



# Chemistry

## Postgraduate Taught Student Handbook

2024-2025

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## Staff and Key Contacts

Head of Department:

Prof Bill Harrison, [w.t.harrison@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:w.t.harrison@abdn.ac.uk)

MSc Chemistry for Sustainable Energy Programme Director:

Dr Alan McCue, [a.mccue@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:a.mccue@abdn.ac.uk)

School Office: Meston Building G05d, [ncspgt@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ncspgt@abdn.ac.uk)

Open 9.00am – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 4.30pm

The department's webpage, which includes a list of staff, can be found at

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/ncs/departments/chemistry/>

## 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.

Course specific announcements and information will be communicated using MyAberdeen Announcements. New announcements will be indicated in the MyAberdeen site and on the MyAberdeen Activity Stream. It is your responsibility to check for new announcements. You will also receive a daily digest of announcements sent to your University email 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.**

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.**

## Key Educational 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

Extensions and Late Submission of Work

Student Discipline

The co-curriculum

Student Learning Service (SLS)

MySkills

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.

## 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
- Assessment and Feedback

## Teaching Timetable

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

## Attendance and Monitoring Progress

You should 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 will 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* any MyAberdeen course page or 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 the School Office G05d) 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>

### 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 <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/toolkit/systems/myaberdeen-students/>

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

### Deadlines

Deadlines for continuous assessment will be listed in the Course Guide or your Course Co-ordinator will notify you of them at the beginning of the course.

### Extensions

The University has a policy for the consideration of and, where appropriate, granting of extensions for pieces of assessment. Agreed extensions will be for the shortest reasonable time to allow the student to complete their assignment while minimising impact on their subsequent studies, and will usually **not exceed seven calendar days**.

Students should apply for extensions via the **Student Report and Request Tool on the Student Hub** or, where a student is unable to access the Student Hub, the extension request should be sent directly to the School concerned.

Please read the [Policy on Extensions and the Late Submission of Coursework](#) in full before requesting an extension.

### 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 | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

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

Term 1 course exams are held in December and Term 2 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>

You should note that CGS marks for summative assessments and overall course grades are provisional, pending confirmation by the External Examiners following the May exam diet.

## Progression and Award

Information on progression requirements and how your degree will be classified can be found at [PGT Award and Classification | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

## 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 Department.

If you have personal problems please talk to your Programme Director 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.

## 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 <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/advice.php>

## Academic Language and Skills Support

For students whose first language is not English, the Language Centre offers support with Academic Writing and Communication Skills.

### Academic Writing

These classes will highlight the common features of academic writing in English. To help with possible differences in writing styles and expectations:

- each session focuses on one aspect of the writing process
- you will work with examples of academic writing
- you will develop skills to produce effective writing
- an opportunity for you to ask questions about writing
- a relaxed and supporting environment

### Academic Communication Skills

Introductory discussion activities, introduction to academic cultures, and mini discussions.

- Problems & solutions: language & discussion.
- Analysis and evaluation from different perspectives: language & discussion. Mini presentations.
- Comparing & contrasting, drawing conclusions, and evaluating: language & discussion.
- To be confirmed (participants will be contacted nearer the time to confirm content).

And **Fluency & Communication** which is more relaxed and focused on social communication.

More information and how to book a place can be found [here](#)

### **Academic Integrity (Plagiarism/Collusion/Contract 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 \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

#### **Further Guidance on Avoiding Plagiarism**

Where a written report or essay contains quotes or paraphrases of the work of others these must be clearly identified and acknowledged. In particular **quotes should be enclosed in quotation marks, with an appropriate reference.**

Given that it is very easy to copy software, the potential exists for plagiarism in the submission of coursework. These notes are supplied to help you avoid any risk of committing plagiarism. The term 'code' stands for any software or data processed by or produced on a computer system, whether its form is textual, graphical or otherwise.

All code submitted for assessment must be clearly annotated with the name of the student submitting the exercise and the date of completion.

Where an assessment exercise contains code which was not written by the student submitting the exercise or contains code written by that student at another time, the code in question must be clearly identified and annotated with author's name, copyright owner's name (if different), date of completion or publication, and source reference e.g. bibliographical reference or URL (for Web pages).

In principle, discussion of course material and non-assessed exercises with other students is encouraged, since such discussion generally helps all involved to understand the subject better. However, unless stated otherwise by the Course Organiser, discussion of work to be submitted for assessment should be of a general nature and should not be about detailed design or coding. Work submitted for assessment should normally be individual work. If you do submit work that was produced jointly with someone else, or that includes sections that are the work of another student, then this must be clearly acknowledged and the code in question identified. The credit for the assignment will be based on the 'value added' by the student.

Similarly, although we encourage the re-use of existing software as good Software Engineering practice, the origins of such re-used software must be clearly acknowledged, and the code identified. The credit for the assignment will be based on the 'value added' by the student.

Certain courses will require that you work in teams; in such cases the Course Organiser will clearly set out any specific additional guidelines. In general, a written report on work carried out by a team must unambiguously

distinguish between work to be accredited to the author alone and work to be accredited to another person or the team as a whole.

Do not succumb to the temptation of copying another student's work and attempting to disguise the fact that you have done so by clever editing (changing the names of identifiers, moving procedures around, etc.). The teaching staff are well aware of such possibilities and have methods for detecting such cheating if it occurs.

Do not agree to requests from other students to copy your work. In such cases both parties will be held culpable. In particular, make sure that you collect any printer output – do not leave it lying around for others to find.

If you acknowledge the source of any work which is not yours, then the Department will be able to assess your work on its merits.

### **Online Originality Checking of Assignments**

Staff in the Department routinely use automated source code plagiarism detection software. These systems compare the work of one student with that of every other member of the class and can calculate the degree of similarity between submissions. You cannot disguise copying by changing the order of methods, altering identifier names, etc. These sophisticated systems have programmed within them a large number of known strategies for attempting to disguise copied work!

**If you copy without acknowledgment, then this is plagiarism. All cases are reported to the University's Academic Registrar, and if you are found guilty, penalties include the awarding of zero marks for the assessment concerned, the entire course, or ultimately, in serious cases, the award of no degree at all.**

### **Library Workshops**

The Library provide many resources on Information Skills and Academic Integrity which must be watched/read at the start of your course. There is a compulsory Avoiding Plagiarism Quiz that all PGT students must take.

All resources can be found in the MyAberdeen Organisation **Natural and Computing Sciences Student Information for Taught Postgraduates**.

### **Class Representatives**

Class representatives 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 an online Course Feedback Form. Once completed, Course Feedback Forms are considered by the relevant course co-ordinator, Programme Director 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 evaluation 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.

## External Examiners

The External Examiners are:

MSc Chemistry for Sustainable Energy: Dr Emma Kendrick, University of Birmingham

**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 webpage 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 unauthorised 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**

<b>% From</b>	<b>% To</b>	<b>CGS</b>	
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