

Welcome!

Thank you for your continued interest in the Dental Admissions Test (DAT). This newsletter provides an update on planned changes, recent information, tips, and reminders.

The American Dental Association’s Council on Dental Education and Licensure (“the Council”), and its DAT Committee, oversee the administration, policies and procedures of the DAT. The Committee met in February, 2013 and the Council met in April, 2013. This newsletter brings you up-to-date on DAT-related matters.

The topics in this newsletter are as follows:

- **(No) Changes to Biology Test Specifications – updated 8/26/2014**
- **Changes to DAT Critical Thinking Content**
- **Expansion of Fee Waiver Program**
- **Data for Underrepresented Minorities**
- **Investigation of Advertising Policies**
- **Test Administration – Summary for 2012**
- **Review of Test Irregularity Practices**
- **Testing Program: 2007-2012**
- **DON’T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU: Violations of Testing Regulations**
- **Information about the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)**
- **Reminders**

(No) Changes to Biology Test Specifications – updated 8/26/2014

It was previously reported that Biology test specifications would be changed in 2014. This is incorrect. There are no immediate plans for changing the Biology specifications, and they will remain the same in 2014 and 2015.

Changes to DAT Critical Thinking Content

In order to enhance testing of critical thinking skills, the Quantitative Reasoning Test (QRT) specifications have been revised to eliminate the sections for numerical calculations, conversions, geometry, and trigonometry. Items will be added in the following areas: data analysis, interpretation, and sufficiency; quantitative comparison; and probability and statistics. These changes will be implemented no sooner than 2015.

As more information becomes available, it will be posted on the DAT website at <http://www.ada.org/dat.aspx>.

Expansion of Fee Waiver Program

Starting in January, 2014, the DAT fee waiver program will be expanded. The waiver program assists a limited number of examinees who qualify for financial aid by waiving the DAT fee. This

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is a pilot program and the number of fee waivers will be regularly monitored based on demand, expenses, and resource requirements.

Investigation of Advertising Policies

The DAT page on ada.org contained an advertisement for DAT study resources. Given the prominence of the ad, applicants might assume these study resources were endorsed by the ADA. The Council decided to investigate applicable advertising policies for the site, and to make sure that advertisements appearing in the DAT page are only accepted if they are consistent with the purpose of the DAT. The DAT Examination Guide states that, “The DAT Program does not endorse any test preparation courses and has no data on the content or efficacy of test preparation courses designed to prepare you to take the DAT.”

Test Administration – Summary for 2012

The DAT is offered year-round at Prometric Test Centers in the United States and its territories, including Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. During 2012, 282 professional level testing centers were available with 5,029 seats for testing in North America.

Examinee satisfaction levels with the test center experience are generally quite positive, according to responses received to a post-test survey.

Review of Test Irregularity Practices

The DAT Examination Guide clearly defines irregularities, defines how they are identified, and provides information about voiding scores when an irregularity is identified. The Committee reviewed the irregularity process and concluded that appropriate criteria and standards are in place to effectively manage DAT test irregularities, and that changes to the process are not warranted at this time.

Testing Program: 2007-2012

The Committee reviewed the following information regarding DAT Program activities for the five-year period from 2007 through 2012:

- Compared to 2008, there was an overall decrease of 983 DAT administrations (i.e., a decrease of 7.0%) in 2012.
- Compared to 2008, there was an overall decrease of 81 first-time DAT examinees in 2012.
- Gender ratios have changed slightly since 2008. The percentage of male test takers slightly decreased from 50.0% to 48.4%, while the percentage of females slightly increased from 50.0% to 51.6%.
- From 2008 through 2012, the number of administrations was distributed as follows:
 - More than 50% involved White examinees
 - 20% involved Asian examinees
 - 6% - 9% involved Hispanic examinees
 - 6% involved Black examinees

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- Less than 2% of administrations involved American Indian examinees
- The ethnicity category ‘Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander’ was added beginning in 2011; findings indicate that less than 2% of administrations involved Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander examinees.

The percentage of test administrations involving American Indian and Black examinees has been stable since 2008. With respect to Asian examinees, the percentage of administrations for 2012 was the lowest since 2008. For Hispanic examinees the percentage increased from 6.8% to 8.1%, while the percentage of White examinees decreased from 55.8% to 52.2% from 2008 to 2012.

- Between 2008 and 2012, the percentage of examinees taking the DAT more than once was the highest in 2009 at 37.6%. In 2012 it was 32.5%.
- With respect to examinee performance, the 2012 average scores for first-time examinees on most of the tests in the battery were slightly higher than those from 2011, while the Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) and Perceptual Ability Test (PAT) had the same average scores for 2011 and 2012. The mean Academic Average (ACA) decreased from 2007 to 2008, and then increased gradually from 2008 through 2011.
- The performance of students matriculating into dental schools is superior to the test performance of first-time examinees and the full examinee population, in general; this suggests that dental schools are continuing to select applicants with greater achievement levels and abilities as measured by the DAT.
- The reliabilities of scores achieved on each test on the DAT battery continue to be strong (≥ 0.90 for the Survey of the Natural Sciences and Perceptual Ability Test, 0.86 and 0.85 for the Reading Comprehension Test and Quantitative Reasoning Test, respectively).

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU: Violations of Testing Regulations

The Test Regulations in the DAT Guide detail behaviors that are prohibited during the test. Examinees that violate these regulations or participate in any prohibited conduct face serious consequences. Consider this example from a real-life case.

Action: An examinee folded the erasable note boards during the test.

Regulations Violated: Note boards cannot be used as measuring devices and cannot be folded, bent, distorted, or mutilated in any manner. This policy is in place to prevent examinees from using the note boards to gain an unfair advantage during the test.

Consequence: The examinee's scores were invalidated and the examinee was required to wait one year to retake the test.

Appropriate Action: Do not fold, bend, distort, or mutilate note boards in any manner. Pay close attention to the Guide and understand what behaviors are permissible during the testing session, and what behaviors are not.

Information about the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

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Dr. Scott Oppler from the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) briefed the Committee on the revised MCAT, which is due to launch in 2015. The MCAT revision process began in 2008.

AAMC has ensured broad participation from all communities of interest and launched comprehensive communications and marketing to keep all stakeholders informed.

Some content areas in the current MCAT were preserved in the revised MCAT, such as Biological & Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems. The writing sample was eliminated. The MCAT will include two new areas of content: 1) scientific inquiry, reasoning, research and statistics; and, 2) social and behavioral sciences, and sociocultural determinants of health.

Other changes include the number of test questions, the length of the test, and scoring. The revised structure will be as follows:

MCAT ²⁰¹⁵ – Four Sections, Four Scores	
Biological & Biochemical Foundations of the Living System	Chemical & Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
Psychological, Social, & Biological Foundations of Behavior	Critical Analysis & Reasoning Skills

Reminders

- Previous editions of this newsletter are available at <http://www.ada.org/3746.aspx>.
- Examinees who registered for the DAT before January 1, 2012 had a 12 month time period to test. Effective January 1, 2012, the eligibility period for the DAT changed from 12 months to 6 months. If an examinee schedules a testing appointment and does not take the test within the six month eligibility period, a new application and fee has to be submitted.
- Faculty interested in being item writers for the DAT can find information on selection criteria, the application process, and an orientation manual that describes the role of test constructors at <http://www.ada.org/108.aspx>.
- Findings from the 2011 DAT Validity Study are consistent with the results of previous DAT validity studies, and provide evidence of the value of including DAT scores as part of dental school selection criteria. The complete report can be found on the DAT website at http://www.ada.org/sections/educationandCareers/pdfs/dat_validity_study.pdf.
- The DAT Practice test is available for purchase through the Prometric web site. The Committee supports continuing efforts to develop DAT practice tests, and will receive a status update in February 2014.

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Please share this newsletter with your colleagues. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and appreciated. Please send them to me at datexam@ada.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Venezia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'R'.

Dr. Ronald Venezia
Chair, Council on Dental Education and Licensure