

CHEM Course Feedback Form

Course: CHEM-E0100 Academic Learning Community, 4-5 cr; autumn 2018 - spring 2019 (periods I-V); number of students: 123 (75 students in total passed the course, ca. 61%).

Reporter and date: Kyösti Ruuttunen (KR), August 16th, 2019.

Teaching and learning methods: Lectures, workshops, quizzes, independent studying and exercises, attending CHEM Career Forum event, as well as academic advising and major-specific feedback sessions. For the bachelors coming from outside Aalto University, the orientation week events formed a part of the course, enabling these students to receive 5 cr for the course. For Aalto bachelors, elective Career Planning Exercises were offered, which increased the extent of the course to 5 cr. For those not attending the orientation week or the Career Planning Exercises, the extent of the course was 4 cr. In addition to the themes already mentioned, the topics covered during the course included: Aalto Ethical Guidelines, Study Techniques, Information Search and Databases, Intercultural Communication, Master's Thesis Review, and Entrepreneurship/Circular Economy. During period I-III the contact sessions started with a joint coffee in the Chemistry Building (restaurant Mau-Kas).

MyCourses (MC) workspace of the course can be found here:

<https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=20375#section-0>

Assessment methods: The possible grades for the students were "pass" or "fail". To pass the course, the exercises and quizzes had to be carried out in an acceptable manner. In addition, the students were required to attend certain activities and events (CHEM Career Forum, academic advising, and feedback sessions). Details on this can be found in MC (click the link above).

Feedback summary: Feedback was collected actively during the course (discussion in class and during the morning coffee, as well as open questions in the quizzes). In addition, the standard electronic survey (Webropol) provided valuable feedback – see Table 1 for a summary of the results.

Table 1. Summary of the student feedback from the electronic (Webropol) survey. The figures are averages from the students' responses. The number of the responses given in the option "E=not applicable" is displayed in parentheses after the calculated average; the responses in the "E" category were not taken into account in the calculation. The deviation of the answers is described presenting the range of the given responses (the column titled Min.-Max.; only for 2019). For comparison, the corresponding average values are also shown for last year (2018). The number of respondents (n) was 54 in 2019 and 35 in 2018.

	Average 2019 (E)	Min.-Max.	Average 2018 (E)
1. Overall assessment	1.96 (0)	1-4	1.55 (2)
2. Teaching methods	2.43 (0)	1-4	1.85 (1)
3. I am pleased with my study effort	3.12 (3)	1-5	2.97 (5)
4. Workload compared to other courses	3.23 (5)	1-5	3.11 (7)
5. Correspondence to the description	3.03 (2)	1-5	2.55 (2)
6. Effect on the study motivation	1.70 (0)	1-4	1.62 (1)
7. Difficulty compared to other courses	2.26 (7)	1-5	2.41 (6)
8. The course enhanced my general skills	2.26 (0)	1-4	1.91 (1)

Overall, the students' feedback was not very positive, e.g. the average of the overall assessment of the course was 1.96 and the evaluation for the teaching methods was 2.43. In the open questions – both in the quizzes, as well as in the Webropol survey – many characteristics of the course were criticised. The lecture time (Mondays 8-10 AM) was seen unsuitable, the course was extended to too many

periods, there was too much overlap with the course *CHEM-A1000 Korkeakouluopiskelijan ABC* (included in the bachelor's programme), and many students saw the topics overall trivial. In more detail, many exercises and tasks were criticised for being trivial and/or frustrating (Information Search, Ethical Guidelines, Intercultural Communication), while others were seen laborious and unimportant (Information Search, Intercultural Communication, Entrepreneurship/Circular Economy). In many comments, the importance of many of the topics was acknowledged but at the same time, the teaching methods were criticised.

The students gave positive feedback to Master's Thesis Review and the Career Planning Exercises. Similarly, CHEM Career Forum, Academic Advising, and the Feedback Sessions were mostly seen worthwhile. The morning coffee, as well as the general communication during the course, received also some positive comments. As a positive feature, it can also be commented that the numeric average values of the students' responses were higher in 2019 compared to the values obtained in 2018 (see Table 1).

Development actions for next year: Based on the student feedback, it is clear that this course can be developed. Yet, for the study year 2019-2020, the topics and the structure of the course will stay mostly the same. As the curriculum is revised in two-year periods, bigger changes can be made for study year 2020-2021. This work has already initiated: I organised a meeting with student guild's persons in charge of studies (*opintovastaava*), and they presented students' views on how the course should be organised in the future. I will continue this work, hearing also opinions from professors and other teaching staff, and will report on the results in due course.

In 2019-2020 the scope of at least the Information Search, Intercultural Communication, and Entrepreneurship/Circular Economy parts will be looked into and modified to some extent. This will be carried out after carefully analysing the student feedback. Also, the motivation for including the different topics into the course will be communicated and justified more clearly. Collecting the student feedback in a versatile manner will continue, including – in addition to the Webropol survey – discussions in class, as well as collecting comments through MC.

General feedback from the teacher: I was very impressed by the students' ability to give justified and constructive feedback. This was especially seen during the feedback sessions, which were pleasant events, even though also critical aspects were discussed. Moreover, the vast majority of the feedback received through the Webropol survey, as well as the quizzes, was analytical and carefully considered.

Some of the critical comments, especially concerning the Information Search Exercise, came to me as a complete surprise. Additionally, some comments on the course were astoundingly angry, for which I was not very well prepared, either. Luckily, I am an experienced and thick-skinned teacher; in my mind, if the students need one course, which to hate sincerely, I will gladly let this course to be the one.

In the end, I want to say that I am fascinated by the different themes covered in this course, and I am convinced that all of the topics are of extreme importance for CHEM School students during the studies, as well as in their future working life. Therefore, my motto for this course continues to be: "Let's make this the best course ever!"