

EEB 2208 (Introduction to Conservation Biology)

Exam Format Information

The midterm and final will each consist of two parts. Part 1 will make up most of the test and will include a series of questions followed by several possible answers. You will need to identify whether each answer is correct or not. Part 2 will include a small number of questions that could require you to do things such as: give short written answers, match pairs, identify things on diagrams, give definitions, fill in the blanks, etc. 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) of these to answer in essay format.

Part 1

The questions in this part of the test 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 syllabus for the answers) and marked “B” for 2 (see the syllabus) 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 of the 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 is probably different from what you've seen before, so I strongly encourage you to make sure you understand it before the first exam.

Part 2

The second part of the test will include only a few questions. You will be asked to write short answers (usually 1-2 sentences maximum), label/explain diagrams, etc.

A couple of hints about answering this type of question:

First, it will be very rare for a question to require an answer of more than 1-2 sentences. So, do not write down everything that you know about the topic, whether it relates to the question or not. This approach will waste time and increase the risk that you write down something that is wrong – which could hurt your grade. If you write five things, four of which are wrong, and one of which happens to be the answer, the grader will interpret it as a sign that you were not sure what the correct answer was and you WILL NOT get full points.

Second, write legibly – it is your responsibility to write something that can be read (and understood) easily by anyone; it is not the grader's responsibility to decipher hieroglyphics or sentence fragments. If the grader cannot understand what you mean from what you have written, you will not get full points even if you come and explain it to us afterwards.

Third, if the question says to use complete sentences, then that is what I want.

Finally, in all my questions (Part 1 and 2) 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, so some of my questions are hard. But, please do not agonize over all the possible bizarre interpretations of my words. Over-thinking questions inevitably leads to mistakes. At least in theory, what I will be asking for will be exactly what it seems like I am asking for.

Asking questions during the exam is disruptive to other students, so please do not do it. In the vast majority (>95%) of cases when students ask questions during an exam 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 the exam, please tell me about it afterwards. If you are correct, I will account for it in my grading.