

## Notes and advice for students interested in the BS/MS program:

Prospective BS/MS candidates should be aware that graduate courses may involve a greater time commitment than undergraduate courses. (First-year chemistry Ph.D. students at Emory typically take two courses and a research rotation.) Furthermore, even when graduate courses do not have explicit prerequisites, it is assumed that students have been exposed to the full range of the undergraduate curriculum. If you plan to enroll in any graduate courses before you complete all core requirements of the BS degree, please consult the instructor and/or your research advisor to make sure you will be prepared.

If you are thinking about the BS/MS program, you should have thought about why you want to take on this challenge. Here are some commonly given reasons, and some comments about each:

***I love chemistry coursework and research, and want to do as much as I can as soon as I can.*** This is a good reason! Keep in mind, however, that there are trade-offs. By taking extra advanced chemistry courses, you will miss some opportunities to sample a broader array of courses in other departments. If you pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry, you will have your whole life to study chemistry. How many chances will you have to learn a foreign language, or study art history?

***I do not plan to pursue further graduate studies in chemistry, but extra training and an extra credential will help my career.*** Students who plan to enter careers in (for example) law, business, or journalism may find that having an advanced scientific degree (and the experience and expertise that go with it) opens some doors to professional sub-specialties.

***It will help me get into graduate school/professional school.*** The advanced coursework and research involved in the BS/MS program may give a student some advantage when applying to graduate or professional schools. Keep in mind that this advantage will be undermined if pursuit of the BS/MS hurts the student's overall academic record. A student who does not already have a **very strong** record of success in chemistry coursework is at risk of performing poorly in the graduate coursework involved in the program, and may not find enough time to devote adequate attention to other courses as well. Even if the BS/MS is awarded, the resulting record may not be as attractive to admissions committees as a strong BS degree. Advanced coursework must be built on a strong fundamental base of knowledge and understanding.

***It will help me get a better job directly upon graduation.*** This may be true. Keep in mind, however, that employers will focus more on the skills you have demonstrated and on your record of success (*i.e.* grades and recommendations) than on the degree you have attained. If job placement is your main concern, talk with your research mentor about the skills and experience you will gain from the research experience and graduate coursework, and how these are likely to help your prospects in the job market.

***I will need an MS degree anyhow to get a Ph.D.*** This is **not**, in general, a good reason. The B.S. curriculum is sufficient for admission to Ph.D. programs in chemistry in the United States; the M.S. degree is not, in general, a prerequisite to the Ph.D. Depending on the policies of each specific Ph.D. program, coursework from an M.S. degree may or may not count towards Ph.D. course requirements. **However**, Ph.D. programs in other countries may have different standards and requirements. Some may in fact expect that entering students begin at a level that corresponds to the M.S. degree. (For instance, undergraduate degree programs tend to involve more advanced coursework in the major in Europe than in the United States.) If you are thinking about study abroad for your Ph.D., find out as much as you can about the programs that interest you and whether the BS/MS program would give you the preparation you need.