

Miniprojects – Instructions

The miniproject will count for 20% of the final grade.

Every student will contribute to a miniproject done in small teams of students on any microbiology-related topic selected by the team and approved by the teacher. The miniproject will comprise a poster, video, or other audio-visual format (note: other formats must be pre-approved by the professor) to be presented to the class in a “wrap up session” at the end of the semester (Week 14). Grading will be based on the quality, depth, and creativity of the material presented as well as the presentation itself. Working on this miniproject will not only give you the opportunity to learn more about a topic of your choice, it will also help you to develop another critical “transversal” skill: how to work effectively in a team. This skill may include learning how to deal with the feeling that you are doing more than your “fair share” (compared to your teammates) to ensure the project’s success. Two things I will say about that. First, this feeling may simply be mistaken because it is an almost universal human trait to overestimate our own contributions and to underestimate the contributions of our colleagues (subjectively speaking). Second, even if it is true (objectively speaking) that you are doing more than your “fair share” of the team work, you had better start getting used to it now because no matter what career track you choose you will almost certainly have to work in a team and you will almost certainly find, sometimes, that the workload is not distributed 100% equally between you and your colleagues. Of course, if someone in your team is seriously lax in contributing to the team’s work, your team should inform me as soon as possible so I can take measures to correct the problem.

Timeline:

Week 4 | 2025.03.12 (Wednesday): Work on miniprojects. The purpose of this class session is: (1) to join a miniproject team; (2) to start identifying a topic for your team’s miniproject. As you read and think and discuss with your team members, the focus of your miniproject may shift over time. That’s absolutely fine. But you should have a pretty solid idea of the topic that you want to study before the next miniproject session in Week 8.

Week 8 | 2025.04.09 (Wednesday): Work on miniprojects. By the end of this class session, you should: (1) decide what the topic of your miniproject will be; (2) start to define the role of each team member in the overall project; (3) discuss information that you have gathered from your topic-focused reading inside and outside of class; (4) begin discussing what the overall structure of your project outputs (poster and oral presentation) will be like.

Week 12 | 2025.05.14 (Wednesday): Work on miniprojects. By the end of this class session, you should be close to finalizing the structure and contents of your poster and the PowerPoint file for your oral presentation. You will still have one more miniproject session (in Week 13) before the listed due dates to refine your poster and presentation but by now you should have a very clear concept of the structure and content of both.

Week 13 | 2025.05.21 (Wednesday): Work on miniprojects. By the end of this class session, you should be putting the finishing touches on your poster (due Thursday, 2025.05.22) and your oral presentation (due Monday, 2025.05.26).

Deadlines:

Week 13 | 2025.05.22 (Thursday): Deadline to submit your poster to the EPFL Repro-Print Center (<https://repro.epfl.ch/>). Use the Poster_Template (PowerPoint) posted on Moodle and the Commande_Repro_Form posted on Moodle. The charges will be paid out of the course budget. It is important not to be late or your poster might not be ready for the poster session next week, which would be sad after all your hard work... :-|

Week 14 | 2025.05.26 (Monday): Deadline to send your PowerPoint presentation (or whatever other format you are using) to us (john.mckinney@epfl.ch and alexandra-elena.preda@epfl.ch). Five (5) slides maximum per presentation. This will give us enough time to compile them for the oral presentations on Wednesday (2025.05.28).

Week 14 | 2025.05.28 (Wednesday): Oral presentations. 10 minutes maximum per team. Each member of the team should present at least one slide. Oral presentations are a standard part of scientific conferences, no matter whether you work in industry or in academia, so this is good practice for something you will be doing often in your future scientific career!

Week 14 | 2025.05.28 (Wednesday): Poster session. Each team should assign one person at a time to present the team's poster on a rotating basis so everyone can circulate and visit all of the posters. The idea is to share what you have learned in a relaxed and informal session. The "poster session" is a standard part of scientific conferences, no matter whether you work in industry or in academia, so this is good practice for something you will be doing often in your future scientific career!