

EEB 2208 (Introduction to Conservation Biology)

Exam Format Information

The midterm and final will each consist of a series of questions followed by several possible answers. You will need to identify whether each answer is correct or not. If you are taking a make-up exam, then you will be given a choice of long-form essay questions and will have to choose a subset (e.g., 3 out of 6; the exam number will depend on whether it is a midterm or final) of these to answer in essay format.

Test questions will NOT be typical multiple choice questions, in which you must pick one correct answer out of five. So read the instructions here (and on the test) to make sure that you know what is expected.

Questions will be organized in groups of five. In each case, there will be an initial question, followed by five potential answers. You must decide whether each answer is correct or not. Then, on the Scantron form, you need to mark “A” if the answer is correct, or “B” if it is incorrect. If you mark any other letter you will get the answer wrong.

THIS IS IMPORTANT: Each answer should be considered separately – whether one is right or wrong has no influence on whether the others are right or wrong. Within a set of 5 answers, it is possible for all to be correct, all to be wrong, or any combination in between.

So that we have a back-up, I recommend that you also mark your answers clearly on the actual test paper by circling the answers that you think are correct, and leaving the incorrect answers uncircled. We will collect these papers, but will not use them unless there is a problem with the scantrons.

One point will be assigned to each answer. Here is an example:

Which of the following statements about this course are true (5 points)?

1. It is taught by Chris Elphick.
2. It is taught by Queen Elizabeth II.
3. It meets Monday and Wednesday at 2:00.
4. It is not as interesting as calculus.
5. Much of the course focuses on species extinctions and declines.

For full marks, on your scantron form you should have marked “A” for 1, 3 and 5 (see the web site for the answers) and marked “B” for 2 (see the web site) and 4 (if you wanted to, you could try to persuade me that I am wrong about this last one but it will be difficult, and most students in the class will be on my side).

If your answers were 1-A, 2-B, 3-A, 4-A, 5-B then you would get 3 points out of 5. This is because your first three answers were correct, but your answers to 4 and 5 were both wrong.

If you are not sure that you understand how these questions work, you can practice on the sample questions that are provided in the homework assignments. If you still do not get it, please talk to me or the TA.

You may (very reasonably) be wondering why I write exams like this. The point is not to confuse you. Instead, by breaking multiple choice questions down into multiple separate parts, this approach makes it easier for you to demonstrate more of what you know. In a traditional multiple choice question where there is only one correct answer out of 5, you may know that 3 parts are wrong, but be unsure about the other two. If you guess based on that, you risk getting no credit for the fact that you had 3/5 (60%) of the answer correct. With my questions, you will get that credit. I think the ability to award partial credit in situations like this is important. I feel that this system also allows me to more thoroughly test your knowledge, so that is another advantage. Nonetheless, the system may be different from what you have seen before, so I strongly encourage you to make sure you understand it before the first exam.

In all my questions, I try really hard to write exactly what I mean. I am not trying to trick you (what would be the point in that – to show what a lousy teacher I am?). I am, however, trying to test what you know, and see if you can discern subtle points, which means that some of my questions are difficult. Please, though, do not agonize over all the possible bizarre interpretations of my words. Over-thinking questions inevitably leads to mistakes. Assume that what I am asking for is exactly what it seems like I am asking for.

Finally, asking questions during the exam is disruptive to other students, so please do not do it – and know that I will not answer any such questions. In the majority of cases when students ask questions, my answer is either (a) “it means what it says” or (b) “I can’t answer that without giving away the answer, which would be unfair to other students (and mean that the question no longer tests your knowledge)”. Of course, if you think there really is a mistake in an exam, please tell me about it afterwards. If you are correct, I will account for it in my grading.