



# Chemistry: *your future*

**Anne Hodgson** outlines factors to consider when thinking of studying chemistry and the career opportunities to which it can lead

## Why study chemistry?

Chemistry provides an excellent basis for a range of careers, some of which might surprise you. Not all chemists work in laboratories, and chemistry graduates hold various interesting and important professional roles. The key transferable skills that you gain from a chemistry degree open a wealth of opportunities, inside and outside of science.

Chemistry is also great for business. According to a report from the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), £1 in every £5 in the UK economy is dependent on developments in chemistry research.

## Employability

A degree in chemistry equips you with a wide range of transferable skills that employers are looking for in their recruits, including:

- communication
- critical thinking
- handling information
- numeracy
- planning and organisation
- practical skills
- problem solving
- scientific knowledge
- scientific thinking
- study skills
- teamwork
- time management



## Career opportunities

These are just some of the many areas where chemists are employed:

- agriculture
- archaeology
- chemical industry
- cosmetics and personal care
- environmental monitoring
- food production and packaging
- forensics
- health and medicine
- management
- materials development
- motor racing
- nutrition and food safety
- paints and coatings
- patent law
- pharmaceuticals
- research and development
- space exploration
- teaching



## Applying to study chemistry

You will need to have a post-16 qualification (for example, A-level) in chemistry, or have studied chemistry as part of a broader qualification. In addition, some universities require you to have an A-level (or equivalent) in maths and/or another science.

It is important to research courses to make sure they meet your requirements. Look at the teaching styles, the provision of laboratory work, the depth and breadth of the material covered and the flexibility to follow different study paths once you are enrolled. Is there the opportunity to work in industry and/or study abroad as part of the course? What are the typical grade requirements for entry onto the course, and is this achievable for you? Visit the university or college to see if it is somewhere where you would feel happy living and working.

## Writing a personal statement

You need to sell yourself in your application, so take time and care when writing your personal statement. Make sure it is organised and clear, and without spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Show that you realise what the study of chemistry is likely to entail.

Answer the following questions in your statement.

- Why do you want to study chemistry?
- How has your interest in chemistry developed?
- What are your interests, especially those that are relevant to chemistry?
- Have you done any work experience, volunteering or extracurricular activities?
- If so, what transferable skills have you developed?
- Do you have any career ambitions and/or gap year plans?

Remember to be:

- distinctive
- enthusiastic
- relevant
- specific and give examples
- truthful

The future is yours, make the most of it!

Anne Hodgson teaches in the Department of Chemistry at the University of York.