



The Orange County High School First Year Exam

OCACS has a long history of encouraging young people to excel in chemistry. This fact is well-illustrated by our annual High School First Year Exam. The tradition began in 1964 and the Section has held the Exam every year since then except during the Covid-imposed black-out of 2020 and 2021.

The Exam is open to any Orange County high school first-year chemistry student enrolled in their first year of regular or honors chemistry. Each school can send up to eight students to take the Exam. Teachers at each school determine the criteria for selecting their students. The goal of the Exam is to challenge but not discourage students, so the average score recently has been about 60%, with only a few students scoring over 90%.



This test is prepared by a group of experienced college teachers. It includes 80-90 multiple choice questions of varying complexity, covering topics included in the NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) and in first year chemistry textbooks.

Organizing the Exam, though complex, has by now been made a fairly smooth exercise by members of the Section. In 2022 there were 18 volunteers from the Education Committee and Executive Board who set up and scored the Exam, plus 30 students from local community colleges to monitor the students during the Exam.



Before Covid, participation was about 300 students from over 40 High Schools. In 2022, despite the uncertainty surrounding in-person events in public spaces, the Exam was still able to attract 160 students from 25 high schools.

The best performers—both individual and team winners—were honored at the OCACS High School Awards Banquet, an extremely well-attended event held in May. The awards included gift cards, plaques, medallions, and certificates.



ChemLuminary Awards

2022

- ◆ Outstanding Public Outreach Event Organized by a Student Group, sponsored by the Committee on Community Activities

2020

- ◆ Global Engagement Award, sponsored by the Committee on International Activities

2018

- ◆ Outstanding Continuing Public Relations Program, sponsored by the Committee on Public Relations and Communications

2017

- ◆ Best Overall Local Section sponsored by the ACS Minority Affairs Committee
- ◆ Outstanding Regional Meeting sponsored by the Committee on Meetings and Expositions
- ◆ Outstanding NCW Event for a Specific Audience sponsored by the ACS National Committee on Community Activities

2016

- ◆ Outstanding US National Chemistry Olympiad sponsored by the Society Committee on Education



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