Physical Science Department
Student Learning Assessment

Course: Chemistry 203 (General Chemistry II) **Semester:** Summer 2012

Course Coordinator: Dr. Tracy Mitchell **No. of Students:** 38

Part 1: Exit Exam Analysis

Assessment Instrument Description: The Exit Exam consisted of 70 questions from the 2006 Second Term General Chemistry Exam, which is a timed (120 minute) multiple-choice exam, prepared by the American Chemical Society (ACS). The majority (i.e. 59/70) of the ACS examination questions are linked to the Chemistry 203 student learning outcomes (SLOs). Students were informed that 30 (or more) of the 70 questions must be correctly answered to pass the Exit Exam. After reviewing the students' scores with the course instructors, the passing score was revised to 27/70. The 59 questions that correspond to the Chemistry 203 SLOs are summarized below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Summary of 59 Questions by Topic and SLOs

Topic	Student Learning Outcomes Students will solve qualitative and quantitative problems which involve:	No. of Quest.
Kinetics	1. Recalling definitions and terms relating to chemical kinetics. 3a: Predicting the impact of certain factors (concentration, temperature, catalysts, activation energy) on the rate of chemical reactions. 3b: Calculating the reaction rate given concentration and time. 3c: Relating the formation of products to the rate of disappearance of reactants given a balanced equation. 3d: Formulating rate laws from exp. data or a proposed mechanism. 3e: Recognizing the differences between first & second order reactions.	9
Equilibrium	1. Recalling definitions and terms relating to chemical equilibrium. 3f: Writing the equilibrium-constant expressions for reactions. 3h: Manipulating the equilibrium constant to reflect changes in the chemical equation. 3i: Calculating an equilibrium constant from given concentrations or pressures (or vice versa). 3j: Predicting the outcome of disrupting a system at equilibrium by changing concentrations, volume or pressure, or temperature using Le Chatlier's principle. 3s: Calculating K_{sp} from molar solubility and molar solubility from K_{sp}.	9

Topic	Student Learning Outcomes Students will solve qualitative and quantitative problems which involve:	No. of Quest.
Acid-Base Equilibrium	1. Recalling definitions and terms relating to acid-base chemistry. 2. Applying previous knowledge of acid-base chemistry in aq. soln. 3k: Defining and identifying Arrhenius, Bronsted-Lowry, and Lewis acids and bases. 3l: Defining, identifying, and relating (strengths) of conj. acid-base pairs. 3m: Relating (mathematically) the $[H^+]$, the $[OH^-]$, the pH and pOH of aqueous solutions using K_w and pK_w at $25^\circ C$. 3n: Calculating the pH of a strong acid, strong base, weak acid, weak base, salt, or buffer solution given initial concentrations and equilibrium constants, K_a or K_b, when appropriate. 3o: Calculating the K_a or K_b from an initial concentration and pH or from K_w for conjugate acid-base pairs. 3q: Defining and identifying buffer solutions. 3r: Interpreting and extracting the information revealed by an acid-base titration curve.	12
Solubility Equilibrium	3s: Calculating K_{sp} from the molar solubility (or vice versa).	1
Thermodynamics	1: Recalling definitions and terms relating to thermodynamics. 2: Apply previous knowledge of chemical reactions in aqueous solution (acid-base, precipitation, redox) to provide a foundation for topics focusing on chemical equilibrium and thermodynamics. 3u: Recalling the three Laws of Thermodynamics. 3v: Defining, predicting (via sign designation) and calculating (via Hess's Law or tabulated standard state values) the enthalpy, entropy, and free energy changes for reactions. 3w: Relating (mathematically) the enthalpy, entropy, and free energy changes for reactions using the Gibbs-Hemholtz equation. 3y: Relating (mathematically and theoretically) the standard free energy change and equilibrium constant for a reaction.	12
Electrochemistry	3aa: Defining and identifying oxidation, reduction, oxidizing agents and reducing agents. 3bb: Assigning oxidation numbers to isolated atoms or atoms within molecules or ions. 3dd: Identifying and defining the anode, cathode and salt bridge as applicable to voltaic/galvanic and electrolytic cells. 3ee: Ranking oxidizing agents and reducing agents by strength given standard reduction potentials. 3ff: Calculating standard cell potentials from standard reduction potentials and nonstandard cell potentials using the Nernst equation. 3hh: Relating (mathematically) the amounts of products and reactants in redox reactions to electrical charge.	11
Nuclear Chemistry	3ii: Defining the properties of alpha, beta, and gamma radiation. 3jj: Constructing and balancing nuclear equations using nuclide symbols. 3ll: Calculating the ages of objects or the amounts of radioactive nuclei remaining given the initial amount and half-life.	3
Coordination Chemistry	----------	0
Laboratory Concepts	4: Draw logical conclusions from laboratory activities using the scientific method and knowledge of chemical kinetics, chemical equilibria, acid-base chemistry, selective precipitation/qualitative analysis and electrochemistry.	2

Table 2: Summary of 59 Questions by Difficulty Index

Difficulty Index*	No. of Questions	Question Difficulty
0.60 or above	19	Least Difficult
0.55 - 0.59	13	----------
0.50 – 0.54	8	----------
0.49 or below	19	Most Difficult

*The difficulty index is the percentage of students who responded correctly to an item.

Overview of Results

Range of Scores Possible: 0 – 70 (0% - 100%)
Range of Scores Achieved: 17 – 58 (24% - 82%)

Average Score: 37/70 (53%)
Benchmark Score: Originally: 30/70 (43%)
Modified: 27/70 (39%)

Number of Students Achieving the Benchmark Score: Originally: 31/38 (82%)
Modified: 33/38 (87%)
Number of Students Not Achieving the Benchmark Score: Originally: 7/38 (18%)
Modified: 5/38 (13%)

Table 3: Questions Answered Incorrectly by Greater Than 55% Of Students (Overview)

Question No.	Topic	% of Students with Incorrect Responses		Difficulty Index
		Wright	Nation	
2	Kinetics	61%	63%	0.37
6	Kinetics	61%	53%	0.47
14	Thermodynamics	76%	79%	0.21
18	Acid-Base Equilibrium	61%	37%	0.63
24	Solubility Product	71%	63%	0.37
35	Acid-Base Equilibrium	63%	51%	0.49
52	Thermodynamics	74%	74%	0.26
54	Electrochemistry	92%	81%	0.19
58	Electrochemistry	68%	53%	0.47
63	Electrochemistry	61%	60%	0.40
65	Nuclear Chemistry	58%	50%	0.50

Note: Only questions from the original set of 59 are included in Table 3 and are eligible for further analysis.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The Physical Science Department attempted to merge the Exit Exam concept, a set of questions used to verify that students have attained a minimum of essential skills from the course, and the nationally standardized American Chemical Society Examination used to gauge the skills of Wright College student against students nationwide. Although the merging of these two types of student learning assessment is not ideal, one clear benefit for students is that this format requires students to take only one exam not two during the already exam-heavy final week of the semester. Overall, the analysis of the data generated indicates that this merger was not only efficient but successful. Students averaged 37/70, which is above the original benchmark score of 30/70 and the modified benchmark score of 27/70. Furthermore, 87% of the 38 Chemistry 203 students met the modified benchmark score and passed the Exit Exam. Finally, of the 5 students failing the ACS Exit exam and not only qualifying but also sitting for the Departmental Appeals Exam, 5 students passed with a minimum score of 10/20.

The 59/70 questions which relate to Chemistry 203 student learning outcomes covered the majority of Chemistry 203 topics and varied in the level of difficulty (see Tables 1 and 2). 48/59 questions were correctly answered by at least 55% of the students. A detailed question analysis was performed on the 11 questions that were answered incorrectly by more than 55% of the students.

Kinetics:

At least 55% of students correctly answered 7/9 questions relating to chemical kinetics.

- Question 2 was answered incorrectly by 61% of the Wright College students as compared to 63% of students nationwide. **This question involves interpreting various concentration versus time graphs to identify a particular rate relationships (SLO 3e).** The greatest number of students (37%) that missed this question did not recognize that the slope was negative for a first order ln[A] vs. t graph.
- Question 6 was answered incorrectly by 61% of the Wright College students as compared to 53% of students nationwide. **This question involves recognizing the order of a decomposition reaction from a straight line plot of 1/[A] vs. time (SLO 3e).** The greatest number of students (32%) that missed this question did not recognize that the reaction was second order. These students misidentified the reaction as zero order.

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Questions 2 and 6.

Recommendation: Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding and request greater coverage of these aspects of kinetics (summarized below). Also, encourage instructors to assign or review problems from the **Visualizing Concepts** section at the end of each chapter to expose students to types of questions encountered less frequently.

1. Graphs for first order reactions (ln[A] vs. time) exhibit negative slopes, while those for second order reactions (1/[A] vs. time) exhibit positive slopes.

Acid-Base Equilibrium:

At least 55% of students correctly answered 10/12 questions relating to acid-base equilibrium.

- Question 18 was answered incorrectly by 61% of the Wright College students as compared to 37% of students nationwide. **The question involves identifying the best molecular-level representation of an aqueous solution of a weak acid (SLO 2).** The greatest number of students (34%) that missed this question thought that weak acids primarily dissociate in aqueous solution rather than exist primarily as intact molecules.
- Question 35 was answered incorrectly by 63% of the Wright College students as compared to 51% of students nationwide. **This question involves recalling definitions and relating terms with respect to**

acid-base chemistry (SLO 1 and 3m). The greatest number of students (34%) that missed this question seemed to confuse the term hydronium (H_3O^+) with the term hydroxide (OH^-) or was unaware that a higher pH implies a higher OH^- concentration.

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Question 35. However, a much greater percentage of Wright College students had difficulty with Question 18, which suggests that SLO 2 is not being fully achieved.

Recommendation: Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding and request greater emphasis on these aspects of acid-base equilibrium (summarized below). Also, encourage instructors to assign or review problems from the **Visualizing Concepts** section at the end of each chapter to expose students to questions involving molecular diagrams which are encountered less frequently.

1. Strong acids dissociate completely in aqueous solutions. Weak acids only partially dissociate in aqueous solutions.
2. A higher concentration of the hydronium (H_3O^+) ion leads to a lower pH.

Solubility Equilibrium:

Only one question on the ACS exam addressed solubility equilibrium.

- Question 24 was answered incorrectly by 71% of the Wright College students as compared to 63% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to calculate the molar solubility given the K_{sp} (SLO 3s).** The greatest number of students (39%) made a common (careless) mistake of disregarding the coefficients in the chemical equation (obtaining $K_{sp} = x^2$).

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Question 24.

Recommendation: Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding (summarized below).

1. Equilibrium constant expressions contain concentration terms raised to a power of each substance's respective coefficient.

Thermodynamics: At least 55% of students correctly answered 10/12 questions relating to chemical thermodynamics.

- Question 14 was answered incorrectly by 76% of the Wright College students as compared to 79% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to select the sign (positive or negative) for ΔH and ΔS for the spontaneous dissolution of a salt (KNO_3) in water. (This question addresses SLO 3v and 3w.)** The majority of students (50%) correctly concluded the sign of entropy, but incorrectly concluded the sign of enthalpy for this dissolution process. Students are first introduced to enthalpy in Chemistry 201. Although enthalpy is reviewed in Chemistry 203, the fact that endothermic process results in its beaker becoming cold and that an exothermic process results in its beaker becoming warm is not typically revisited, which may partially explain the lower level of student achievement on this question.
- Question 52 was answered incorrectly by 74% of the Wright College students as compared to 74% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to recall the second law of thermodynamics (SLO 3u).** 34% of students that missed this question did not make the distinction between the ΔS_{system} (which addresses the randomness or disorder of the reaction) and $\Delta S_{universe}$ (which addresses the spontaneity of the reaction). Another 32% of the students that incorrectly answered this question thought that $\Delta S_{universe} = 0$ for a spontaneous process (i.e. that the $\Delta S_{system} = -\Delta S_{surroundings}$).

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Questions 14 and 52.

Recommendation: Remind Chemistry 201 instructors that thorough coverage of net ionic equations, enthalpy, and the dissolution of salts is necessary to prepare students adequately for Chemistry 203. Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding and request greater coverage of these aspects of thermodynamics (summarized below). Furthermore, remind instructors that the students must memorize the Gibbs-Hemholtz equation ($\Delta G = \Delta H_{system} - T\Delta S_{system}$) as it is not given for reference by the ACS exam and suggest that instructors introduce more conceptual problems involving thermodynamic relationships in their instruction and examinations to adequately prepare students for the ACS exam.

1. In an endothermic process the solution temperature decreases, which results in its beaker becoming cold. In an exothermic process the solution temperature increases, which results in its beaker becoming warm.
2. ΔS_{system} addresses the randomness or disorder of the reaction and $\Delta S_{universe}$ addresses the spontaneity of the reaction.

Note: Although Chemistry 201 has a thermochemistry lab activity, Chemistry 203 does not. An experiment that not only reviews the enthalpy changes associated with neutralization reactions and dissolution processes, but also incorporates the aspects of entropy and free energy changes should be introduced into Chemistry 203.

Electrochemistry: At least 55% of students correctly answered 8/11 questions relating to electrochemistry.

- Question 54 was answered incorrectly by 92% of the Wright College students as compared to 81% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to understand the process of electrolysis for an aqueous salt solution (SLO 3dd and 3ee).** The greatest number of students (53%) that missed this question assumed that water would not undergo electrolysis.
- Question 58 was answered incorrectly by 68% of the Wright College students as compared to 53% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to know definitions related to electrochemistry (galvanic cell and salt bridge) (SLO 3dd).** The greatest number of students that missed this question (50%) thought that the salt bridge provided a path for the flow of free electrons. Students may have confused electrons flow with ion flow.
- Question 63 was answered incorrectly by 61% of the Wright College students as compared to 60% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to know definition of a reducing agent and identify the best reducing agent given standard reduction potentials (SLO 3aa and SLO 3ee).** The greatest number of students that missed this question (32%) incorrectly chose the worst oxidizing agent (i.e. the substance less readily reduced).

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Questions 54, 58 and 63.

Recommendation: Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding and request greater coverage of these aspects of electrochemistry (summarized below). Furthermore, encourage instructors to explain the difference between electrolysis of a molten salt and the electrolysis of an aqueous salt solution.

1. When an aqueous salt solution undergoes electrolysis, water may participate in the electron transfer events. The two half reactions that yield the least negative E_{cell} value upon pairing will actually participate in the electrolytic redox event.
2. The terms galvanic cell, voltaic cell, and battery are synonymous terms referring to spontaneous redox reactions marked with positive E_{cell} values.
3. In a galvanic cell the purpose of the salt bridge is to maintain charge balance in the cell by

allowing cations to flow toward the cathode and anions to flow toward the anode. An external wire connects the electrodes in a galvanic cell and provides a path for the flow of electrons.

4. Stronger oxidizing agents undergo reduction and have more positive standard reduction potentials. Stronger reducing agents undergo oxidation and have more positive standard oxidation potentials.

Nuclear Chemistry: At least 55% of students correctly answered 2/3 questions relating to nuclear chemistry.

- Question 65 was answered incorrectly by 58% of the Wright College students as compared to 50% of students nationwide. **This question requires students to calculate the amount of radioactive nuclei remaining given the initial amount, the half-life, and the time elapsed (SLO 3ll).** The greatest number of students (32%) that missed this question did not recognize that three half-lives had elapsed or did not understand the meaning of half-live.

Conclusion: When compared to students nationwide, Wright College students are similarly challenged by Questions 65.

Recommendation: Inform Chemistry 203 instructors of the apparent weaknesses in student understanding and request greater coverage of these aspects of electrochemistry (summarized below).

1. Radioactive decay follows first order kinetics.
2. The half-life of a substance is the time that it takes for a sample to become half of its initial amount.

Note: Students preformed exceptionally well on the 9 **Equilibrium** questions and 2 **Laboratory Concept** questions with at least 55% of students answering each of these questions correctly.

Conclusions and Recommendations (Summary): Although 87% (of the 38) Chemistry 203 students met the modified benchmark score of 27/70 and passed the Exit Exam, the data collected indicates that emphasis on particular aspects of chemical (and nuclear) kinetics, acid-base equilibrium, chemical thermodynamics, and electrochemistry as well as the introduction of practice questions utilizing molecular diagrams and graphs may serve to enhance student learning. The addition a laboratory activity that focuses on thermodynamic (enthalpy, entropy and free-energy) changes for neutralization reactions and dissolution processes as well as another lab activity that includes the titration of a weak base by a strong acid would further support student understanding of these concepts. Currently, Chemistry 203 does not have a thermochemistry lab activity or an acid-base lab that evaluates the titration of a weak base with a strong acid.

The data indicates that the majority of students demonstrated competency with regard to the student learning outcomes for Chemistry 203. Students appeared to have attained the strongest understanding of chemical equilibrium and the weakest understanding of electrochemistry. Therefore, instructors should be encouraged to provide ample time for the instruction of electrochemistry as well as ample problem-solving opportunities.

Part 2: ACS Exam Analysis

Assessment Instrument Description: The 2006 Second Term General Chemistry Exam is a 70-question, multiple-choice exam, prepared by the American Chemical Society (ACS) to assess the knowledge gained by students after completing the second semester of the General Chemistry sequence (i.e. Chemistry 203). Composite norms provided by ACS for this exam are based on the scores of 1,315 students in 16 colleges.

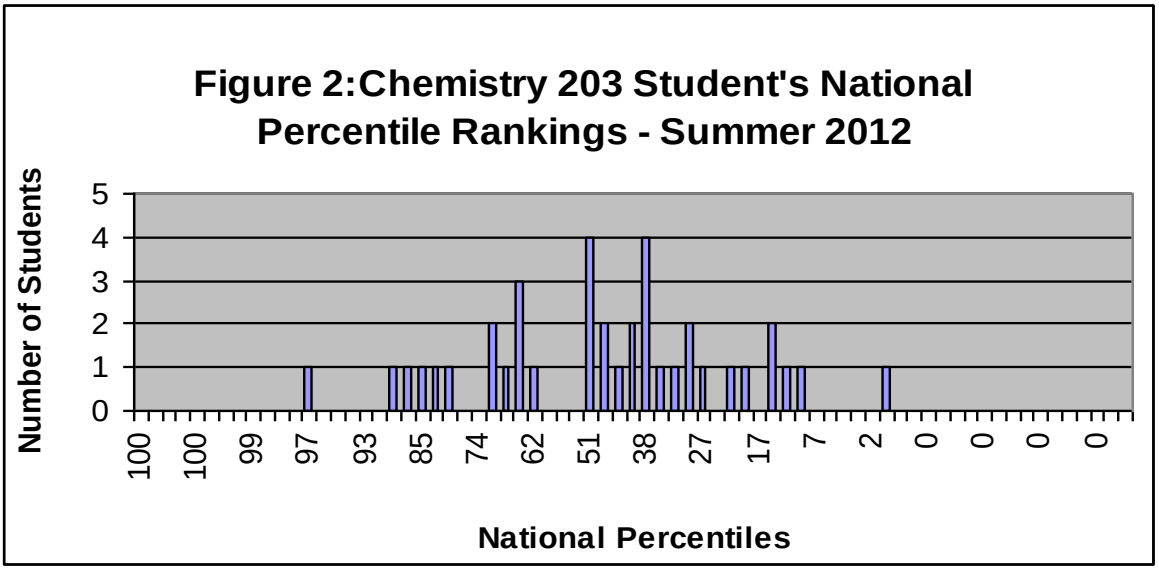
Range of Scores Possible: 0 – 70 (0% - 100%)
Range of Scores Achieved: 17 – 58 (24% - 82%)

Average Score: 37/70 (53%)
National Average Score: 38/70 (54%)

Number of Students Achieving the National Average: 17/38 (45%)
Number of Students Not Achieving the National Average: 21/38 (55%)

Table 7: Summary of Chemistry 203 Student Achievement

Score	National Percentile	Number of Chem 203 Students
53 - 70	90 - 100	1
48 - 52	80 - 89	5
45 - 47	70 - 79	2
41 - 44	60 - 69	5
38 - 40	50 - 59	4
35 - 37	40 - 49	5
31 - 34	30 - 39	8
28 - 30	20 - 29	2
24 - 27	10 - 19	4
0 - 23	0 - 9	2



Summary: As evidenced by the data in Table 7 and Figure 2, 17/38 (i.e. 45% of the) Chemistry 203 students scored at or above the national average. In fact, one student scored above the 90th percentile. Likewise, 21/38 (i.e. 55% of the) students scored below the national average with two students scoring below the 10th percentile. Figure 3 illustrates the Chemistry 203 Student Score Distribution from Summer 2012.