LABORATORY BREAKAGE FEE

HISTORY....
In 1994, the cost for replacing glassware in the teaching laboratories was about $25,000 per year. But most importantly, a significant portion of this was because students were throwing away perfectly good glassware rather than have to spend a few minutes cleaning it. This was unacceptable from an environmental and a cost perspective. Therefore the chemistry laboratory breakage fee was implemented. The next year, only $8,000 was spent on replacing the glassware. So the system works!

*It is not a money making exercise, the money is only used to replace equipment broken or lost from students drawers.*

Unfortunately, scientific equipment is expensive and glassware does break. A list of the replacement costs for equipment is updated at the beginning of each academic year. These prices are from the supplier catalogue and are the cost a student will be charged. We do not make a profit from this process; we recover what has been lost. For safety reasons, we have to replace the glassware with new equipment from a reputable source.

Please note that the breakage fee is referenced in the University Calendar under "Mandatory Supplementary Fees for Courses" and it’s referred to on the Course Information Sheet ([link to courses page](#)) for any course where it is in effect.

**How does the breakage fee system work?**
In any course where the student has individual equipment drawers, students are required at the beginning of a course to carefully check the equipment in their personal drawers to make sure that all the equipment is present, that it is clean and that it is in good, usable condition. This means it should be inspected for cracks etc. Anything that is broken and unusable at this time will be replaced FREE OF CHARGE.

Once check-in has been completed, the students sign a form indicating that they accept responsibility for the equipment until they checkout - we keep the original signed form until the end of the course. This is like any rental agreement.... if you rent a car, you check it over before you take it because you know you will have to pay for any damage that occurs while you it is in your possession.

**IMPLICATIONS:**
*By signing the check-in form, the student is accepting that the equipment is all present, clean and usable, and that they agree to look after it and be responsible for it until checkout.*

Once the form is signed, students can lock the drawers are locked. This means each week that the student has to look after their own equipment as they are responsible for it. We will not issue free replacements once a student has signed the form. If a student refuses to sign the form, they will not be able to perform any laboratory work and hence they will not be able to complete the course.

During the course, any equipment that is broken is recorded and replaced by the laboratory technician. Unfortunately, glass is fragile and it can’t just be glued back together (chemical solvents will react with the glue). In some cases, it may be possible that our glass blower can repair the equipment, but it is often cheaper to buy simple glassware rather than repair it.
At the end of each laboratory period, any equipment that is left out is placed in a lost and found drawer, and any drawers that were left unlocked are tagged and secured by the TA’s. If a student is careful and thoughtful during the semester and does not lose or break anything, then there is no cost to them.

At the end of the course, every student is required to checkout, regardless of dropping or withdrawing, if you sign in you must sign out. Then any missing or broken equipment is recorded and added to any equipment that was replaced during the semester. If necessary, the student is given an individual bill at the checkout session for the cost of replacing the equipment. The bill can be paid at the Chemistry main office SA229 during normal office hours. When they are given the bill, the student is asked to sign it. Failure to pay the bill by the due date will result in a further late fee and ultimately a withhold of University services. If a student fails to check out by the last week of the laboratory part of a course, then the checkout will be performed by the laboratory staff at an additional cost of $30 plus the cost of any missing equipment, a copy of the bill will be emailed to the student.

Why don't we take out insurance?

The cost of an insurance premium versus the deductible is prohibitive. The premium would require that all students would have to share that cost rather than the just the ones who break or lose their equipment. It seems better to use the money saved to pay for things like new communal equipment, computers or for more instructors, right?

What can you do to avoid having to pay?

- Check-in **carefully**!
- **Remember** to put all your equipment away at the end of each laboratory period.
- Be **careful** when you open your drawers.
- Avoid knocking the glass against other pieces of equipment or the bench etc.
- Make sure equipment is **secure** when you put it on the bench or set up apparatus.
- Be **careful** how you put equipment back into the drawers.
- Be **careful** when you close your drawers.
- Either don’t loan it to friends or remember to ask for it back.
- **Remember** to lock your drawers at the end of a laboratory period.
- Don’t leave the combinations on the back of your locks.
- Watch for theft....some students will steal equipment from other students and from us.