

School of Chemistry – Unit Feedback 2016/17

Unit title: Basic Physical Chemistry		
Unit code: CHEM10212		
Unit co-ordinator: Sven Koehler		
Other teaching staff: Nik Kaltsoyannis, Jonathan Agger, Gareth Morris		
Response Rate: 42/181 (23.2%)		
General University Questions	Mean score	Previous Year
Overall, I would rate this unit as being excellent	4.21	3.7
The feedback that I received on my work was helpful	3.9	3.61
This unit was well organised	4.45	3.88
The eLearning resources provided in this unit enhanced my learning experience	4.19	3.78
I found the tutorials linked to this course helpful	4.29	4.19
I found the online tests useful	4.02	n/a
<p><i>Please summarise the main themes from students' comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average scores improved noticeably compared to last year • Most students praised the course content and delivery • too rushed/too much content for each module/there should be more lectures for each module • better coordination of tutorials with lectures 		
<p><i>Please provide feedback to students comments:</i></p> <p>3 vs. 4 modules per lecture course will be re-considered; reduction to 3 modules would also better align the tutorials with the lectures.</p>		

School of Chemistry – Unit Feedback 2016/17

Unit title: Basic Inorganic Chemistry		
Unit code: CHEM10312		
Unit co-ordinator: Eric McInnes		
Other teaching staff: David Mills		
Response Rate:	43/180 (23.89%)	
General University Questions	Mean score	Previous Year
Overall, I would rate this unit as being excellent	4.63	3.91
The feedback that I received on my work was helpful	4.47	3.92
This unit was well organised	4.72	4.14
The eLearning resources provided in this unit enhanced my learning experience	4.44	4.09
I found the supporting workshops for this course helpful	4.72	4.45
I found the Tutorials linked to this course useful	4.74	4.39
I found the online tests useful	4.28	n/a
<i>Please summarise the main themes from students' comments:</i>		
<p>The survey returns were overwhelmingly positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy with content, delivery & pace of lectures • Valued the approachability & availability of lecturers outside of lectures. • Happy with notes/slides and further (including on-line) resources. • Workshops were popular, and tutorials were found to be useful • Prof McInnes was particularly pleased that his “lack of tolerance for being on phones (in lectures)” was noted as a positive aspect in helping learning. • Two comments said there were too many questions in tutorials/workshops, or questions with too many parts. One comment requested for more workshops. • There was one comment regarding Prof McInnes’ notes not having gaps to fill. 		
<i>Please provide feedback to students comments:</i>		
<p>There are very few comments to respond to. We are pleased that the students enjoyed the course, and liked the lecturers. We also enjoyed giving the course!</p> <p>We were, in general, very pleased with the performance in the exam. We have written a summary of common exam errors in order to supply some feedback.</p> <p>This was an entirely new course, so we will be reviewing what went well and what can be improved for 2017/18. This will include a review of the balance of lectures/workshops. As regards the structure of questions in workshops etc, there are specific reasons for these. For a start, most scientific problems are not solved in 30 seconds – we are deliberately structuring questions such that the answers follow through to the next sections. This is also good exam practice. There are deliberately too many questions to answer – we want students to work on these in their own time aswell.</p> <p>As regards gapped notes, Dr Mills likes these and Prof McInnes does not. We are happy to disagree -</p>		

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we feel it is important educationally for students to learn to obtain information from different delivery styles and formats. Prof McInnes expects students to write additional notes based on what is being discussed in the lectures (the slides having been available from the beginning of the course for the students to read ahead). Note taking is a valuable skill that students need to learn.

School of Chemistry – Unit Feedback 2016/17

Unit title: Organic Chemistry		
Unit code: CHEM10412		
Unit co-ordinator: Igor Larossa		
Other teaching staff: David Procter, John Gardiner		
Response Rate:	43/184 (23.37%)	
General University Questions	Mean score	Previous Year
Overall, I would rate this unit as being excellent	4.19	3.83
The feedback that I received on my work was helpful	4.33	3.83
This unit was well organised	4.35	4.36
The eLearning resources provided in this unit enhanced my learning experience	4.21	4.17
I found the Tutorials linked to this course useful	4.53	4.02
I found the online tests useful	4.19	n/a
<p><i>Please summarise the main themes from students' comments:</i></p> <p>Students seemed generally very pleased with the content, structure and delivery of the course. Some comments included: the mechanisms were well presented / the majority of the lectures were engaging / The handouts were very useful / All the lecturers had planned well before their lectures / the teaching and explanation on this unit was very well done / Interesting, understandable and a good explanation to how atoms react rather than memorising mechanisms</p> <p>The main themes regarding what could be improved in the course were: 1) the timing of the tutorials and lectures was sometimes off, with some material in the tutorial not having been taught; 2) the online tests do not provide full descriptions of right answers; 3) more workshops or weekly tests would be of benefit.</p>		
<p><i>Please provide feedback to students comments: (this will be published on the intranet and Blackboard):</i></p> <p>We are very pleased that students enjoyed the course and even more with the excellent performance that they displayed in the exam.</p> <p>The tutorial scheduling is unfortunately out of our control and some years tutorials are too early in the semester. We will review the content for next year in order to ensure maximum overlap with the lectures.</p> <p>Regarding the weekly online tests, we are in the process of reviewing their implementation, as we found that a large majority of the students did not engage with them. Over half of the class did not attempt or only attempted one of the tests. There was a strong correlation between exam results and attempted online tests, with an average 60% exam grade for students not attempting the online quizzes, compared to a 80% exam average for those students attempting over half of the tests.</p>		

School of Chemistry – Unit Feedback 2016/17

Unit title: Chemists' Toolkit		
Unit code: CHEM10520		
Unit co-ordinator: Andrew Horn		
Response Rate:	40/178 (22.47%)	
General University Questions	Mean score	Previous Year
Overall, I would rate this unit as being excellent	3.58	3.53
The feedback that I received on my work was helpful	3.55	3.25
This unit was well organised	3.8	3.98
The eLearning resources provided in this unit enhanced my learning experience	3.78	3.79
The semester one lecture material was interesting	3.33	n/a
I found the maths exercises useful	4.05	n/a
I found the maths support workshops helpful (if you used them)	3.72	n/a
I found the scientific writing exercise to be useful	3.95	n/a
I found the employability sessions helpful	3.65	n/a
I found the group poster exercise interesting and useful	3.58	n/a
<p><i>Please summarise the main themes from students' comments:</i></p> <p>Generally positive about the maths on the whole – a recognition that this will be useful in the future.</p> <p>Also a general recognition about the usefulness of spectroscopy, analytical chemistry and scientific writing.</p> <p>More detail on the organisation of the unit will be needed in 2017-18, especially in respect to the exam content and timing.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the positive comments about the maths course, further revision and contextualisation of the material in the maths book seems to be needed. "Written by someone who understands maths" implies that revisions to make it more accessible to 'someone who doesn't understand maths' are needed.</p>		
<p><i>Please provide feedback to students comments: (this will be published on the intranet and Blackboard):</i></p> <p>On the whole, this course unit seems to have been well-received this year, although some upgrades and revisions are needed.</p> <p>We also need to give clearer guidance as to the structure of the module and the contents of each section, alongside making clearer links into the taught and labs programmes.</p> <p>The content and purpose of the exam will be made clearer (and there will be a complete example paper for this as well now from 2016-17).</p> <p>The outcomes of this course unit were generally very good for all students.</p>		

School of Chemistry – Unit Feedback 2016/17

Unit title: Practical Chemistry		
Unit code: CHEM10600		
Unit co-ordinator: Jenny Slaughter/Jonathan Agger		
Response Rate:	45/178 (25.28%)	
General University Questions	Mean score	Previous Year
Overall, I would rate this unit as being excellent	4.24	4.29
The feedback that I received on my work was helpful	3.67	4.05
This unit was well organised	3.93	4.41
The eLearning resources provided in this unit enhanced my learning experience	4.17	4.09
The lab has helped me develop technical skills (such as synthetic or analytical skills etc.)	4.73	n/a
The lab has helped me develop professional skills (such as safety awareness etc.)	4.60	n/a
The lab has helped me develop confidence in practical chemistry	4.49	n/a
I found lab work to be interesting and rewarding	4.40	n/a
The experiments helped me consolidate theory	4.07	n/a
The floor 1 lab is an environment where I can ask questions and discuss chemistry	4.40	n/a
The floor 2 lab is an environment where I can ask questions and discuss chemistry	4.38	n/a
Pre-lab work helped me prepare for the lab	4.49	n/a
Feedback I received from floor 1 experiments has aided my progression through the year	3.76	n/a
Feedback I received from floor 2 experiments has aided my progression through the year	3.88	n/a
Feedback I received from reports has aided my progression through the year	3.24	n/a
The floor 1 lab was well resourced with the kit and apparatus I needed	4.73	n/a
The floor 2 lab was well resourced with the kit and apparatus I needed	4.68	n/a
The GTAs (demonstrators) in the floor 1 lab were professional and provided support	4.37	n/a
The GTAs (demonstrators) in the floor 2 lab were professional and provided support	4.27	n/a
The technical staff were professional and provided support	4.54	n/a
The academic staff were professional and provided support	4.59	n/a

Please summarise the main themes from students' comments (this will be published on the intranet and Blackboard):

The general response to CHEM10600 was very good (as reflected in the overall scores given above). The overall performance for CHEM10600 was very good with an average mark of 72%, a normal distribution of marks and standard deviation of 11%.

The key themes which came through in both the comments and the overall scores were:

- 1. Help and support with preparing lab books**
- 2. The timing of the practice session in week 6**
- 3. Marking consistency & progression through the lab**
- 4. Reports and feedback on reports**

1. Help and support with preparing lab books

This is a key skill for a chemist but one which requires practice and refinement. For many people this was the first time dealing with preparing a lab book; for next year we will introduce an online resource to help you and the new first years know what is expected.

2. The timing of the practice session in week 6

Despite the cohort's consternation at having to complete labs during week 6, it's important to note that many of the UEQ comments were very positive about the value of this session. The main point raised was the timing, with requests to have it at the start of term. We're glad you found this session of value. We will look at the logistics of the course for next year and will seek to do this if possible.

3. Marking consistency & progression through labs

We do listen to comments regarding the consistency of marking; as of yet, we have found no data evidence in support of inconsistency in marking between markers or across experiments. The majority of comments referred to perceived "fairness" (*i.e.* where an experiment was not completed due to "running out of time" or a single element of the experiment was marked lower); it is important to note that the lab course is designed to allow failure in some components.

Many people commented positively on the fact the lab gave an opportunity to practice skills and techniques. Practical work is a skill which is improved through experience – this is why we assess the labs over a long time period, so that your progression and improvements can be rewarded.

The data shows that there is clear progression in all areas of assessment of the lab course. As an example, in week 1 of semester 1 the average pre-lab and in-lab assessment marks were 14.8/20 and 50.7/80 respectively, giving a general performance of 65%; by the end of semester 1, this had increased, across all experiments, to 17.2/20 and 56.5/80, respectively, giving a general performance of 71%.

4. Reports and feedback on reports

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The majority of comments regarding reports referred to the feedback not being detailed or unhelpful with regard to progression. Reports are marked by a Marking College, consisting of a team of GTAs, early career researchers and lab conveners; this team is trained to focus on timely marking which provides both constructive, actionable feedback and consistent marking. As part of this process, we moderate report marking throughout the year and, as a result of this process, our Marking College receive regular input into the standards of work. We are therefore confident that the marks are consistent and reflect the work submitted.

Feedback is a key to the process of progression; to ensure students receive useful and actionable feedback, our report templates have a feedback cover sheet which both student and marker are requested to complete.

Feedback can only be of use where an individual chooses to engage with it. Through TurnItIn, we are able to monitor the number of people who have revisited their report to look at the feedback; on average 50% of students have revisited their report, once marked, to view the feedback and comments. Furthermore, on average, 10% of the cohort have not submitted written work for one or more report submissions.

Report writing is key to your success as a chemist and is the main way that you will be assessed during your third and final years. Finding ways to increase student engagement with feedback and ensuring all students take the opportunity to practice their report writing in the early years of their degree remains a priority for the Teaching Laboratory Team.