

Student Forum, September 26, 2014
Student Feedback Summary and Department Response

A student forum was hosted by the Publicity and Undergraduate Recruitment Committee (PURC) on Sept. 26, 2014. The forum was attended by 12 students. Faculty in attendance at the forum were: Matt Moffitt (chair), Neil Burford and Cornelia Bohne. Notes were taken by Sandra Carlson. The forum topics were: 1. Course Support; 2 Exchange and Travel Opportunities; 3. Student Workload; and 4. Curriculum Review. Details of student feedback on each topic are provided in the Forum Meeting Notes document. The current document provides a summary of student feedback on each topic, followed by the Department response.

1. Course Support.

a.) Student Feedback:

Need for support depends on distribution of evaluation and difficulty level within a course and is not generally constant throughout the term. Students prefer lecture office hours in classrooms rather than in the professor's office, where they feel rushed and less comfortable. Classrooms for office hours provide space to sit and discuss with other students, whether or not they have a specific question for the professor. Students prefer the 4:00-6:00 pm timeframe for course support since it conflicts less with other classes/labs. It was suggested that some students would benefit from a lab drop-in centre to practice lab skills.

b.) Department Response:

The Department will collect data on when current office hours and drop-in centres are most busy; these results will be used to implement a distribution of TA drop-in centre hours according to greatest need and to suggest a preferred distribution of office hours to professors. The Department will suggest to professors that whenever possible office hours be held in classrooms. Whenever possible, the Department will implement TA drop-in centre hours in the 4:00-6:00 pm timeframe and professors will be informed that students prefer this timeframe for office hours. The Department will also suggest to instructors that office/drop-in centre hours and locations be announced in the syllabus and on the course website at the beginning of a course. The suggestion

of a lab skills drop-in centre is not operationally feasible due to current resource limitations and safety requirements; however, the Department will pass this suggestion along to lab staff for consideration when designing future introductory labs. As well, new lab manuals in CHEM 101/102 will explicitly indicate which lab skills are learned/practiced in each lab; this should improve student learning in practical lab skills. The department is also making efforts to make courses more integrated and accessible to students. Starting with Chem101 in summer 2015, the course website and supporting materials will be integrated together into UVic's CourseSpaces.

2. Exchange and Travel Opportunities.

a.) Student Feedback:

A more visible and accessible list of exchange and travel opportunities on the Department website would be helpful. Students are interested in other opportunities for jobs and networking beside the career fair.

b.) Department Response:

The Department has moved the "Research Opportunities" link to the "News and Events" sidebar and renamed it "Research and Exchange Opportunities", adding links to Co-op opportunities, Inorganic Chemistry Exchange (ICE) and Reactive Intermediate Student Exchange (RISE) to the list: <http://www.uvic.ca/science/chemistry/undergraduate/Undergradresearch/index.php>. For further information, the Department refers students to the "career planning" page on the Department website: <http://www.uvic.ca/science/chemistry/undergraduate/Co-op/CareerPlanning.php> and to information on the Department mentoring program: <http://www.uvic.ca/science/chemistry/undergraduate/Chemistry%20Mentoring%20Program.php>. Students are encouraged to talk to Tom Fyles and Neil Burford for information on the Association of the Chemical Profession of British Columbia (ACPBC: <http://pchembc.ca/>) and the Canadian Society for Chemistry (CSC: <http://www.cheminst.ca/about/cic/csc>), respectively.

3. Student Workload.

a.) Student Feedback:

Students have concerns that first- and second-year lab reports are too time-intensive for the allotted time in between report due dates. Recent changes to 36X courses in response to workload concerns have helped a lot and have struck a better balance between workload and learning.

b.) Department Response:

The Department is aware of a workload issue concerning first- and second-year labs and has been working to correct this. In addition to recent workload-related changes to 36X courses, teachers are currently working on changes to CHEM 101 labs that are designed to improve student learning on writing lab reports, but will incidentally decrease the workload associated with repetitive lab write-ups. Students are encouraged to send other comments and concerns regarding student workload to the Department Chair, Neil Burford (nburford@uvic.ca)

4. Curriculum Review.

a.) Student Feedback:

Cornelia Bohne, the Curriculum Review Steering Committee chair, described the current curriculum review process to the students and asked for feedback on curriculum or the process. Students expressed various concerns/questions on such topics as time required to complete a degree, availability of summer courses, and the recent elimination of fourth year labs.

a.) Department Response:

Student comments and concerns with respect to curriculum are heard and noted by the Department. Students are encouraged to see further information on the curriculum review process on the Department website (<http://www.uvic.ca/science/chemistry/assets/docs/Curriculum%20Review1.php>), and to contact Cornelia Bohne (cornelia.bohne@gmail.com) to provide further feedback on the curriculum and curriculum review.