

EEB 2208E (Introduction to Conservation Biology)

Exam Information

The midterm and final will each consist of two types of questions. First, there will be grouped sets of answers linked to an opening question. For each group, you will need to identify whether each answer is correct or not. Second, there will be a series of statements about conservation scenarios and you will have to assess whether they are accurate.

If you are taking a make-up exam, then it might take the form of a series of long-form essay questions, of which you will have to answer a subset (e.g., 4 out of 5; the number will depend on whether it is a midterm or final).

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

The grouped questions will be organized in sets 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.

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.

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

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

- a. It is taught by Chris Elphick.
- b. It is taught by Queen Elizabeth II.
- c. It meets Monday and Wednesday at 2 pm.
- d. It is not as interesting as calculus.
- e. Much of the course focuses on species extinctions and declines.

In HuskyCT, you will be given the option to write “yes” or “no” after each of the 5 statements. To get the points it is important that you only use these two responses – anything else will result in the answers being graded wrong.

For full marks in the example above, you should write “yes” for 1, 3 and 5 (see the class web site for the answers) and “no” for 2 (see the web site) and 4 (if you wanted to, you could try to persuade me that I am wrong about this one but it will be difficult, and most students in the class will be on my side).

If your answers were a-yes, b-no, c-yes, d-yes, e-no then you would get 3 points out of 5. This is because your first three answers were correct, but your answers to parts d and e were both wrong.

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

You may (very reasonably) be wondering why I write exams like this, rather than in a more conventional way. The point is not to confuse you. Instead, by breaking a typical multiple-choice question into its 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 these questions, you will get that credit. I think the ability to award partial credit in situations like this is important. 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.

A second reason why I dislike typical multiple-choice type questions is that it is rare in my working life for me to be faced with a situation where I am handed 4 or 5 options and I have to pick one that is correct. In contrast, I constantly have to know whether something is accurate or not, or assess which of two choices is the better one. Consequently, I think that this format allows me to write questions that more realistically mimic the way someone would use the class material in the real world.

In my questions, I also try really hard to write exactly what I mean. Although it may not seem that way, 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 to 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. If you come across a question that you think is misleading, please ask about it afterwards (I will not answer questions during the actual exam though). I will happily explain my rationale for writing any question the way I do. And, if there is a real problem with a question, I will adjust everyone’s grades accordingly.