

Frequently Asked Questions – Life Sci 2X03 – Winter 2017

1. Is this topic (for example: article XX, page YY) going to be on the Final exam?

If it's not in your lecture notes, then it's not covered by the Final exam. I don't always cover everything in the readings, and if it's not covered in lecture, then it's not crucial to your understanding of the course material, and it's not important enough to be on your Final Exam.

I will post all the details about the coverage of the Final Exam near the end of Term on Avenue, and discuss them as well during lecture at the same time.

2. Is this topic (for example: article XX, page YY) going to be covered by the midterm?

As indicated above, I don't always cover everything in the readings, but there may be details covered in them that you may need to know in order to do well on the midterm.

3. Are you going to bell the grades?

That would assume that student grades are actually Normally distributed. This hasn't been the case for many years. Believe it or not, many more students earn As and Bs these days than they used to earn, years ago. In rare cases, I have made minor adjustments if I thought a question on the Final Exam was a little too hard, but this is extremely rare so do not expect any adjustments to be made.

4. "I need a certain mark to stay in my program", or "I need a certain mark to get into the program I want". Can you bump my grade?

Sorry but I cannot. The grade I assigned is the grade you earned. To give a grade that has not been deserved would compromise my integrity as a professor and compromise the integrity of McMaster as being one of the most respected universities in the world. Also, that would be unfair to the rest of the class and demean the value of everyone's grades. You might consider taking the course over or speaking with an academic advisor in your faculty.

If you do poorly in the course, or on a specific component, there are no extra assignments or makeup work for you to boost your grade. The mark you earn in the course is final.

I can't make exceptions, so please don't ask me.

5. Can you post the lecture slides in PowerPoint format?

No, I cannot. The slides contain copyrighted material which is only made available to instructors by the publishers on the condition that the artwork, images, etc., are not redistributed to students. Posting the lecture slides in PowerPoint format would breach that agreement.

6. I missed a midterm for a legitimate reason. Can I use the MSAF to have the extra mark added to my final exam?

Yes, and then your Final exam mark will then also take into account the weight of the missed midterm.

7. Is there any extra work I can do to increase my grade?

Sorry, but no. That would be unfair to other students. I have to be consistent in order for grades to mean anything.

8. If I do better on my Final exam, can it count for more towards my final grade?

Sorry, but no. To arbitrarily reweight individual students' marks would be unfair to the rest of the class.

9. I have another exam on the same day as our exam. Can I write at a different time?

Sorry. This situation may happen often during your university career, so prepare for it. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have no conflicts.

Notwithstanding, the Registrar will allow rescheduling of an exam under the following circumstances:

- a) You have more than one examination scheduled at the same time.
- b) You have three examinations in one calendar day (midnight to midnight).
- c) You have three consecutive examinations over two days.

10. You posted a change to the course on Avenue, but I didn't check the shell for the course and I didn't realize there had been a change.

You are responsible for checking Avenue regularly, as stipulated in the course manual. Any major changes are always posted well in advance.

11. What articles do I need to read?

See the Schedule of activities included in the course online. Everything you need to know is included in it.

12. I received my final grade. It says I have an F. That's not right.

If you were not registered in this course, there was no way I could submit a grade for you. You will have to contact someone in your faculty office. Alternatively, you may have improperly filled out your exam scan sheet bubbles; it did not get marked and your grade shows up as a fail. Additionally, you may have done poorly on the Final exam and you really do have an F.

13. I don't see my final grade posted.

If you were not sectioned into this course or did not pay in full for the course, there is no official grade for you. Contact your faculty office.

14. Can you email me my final grade? I need it because (fill in urgent reason)

Sorry, but McMaster instructors are not allowed to release grades until they have been made official by the Registrar. If your grade is not posted, it is still unofficial and I am not allowed to disclose the mark.

15. I missed my lecture. Can I borrow your notes?

No need. ECHO360 captures of all the lectures are posted through Avenue.

16. Can I come by your office for some extra help?

Yes, please do! I'm here to help, and I enjoy meeting my students.

17. Can I see my questionnaire and the scan sheet for my Final exam?

Yes. You need to contact the Life Sciences Program and ask to view your Final exam. We do not return scan sheets to students.

18.If I email you with a question about the material, will you reply with an explanation?

Most questions can't be answered thoroughly through email, and you'll need to see me in person. Imagine trying to explain something in an email that took 20 minutes to cover in lecture!

19.I emailed you through the Avenue email but you didn't reply.

I do not use that email – it is there for students to contact each other and the TAs do not use it. If you want to contact me, you must email me directly or I will not see your email and consequently will not respond.

20.Can I phone you for help during your office hours?

Sorry, but no. It's always best to come in person. Additionally, some questions cannot be answered over the phone.

21.Can I leave you a phone message and have you call me back?

Email me. I don't phone students under any circumstance, and I wouldn't get your message anyway in a timely manner. Email ensures that I will get your message and you will get a timely response.

22.Can I use you as a reference for a job, grad school application, etc.?

Sorry, but no. I teach primarily large enrollments courses, and (sadly for me) I usually don't have the opportunity to meet many students because the classes are so big. You'll need reference letters from professors who really know you and your work in upper-year courses. I would not be comfortable acting as a referee for someone I don't know.

23.I sent you a question to your MacMail email address and never got a reply.

There are 2 major reasons for which I do not reply to emails sent to my email address:

- a) You did not give me all the information I need from you (name, course, student ID number).
- b) The answer to your question is already available. Either it is already in the course outline (**READ it once from start to finish**); was posted on Avenue;

was provided by me during lecture or by your TA during the tutorial; is included in this FAQ; or was stated in my automated reply (**READ IT** from start to finish). If the answer to your question cannot be found in any of the sources, I will reply to you. Otherwise, take it as a sign that the information you seek was already given to you.

Please don't email me or the TAs asking questions for which the answers are already available – we have over hundreds of students to service and we are swamped as it is!

24. I have ongoing (not temporary) learning challenges. What should I do?

You should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to determine if you are entitled to special accommodations for deadlines, writing midterms, the Final Exam, etc. The students who normally register with SAS, are for instance often provided with a place to write for whatever length of time they require as specified in documentation provided by a professional.

If you are entitled to SAS accommodations, it is your responsibility to use them and to meet with me early in the term to finalize their approval. Please note that I will not accommodate you *a posteriori* (i.e. after the fact), or once the term is over.

Last updated: January 8, 2017