BIOL 103 – Exam Study Strategies

EXAM FORMAT
Approx. 100 multiple choice questions and 2 short answer questions worth 50% of your final grade
- Vast majority of the focus is usually on lecture material with some extra material from labs
- The types of questions will be similar to the multiple choice assignments and sample short answer questions given throughout the semester

HOW TO STUDY
- Summarize your notes with an emphasis on understanding key ideas and how they relate to different parts of the course
- Use mind maps, charts and cue cards to review and organize facts
- Don’t just memorize facts! Spend the majority of your time working on applying concepts and answering questions actively
- Study in short sessions over many days, completing brief summary reviews regularly
- Once you feel ready on your own, study with a friend and quiz each other or teach your study partner about key topics
- Being able to talk about content will test your notes in front of you is important, especially for short answer questions, as they demand recall rather than recognition
- Do practice questions, which can pinpoint your weak points and give you an idea of which topics to focus on further

HOW TO STUDY (CONTD)
- Examples of ways to organize your notes:
  Organize Notes: Mind Maps
  Charts

COMMON MISTAKES
- Memorizing every detail in the textbook
  - Instead, focus on your notes, then complete practice questions to see what you really know
  - Return to the book to round out your knowledge
- Skipping practice questions because they’re tough or boring
  - Work on what’s important and difficult first (but leave some time to review simpler information)
- Trying to guess which concepts will be tested and focusing only on those
  - Aim to study material from each session and throughout the course
- Learning passively by focusing on spelling facts for multiple choice
  - Try writing about elements of the course, or explaining them to a friend or study buddy
- Re-reading the textbook and notes too much
  - Practicing is key, and using information from the course in context, is far more productive

FINDING PRACTICE QUESTIONS
- Use questions from:
  - Quiz questions
  - iClicker questions
  - The textbook
  - Exam Bank
  - Study with friends and quiz each other

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
- SASS online module on exam taking contains info on efficient prep and writing of multiple-choice exams
- Queen’s Library’s Biology Research Guides may have useful summative information:
  https://guides.library.queensu.ca/biology
- Try Khan Academy’s free biology tutorials, but make sure to focus only on information that’s on the BIOL 103 syllabus:
  https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR
- Over the summer, look at how you did last semester and identify areas for improvement. You might work on improving notetaking, reading skills, time management, or read around difficult topics before the start of the semester
- Keep up with readings and review your notes throughout the semester. Even a quick review will help
- Ask your TA, prof or classmates for help when needed
- Seek help from Student Academic Success Services’ Sidney A. Kerr Writing Assistants, who can help you complete lab reports. Book on SASS’ website