



Chemistry

Undergraduate Student Handbook

2023–2024

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Staff and Key Contacts

Head of Department: Prof Abbie McLaughlin, Room Meston G23, e-mail a.c.mclaughlin@abdn.ac.uk
Director of Undergraduate Pathways: Dr Peter Henderson, Room Meston 055, e-mail p.henderson@abdn.ac.uk
School Office: Meston Building G05d, chemistry@abdn.ac.uk

The department's webpage, which includes a list of staff, can be found at [Chemistry | The School of Natural and Computing Sciences | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](http://Chemistry | The School of Natural and Computing Sciences | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk))

Key Education Policies

Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key University-wide policies, available [here](#). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and how the University will calculate your degree outcome.

Assessment
Feedback
Academic Integrity
Absence
Student Monitoring/Class Certificates
Late Submission of Work
Student Discipline
The co-curriculum
Student Learning Service (SLS)
Professional and Academic Development
Graduate Attributes
Email use
MyAberdeen
Appeals and Complaints

These University wide education policies should be read in conjunction with this handbook, in which School specific policies are detailed. These policies are effective immediately, for the 2023/24 academic year. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

Decolonising the Curriculum

1. At the University of Aberdeen, we are dedicated to decolonising the curriculum. Our courses reflect a commitment to diverse perspectives and a comprehensive understanding of global knowledge.
2. In line with our commitment to inclusivity and equity, the University of Aberdeen is actively engaged in the process of decolonising our curriculum. Our courses and programmes aim to emphasise a plurality of voices and perspectives.
3. At the University of Aberdeen, our courses and programmes are designed to challenge traditional narratives and incorporate a wide range of cultural and global viewpoints.
4. Decolonising the curriculum is central to our mission at the University of Aberdeen. Our courses are continually evolving to better represent a broader range of voices and experiences.
5. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity, the University of Aberdeen is committed to decolonising our curriculum. Our courses aim to embrace the rich tapestry of human knowledge from diverse cultural contexts.
6. At the University of Aberdeen, we recognise the importance of decolonising the curriculum to create a more equitable educational environment. Our courses are designed to challenge biases and embrace global perspectives.

7. Diversity and inclusivity are fundamental to our educational ethos at the University of Aberdeen. We are actively engaged in the process of decolonising our curriculum to provide a well-rounded and equitable education for all.

Catalogue of Courses

The Catalogue of Courses can be found at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/courses/> and contains the following information, and more, for each course:

- Course Overview and Description
- Course Co-ordinator
- Course Requisites
- Assessment and Feedback
- Intended Learning Outcomes

Teaching Timetable

Once you have registered, your timetable can be found at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/mytimetable/courses/index>

If you aren't yet registered or would like to find out if courses clash you should check <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/mist/apps/courseoverlay/>

Attendance and Monitoring Progress

You must attend classes regularly and do the work of the course. The University operates a monitoring system throughout the academic year to identify students who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies and to ensure that students remain on track for their degree and satisfy the minimum attendance requirements.

If you miss **two** classes without good reason or fail to complete a continuous assessment you may be entered as C6 At Risk. Please read <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-monitoring.php> for full information.

Absence from Class

You should submit an Absence Report (*via* your StudentHub) every time you miss a class for good reason. You will need to provide supporting evidence if you are absent for more than 7 consecutive days.

Satisfactory attendance at laboratory classes and tutorials is an essential learning outcome of all Chemistry courses, and any attendance record that falls below 50%, even with medical certificates, means that this learning outcome cannot be achieved. However, the Department will do its utmost to ensure that students with genuine medical problems are given an opportunity to catch up with missed work, or if necessary, to perform alternative equivalent activities. We urge any student with prolonged medical problems to contact the Department (the relevant Course Co-ordinator or in an Absence Report) at the earliest possible opportunity with details, so that appropriate arrangements can be discussed and agreed in advance.

Absence from Exams/Impaired Performance

If you believe that illness and/or other personal circumstances may have affected your performance in an examination, or you have been unable to attend an examination, you must submit details through [MyAberdeen](#) Absence Reporting **on the day of the exam and certainly no later than three days following** the date on which you were expected to appear for the exam concerned. This is as per the University's Policy and Procedure of Student Absence. The policy, linked below, contains information on when supporting evidence (*e.g.* medical certificates) is required.

Absence policy and further information on Impaired Performance

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/academic-life/assessment-exams-3377.php#panel1957>

Communication with Students

The University will normally use e-mail to communicate with you during term-time. All messages will be sent to your University e-mail account.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you can log into your University computer accounts and to check your e-mail on a regular (daily) basis and to tidy the contents of your e-mail in-box to ensure that it does not become full. You should note that failure to promptly seek help from IT Services re login problems and/or failure to check your e-mail and/or failure to receive an e-mail because your e-mail in-box is full and/or non-delivery of an e-mail forwarded to a non- University e-mail account **will not be accepted as a ground for academic appeal.**

In Chemistry, we will make extensive use of e-mail to communicate with the class, including vital information on labs and on-line test deadlines, so please make sure that you check your University e-mail *every day*.

We are under no obligation to read or respond to messages sent from non-University e-mail addresses and if e-mails sent from non-University addresses are blocked or deleted as “spam,” their non-arrival **will not be accepted as a ground for academic appeal.**

All e-mails must include your name, student ID, course code, lab day (if applicable) and a clear statement of the problem. There must be a subject stated.

MyAberdeen

MyAberdeen is the University’s Virtual Learning Environment where you can access learning materials and resources associated with your courses. Access at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/myaberdeen>

A number of resources have been developed to help you make effective use of MyAberdeen. See [MyAberdeen: Students](#)

Each course will have its own MyAberdeen page containing information you need for the course. It’s important that you check MyAberdeen regularly.

Deadlines

Deadlines for submitting continuous assessments will be listed in the Course Guide or your Course Co-ordinator will notify you of them at the beginning of the course. It is important that the deadlines are met for all continuous assessments.

Assessment Submission and Feedback

Many assessments will be online but for those on paper the submission boxes can be found next to the stairs in the Meston Building foyer (entrance opposite Fraser Noble Building).

Continuous assessment *which has been handed in on time* will be returned with feedback within 2 (teaching) weeks of submission.

You should note that CGS marks for summative assessments are provisional, pending confirmation by the External Examiner.

Overall CGS marks for courses will be available in your StudentHub.

Feedback on written examinations can be obtained by making an appointment to see the relevant Course Co-ordinator once the results have been released in StudentHub.

Extensions

If you require an extension for coursework you should submit an Absence Report with supporting evidence (eg letter from Dr) and email the Course Co-ordinator.

Late Submission of Work

Late submission refers to submission of work after the published deadline without an agreed extension, and in the absence of exceptional circumstances.

Any assessed coursework that is submitted beyond the deadline, without an agreed extension, will be recorded as late and a penalty will be applied as follows:

- Up to 24 hours late, the grade will be deducted by **2 Common Grading Scale (CGS) points**;
- For each subsequent day, up to a maximum of seven days total, the grade will be deducted by a **further CGS point for each day**, or part of a day, up to a maximum of seven days late;
- Over seven days late, **a grade of G3 will be awarded**.

Further details can be found at [Policy on Late Submission of Work](#)

Marking

The University Common Grading Scale, CGS, provides a common marking scale which is used across the University. You can find full information at [Common Grading Scale \(CGS\) | Students](#)

Some courses are marked in percentage or “marks out of”. Please see appendix 1 for the Percentage to CGS conversion table used in the School.

Exams

You are strongly recommended to familiarise yourself with the format, presentation of questions, time allocation, and standard of work required by consulting past examination papers available online at: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/support/exam-papers-180.php>

First half session course exams are held in December and second half session course exams are held in May. There is another opportunity in the summer for those who fail, fail to attend or are unable to attend.

Deadlines and dates can be found at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/exams.php>

Academic Integrity (Plagiarism/Collusion/Cheating)

The University expects that **all students** will undertake their studies with integrity and will submit assessments that have been prepared by themselves. To do otherwise, to act dishonestly and cheat in an assessment, is classed as academic misconduct and will incur penalties.

Ensure you understand the meaning of academic misconduct, how you can avoid it and what the penalties are should you act dishonestly.

Please read the following carefully:

[Academic Integrity | Students | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

[Academic Integrity & Referencing | Digital Skills | Toolkit | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

[Code of Practice in Student Discipline \(Academic\).pdf \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

Progression

Information on Progression can be found under Regulation 16.1 at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/generalregulations.php>

Students are formally admitted to Chemistry Honours at the start of the third year of study. To be admitted to the MChem stream in level 4, students must attain a minimum standard in level 3 chemistry (CM course code) courses.

For entry into the 4th year of the MChem degree programme, a GPA of 15.0 or better is normally expected at 3rd year with a minimum CGS mark of D3 in any particular course.

If you wish to transfer from BSc to MChem or *vice versa* (and you are eligible to do so) you must make the decision **BEFORE 30th of June 2024**.

Degree Classification

Information on how your degree will be classified can be found at [Undergraduate Degree Classification](#)

Weighting

BSc: 30% Level 3, 70% Level 4.

MChem: 25% Level 3, 35% Level 4, 40% Level 5.

Student Support

If you have a problem related to the course, please speak to the lecturer or course co-ordinator in the first instance. If you feel unable to discuss the problem with them, and it affects the whole class, you can raise the issue with the Class Rep. Otherwise, you can arrange to meet with the Head of Discipline.

If you have personal problems, please talk to your Personal Tutor or the member of staff you feel most comfortable with. If you would prefer to talk to a non-academic member of staff, you can contact the Advice and Support Office.

Student Advice and Support Office

Based in the Students' Union Building, the Student Advice and Support team offers impartial and confidential advice and support on a range of issues, including finance, disability information and more. Further information at [Student Advice & Support Office | Students](#)

Class Representatives

Student representatives (class reps) are elected on an annual basis. Any students registered within a course/year or programme that wishes to represent a given group of students can stand for election as a class representative. You will be informed when the elections for class representative will take place.

You can ask your class rep at any time to bring up matters of concern with any member of staff.

What will it involve?

It will involve speaking to your fellow students about the course/year you represent. This can include any comments that they may have. You will attend a Staff-Student Liaison Committee and you should represent the views and concerns of the students within this meeting. As a representative you will also be able to contribute to the agenda. You then feed back to the students after this meeting with any actions that are being taken.

Class reps are encouraged to meet with course co-ordinators early in each half-session to introduce themselves and to ensure an effective channel of communication is established between the class and the teaching staff.

Training

Training for class representatives will be run by the Students Association. Training will take place in the fourth or fifth week of teaching each semester.

For more information about the class representative system visit <http://www.ausa.org.uk>.

Staff-Student Liaison Committees

These meet twice a year to discuss matters of joint concern. If there are any matters that you would like discussed, take the initiative and see your class rep. Minutes of the meetings are available in MyAberdeen.

Course Feedback

Towards the end of each course, you will be invited to complete a Course Feedback Form. Once completed, they are considered by the relevant course co-ordinator, Director of Undergraduate Pathways as well as the School Director of Education. Ultimately, the University will consider the points raised in all Course Feedback Forms to ensure teaching is of a high quality. The University greatly values your comments and they do help when we are working on ways to improve what we are able to offer.

Course Review

Each year, the staff teaching a course have a formal Course Review meeting, which considers feedback from the course feedback exercise and from the Staff–Student Liaison Committee, along with examination pass rates and any other information about the success of the course. This meeting may decide to make changes to the course, but it may also decide that it is not possible to act upon suggestions made by students.

Prizes

The Department offers various prizes and information can be found at [Available Prizes for Chemistry](#)

External Examiners

As well as being anonymously double-marked by members of chemistry staff, all work contributing to the final degree class is assessed by three external examiners. These examiners change from year to year, but all three are distinguished academics (usually Professors) from other UK university chemistry departments, whose expertise covers all areas of chemistry. The external examiners also vet the exam papers to ensure that questions are of an appropriate breadth and difficulty and comparable to those in other UK universities.

The External Examiners are:

Prof Carole Morrison, University of Edinburgh
Dr Gordon Florence, University of St Andrew's
To be confirmed

You should note that this is for information only and under no circumstances are students allowed to contact external examiners directly.

Safety

Chemists and other scientists must learn to work safely as a very important part of their professional training.

All users of University premises and property must comply with the regulations of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Act (1989). The Department's advice for compliance with these acts is given in the Departmental Safety Handbook.

- Before commencing work in any laboratory, you must identify the location of safety equipment, fire escapes and exits.
- **Safety glasses or goggles must be worn at all times in the laboratories.** Even if you are doing some safe operation, someone else might do something that could affect you. Ordinary spectacles are not acceptable.
- **All** equipment and materials should be treated as potentially hazardous.
- Laboratory coats must be worn in all laboratories.
- Long hair must be tied back. Open cuts and grazes should be covered; if necessary, gloves will be provided.
- All accidents must be reported at once to a demonstrator.
- There must be no eating, drinking, chewing or smoking in laboratories.
- All chemicals must be treated with caution. More detailed information about hazards is provided by wall charts and the Department Safety booklet, both available in all laboratories. The Department WWW Home Page also has links to safety data.
- Always place coats and bags under the bench where they will not be tripped over. Move about the laboratory with care. Never run. Do not obstruct the aisles with lab stools.
- No unauthorized experiments are permitted

All teaching laboratories contain first aid kits and the First Aid room is 037 on the lower ground floor. The Department Safety Adviser is Dr Rainer Ebel (G32) to whom any other safety matters should be reported.

IF THE FIRE-BELL RINGS:

- Switch off any Bunsen burners or electric heaters (if in the teaching lab).
- Leave by the nearest exit or fire escape. Do not use the lift. Leave calmly; do not return for coats, bags, *etc.*
- Assemble in the academic square, at the front of the Sir Duncan Rice Library.
- Do not re-enter the building until a fire marshal declares it to be safe, even if the fire alarm has stopped ringing.

Pregnancy

For general information about pregnancy including help and support, please refer to the information published by Student Support which can be found under <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/health-3628.php#panel3632>

In certain circumstances, where there could be a potential risk to your unborn child (for example from exposure to certain pathogens, chemicals or radiation in the laboratory), it will be important that your School is informed as soon as possible to enable them to carry out a review of your study programme and, where necessary, ensure that measures are taken for your health and safety and that of your child. The Student Advice & Support Office will contact the School on your behalf to ask that a specific risk assessment be undertaken.

The University provides guidance to Schools on health and safety issues for new and expectant mothers.

Once your School has been informed, they will arrange to carry out a risk assessment with you to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection.

Appendix 1 - Percentage to Common Grade Scale Conversion

% From	% To	CGS	
89.5	100	22	A1
84.5	89.4	21	A2
79.5	84.4	20	A3
74.5	79.4	19	A4
69.5	74.4	18	A5
65.5	69.4	17	B1
62.5	65.4	16	B2
59.5	62.4	15	B3
55.5	59.4	14	C1
52.5	55.4	13	C2
49.5	52.4	12	C3
45.5	49.4	11	D1
42.5	45.4	10	D2
39.5	42.4	9	D3
36.5	39.4	8	E1
34.5	36.4	7	E2
29.5	34.4	6	E3
24.5	29.4	5	F1
19.5	24.4	4	F2
14.5	19.4	3	F3
9.5	14.4	2	G1
4.5	9.4	1	G2
0	4.4	0	G3