

Action plan based on students' feedback regarding the 1st semester of the 2022/2023 academic year

Department: Department of Molecular Biology
Faculty: Faculty of Medicine
Compulsory subjects: Medical Chemistry; Molecular Cell Biology I
Elective subjects: Basics of Medical Chemistry; Molecular Medicine Research

1. Response to the general comments:

We are pleased to see that the vast majority of the scores received on specific items of the questionnaire corresponded to or were slightly above the faculty average. We thank our students for acknowledging the strengths of the curriculum (logical and easy-to-follow lectures, well-organized practical teaching, well-defined examination requirements). This positive feedback further supports our efforts to keep these subjects an up-to-date and comprehensive pillar of the preclinical module in the medical training.

Items having received significantly more negative evaluation than the faculty average were the attendance on our lectures and extent of arousing your interest for the subject. The former is likely due to the availability of recordings throughout the semester. Though it might be tempting to skip the lectures and only watch the recordings in the exam period, we do believe that regular attendance at the lectures strengthens our students' motivation and prompts them to deal with the material regularly – a token of better understanding and a more in-depth knowledge. In addition, our laboratory practical classes are based on the material of the lectures, so proper understanding of the measurements also requires a regular attendance at the lectures.

We continue to do our best in highlighting the medical relevance and importance of the learning material. Our aim is to make you understand the molecular processes underlying human health and disease. However, these mechanisms are challenging to teach and study as they are so intangible and not as easy to see as anatomical structures. Reliable information on molecular systems can only be gained indirectly, through carefully designed experiments. However, the logical and amazing complexity of molecular pathways are admirable and fascinating, and we will try to put more effort and perseverance in making you understand and enjoy these principles.

2. Response to specific comments on compulsory subjects:

We are grateful for the positive comments acknowledging our high-quality teaching and for appreciating the preparedness and proficiency of some lecturers and lab teachers.

Criticism was focused on the following issues:

“Midterms can force some to study for the subject in middle of semester instead of in examination period. And exemptions can serve as a good motivation for many students”

In principle, we agree with your opinion as a midterm examination would encourage students master the material during the semester and that would surely deepen and broaden their knowledge. However, the current study and examination regulations of the university do not allow us to give the appropriate weight to the midterms. The facultative midterms, which we held for a few years were taken by a small minority of students, and mainly by those who would have adequately prepared for the exam, anyway. We do not wish

to hold midterm exams until we can find a way to impel every student to meet the minimal requirements of a compulsory midterm.

“Adding an Electrochemistry practical experiment as that would help in the overall understanding and solving calculations”

Let us kindly remind you that there is an electrochemistry lab in the practical course of Medical chemistry, and there are fortnightly seminars with the explicit aim of improving your problem-solving skills.

“The practices were very helpful! maybe you can make it be twice a week.”

Thank you for your suggestion. We are continuously struggling with lab room shortage and your proposal does not seem feasible for practical reasons. You might imply to have shorter labs more frequently, but we intentionally pulled labs together to provide enough time for longer experiments.

3. Response to specific comments on elective subjects:

“Focusing more on organic chemistry in lectures as that would help so many students who struggle with it in medical chemistry.”

Your valuable suggestion makes sense considering the high failure rates in the organic topics of the Medical chemistry exam. We will consider it. Thank you.

Date: 13 April, 2023