

General Course Information

CHEM 337 Organic Synthesis

0.125 EFTS 15 Points
Second Semester 2026

Description

This course is about the reactivity of organic molecules, and how this reactivity is used in the synthesis of important and interesting compounds. The topics covered by this course are:

- modern synthetic transformations, particularly focusing on the organic chemistry of B, Si, P and S
- applications of highly reactive intermediates in synthesis
- neighbouring group participation and rearrangement reactions
- stereochemistry in organic chemistry; how stereochemistry affects and controls reactivity, and how stereogenic centres may be constructed selectively

Timetable

Lectures: Two hours of lectures per week. Details to be confirmed on 'My Timetable' and the Web.

Tutorials: One hour of tutorials per week. Details to be confirmed on 'My Timetable' and the Web.

Students should note that in the Science Faculty that the average student is responsible for approximately 4.5 hours of additional study for each hour of lecture at the 300-level.

Course Coordinator

Professor Antony Fairbanks, SPCS, JvH room 631, ext 95217,
email: antony.fairbanks@canterbury.ac.nz

Assessment

Test 1: 20%
Test 2: 20%
End of course examination: 60%

Examination and Formal Tests

Term 3 test: 90 Minutes, with questions from Antony Fairbanks.

Term 4 test: 90 Minutes, with questions from Dan Foley.

End of year Exam: Three hours, with questions from Antony Fairbanks and Dan Foley.

Textbooks

Organic Chemistry, Clayden, Greeves, Wothers and Warren, Oxford University Press, 2001 is the preferred general textbook for the course. Copies are available on reserve in the Engineering and Physical Sciences Library

Other more specialised textbooks that will also be useful for the course are as follows:

S.E. Thomas, 'Organic Synthesis: The Roles of Boron and Silicon', Oxford Chemistry Primer No. 1, Oxford University Press, 1991.

G. Whitham, 'Organosulfur Chemistry', Oxford Chemistry Primer No. 33, Oxford University Press, 1995.

C.J. Moody and G.H. Whitham, 'Reactive Intermediates', Oxford Primer No. 8., Oxford University Press, 1992.

L. Harwood, 'Polar Rearrangements', Oxford Chemistry Primer No. 5, Oxford University Press, 1995.

G. Proctor, 'Stereoselectivity in Organic Synthesis', Oxford Chemistry Primer No. 63, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Prerequisites

P: 30 points from [CHEM212](#) or [CHEM242](#) or [BCHM212](#) or [BCHM206](#).

R: CHEM322

Molecular Models

To purchase approved safety glasses, lab coats or model kits go to:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/science/shop/>.

The collection point for purchases is inside the southern entry to the Ernest Rutherford Building, Monday to Friday between the hours 8.30 – 10.00 am and 1.30 – 3.00 pm for the first two weeks of the semester.

Web-based resources

Various learning resources (lecture material, reference links, quizzes, discussion forums etc.) for this course are available via the University of Canterbury's *Learn* web site -- <http://learn.canterbury.ac.nz/>. This site will also be used regularly as a means of communication and information distribution for all of your Canterbury courses. You should familiarise yourself with *Learn* as soon as possible.

Goal of the Course

This course aims to develop a mechanistic (curly arrow) and stereochemical understanding of a range of synthetic transformations using the principles of Organic Chemistry. There is a particular focus on the application of synthetic chemistry for the multi-step synthesis of complex organic molecules which contain multiple functional groups, together with several stereogenic centres and/or aromatic/heterocyclic rings.

Learning Outcomes

As a student in this course I will develop the ability to:

- Solve a variety of mechanistic problems in organic chemistry
- Give curly arrow mechanisms for many common synthetic processes, particularly those involving reagents that contain B, Si, S or P and/or involve high energy reactive intermediates
- Suggest reagents that may be used to achieve a particular selective transformation
- Explain the regio- and stereochemical outcomes of a range of synthetic reactions
- Predict the structure of a product that is formed when presented with a set of reagents
- Plan a reaction scheme for the synthesis of a molecule containing multiple functional groups using selective transformations
- Identify and mechanistically explain several different types of molecular rearrangement
- Rationalize a range of stereoselective processes by thinking in three dimensions
- Draw 2D diagrams that represent 3D reaction processes

Transferable Skill Register

As a student in this course I will develop the following skills:

- Problem solving. This is a key skill that is transferable to most careers.
- Pattern spotting and logical analysis. The key to Organic Chemistry is the ability to understand similarities between processes which allows enormous simplification / rationalisation. *This is a highly useful skill that allows the rationalisation of huge numbers of different reactions into a manageable and quite limited number of distinct processes.*
- Three-dimensional spatial awareness. The ability to think about molecules and chemical reactions in three dimensions is highly useful transferable skill.
- Presentation. A particularly important skill is being able to represent three dimensional situations in a two-dimensional format (i.e. on paper).

Summary of the Course Content

The topics covered by this course are:

MODERN SYNTHETIC TRANSFORMATIONS

(12 lectures + 6 tutorials)

This part of the course will include discussion of the synthetic organic chemistry of reagents containing boron, silicon, phosphorus and sulfur, with particular emphasis of the utility of these heteroatoms in modern synthetic processes. The course will also cover an introduction to the organic chemistry of free radicals and carbenes, again with emphasis on the utility of these reactive intermediates for selective synthetic transformations.

Lecturer: Professor Antony Fairbanks, JvH Room 631, ext 92517, antony.fairbanks@canterbury.ac.nz

NEIGHBOURING GROUP PARTICIPATION AND REARRANGEMENT REACTIONS

(4 lectures + 2 tutorials)

In many instances remote functional groups within a molecule can participate when reaction is initiated at another centre. In certain cases even sigma and pi bonds can also participate, something which may lead to a rearrangement reaction. This part of the course will examine the mechanistic basis and stereoelectronic requirements for these types of process, and their applications and utility in organic synthesis.

Lecturer: Dr Daniel Foley, Julius von Haast 630A, ext 90479, daniel.foley@canterbury.ac.nz

DIASTEREOSELECTIVE SYNTHESIS

(8 lectures + 4 tutorials)

Developing synthetic strategies to enable the efficient construction of complex molecules whilst controlling the configuration of stereogenic centres is a key goal in organic synthesis. This part of the course will focus on a variety of synthetic transformations in which the stereochemical outcome of the reaction is controlled.

Lecturer: Dr Daniel Foley, Julius von Haast 630A, ext 90479, daniel.foley@canterbury.ac.nz

GENERAL INFORMATION | TE KIMI MŌHIOHIO 2026

Policy on 'Dishonest Practice' | Ngā Takahitanga me ngā Tinihanga

The University has strict guidelines regarding 'dishonest practice' and 'breach of instructions' in relation to the completion and submission of examinable material. In cases where dishonest practice is involved in tests or other work submitted for credit, a department may choose to not mark such work – see the online guidelines in relation to '[Academic Integrity](#)'.

The School of Physical and Chemical Sciences upholds this policy. It considers plagiarism, collusion, copying and ghost writing – all detailed below – to be unacceptable and dishonest practices:

- **Plagiarism | Tārua Whānako** is the presentation of any material (text, data or figures, on any medium including computer files) from any other source without clear and adequate acknowledgement of the source.
- **Collusion** is the presentation of work performed in whole, or in part, in conjunction with another person or persons, but submitted as if it has been completed by the named author alone. This interpretation is not intended to discourage students from having discussions about how to approach an assigned task and incorporating general ideas that come from those discussions into their own individual submissions, but acknowledgement is necessary.
- **Copying** is the use of material (in any medium, including computer files) produced by another person or persons with or without their knowledge and approval. **This includes copying of the lab reports (raw data may be shared within the group if permitted or required by the experiment) – data analysis and interpretation of obtained results MUST be performed individually.**
- **Ghost writing** is the use of other person(s) (whether with or without payment) to prepare all or part of an item of work submitted for assessment.
- **Generative AI Tools: The following shall apply to all assessments in this course, except where a lecturer has specifically stated otherwise in written instructions for an assessment.**
In all assessments, you are strictly prohibited from using generative artificial intelligence (AI) to generate any materials or content related to the assessment. This is because students are expected to solve problems and demonstrate knowledge and understanding without the assistance of AI. The use of AI-generated content is not permitted and may be considered a breach of academic integrity. Please ensure that all work submitted is the result of your own human knowledge, skills, and efforts.

Special consideration of assessment | Ngā Pairuri Motuhake

'[Special Consideration](#)' for an item of assessment is for students who have covered the work involved but have been prevented from demonstrating their knowledge or skills at the time of the assessment due to unforeseen circumstances, whether illness, injury, bereavement, car crash or any other extenuating circumstance *beyond one's control*. Special Consideration for a test/exam may be because a student has not sat it or has done so with impaired performance. Applications can be submitted via the above link and must be made **no later than five working days after the assessment due date**. Note that special consideration is **not available for items worth less than 10% of the overall course mark**. In the case of illness or injury, medical consultation should normally have taken place either shortly before or within 24 hours after the due date for the required work or test/examination.

Note that you may be required to sit a special exam or your grade may not be changed if there is insufficient evidence of your performance from other invigilated assessment items in the course. ***You have the right to appeal any decision.***

It is important to understand that Special Consideration is only available *where course work has been covered*, and the inability to demonstrate this fully is both *no longer possible* AND is due to *unexpected circumstances beyond one's control*. Thus Special Consideration is **NOT available for:**

- essays, assignments or quizzes where an extension of time is available to complete the assessment item (see below for the process to involved);
- missed lectures during the semester;
- experiencing examination anxiety;
- having several examinations or assessments close together;
- known impairment, such as chronic illness (medical or psychological), injury or disability unless medical evidence confirms that the circumstances were exacerbated, despite appropriate management, at the time of assessment;
- mistaking the date or time of an examination (this is a circumstance one can control!);
- failing to turn up to an examination or test because of sleeping in (a circumstance as above!);
- where applications are repeatedly made for the same or similar reason, then the application may be declined on the grounds that the reason is not unexpected;
- where the application is made at the time of the assessment but the supporting documentation is received significantly after this date or after the date results are released; or
- the application is made following the release of results (unless under exceptional circumstances).

Extensions of deadlines | Tononga Wā Āpiti

Where an extension may be granted for an assessment item, this will be decided by application to the course co-ordinator and/or the lecturer concerned.

Late withdrawal from a course

If you are prevented by extenuating circumstances from completing the course after the final date for withdrawing from the course, you may apply for special consideration for late discontinuation. For details on special consideration, or to make an application, refer to the Examinations Office website <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/exams/>. Applications must be submitted **within five days** of the end of the main examination period for the semester.

Missing of tests | Te Matangaro i ngā Whakamātautau

In rare cases a student will not be able to sit a test. In such cases, the student should consult with the course co-ordinator to arrange alternative procedures. **This must be done well in advance of the set date for the test.**

Past tests and exams

Past tests can be found on our [Chemistry Undergraduate](#) website. Past exams can be found on the [Library website](#).

Submission of reports and assignments

Reports (including lab reports) and assignments should be handed in on time. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (such as illness or bereavement). If an extension is required, as early as possible you should request it from the lecturer concerned.

Note: If you do not submit an assignment for assessment, you will be allotted zero marks, which will affect your final result. You should ensure that you pick up marked assignments and keep them until the end of the course as evidence that the work was completed and marked in the case that either is disputed. To guard against accidental loss, it would be prudent to keep photocopies or electronic copies of anything submitted.

Late Work

Acceptance of late work for assessment will be at the discretion of the course coordinator and/or the lecturer concerned. If your assessment is likely to be late, please contact the relevant of these people **before the assessment is due**. Never assume that an extension will be automatically granted – some courses have the policy of no late work being accepted. A commonly exercised policy is to deduct 10% of the total marks for each day that the work is late, where weekends and public holidays also count as such days.

Marks and Grades | Taumata Ako

The following numbers should be considered as a guide to the expected grades under normal circumstances.

Please note that for all invigilated assessments (tests and exams) worth 33% and above, failure to obtain a mark of at least 40% will result in a final grade no higher than an R at 100 and 200 level; in general this requirement will not be applied at 300 level, but if it is then the course coordinator will inform the class and it will result in a final grade no higher than a C–.

Grade:	A+	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D	E
Minimum mark %:	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	40	0

The School reserves the right to adjust this mark/grade conversion, up or down, to achieve consistency of assessments standards.

Reconsideration of Grades

Students should, in the first instance, speak to the course co-ordinator about their marks. If they cannot reach an agreeable solution, or have questions about their grade in a course, students should then speak to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, [Assoc Prof Greg Russell](#). Students can appeal any decision made on their final grade. You can apply at the Registry for reconsideration of the final grade within four weeks of the date of publication of final results. Be aware that there are time limits for each step of the appeals process.

Student Accessibility Services | Te Whaikaha

Students can speak with someone at [Student Accessibility Service](#), phone: 369 3334 (or ext. 93334), email: sas@canterbury.ac.nz.

Academic Advice

[Assoc Prof Greg Russell](#) is the coordinator of undergraduate chemistry courses. His interest is in the academic performance and well-being of all such students. Anyone experiencing problems with their chemistry courses or requiring guidance about their B.Sc. in Chemistry should get in contact with Greg.

Staff-Class Rep Liaison

[Assoc Prof Greg Russell](#) is in charge of liaison with students in chemistry courses. Your class will appoint a student representative to the liaison committee at the start of the semester. Please feel free to talk to the Academic Liaison or the student rep about any problems or concerns that you might have.

Greg Russell (greg.russell@canterbury.ac.nz, tel. 369 5129)

Director of Undergraduate Studies

School of Physical and Chemical Sciences

2026