Information for Prospective Students

Considering a major in Chemistry or Biochemistry? Here is more background about the field and preparing for application to our programs.

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High School Students

The ideal high school preparation to study chemistry and/or biochemistry includes four years of college preparatory mathematics, one year of physics, one year of chemistry, and one year of biology. Students should work closely with their school counselors to ensure that the appropriate courses are taken to meet the University of Washington's general admission requirements.

In addition to the normal curriculum, many high schools offer students in their junior and senior years the opportunity to take courses at community colleges near their high school through the Running Start Program, or to participate in the Advanced Placement (AP) Program. The courses taken in these programs count toward high school graduation as well as satisfying entry requirements at the UW.

Running Start courses transfer in the same way as other college-level courses. The AP program offers college-level courses in high school. At the end of the course, students can take an exam administered by the College Board and, if they score high enough, they can earn college credit or be exempted from certain courses in college.

Freshmen

General chemistry is a core requirement for many science majors and professional training programs and is central to your success in these programs; therefore, it is essential that students are conscientious in learning the course material. We have information available to help you in Choosing Introductory Courses. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the various resources that can help you be a success, such as the Chemistry Study Center. Often students will find temporary use of tutoring services provided by either upperclassmen or professional firms to be helpful. You can obtain a list of possible tutors from the advisors’ offices in Bagley Hall Room 303.

Prospective Student?

We encourage prospective students to come for a visit, talk with an advisor and perhaps sit in on a typical first year course. Another way to check out the school and the department is by visiting the UW website or the Chemistry Department’s site.
Some high school students choose to take advantage of the Running Start Program. Running Start allows 11th and 12th grade students to enroll in courses at certain local community colleges for college credit, which also count towards high school graduation (see the section on high school opportunities).

Many students may also take advanced courses at their high school, then take the AP Chemistry exam or IB Chemistry exam at the end which may result in college credits in General Chemistry. Students who score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Chemistry exam or a 4, 5, 6, or 7 on the IB (HL) Advanced Chemistry exam are awarded credits in the general chemistry sequence (CHEM 142, 152 and 162). However, these students are strongly encouraged to consider taking the honors general chemistry sequence, CHEM 145, 155, and 165. Many students who have opted to take the honors general chemistry sequence have found themselves to be challenged and ultimately better prepared for the more advanced chemistry and biochemistry courses. The honors general chemistry sequence offers small class size and more individual interaction with instructors.

Course Registration Problems

Hopefully, you have attended an orientation session for new or transfer students and have learned the ins and outs of registration. There are several possible reasons why you are not able to register such as your measles immunization records aren’t on file, the class is restricted to a specific group of students, or you do not have the prerequisites as a part of your UW record. Web registration checks your prerequisites but if you are an incoming student there’s a chance that your credits are not yet on the UW computer database.

What can you do? Go to an adviser and ask for help. We can override some restrictions for prerequisites for chemistry courses, provided you have proof of taking them at another school. We have drop-in hours from 900-1130am and 130-400pm. Most registration problems are easy to diagnose. Be prepared to hear that you need to keep trying to check for space availability in classes because students drop courses every day and the opening you are looking for can happen at anytime.

Transfer Students

The chemistry and biochemistry majors require careful planning. Suggested introductory coursework for transfer students who are planning to major in chemistry include the equivalent of CHEM 142, 152, 162 (one year of general chemistry for science majors with labs); 237, 238, 239, 241, 242 (one year of organic chemistry with labs); MATH 124, 125, and 126 (one year of college calculus); PHYS 121/131, 122/132, 123/133 (one year of college physics). Courses in linear algebra and differential equations are also recommended. To make sure you are taking the appropriate classes in the right order, refer to a chemistry model schedule. In addition to the chemistry and calculus sequences, biochemistry majors should include one year of college biology in the first two years. Intended biochemistry majors please refer to the biochemistry model schedule. The most important courses to complete are the general chemistry and calculus sequences.

Additional information is available concerning transfer admission and planning. Of particular interest will be the Equivalency Guide for Washington Community and Technical Colleges and the Course equivalency tables in which you will find entries for approximately 18,000 courses from Washington-state community and technical colleges, and their corresponding equivalencies at the UW.

UW Transfer Credit policies are also available.

Post-Baccalaureate

Postbaccalaureate is a matriculated status, reserved for students who are working toward a second bachelor’s degree, or preparing for entrance to graduate or professional school. Only a small number of applicants are admitted every quarter as postbaccalaureate
(fifth-year students) because the University's primary commitment is to undergraduates who are completing their first bachelor's degree. The undergraduate chemistry and biochemistry programs are competitive majors and thus they require a separate additional application. A link to the departmental admissions page can be found here.

- Admission to the University - Policies and Details
- Undergraduate Programs
- Applicants who are not US Citizens

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