

Common Questions & Answers about Biology 1A vs Biology 1AC

We have received a number of questions in regards to our Biology 1AC vs Biology 1A course offerings for next year. I hope answers to these common questions will help you and your students.

Q: Does a student get a weighted grade by taking Biology 1AC?

A: No, a student will not receive a weighted grade. The UC system does not award honors credit for a 9th grade honors class.

Q: How much more homework is there per night for the AC vs. non-AC class.

A: As stated in the Paly course catalogue, we anticipate about 2-3 hours of homework per week for Biology 1A and 3-5 hours of homework for Biology 1AC. This is the same anticipated homework load that Gunn has for its Biology 1A and 1AC courses.

Q: Can a child opt out of the highest math lane but still do the Bio AC (assuming s/he is recommended for both)?

A: As long as a student is recommended by his/her science teacher, they can opt to take Biology AC. The students' current teacher knows best where they are (and in which class a student will be most successful) and we trust their judgment.

On a side note, it is our understanding that a small percent of students in the nation are able to complete BC Calculus before leaving high school. In addition, by taking BC Calculus, a student will be able to take our AP Physics C course, definitely our most mathematically challenging science class.

Q: Do you know how the Biology 1A and Biology AC will be handled in TEAM?

A: In the past, TEAM has integrated two levels of Biology into one classroom. We will continue with this structure for our TEAM classes. Our TEAM teacher will work closely with the Biology AC teacher so that students will receive similar experiences. We will continue to discuss and focus on what is in the best interest of our students, so that they are all challenged appropriately. We will also continue to work with Gunn teachers so that students at each of our high schools receive similar experiences and challenges in their academic courses.

Q: What do you anticipate the difference will be between the non-accelerated Biology class and the accelerated class?

A: We anticipate that the non-accelerated Biology class (in alignment with our current non-accelerated Chemistry and Physics courses) will primarily focus on the state standards, as our Biology class is currently taught. We anticipate that the Biology AC class (similar to our sequence in the more advanced Chemistry and Physics classes) will focus not only on the state standards, but also those extra topics covered on the SAT II Biology exam. We also anticipate some sort of semester science project being part of the Biology AC class.

Q: What is your view on the type of student you believe would be successful in the accelerated class, and most importantly, would also enjoy and benefit from it more than s/he would enjoy the non-accelerated class?

A: A student who might find the transition from middle to high school "easier" than most freshmen AND who enjoys science will enjoy Biology AC. Students who retain most of what they have learned in middle school, who have studied science or read about science on their own (out of interest) and who are excited by thinking more deeply about science are those who will succeed in this class.

A student who needs more guidance in class and who might have more trouble adjusting to high school (bigger campus, more distractions, etc) would be best taking the non-accelerated biology class. A student who is more interested in focusing on English and Social Studies, or who is looking to stretch themselves in math, or looking to take on more extra-curricular activities (sports, theater, etc) should also think about taking the non-accelerated biology class. *This decision is not only about finding the appropriate level for a student, but also about balance in their overall schedule.*

FINAL NOTE:

It's really important that a student and parent make sure the freshman year experience is balanced. Science lanes are flexible from year to year, as long as a student continues to do well in both their science class (whether it is accelerated or not) AND their math class. So whether a student takes Biology AC as a freshman or not, if they do well in both Biology (earning an A) and math, they can be recommended by a science teacher to take either Chemistry 1A or Chemistry H. The same is true for students transitioning from Chemistry to Physics.