What is dentistry all about? Not just teeth, but all the oral and maxillofacial tissues – and it is increasingly being recognised that good oral health is important for good general health.

Dentists prevent oral diseases and diagnose and treat oral conditions. Dentists have many roles; they may have a family-based general dental practice, they may specialise in high-tech areas such as implants and restorative procedures, and they may work with medically- or socially-disadvantaged patients.

Dentistry is the art and science of the maintenance of all aspects of oral health and function for all people in our community.

“The BDS course encompasses so much. It is hugely practical and perfect for those people who love doing things as well as throwing out interesting academic challenges.”

Sam Smith
Bachelor of Dental Surgery
Why study dentistry?

Dentistry is a challenging profession that combines a high degree of manual dexterity and precision with a thorough understanding of craniofacial biology and pathology, and excellent communication skills. The dentist is the leader of the oral health team and can diagnose and carry out treatment planned to each patient's oral needs.

If you are considering a career as a dentist, you should be prepared for lifelong learning to maintain your practising standards.

As a graduate there are opportunities for full- or part-time work in New Zealand or overseas; and opportunities include private general or specialist practice, academic careers, or hospital- or defence-based practice.

Dentistry teaches you:

- The scientific foundations in anatomy, physiology and oral biology.
- About public health dentistry and how to develop your communication skills.
- Clinical skills, first in simulation classes in the Faculty's cutting-edge simulation laboratory, and then in patient sessions.
- About a wide range of clinical dental disciplines including prosthodontics and clinical cariology, endodontics, periodontics, paediatric dentistry, orthodontics, oral medicine, oral surgery, oral pathology and special needs dentistry.

What will I study?

After selection from Health Sciences First Year (HSFY), or from other entry categories, you commence studies in second-year Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). There are three themes that run through the entire course.

In second year, the largest theme is Biomedical Sciences, which lays the scientific foundations in anatomy, physiology and oral biology for the introductory clinical work you will undertake in the second theme, the Dentist and the Patient.

In the third theme, the Dentist and the Community, you will learn about public health dentistry and about how to further develop your communication skills.

In third and fourth year, the Dentist and the Patient is a major component of the curriculum. Here you will develop your clinical skills, initially in simulation sessions in our state-of-the-art simulation laboratory and then in patient sessions.

You will cover a wide range of clinical dental disciplines including prosthodontics and clinical cariology, endodontics, periodontics, paediatric dentistry, orthodontics, oral medicine, oral surgery, oral pathology and special needs dentistry.

To underpin your increasing clinical experience, the biomedical sciences papers will cover general and oral pathology, growth and development, medicine, surgery and therapeutics. In the Dentist and the Community, you will explore epidemiology and determinants of oral health and culture, and ethnicity and oral health.

In fifth year, you will consolidate your clinical experience and undertake a research project, either in Dunedin, elsewhere in New Zealand, or overseas.

Background required

There are no subject requirements for entry into the HSFY programme, but we strongly recommend you take chemistry, physics and biology at Year 13.

HSFY must be your first year of university study. If you are considering tertiary study before enrolling, you are strongly advised to contact the Health Sciences Admissions Office beforehand.

Admission to the programme

Admission to dentistry is very competitive. The majority of places are offered to students who have completed the HSFY programme at the University of Otago. High grades are required and no compulsory paper can be less than a B-.

Applications are also considered in the Graduate, and Alternative categories. In all cases, you must have completed the HSFY papers or approved alternatives with the required grades.

A small number of places are available for international students who return to their home country after graduating. Applicants may also apply via the Mirror on Society subcategories which are outlined in the Guidelines for Admission.

Want to know more about admission to dentistry?

Application information for admission into dentistry and other health sciences programmes is available online: [otago.ac.nz/healthsciences](otago.ac.nz/healthsciences)

International applications

If you are not a New Zealand or Australian citizen, or permanent resident, you can obtain information from the University's International Office: [otago.ac.nz/international/undergraduate](otago.ac.nz/international/undergraduate)

For questions about Dentistry

[otago.ac.nz/dentistry](otago.ac.nz/dentistry)