotion of Dental Hygiene as a profession; and promotion of research and life-long learning.

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The Dental Hygiene Program is committed to helping students who enter clinical courses and programs at Tennessee State University to have every opportunity to succeed in those endeavors. Academic entry-level standards are completed by the requirement to meet technical standards. Technical Standards are the essential qualities and abilities needed by each student if they are to maximize their potential for success both in the academic classroom and in clinical settings. Ability to meet these Technical Standards for the Program is required for successful acclimation into the profession and these standards must be maintained throughout the student's enrollment in The Dental Hygiene programs at Tennessee State University. In the event a student is unable to maintain these standards, with or without accommodation, the student may be required to withdraw from the course or program.

In keeping with applicable federal and state law regarding disabilities, Tennessee State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in order to enable them in performing successfully the skills necessary for a student in the Dental Hygiene Program.

## Essential Functions

The following are the essential functions or technical skills which are expected of a student accepted in the Dental Hygiene Program at Tennessee State University. Although it is expected that students will continue to develop and improve these abilities, those listed below are the minimal expectation for entry-level students.

### Visual Acuity

The practice of clinical dental hygiene requires that the student possess fine motor skills to hold small dental instruments while working within the limited confines of the oral cavity. Depth perception and excellent hand eye coordination are required when using sharp instruments to enter the oral cavity and perform functions within the oral cavity.

### Hearing

Students must have correctable hearing in at least one ear and be able to develop reasonable skills of percussion and auscultation. Sensory and motor innervation of the hand and arm muscles must be intact and functioning normally as fine motor and tactile skills are an essential component of this profession.

**Motor Skills**

Students must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from a patient by palpation and other diagnostic modalities. Candidates must also be able to perform the motor movement skills necessary to render clinical dental hygiene treatment. Additionally, the candidate must possess the strength to assist a patient in transferring themselves to and from a dental chair. Fine motor skills are expected of every student. The candidate should have full manual dexterity including the functioning of both arms, both wrists, both hands, both thumbs, and all fingers on each hand. Necessary clinical skills involve procedures requiring (but not limited to) grasping, fingering, pinching, pushing, pulling, holding, extending, and rotation.

**Intellectual, Conceptual and Cognitive Skills**

Students must have the ability to measure, assess, calculate reason, analyze, and synthesize data. Problem solving, critical thinking and diagnosis (which include obtaining, interpreting, and documenting information) are essential skills. The ability to understand and comprehend multi-dimensional relationships is necessary.

**Communication Skills / Speech**

The student is expected to be able to communicate clearly in English at a level of understanding appropriate to the ability of an individual patient to understand. This communication ability is expected both in the oral and written form. The clinical practice of dental hygiene requires the ability to accurately transfer gathered data into a patient record. Included in this area is therapeutic communication in which a candidate is expected to have (or be able to develop) skill in coaching, facilitating, and touching.

**Emotional Stability/ Personal Temperament**

Direct interaction with patients requires that students are able to routinely demonstrate critical thinking, respond calmly, evenly and efficiently, and utilize good listening and communication skills. Students must have the ability to handle the stressors of academically rigorous coursework, as well as stress associated with working in a busy clinical setting with a variety of patients under time and patient management constraints. Time management skills are needed to meet deadlines and time critical tasks associated with professional education and practice. Prioritizing tasks to meet deadlines is expected. Compliance with clinical and workplace rules and regulations related to successful and safe clinical practice is required. The student must possess and demonstrate professional attributes and appearance.

**Cognitive Abilities** are those tied to thinking skills and include such areas as focusing, organizing, recording, evaluating, communicating, and applying. The following are the expectations of the Dental Hygiene Program

- Comprehend, integrate, and synthesize a large body of information/knowledge in a short time.
- Analyze complex problems.
- Reflect on academic and classroom performance accurately, and identify and implement remedies for improvement.
- Reflect on classroom and academic performance of others entrusted to their charge and accurately identify problems, pose and implement remedies for improvement.
- Utilize appropriate and effective spoken, written, and non-verbal communication. Students must be able to understand and speak the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice.

**Affective Abilities** are those tied to social and emotional skills including interaction with others and ethical beliefs that are consistent with those who work with, and are role models for young people. The following are the expectations of the Dental Hygiene Program.

- Demonstrate a collaborative work ethic.
- Demonstrate an appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in fellow students, colleagues, staff, host teachers, and learners entrusted to them during their field experiences.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the safety of their fellow students, themselves, colleagues, staff, host teachers, and learners entrusted to them during their field experiences.

- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately handle situations that may be emotionally, physically, or intellectually stressful.
- Demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in academic and clinical classroom situations.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, initiative, responsibility, and professionalism.
- Maintain confidentiality of information consistent with work in academic and clinical classroom situations including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Demonstrate self-reflection and responsiveness to professional feedback.

**Observation Skills** are those skills, which help maintain awareness of people and situations in the context of classrooms, laboratories, and field situations. The following are the expectations of the Dental Hygiene Program.

- Observe the appropriate level of students' abilities and behaviors accurately during clinical classroom observations, instructional opportunities, and field placements.
- Read, comprehend, and interpret information accurately from diagnostic tests, equipment and records of clinical classroom students.

**Psychomotor Skills** are those physical skills needed to carry out the activities required of a student in education courses and programs. The following are the expectations of the Dental Hygiene Program.

- Attend lecture and laboratory classes and access laboratories, classrooms, and workstations.
- Attend field placements in assignment locations throughout the State of Tennessee.
- Accomplish required tasks in academic and field placement settings.
- Use fine motor skills to accurately and efficiently manipulate equipment for instruction, assessment, and management of clinical classroom students.

Admission to the Dental Hygiene Program is contingent on students' confirmation that they understand these Essential Functions and believe they can meet them either with or without accommodations. If a student has a disability that he/she feels may require accommodations to perform any of the tasks identified as essential to education program, it is the student's responsibility to inform the Student Disability Office so appropriate steps can be taken to accommodate the student's needs.

**Tennessee State University  
Department of Dental Hygiene**

**Essential Functions for Dental Hygiene Students**

Dental Hygiene **APPLICANTS** must possess the following abilities and skills:

- Visual Acuity - Ability to determine small areas of detail, color discrimination and adequate depth perception in a clinical situation.
- Speech - Ability to clearly communicate in English with colleagues, patients, faculty and staff in classroom and clinical setting.
- Hearing – Ability to adapt with assistive devices to perform the essential functions of the Dental Hygiene profession.
- Tactile Sensitivity – Ability to employ gross and fine motor skills
- Writing – Ability to communicate effectively in the written form in English.
- Reading – Ability to read, comprehend and follow directions printed in English.
- Manual Dexterity – Ability to use hands with instruments and equipment in a coordinated manner.
- Motor Capacity – Ability to maneuver in laboratory and clinical areas around equipment during patient care procedures.

I have read this document and I am able to function according to the above stated functions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*I have read this document and there are some functions for which I will need accommodations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**\*Student will request reasonable accommodation through TSU's Office of Student Disability located on the 1<sup>st</sup>.  
floor of the Campus Center.**