Answers to Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Advanced Dental Admission Test (ADAT) are provided below:

What is the Advanced Dental Admission Test?

The Advanced Dental Admission Test (ADAT):

- is designed to evaluate critical thinking skills and preparedness for advanced dental education programs.
- is a professionally developed, content valid examination containing questions written by dental subject matter experts.
- is a norm referenced computer-based examination designed to provide advanced dental education programs with insight into applicants' potential for success in their programs.
- provides the ability to quantitatively assess the strongest program applicants using a nationally standardized and reliable examination.
- can be used in conjunction with other assessment tools to help inform program admission decisions.

What is the purpose of the ADAT?

The purpose of the ADAT is to provide an assessment instrument to allow advanced dental education program directors to rank applicants according to their potential for success using a standardized test.

The American Dental Association determined the need for the ADAT from research indicating advanced dental education programs sought an instrument to differentiate applicants. A survey created by Fagin, Howell, Da Silva, and Park indicated 71% of program directors who responded said it was more difficult to select interview candidates since many dental schools no longer provide grade point averages (GPA) and instead report grades as pass/fail. In addition, as of January 2012, the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE) no longer reports numeric scores for candidates who pass the National Board Dental Examination (NBDE) Part I and Part II examinations.

In May 2014, the Council on Dental Education and Licensure endorsed the creation of the ADAT.

For additional information on “Utilization of ADAT Results in Admission Decisions,” please download Using the Advanced Dental Admission Test (ADAT) for Admission Purposes: A Guide for Advanced Dental Education Programs (PDF).

What is the difference between the ADAT and the National Board Dental Examinations?

The ADAT assesses the higher-level critical thinking skills of applicants applying for advanced dental education programs and provides numeric scores useful in ranking candidates for
admission, while the NBDE Part I and Part II are pass/fail examinations used to determine candidates’ competency for dental licensure. The NBDE examinations assess candidates’ ability to understand the basic sciences and apply the knowledge in a problem-solving context.

Why should I take the ADAT?

The ADAT is designed to serve as a predictive measure of a candidate’s chances for success in an advanced dental education program. As such, it will provide advanced dental education programs with a valid tool to differentiate between applicants.

Advanced dental education programs have been selecting students without the use of the ADAT for years, so why is this test needed now?

Advanced dental education program directors have indicated that it is difficult to assess applicants since the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations discontinued reporting numeric National Board scores. Additionally, some dental schools have transitioned to pass/fail grades, thereby limiting the options for assessment tools.

If advanced program directors want a numerically scored examination, why can’t the scores from the NBDE be used as they were in the past?

The National Board examinations measures minimum competency (criterion referenced assessment) while the ADAT measures performance of candidates to other candidates (norm referenced assessment). The National Boards and the ADAT do not assess the same characteristics.

How is the content of the ADAT different from the NBDE, or what is not assessed by the Part I and Part II examinations?

The content between the two tests are similar because they assess biomedical and clinical sciences. The item difficulty (examination questions) on the ADAT are higher because it is designed to distinguish between the best of the best. The National Boards are designed to measure minimum competency and therefore has a lower item difficulty.

How is the content of the ADAT different from that of the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) examinations currently used by many advanced dental programs?

The content on the ADAT assesses biomedical sciences and dental sciences; the NBME is designed to assess the medical sciences.

Some experts have suggested advanced dental education programs should avoid selecting candidates based on test scores. How will this test assist the advanced dental education programs in their selection process?

The ADAT is specifically designed to assess a candidate’s likelihood for success in an advanced dental education program. The test is a norm-referenced assessment tool and will allow programs to compare one candidate against another and to identify the best of the best.

How can the first-year results of the ADAT be valid, since there is no prior data?

Use of the ADAT is supported based on content validity evidence. ADAT items were written by
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dental subject matter experts, and other subject matter experts whose qualifications matched needs dictated by the test specifications. ADAT Test Construction Committee (TCC) members receive extensive training on how to develop valid and reliable items. This includes training on fairness and sensitivity considerations in item writing. Additionally, window testing and delayed scoring/results reporting are employed in 2016, so that psychometric analyses can identify and address any detected issues with test questions and how the examination performs. Through window testing and the delayed reporting of official scores, candidate data will be available on all test items administered before items are actually used in official scoring. Any non-performing items that are identified will be eliminated prior to official scoring and reporting.

Why is the history of results presented to schools, and not just the most recent results?

Security issues are a consideration in allowing a candidate to test for practice or to obtain advance review of the content. Candidates should take each testing attempt seriously and advanced dental education programs should consider the most recent test attempt to be the best indicator of a candidate’s current abilities.

Why was this test developed so quickly?

Advanced program directors expressed the need for a quantitative tool to assess applicants as soon as possible. The timeline for the development of the ADAT followed industry standard procedures to create a reliable and valid testing instrument.

How important will this test be to the dental schools? Will it determine whether I can specialize?

Admission decisions are the purview of the advanced dental education program and use of the ADAT in the admission decision will be determined by each individual advanced dental education program.

Medical schools use board scores to evaluate candidates for admission, so why can’t advance dental programs use the NBDE scores?

The National Board examinations measures minimum competency (criterion referenced assessment) while the ADAT measures performance of candidates to other candidates (norm referenced assessment). The National Boards and the ADAT do not assess the same characteristics.

Some programs I’m applying to say either the NBDE or the ADAT is required. If I don’t take the ADAT, will my chances of admission be reduced?

Admission decisions are the purview of the advanced dental education program and use of the ADAT in the admission decision will be determined by each individual advanced dental education program. Please discuss with each individual program.

Why doesn’t the ADA just release scores for the National Boards?

The National Board Dental examinations are designed to measure whether or not a candidate possesses the basic knowledge necessary to safely practice dentistry. As such, it is calibrated to differentiate between candidates at the bottom of a standard Bell Curve. The NBDEs have not been validated for differentiating between top-performing candidates.

Also, the NBDEs are criterion-referenced assessments; meaning that candidates are measured
against a pre-determined minimum standard. The ADAT is a norm-referenced assessment; meaning that candidate scores are based on how they perform in relation to other candidates.

Why doesn’t the NBDE release test scores from Part I to students so they know how they did on the test?

The National Board examinations determine whether a candidate has met the minimum cognitive standard to practice dentistry safely. A numerical score does not change that standard.

The program I want to attend requires the MCAT, not the ADAT, so should I take both examinations?

Admission decisions are the purview of the advanced dental education program and use of the ADAT in the admission decision will be determined by each individual advanced dental education program. Please discuss with each individual program.

What are the ADAT’s content areas?

The ADAT is designed to assess candidates’ critical thinking skills in biomedical sciences, clinical sciences, data, and research interpretation & evidence based dentistry, as well as their knowledge and skills with respect to the principles of ethics and patient management. The ADAT assesses higher level cognitive skills, requiring candidates to solve complex problems.

The areas to be measured within the ADAT were preliminarily identified through review and analysis of the findings of an Advanced Dental Admission Test Task Force Report submitted to the ADA House of Delegates in September 2010. This report included findings from a survey on the evaluation and selection of applicants for positions in advanced dental education programs. This survey was conducted as part of the ADEA Future of Advanced Dental Education Admissions (ADEA/FADEA) project.

How many items will be on the test and how long is the test?

The test includes 200 multiple choice items. It will be administered in a half-day format (approximately 4 ½ hours). The number of items per subject covered on the ADAT is provided in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Items per Subject</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data, Research Interpretation, and Evidence Based Dentistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles of Ethics and Patient Management</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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How often and when will the ADAT be administered?

The ADAT is a computer-based test and will be administered by Pearson VUE at test centers throughout the United States, Canada and the U.S. territories (including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). In its pilot year (2016), ADAT administrations will be conducted from May 16 through August 31, 2016. Test administration is expected to take place during the months of April through July in 2017 and subsequent years.

How will results be reported?

ADAT scores will be reported for the following six scales:

- ADAT Score: an overall score that is computed based on performance on all ADAT items
- Critical Thinking
- Principles of Ethics and Patient Management
- Biomedical Sciences
- Clinical Sciences
- Data and Research Interpretation.

Scores will be reported as scale scores ranging from 200 and 800, with a target mean of 500 and a target standard deviation of 100. Scores will be reported in increments of 10.

The number of correct responses will NOT be reported. Examinees will NOT receive immediate feedback concerning their test results.

Scores will be reported to the programs selected by the candidate at the time of application. Additionally, if a candidate requests their scores be sent to any advanced dental education program, their scores will also be made available to American Dental Education Association Postdoctoral Application Support Service (ADEA PASS) and distributed to all programs that participate in ADEA PASS.

ADAT scores will be reported to ADEA PASS, and made available to the advanced dental education programs through DTS Hub, an online score reporting portal developed by the ADA.

After the 2016 test administration period, the ADAT program expects to provide overall normative tables as a reference in understanding the skills of those who tested in a given year, and how candidates’ scores compared to others.

Once a candidate has taken any part of the ADAT, the scores cannot be voided at the candidate’s request. If candidates retest, a complete history of testing attempts is reported.

Preliminary Scores from 2016 Test Administrations

Preliminary scores from the first test administration period will be considered unofficial. Candidates and programs will receive information concerning candidates’ percentile standing in each of the following areas:

- Biomedical Sciences
- Clinical Sciences
Percentiles describe how a candidate performed relative to other test-takers in a norm group. Percentiles can be interpreted as the percentage of test-takers in the norm group who scored at or below the candidate’s score. Candidates and programs should expect that candidates’ percentile standing will change as more individuals complete the ADAT. Similarly, the preliminary results reported to candidates and programs will also change after subsequent testing administrations.

Candidates can monitor changes by reviewing the “My Account” area of their DENTPIN® accounts. This area will contain candidates’ most recently reported results; any previous percentiles reported will be replaced with the newest information. When official results are reported, candidate scale scores will completely replace the preliminary percentiles reported in My Account. Programs will be provided with candidate percentile performance relative to the indicated norm group. Results will be provided electronically to all programs selected by the candidate. Additionally, if a candidate requests their results be sent to any advanced dental education program, their results will also be made available to ADEA PASS and distributed to all programs that participate in ADEA PASS.

During the preliminary test administration period, score results will be provided as described in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRELIMINARY SCORE RESULTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Administration Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1, 2016 to July 31, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1, 2016 to August 31, 2016</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFICIAL SCORE RESULTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Administration Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 16, 2016 to August 31, 2016</td>
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</table>
Why doesn’t the ADAT just report percentiles?

Percentiles describe how a candidate performed relative to other test-takers in a norm group. Accordingly, a candidate’s percentile standing can shift up or down as the norm group changes, even though his or her performance on the examination remains the same. Furthermore, differences in percentile standing do not communicate the amount of difference between candidates in their underlying skills. For example, assuming the data are normally distributed, a five percent (5%) difference in percentile standing can correspond to a small difference in skills for candidates who fall in the middle of the distribution (e.g., 50th percentile), but a large difference in skills for candidates scoring in the tails of a distribution (e.g., 95th percentile).

For the reasons described above, ADAT official results are provided in scale scores, which do not change with a changing norm group, and which allow users to understand the amount of difference between candidates in terms of their underlying skills.

Why not tell programs to collect the data in the first year, but not use results to make decisions?

The ADA User’s Guide encourages advanced dental education programs to use ADAT scores to differentiate between applicants, but discourages programs from automatically disqualifying an applicant because they did not attain a particular ADAT score.

How will each program use ADAT results in 2016?

The advanced dental education programs were asked to indicate how they intend to use the ADAT results in 2016 (require, accept, or not accept). The ADAT participation tracker on www.ada.org/adat provides a list of programs that provided responses on how they intend to use ADAT results.

A program I am interested in does not appear in the program tracker spreadsheet. What should I do?

Contact that program directly regarding their intended use of the ADAT.

During what year should I take the ADAT, and how many years can the scores be used?

Your dental school can help you determine when best to take the ADAT based on your curriculum and your strengths and weaknesses.

Scores are a valid reflection of the candidate’s abilities for two years. Beyond that time the results may not reflect the current abilities of the candidate.

What is the best way to study and prepare for this exam? How am I supposed to study for this when there are no review courses available?

Candidates should review the ADAT Test Specifications for a detailed outline of the test content. Additionally, you should consult with your dental school faculty regarding your curriculum preparation in relationship to your strengths and weaknesses. An ADAT practice test (100 questions) and a list of reference texts have been posted on www.ada.org/adat.

What is the ADAT test fee?
For the initial 2016 pilot year, the test fee will be $250; a $35 charge will be assessed for each additional score report not requested at the time of application. Candidates from non-accredited institutions will be assessed an additional $125 processing fee at the time of application.

Why should I have to pay $250 when this exam is so new?

The ADAT was developed using industry standard procedures to produce a reliable and valid testing instrument. During the first year, the official scores for the ADAT will provide advanced dental education programs with a valid tool to assess applicants.

Where can I find additional information?

The ADAT website is continually updated with information, including what programs do and do not accept the ADAT, and it is where you can also find and download the ADAT Guide. Questions regarding the ADAT can be directed via email to adat@ada.org or via telephone to 800-232-1694.