

## Frequently Asked Questions about Pre-Chemistry and Pre-Biochemistry Majors

### What is a “pre-major”? How do I become a Chemistry or Biochemistry major at Cal State LA?

All first-year students interested in graduating with a major in Chemistry or Biochemistry enter Cal State LA as a pre-chemistry or pre-biochemistry major. Once a student has completed a specific set of criteria, they will switch from pre-Chemistry to Chemistry majors (or pre-Biochemistry to Biochemistry majors). Students interested in switching majors into Chemistry or Biochemistry will start as pre-majors until they complete the criteria. Please note that there is a ***time limit***...you must complete these criteria by 60 units. (University policy on Declaring a Major).

### What are the Chemistry and Biochemistry- specific criteria?

*By completion of 60 units* you must have:

- Required minimum cumulative GPA: 2.2
- Required major preparation courses (grade of "C" or better required):
  - One of the following three mathematics options:
    - MATH 1040 – Precalculus
    - MATH 1081 – Precalculus: Functions and MATH 1083 – Mathematical Analysis II
    - MATH 1082 – Precalculus I: Functions with Lab and MATH 1083 – Mathematical Analysis II
  - CHEM 1100 – General Chemistry I
  - CHEM 1110 – General Chemistry II
- Required General Education courses not covered by major preparation courses listed above:
  - Written Communication
  - Oral Communication
  - Critical Thinking
  - Quantitative Reasoning if not satisfied by required math course above

### What is the purpose of having pre-majors in Chemistry and Biochemistry?

This is a way to require students to completing the criteria early in their academic career. It sets students on a good path for completion of the majors. In addition, if students face difficulties in these early classes, it will trigger a discussion about changing strategies for learning or possibly about exploring other majors.

**Does being a “pre-major” mean that it will take me longer to graduate?**

No! Coursework required of the pre-major is simply a small part of the foundational coursework required of the chemistry and biochemistry degrees.

**Does being a “pre-major” mean that I am competing for limited spaces in the program?**

No! Once you successfully complete the specific criteria coursework with required grades and meet the GPA requirements (*see above*), all you need to do is declare the major.

**I’m considering being a chemistry or biochemistry major. Is there a particular order in which I should take the pre-major classes? Do any of them have prerequisites?**

All first-year students should take the math courses that lead to the completion of Calculus I and II, starting in their first semester. The specific course to take depends on your placement category. A very helpful flowchart explaining the possible math sequences leading to the completion of Calculus I and II can be found here:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/math/stem-other>

You can take General Chemistry I (CHEM 1100) if your math placement is “no support needed” (Math placement categories I and II). You cannot take General Chemistry II (CHEM 1110) before you successfully pass General Chemistry I.

**How will I know if the Chemistry or Biochemistry major is right for me? What do I do if I came to Cal State LA specifically for these majors, but now I’m struggling or not sure?**

It is common for students to be unsure about their major choice and to develop new interests as they learn more and as they explore career opportunities. Students are encouraged to discuss their concerns and interest in completing their degree as a Chemistry or Biochemistry major with their faculty advisors, the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department Chair, or NSS Advising Center advisors.

**Can I repeat a pre-major course if I do not get the grade I want/need?**

Yes you can, but be sure that you have a plan for how to be more successful in the course! This can involve learning better time management, seeking help from instructors in office hours, going to tutors, forming a study group, or possibly changing your work or family obligations.

The regular policy on course repetition applies. Undergraduate students may repeat a course no more than two times (a maximum of 3 times taking the same course). Undergraduate students who wish to repeat an individual course a second time must create an action plan with the NSS Director of Advisement and Student Success Gene Sandan ((323) 343-5284 | [nssac@calstatela.edu](mailto:nssac@calstatela.edu)).

**What are my options if I do not meet the pre-major requirements by 60 units?**

If you do not meet the pre-major specific criteria within 60 units of course work at Cal State LA, you will be advised to switch majors. Your advisor will work with you to identify a major that better suits your needs. Potential options within the sciences include Physics, Geosciences and Natural Science majors.. Alternatively, you can switch to a major that is outside of science. Finally, under extenuating circumstances, and with approval, there may be a one-semester extension of the deadline to meet all the requirements.

**What if I have other questions about being a Chemistry or Biochemistry major or pre-major?**

There are many people available to answer your questions! Feel free to contact the Department Chair (Dr. Alison McCurdy) by email ([amccurd@calstatela.edu](mailto:amccurd@calstatela.edu)) or by appointment (323-343-2300 or sign up at the department office BIOS 336)