

Chemistry 3250
Professional Responsibilities of Chemists

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The concept of a profession

- ▶ A **profession** is a group of people who exercise a common occupation or apply a common set of skills and who function within structures allowing their identification as belonging to that profession.
- ▶ Those structures can be more or less rigid.
 - ▶ Professions defined by law (engineering, law, medicine, teaching)
 - ▶ Professions defined by membership in a professional society or other similar body (some sciences)
 - ▶ Professions defined by employment in specified positions in well-recognized institutions (university professors)
- ▶ Member of a profession are typically trained according to a more-or-less standard curriculum.
- ▶ Members of a profession typically have a common set of values which, again, may be more or less rigidly enforced.

Self-governance

- ▶ Professions, even those governed by legislation, are typically **self-governing**.
- ▶ Self-governance allows professional associations to determine their membership, and to create and enforce codes of ethics.

Ethical obligations

- ▶ Membership in a legally recognized profession entails both **rights** and **responsibilities**.
- ▶ Due to the self-governing nature of professional societies, the responsibilities are typically contained in a **code of ethics** created by the society itself.
- ▶ The code of ethics is enforced by a disciplinary committee of the society.
- ▶ Penalties for breaching the society's code of ethics can include publication of the breach, fines, suspension of some particular privileges provided by the society, suspension from the society (and thus, temporary loss of any associated right to practice), or permanent expulsion from the society.

Professional status in Canada

- ▶ The Canadian Constitution makes the licensing of professionals a provincial responsibility.
- ▶ Legally recognized professional societies must therefore be professional organizations.
National organizations can play no direct role in professional licensing.
- ▶ Self-governance allows provincial societies to agree to recognize each other's members and to transferability of qualifications.

Chemistry as a profession

- ▶ In most parts of the world, the title “chemist” is unregulated. The professional status of chemists is thus of an informal nature, defined by training, convention, and voluntary membership in organizations of chemists.
- ▶ In some Canadian provinces, legislation now exists establishing chemistry as a profession. Provinces where legislation establishes a distinct title reserved for members of the relevant professional association:
 - Professional Chemist: Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, Nova Scotia
 - Chartered Chemist: Ontario
 - Chemist: Quebec
- ▶ Legislation in two provinces (Alberta, Quebec) creates a right to practice in certain areas

Association of the Chemical Profession of Alberta

- ▶ In Alberta, Professional Chemists must be members of the Association of the Chemical Profession of Alberta (ACPA).
- ▶ Membership in ACPA requires
 1. an accredited degree,
 2. at least two years of full-time chemistry-related work experience, with at least one year of experience acquired in Canada, and
 3. ongoing professional development.
- ▶ A graduate from an accredited degree who does not yet have the required experience can join ACPA as a Chemist-in-Training.
- ▶ Students in accredited degree programs can become student members of ACPA (at no cost).

Canadian Society for Chemistry

- ▶ National organization of chemists
- ▶ Provides accreditation of Chemistry degrees used as a basis for the recognition of credentials by provincial societies

ACPA's code of ethics

- ▶ Divides duties of Members into
 - ▶ duties to the public
 - ▶ duties to employers or clients
 - ▶ duties of Members to themselves, to other Members and to the Association
- ▶ [Link to code of ethics](#)

ACPA Discipline Committee

- ▶ Hears arguments related to alleged professional misconduct or incompetence and rules on the allegations
- ▶ In the case of a ruling of misconduct or incompetence, the Committee may impose a range of sanctions.