

BIO-413: Grading Procedure for Weeks 7-9 (McKinney)

Dear BIO-413 Students,

Some of you have asked questions about the grading procedure for my part of the BIO-413 course (weeks 7-9). Here's my response (below). I hope it's all clear but but please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any further questions (or you can ask me in class).

> Exam

For my section of BIO-413 there will be one written exam on December 3rd (week 12) for the material covered in weeks 7-9. The exams will be in multiple-choice and short-answer formats, very similar to the written exercises. I do not tolerate cheating on exams. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be asked to leave the examination room and will receive a grade of "1.0" for that exam.

Your answers on the exam may be written in French or English or both. You will not be graded on grammar, spelling, penmanship, etc., but if I can't read or understand what you have written then I can't give you credit for your answers, so please do your best to write legibly and coherently.

For my (McKinney) section of BIO-413, the exam will count for 80% of the grade. The exercises will count for the other 20% (explained below).

> Exercises

There will be written exercises in multiple-choice and short-answer formats very similar to the questions in the exam. Which means that doing the exercises diligently will be great practice for preparing for the exam! Here's the procedure. The exercises are posted on Moodle. Each week, following the lectures on Tuesdays (09:15-11:00), you will complete the written exercises to the best of your ability during the exercises session (11:15-12:00). You should do this in small groups of two or three people, working together to answer the questions, in order to maximize your benefit from the exercises. There are no scheduled breaks during the exercise session but you can take a break whenever you like. After the class, I will post a grading rubric for the exercises on Moodle. On your own time (outside class) you should use the grading rubric to assess your answers and assign a grade. Please use the "standard" grading scale of 1.0 (worst) to 6.0 (best), scaled in increments of 0.25 points, where anything ≥ 4.0 is a passing grade and anything < 4.0 is a failing grade. Also, please provide separate grades for each of the exercises (usually two or three exercises per week).

There are five questions per exercise. Each question is scored from 0.00 points (minimum) up to 1.00 points (maximum) in increments of 0.25 points (0.00, 0.25, 0.50, 0.75, or 1.00 points). For each exercise, start with a base grade of 1.00 then add the total number of points earned for the five questions to compute the grade on a scale of 1.00 (minimum) to 6.00 (maximum) in increments of 0.25 points. This procedure might sound complicated, but in practice it should make the grading process easier and more "objective" for you. Write

your name and the grade for each exercise at the top of each page in the space provided. Then hand in your completed and self-graded exercises to me at class the next week. You may hand in a printed copy of your graded exercises or you may email them to me (john.mckinney@epfl.ch); please make sure you include “**BIO-413**” in the Subject line of your email.

Maybe you are thinking, “What’s the point of such a peculiar grading procedure?” Good question! Answer: the purpose of this “peculiar” grading procedure is to consolidate your learning and to practice your skills in group discussion and self-evaluation. These are important “transversal skills” that will be extremely valuable to you no matter what career track you eventually choose in the future. Fair-minded and critical self-review and peer-review are fundamental activities of scientific culture. Best to start practicing now!

Your self-evaluation should be honest and critical but also constructive and professional. For the best learning outcomes, you should complete the exercises *before* you look at the grading rubric (!!!). There is no motivation to cheat because the grades that you assign will not count towards your final grade. Instead, you will be graded based solely on your diligence in completing the exercises, self-evaluating them, and giving them to me on time.

Let’s be clear about the procedure. If you complete, self-evaluate, and hand in all of the exercises on time, you will receive a “6.0” for this part of the assessment, *even if you get all of the answers wrong!* The point is to make your “best effort” to do the work and to do it well. You should be highly motivated to do your best work on the exercises because this is also the best way to prepare for the exams. As your teacher, I reserve the right not to credit you for an exercise (or to give you only partial credit) if I think you did not make a “good faith” effort to do it well. For example, simply writing your name on the page and handing it in with no work done will not earn you any credit for that exercise.

Your answers on the exercises may be written in French or English or both. You will not be graded on grammar, spelling, penmanship, etc., but if I can’t read or understand what you have written then I can’t give you credit for your answers, so please do your best to write legibly and coherently.

Completion and submission of the written exercises *on time* will count for 20% of the final grade for my (McKinney) section of the course.

Just to be clear: the above explanations apply only to my (McKinney) section of BIO-413, i.e., weeks 7-9.

Please don’t hesitate to let me know if you have any questions about the grading procedure for the exercises or exam.

John