

Student Eligibility and Rules for 2026

All interested secondary school students (grades 9-12) who can be accommodated by their local section are invited to participate in the local section selections and Local Section Exam (LSE).

The LSE may be translated and administered in other languages. All students must register first with ACS in order to participate. Registration link is available on the USNCO website.

Participation in the local section selections is how the majority of students interact with the USNCO, so please work to make this an enjoyable and inclusive experience. The USNCO will consider providing competitors with disabilities with accommodation to enable them to compete within the rules of the USNCO to which all competitors are subject. Accommodations that fundamentally alter the highly competitive nature of the USNCO contest and/or create undue hardship cannot be granted. For example, in nearly all cases time extensions cannot be accommodated for the National Exam because they fundamentally alter the competitive nature of the exam and create an undue hardship on volunteers. Coordinators may grant students extra time for the LSE at their discretion. Students must request accommodation as soon as possible to enable the USNCO to consider the request. National Exam Nominees must meet the following criteria:

1. Students must be U.S. citizens or legal, permanent residents of the United States (green card holders) to take the U.S. national examination.
2. High school students who will graduate no earlier than spring of a year in which they participate in the competition are eligible.
3. Students must be under the 20 years of age on the first of July of the year of the competition.
4. No more than two students per high school per local section may be nominated to take the national exam. In the case of magnet programs, split enrollment, or cyber students, a student's school is defined as the high school from which the student will receive their diploma.
5. Eligible students who have previously attended the study camp automatically qualify for the national exam and do not count against the limit on the number of eligible students from their local section or school.
6. Winners of gold medals at the International Chemistry Olympiad are not eligible to participate in subsequent National Exams, study camps, or International Chemistry Olympiad competitions.

7. Students who have taken advanced placement courses in chemistry are eligible. Email: USNCO@acs.org | Phone: 202-872-6328 | Fax: 202-833-7732 American Chemical Society, 1155 16th Street Northwest | Washington, DC. 20036 USA Last Updated: 10 October 2023

8. A student may participate only in the competition of the section in which the student's high school is located. In the case of a cyber-student, the student shall participate in the local section where they are geographically located, regardless of where the cyber school is located. Cyber schools can nominate no more than two students.

9. A student who participates in the Physics Olympiad study camp, the Mathematics Olympiad study camp, or the Biology Olympiad study camp is not eligible to participate in the Chemistry Olympiad study camp during the same summer

10. Only non-programmable calculators are to be used on the national exam and on the ACS local section exam, if used. The use of a programmable calculator, cell phone, or any other device that can access the internet or make copies or photographs during the exam is grounds for disqualification.