

Chemistry FAQs

1. What are the compulsory modules/classes I will be taking in first year?

In the first two years 50% of your timetable each term will be compulsory Chemistry courses, with the rest your choice of Enhanced Study course, dependent on timetabling.

In first year, you will take two compulsory courses each term: [CM1021 Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 1](#) and [CM1022 Elements of Chemistry 1](#) in the first term, and [CM1513 Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 2](#) and [CM1522 Elements of Chemistry 2](#) in the second term.

The [table at the end of this FAQ](#) shows a breakdown of the course structure for each year.

2. Can I take optional modules/classes? How many? Are there any restrictions to what I can take?

We have an optional 2nd year course, [CM2012 Introduction to Materials](#). There is space in your timetable in years 1 and 2, and also in year 4, to take other courses from the University catalogue.

3. What will my timetable in first year look like? How much contact time will I have with lecturers?

Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 1 & 2 each have three 1-hour lectures per week and a fortnightly 3-hour lab. Elements of Chemistry 1 & 2 each have a lecture and workshop every week and alternating each week a 1-hour mini-skills lab or small group tutorial. The small group tutorials are normally held in staff offices and typically have 3-5 students with each lecturer.

You will also have a similar number of other lectures, tutorials, and labs depending on the other courses which you select.

4. What are the typical first year class sizes like?

Class sizes can vary considerably, depending on which courses you choose, but this can be a good opportunity to meet students from a range of different degree programmes.

Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 1 and 2 are also taken by students on some Engineering programmes, and others who select it as part of their Enhanced Study. The class size tends to range from 60-150 depending on if it is course 1 or 2, and the number of students on other programmes.

Elements of Chemistry 1 and 2 are generally only taken by students on the Chemistry degree programme. The class size can vary from around 20-40, depending on the size of the year, and if there are other students, such as direct entry and transferring students, who sometimes take the courses to help with their transition into University and the Chemistry Department.

5. Are there work placements available and are they built into the degree?

We do not have formal work placements built into our courses. However, as part of the final research project in the fifth year of MChem students typically spend around 3 months in the research labs of a host institution.

6. Will there be field trips in my classes?

No, we do not have field trips outside of University. In Elements of Chemistry 1 & 2 we have research lab visits, where in small groups or 3-5 you will go to our academic research labs where you may meet PhD and post-doctoral researchers. You are normally shown round by an academic who will tell you about their research projects and show you the different instruments. This is a great opportunity to meet staff other than the first-year lecturing team, and to get an idea of what a University does in addition to teaching.

7. Will there be any group work/group projects?

From first year onwards lab work and projects will include individual, pair, and group work. Third year analytical environmental labs have an element of group work and project management built into them. In 4th year there is a group research project for the MChem students, where each student works on some research which contributes to the overall larger project.

8. How are my modules/classes assessed? Exam, essays, in-class work?

We use a variety of assessment methods to assess a range of skills and abilities, and also so support different learners. Assessments include online continuous assessments in first year, online pre-lab and post-lab tests in first and second year, traditional lab reports, short presentations, wikis, posters, journals and video posts, mind maps, research brochures, oral exam, lab skills observation, and also more traditional times written exams.

9. Is there an opportunity to study languages alongside my degree?

The University offers courses in several languages as part of [Enhanced Study](#).

10. Should I be preparing for first year by reading anything specific? Do you have any suggestions?

University isn't timetabled as rigidly as school to fill up each day with classes, so independent study is an important skill to learn.

Our main textbook is Chemistry 3 by Burrows. We also recommend Maths for Chemistry by Monk, and Study and Communication Skills for the Chemical Sciences by Overton, all from Oxford University Press. These books are often on offer as a bundle at a discount price at the start of term, but you may wish to buy them in advance. Do not worry about the thickness of Chemistry 3; we don't just use it for first year!

Reading chemical literature and general science magazines such as New Scientist or the Royal Society of Chemistry's Chemistry World (available online) will help you develop an understanding of the use of scientific language and writing, which is an important skill for report and project writing.

The OUP's A very short introduction to... series has several books related to different areas of chemistry. These may help with building your background knowledge on the topics, whilst also keeping you engaged with chemistry in advance of starting your degree.

11. Are there any societies which would be good to join? E.g. societies that are for those studying my degree.

There is a Chemistry Society run by undergraduate and postgraduate students, which organises social events throughout the year.

There are over 100 societies which are part of the Aberdeen University Student Association: <https://www.ausa.org.uk/societies/>. We encourage you to join societies (or start your own!) as it is important to remember that coming to University is not just about learning Chemistry facts and figures. Taking an active part in societies can help you develop skills and attributes which will help with your employability, and some society roles can be formally recognised on your graduation transcript.

12. Can I study abroad with this degree? Where can I go?

The University has an [International Exchange Programme](#) which allows students in their 2nd or 3rd year to spend part of all of a term abroad. This covers countries outside of Europe including Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea and the USA. The Erasmus programme allows for study at European universities, although this may change as a result of Brexit.

13. How much time will I spend in labs each week?

Practical lab classes are an important part of the degree programme, allowing you to learn specific laboratory techniques, use instruments, and also develop group working, problem solving, and data collection and analysis skills. The number of hours spent in the lab increases as you progress through your degree.

In first year, you will have a fortnightly 3-hour lab and a fortnightly 1-hour mini skills lab.

In second year, you will normally spend 3-6 hours per week in the lab depending on the timetabling of different courses.

In third year, you will have three or four 3-hour labs per week. Some of this may include computational (theoretical) chemistry or data processing and analysis in computer classrooms.

In fourth year, you will be doing either your BSc research project or the MChem group and individual projects. You will normally be working in the department's research labs, supported by PhD and postdoctoral researchers. We would expect you to spend about 100 hours in the lab for the year.

In the MChem fifth year you will have a large research project in the second term. You will not have any timetabled taught classes that term but will be expected to be working full time on your research.

14. Chemistry degree structure showing compulsory Chemistry and Enhanced Study options. BSc and MChem students have different projects in 4th year.

Level	Term 1				Term 2			
1	Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 1	Elements of Chemistry 1	Enhanced Study	Enhanced Study	Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 2	Elements of Chemistry 2	Enhanced Study	Enhanced Study
2	Analytical Chemistry	Physical Chemistry	Introduction to Materials Or Enhanced Study	Enhanced Study	Organic Chemistry	Inorganic Chemistry	Enhanced Study	Enhanced Study
3	Environmental Chemistry	Inorganic Chemistry		Professional Skills	Physical Chemistry		Organic Chemistry	
4	Analytical & Organic	Inorganic & Physical	Enhanced Study	BSc Honours Project			Advanced Chemistry Options	Integrated Chemistry
				MChem Group mini-project	MChem Project			
5	MChem Topics & Workshops				Major Research Project			

Blue – Chemistry course, green – choice of other course