

CHEM2301/4 – Physical Chemistry (2011/12)

Summary of student comments compiled by Kevin Douglas
Responses by course organiser (Dr W A Brown)

Number of responses: 24 (16 with comments)
Total number of students: 120

Overall score for course: 3.8

Score for Lab: 4.1

Comments on course

General

Overall positive review of the course, with students commenting that they enjoyed the content, thought the course was well organised and that the lecturers were good. "All lecturers were fantastic and notes are thorough and I find all the physical chemistry staff extremely helpful" was one comment. However some students did comment that having 5 sections to the course made it content heavy, and suggested removing one and spending more time on the others. Some students also commented that the coursework tests were not as useful as written coursework, were stressful and too soon after the corresponding lecture, with one student saying they did little to aid their learning. One student suggested that it may be helpful to collaborate with students on the content and layout of lecture notes, commenting that having gaps in lecture notes where equations with Greek and Latin characters need to be written can cause confusion. They also suggested anonymous online feedback of the course at any point, rather than at the end.

WAB

"Great as always, material well communicated, good coursework".

DJC

Some students commented that the lectures notes were complicated and difficult to revise from. Other students commented that the coursework test had too many questions.

MBE

Some students commented that this section was very mathematical, with few real life examples, but that otherwise the lectures were enjoyable.

NK

Several students commented that this section was the most challenging, with mixed reviews. Some students commented that lectures were good and the content well communicated, while others that the lectures were fast paced and the difficult concepts not explained well enough.

DMR

"No objections. He is a brilliant lecturer" was one comment.

Comments on Lab

General positive view of labs, with students commenting that the course was good, and that the demonstrators were friendly, enthusiastic and competent. Several students also commented that face-to-face marking was very useful. Several students picked experiment 1 as the best, being both interesting and useful, while one commented that experiment 2 was the most useful for improving understanding of the subject matter. One student commented that 4 was the least useful, and didn't aid in any understanding of the course.

Comments on Tutorials

Mostly positive views about tutors, with comments such as very helpful, encouraging, clear explanations, truly outstanding, and flexible. However some students commented that their tutors couldn't explain the course material and were too slow, not covering many questions. Several students also commented that it would be useful to have model answers of the tutorial questions placed on moodle after the tutorial, in case all the questions weren't gone through. Another commented that one tutorial a week was insufficient to cover all the problems. One student also suggested bunching students on particular courses together, as natural scientists are more likely to struggle with certain questions as opposed to chemists.

Response from Course Organiser: Dr W A Brown

Response to Lecturers, Content and Help Sessions

In general, the course was well received and the tutorials went down well. I agree with the students that putting students together in tutorials who are on similar courses (or who have similar ability) works better, but we cannot do anything about this because of the central timetable that now allocates students to tutorial groups. Clearly, most of the lectures were well received. There may be a change of personnel next year, with MBE possibly being replaced, although this is yet to be confirmed. If he is, it is likely that the lectures would be re-written, which is likely to address the concerns about the mathematical content of the course. I do not agree that answers to tutorial problems should be available on Moodle. The students should attend tutorials and ask questions, not simply learn model answers written on Moodle, as this gives a much better learning experience.

The lab course works well, and has recently been improved by Dr Banks. Clearly the changes he has made (in terms of pre-lab questions etc) have worked well. It is encouraging that the students appreciate the face-to-face marking and feedback, and we plan to continue with this.

Action to be taken for next session

Course Content

Possibly some changes to Thermodynamics, if MBE is replaced as a lecturer.

Lecturing Staff

Possible replacement of MBE. Not yet confirmed.

Coursework

No planned changes. The mix of coursework tests and written coursework gives experience of a range of different assessment methods. We will aim to have the coursework tests a little later, to allow a bit more time for preparation.

Signed by Course Organiser:

Wendy Brown

Date: 1st June 2012