ACS Chemistry for Life®

AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

Do you want to talk about U.S. education with your American friends and colleagues? Here is what you have to know:

The U.S. Education System at a Glance

Education Type		Program Type			Typical Age of Students*
Higher Education	Post-Doctorate	Postdoctoral Research/Training			18-50+
	Post-Baccalaureate	Doctoral Degree Programs (e.g Ph.D.)	Combined Programs	Prof. Degree Programs (Medicine, Dentistry, etc.)	
		Masters Degree Programs (e.g M.S.)			
	Post-Secondary	Undergraduate Programs (e.g. BS, BA)			
		(incl. Community College; e.g. AA, AS)		Vocational/ Technical	
K -12 Edu. (Kindergarten – 12th Grade)	Secondary	High School (9th-12th Grade)			12-18
		Middle School (6th-8th Grade)			
	Elementary/ Primary	Elementary/Primary (1st-5th Grade)			5-12
		Kindergarten (K)			3-4
	Pre-Kindergarten	Nursery or Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)			

The ACS Graduate and Postdoctoral Scholars Office adapted this chart from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *varies by state and other circumstances

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Frequently Asked Questions

U.S. Education System – FAQs

What are Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior students?
These terms refer to the year students are enrolled in an undergraduate program. Typically in a four-year program the terms refer to:

Freshman = 1st year student
Sophomore = 2nd year student
Junior = 3rd year student
Senior = 4th (last) year student

Which common acronyms/terms for U.S. academic institutions should I know?
Carnegie Classification System = framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education (http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu)

HBCU = Historically Black Colleges and Universities
MSI = Minority Serving Institution
PUI = Primarily Undergraduate Institution
R1, R2, R3 Institutions = Doctoral Degree granting universities with ***highest, higher,*** and ***moderate*** research activity, respectively
SAT/ACT = American College Test/Scholastic Aptitude Test (colleges use ACT/SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships)
GPA = Grade Point Average (standard way of measuring academic achievement in the U.S.)
GRE = Graduate Record Exam (commonly required to get into graduate school)
MCAT = Medical College Admission Test (required to get into medical school)
TOEFL = Test of English as a Foreign Language
ELTS = International English Language Testing System

What should I take into consideration when planning my U.S. career in academia?
As a Ph.D. in chemistry you can work at any higher education institution as well as in some K-12 institutions. It really depends on your personal goals (How long do you want to stay in the U.S.? Or how would this temporary, academic experience help you secure a job in your home country?). If you want to focus on academic research, R1 institutions might be the best option. If you want to focus on teaching with less research responsibility, PUI institutions (including community colleges) might be a good starting point for your job search. ACS offers a wide variety of workshops and other activities that help you transition to faculty a position. For more information, visit: **www.acs.org/GRAD**

Does ACS provide career planning resources that would help me transition into any kind of career, not just academia?
ACS developed the online Individual Development Plan **ChemIDP™** that helps with career planning. This FREE tool helps with career exploration, skill strengthening, and goal setting. For more information visit: **www.ChemIDP.org**