

## **BIN 506: Protein & DNA Sequence Analysis**

Assignment 04

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- 1) Discuss the following: Why does using protein sequences result in more accurate sequence alignments? Think about biological reasons, statistical reasons, and computational reasons.**

Answer:

There are a number of biological, statistical and computational reasons for protein sequences resulting in more accurate sequence alignment,

### Biological Factors:

Protein sequences are under stronger functional constraints than DNA. Protein alignments highlight the conserved functional domains or motifs like enzyme active sites which are critical for biological activity therefore proteins evolve slower than DNA as natural selection preserves the structure of a functional protein, for example non synonymous mutations which alter the amino acid sequence of a protein are often deleterious and are selected against which leads to slower evolutionary rates. On the other hand synonymous mutations do not affect the amino acid sequences and consequently the proteins. These are common in DNA but irrelevant in protein alignment.

### Statistical reasons:

Proteins have 20 amino acids compared to 4 nucleotides in DNA, this lowers the probability of random matches thus reducing false positive alignments. DNA matrices consist of very simple DNA match/ mismatch scores. For protein alignments we have more complicated models/ substitutions matrices like BLOSUM and PAM which incorporate empirical data on evolutionary likelihood and biochemical similarities as well, all of which improves the alignment accuracy. Furthermore each amino acid carries more evolutionary information due to diversity and biochemical activity, this enables us to better identify between homologous and random matches.

### Computational Reasons:

An amino acid which is the building block of proteins is made up of 3 nucleotides per 1 amino acid. This means that a protein sequence is 3 times shorter than their coding dna counterparts, this simplifies alignment algorithms by reducing the computational complexity. Unlike a DNA sequence protein alignments are not affected by frameshifts or ambiguous reading frames in dna. The slower evolution and high information density allows protein alignments to detect distant evolutionary relationships better than DNA alignments especially for sequences with low nucleotide similarity but conserved protein function.

**2) Answer the following questions about PAM and BLOSUM matrices**

**a) What kind of biological information are they built upon?**

PAM which stands for point accepted mutations are built upon evolutionary models of accepted mutations only (mutations which exist through evolution), it is built on global alignments of protein with high similarity. PAM is derived from closely related protein sequences which allows us to see how amino acids change over time. A PAM matrix gives the probability of one amino acid mutating into another during evolution.

BLOSUM which stands for block substitution matrices uses local alignments instead of global and also unlike PAM it does not assume any evolutionary path. The matrix is built using conserved regions from an array of protein families which are divergent. It measures how one amino acid is substituted for another in aligned blocks that do not contain gaps, it is derived from protein sequences grouped by percentage identity for example BLOSUM62 are sequences that are 62% identical and BLOSUM95 are those which are 95% identical.

In essence pam emphasises on evolutionary time whereas BLOSUM emphasises on sequence diversity.

**b) Explain the difference between PAM250 and PAM500 and the difference between BLOSUM62 and BLOSUM95.**

PAM 250 vs PAM 500:

PAM250 indicates 250% average accepted mutations per site and is suitable for moderately divergent sequences. On the other hand PAM500 models 500% accepted mutations thus indicating longer evolutionary divergence. PAM500 is designed for highly divergent sequences. The PAM numbers increase with evolutionary distance.

BLOSUM62 vs BLOSUM95:

BLOSUM62 is built from clusters with less than 62% identity and is optimised for general-purpose alignment of moderately divergent sequences. On the other hand BLOSUM95 uses clusters with less than 95% identity which means that only closely related sequences are included and is best for aligning very similar sequences

BLOSUM numbers, unlike PAM, decrease with evolutionary distance.

### 3) Use “unknown.fasta” and search for the source using NCBI BLAST, UCSC BLAT, and Ensembl BLAST/BLAT.

#### a) Share the list of the results. Write down the name and the type (gene, transcript, etc.) of the source.

#### NCBI BLASTN Hit:

	Description	Scientific Name	Max Score	Total Score	Query Cover	E value	Per. Ident	Acc. Len	Accession
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily Q member 1 (KCNQ1).RefSeqGene...</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1.375e+05	1.573e+05	100%	0.0	100.00%	411120	<a href="#">NG_008935.1</a>

Name: KCNQ1

Type: Gene

Description: Homo sapiens potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily Q member 1 (KCNQ1), RefSeqGene (LRG\_287) on chromosome 11

#### UCSC BLAT Hit:

ACTIONS	QUERY	SCORE	START	END	QSIZE	IDENTITY	CHROM	STRAND	START	END	SPAN
<a href="#">browser</a> <a href="#">new tab</a> <a href="#">details</a>	unknown	40496	1	40496	74480	100.0%	chr11	+	2609251	2649746	40496

Name: KCNQ1

Type : Gene

Details: The sequence aligns to the genomic region of chr11:2,609,251-2,649,746, which corresponds to the KCNQ1 gene locus.

## ENSEMBL BLAT Hit:

Genomic Location	Overlapping Gene(s)	Orientation	Query start	Query end	Length	Score	E-val	%ID
<a href="#">11:2609251-2649740 [Sequence]</a>	<a href="#">KCNQ1</a> , <a href="#">KCNQ1OT1</a>	Forward	1	40490	40490 <a href="#">[Sequence]</a>	78310.0	0.0e+00	100.00 <a href="#">[Alignment]</a>

Name: KCNQ1

Type: Gene

Details: although we can see KCNQ1OT1 along with KCNQ1 as part of the overlapping genes however KCNQ1OT1 is a non coding RNA therefore we ignore it.

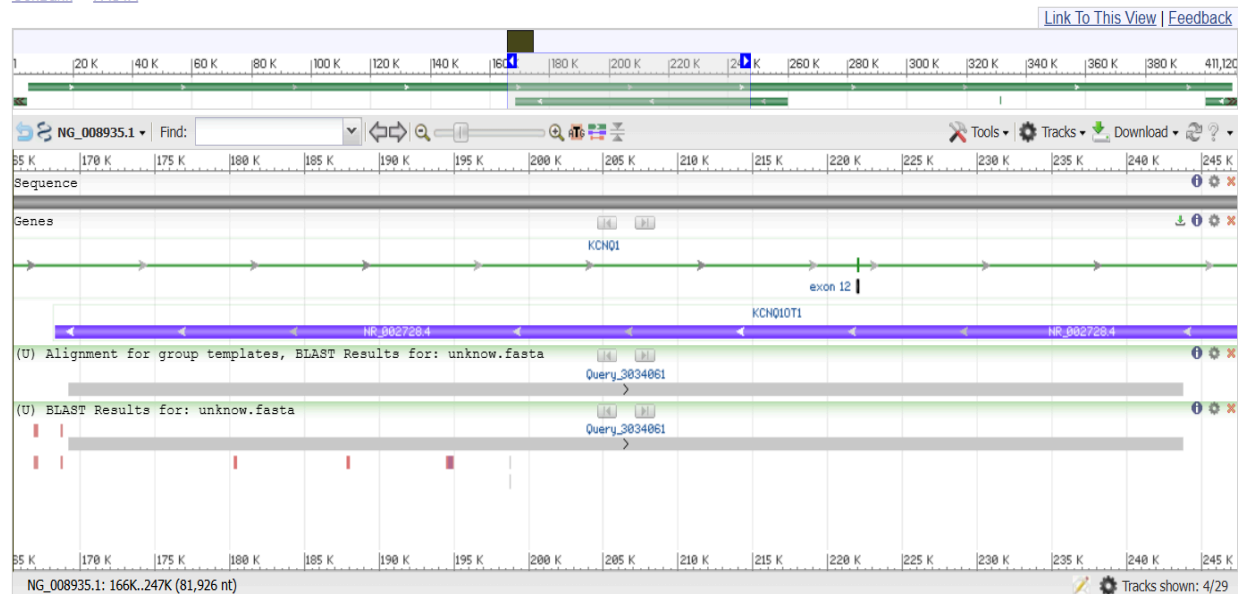
- b) Select the top scoring hit (both in terms of E-Value and score). Click on the link that will direct you to the genome browser on each database. Share a screenshot from each genome browser.

## NCBI BLASTN:

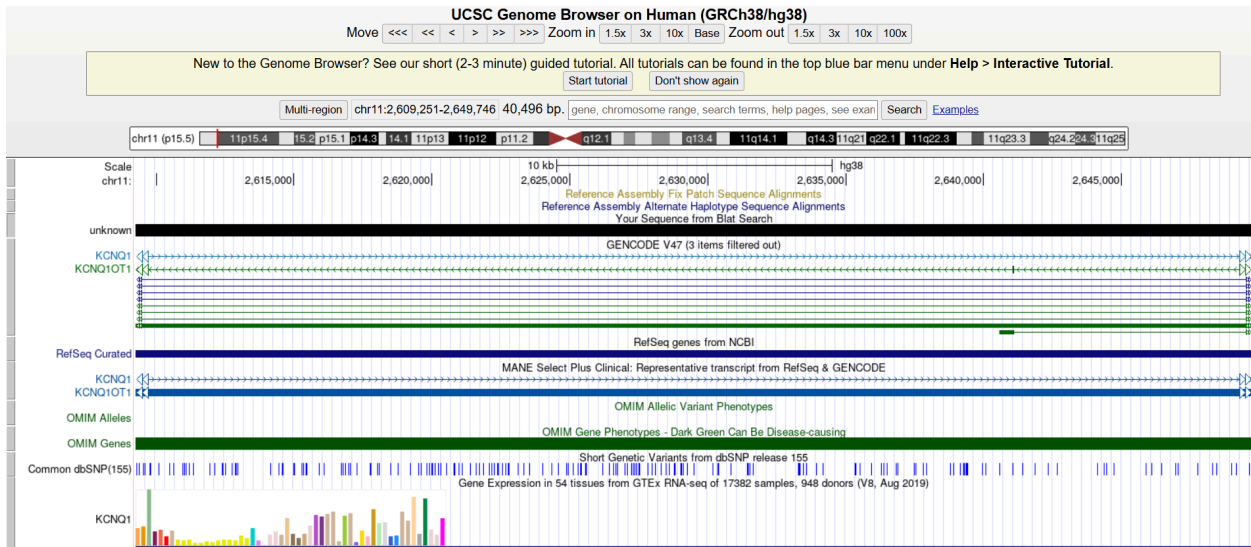
### Homo sapiens potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily Q member 1 (KCNQ1), RefSeqGene (LRG\_287) on chromosome 11

NCBI Reference Sequence: NG\_008935.1

[GenBank](#) [FASTA](#)



UCSC BLAT:



ENSEMBL BLAST/BLAT :



4) Use “protein.fasta” and run a search using blastp and psi-blast.

- For both results, set the ‘Show’ value to 50 and make sure to keep it that way.
  - Set ‘Number of sequences’ to 50 in psi-blast results and make 5 iterations.
  - Make sure the resulting hits are sorted by the E-value.
  - Answer the following questions by comparing the blastp result to the 5th iteration of psi-blast.
- a) Are the first 5 hits the same in both tools?

PSI-BLAST:

Sequences producing significant alignments

Download

Select columns

Show

50

?

50 sequences selected

☐ sequences newly added this iteration

GenPept

Graphics

Distance tree of results

Multiple alignment

MSA Viewer

Sequences with E-value BETTER than threshold

☒ select all

50 sequences selected

[Skip to the first new sequence](#)

PSI-BLAST iteration 5

	Description	Scientific Name	Max Score	Total Score	Query Cover	E value	Per. Ident	Acc. Len	Accession	Select for PSI blast	Used to build PSSM	Newly added
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform 2 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1061	1061	100%	0.0	97.93%	549	<a href="#">NP_861463.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">voltage gated potassium channel [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1061	1061	100%	0.0	97.93%	581	<a href="#">AAC51781.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform X4 [Pan troglodytes]</a>	<a href="#">Pan troglodytes</a>	1060	1060	100%	0.0	97.36%	549	<a href="#">XP_016775682.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">KCNQ1 isoform 3 [Pongo abelii]</a>	<a href="#">Pongo abelii</a>	1059	1059	100%	0.0	97.36%	549	<a href="#">PNJ16374.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">KvLQT1 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1058	1058	100%	0.0	97.74%	549	<a href="#">CAB44650.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

BLASTP:

Sequences producing significant alignments										
Download ▾ Select columns ▾ Show 50 ⓘ										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> select all 50 sequences selected <a href="#">GenPept</a> <a href="#">Graphics</a> <a href="#">Distance tree of results</a> <a href="#">Multiple alignment</a> <a href="#">MSA Viewer</a>										
	Description	Scientific Name	Max Score	Total Score	Query Cover	E value	Per. Ident	Acc. Len	Accession	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform 4 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1056	1056	100%	0.0	97.93%	586	<a href="#">NP_001393766.1</a>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform 2 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1056	1056	100%	0.0	97.93%	549	<a href="#">NP_861463.1</a>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">voltage gated potassium channel [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1054	1054	100%	0.0	97.93%	581	<a href="#">AAC51781.1</a>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform 1 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1054	1054	100%	0.0	97.93%	676	<a href="#">NP_000209.2</a>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">KvLQT1 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1053	1053	100%	0.0	97.74%	549	<a href="#">CAB44650.1</a>	

No, the first 5 hits in both tools are different as we can observe from both figures which show the results of BLASTP and PSI-BLAST. By only looking at the scientific names we can see that all of the 5 hits of BLASTP are from Homo Sapiens taxon group while PSI-BLAST gives us 3 homosapiens and 2 from Pongo Abelii taxa.

- b) Select the last 5 hits in both tools and compare their scores, E-values, and query covers. Submit a screenshot of ‘Graphical Summary’ with an explanation for both graphs for the last 5 hits. What do the graphs tell? What is the difference between the two graphs?

### PSI-BLAST:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1... Sapajus...</a>	1029	1029	100%	0.0	93.97%	676	<a href="#">XP_032124374.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel, KQT-like subfamily mem... Homo s...</a>	1024	1024	97%	0.0	97.86%	518	<a href="#">EAX02521.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1... Sciurus...</a>	1022	1022	100%	0.0	89.64%	671	<a href="#">XP_047374614.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1... Sciurus...</a>	1022	1022	100%	0.0	89.64%	671	<a href="#">MBZ3886233.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">PREDICTED: potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily K... Rhinopit...</a>	1020	1020	100%	0.0	93.28%	637	<a href="#">XP_017741504.1</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### BLASTP:

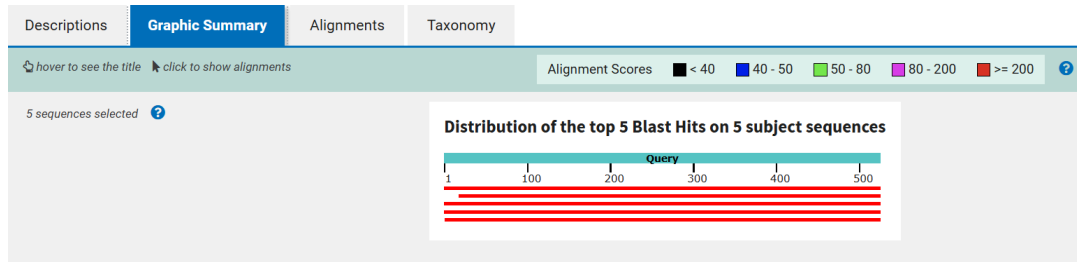
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">KVLQT1 isoform1 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	1016	1016	96%	0.0	97.85%	676	<a href="#">BAA34739.1</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">PREDICTED: potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 [Rhinopithe...</a>	<a href="#">Rhinopithec...</a>	1004	1004	100%	0.0	93.28%	637	<a href="#">XP_017741504.1</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">RecName: Full=Potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1; AltName...</a>	<a href="#">Cavia porcel...</a>	974	974	100%	0.0	90.77%	671	<a href="#">O70344.3</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 [Cavia porcellus]</a>	<a href="#">Cavia porcel...</a>	973	973	100%	0.0	90.77%	671	<a href="#">NP_001166292.1</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily KQT member 1 isoform 3 [Homo sapiens]</a>	<a href="#">Homo sapiens</a>	973	973	100%	0.0	91.90%	644	<a href="#">NP_001393765.1</a>

As we can observe in the figures of blastp and psi-blast hits above the last 5 results are different to each other as well.

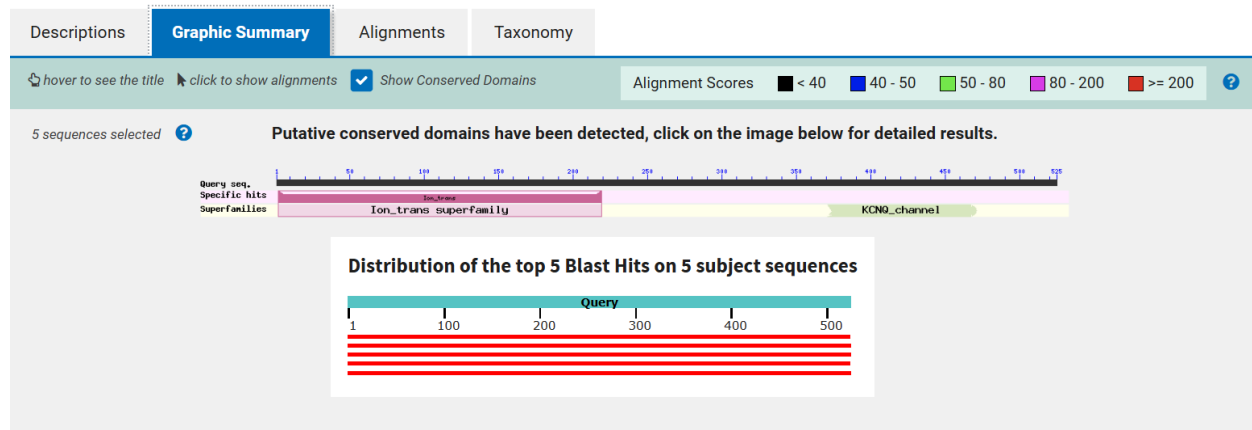
We see that for all the hits the max and min score are equal, a 100% query cover and the E-Value also being 0.0 for all hits, as for psi-blast the max and min are also equal with a 100% query cover and 0.0 E value for all results just like the blastp however the max and min score of psi-blast are greater than those of blastp (man and min score of psi-blast > 120 & max and min score of blastp > 970 but < 1016 with 1016 being the value of 5th last blastp hit). For both tools the min and max score decreases as we go down the list. The corresponding Accession numbers also differ in both the tools.

### Graphical Summary:

### PSI-BLAST:



## BLASTP:



Although all the alignment scores are  $> 200$  in both the graphs. We can clearly observe a key difference between the graphical summary of the last 5 hits of blastp and psi-blast.

The PSI-BLASTP output displays five red lines representing sequence alignments on a scale of 1-500 with one noticeably shorter line (let's say 20-500 instead of 1-500). This shorter line is a key indicator of PSI-BLASTP iterative approach, which refines its search across multiple iterations to detect distant homologs. The partial alignment (shorter line) reflects its sensitivity to sequences with gaps, mismatches, or insertions, shows the algorithms ability to uncover evolutionary connections that might not be immediately obvious

In contrast, the BLASTP output shows five equal red lines, each spanning the full length of the scale (1-500), indicating precise, full-length matches between the query sequence and database hits. This highlights BLASTP's focus on high similarity alignments, where sequences are closely related with minimal gaps or differences

- c) Again, select the last 5 hits, go to the 'Alignments' tab, and change the 'Alignment View' to 'Flat query-anchored with letters for identities'. Explain the differences you see with a few sentences. You may take hints from the graphs from 4b.

## PSI-BLAST:

Query range 1: 1 to 60

Query	1	VLSTIEQYA-----ALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	54
<a href="#">XP_032124374.1</a>	141	VLSTIEQYA-----ALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	194
<a href="#">EAX02521.1</a>	1	MEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	36
<a href="#">XP_047374614.1</a>	142	VLSTIEQYA-----ALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	195
<a href="#">MBZ3886233.1</a>	142	VLSTIEQYA-----ALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	195
<a href="#">XP_017741504.1</a>	97	LVGIEQYRRRRRLAHGRGGGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVVRLLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFA	155



## BLASTP:

### Query range 1: 1 to 60

Query	1	VLSTIEQYAALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGLWGRLRFARKPISI	60
<a href="#">XP_045005992.1</a>	35	VLSTIEQYAALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGVWGRLRFARKPISI	94
<a href="#">XP_035923692.1</a>	15	VLSTIEQYVALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGIWGRLRFARKPISI	74
<a href="#">XP_036867365.1</a>	139	VLSTIEQYVALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGIWGRLRFARKPISI	198
<a href="#">XP_004654281.1</a>	138	VLSTIEQYAALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGVWGRLRFARKPISI	197
<a href="#">XP_015444155.1</a>	195	VLSTIEQYVALATGTLFWMEIVLVVFFGTEYVRLWSAGCRSKYVGIWGRLRFARKPISI	254

## Explanation:

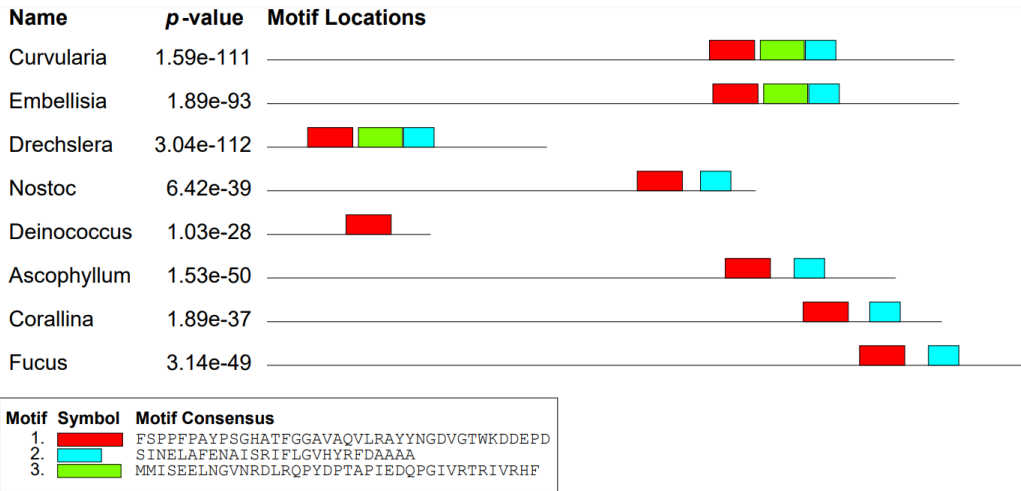
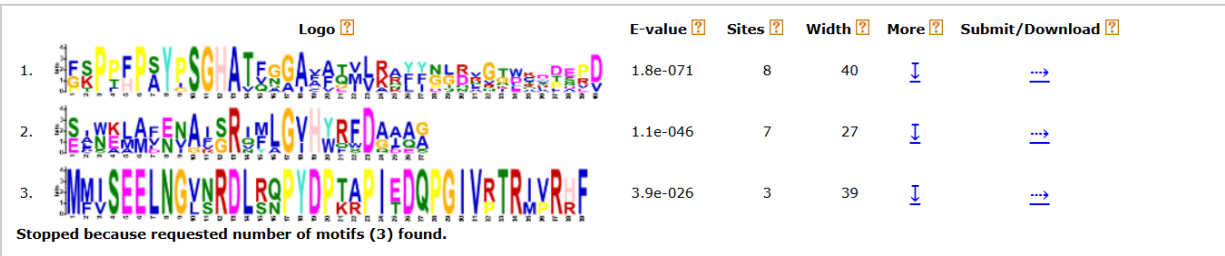
In the 'Flat query-anchored with letters for identities' view, the BLASTP alignments for the last 5 hits (XP\_0450089592.1 to XP\_015444155.1) show near-perfect matches to the query (VLSTIEQYAA...), with almost all positions as letters, indicating high identity and no gaps or mismatches in the aligned region (1-54). In contrast, the PSI-BLASTP alignments (XP\_032124374.1 to XP\_017741504.1) display more variability, with gaps (dashes like VLSTIEQYA-----ALATGTLM...) and mismatches, showing these hits are less identical and include sequences with evolutionary divergence. This aligns with the graphs from 4b, where PSI-BLASTP had a shorter line for one hit, reflecting its iterative sensitivity to distant homologs, while BLASTP equal lines indicated consistent, full-length matches.

The graphs from 4b support this: PSI-BLASTP's shorter line (eg 1-450) hinted at partial alignments, which we now see as gaps and mismatches in the alignment view. BLASTP's equal lines (all 1-500) predicted its perfect alignments, confirmed by the near-identical sequences here. This further defines PSI-BLASTP focus on evolutionary relationships as compared to BLASTP's emphasis on exact similarity.

## 5) Submit the msa.txt file to MEME Suite.

- How many motifs are these sequences sharing? How are these motifs positioned on the sequences? Add a screenshot of the graphical view of the motifs.

## DISCOVERED MOTIFS



Motifs shared = 3 (default parameter in MEME Suite).

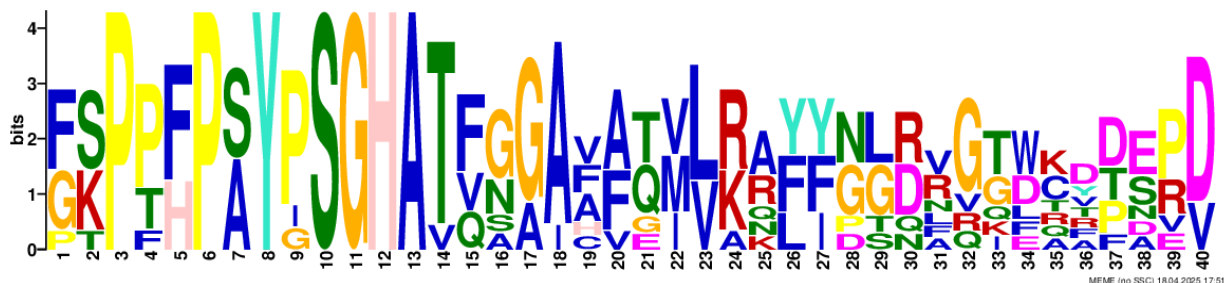
Motifs have a general pattern in the order of red, green and blue in order

Motif 1 (red): Found in all 8 sequences (Curvularia, Embellisia, Drechslera, Nostoc, Deinococcus, Ascophyllum, Coralina, Fucus).

Motif 2 (green): Found in 3 sequences (Curvularia, Embellisia, Drechslera)

Motif 3 (blue): Found in 7 sequences (Curvularia, Embellisia, Drechslera, Ascophyllum, Nostoc, Coralina, Fucus)

- b) Select the most significant motif and add 1) the seq logo, 2) the alignment, and 3) scores for that motif. What does the seq logo and size of the letters represent? Explain using the screenshots you provided.



Motif 1 has the lowest E-value (1.8e-071), making it the most significant. It appears in 8 sites (all sequences) with a width of 40.

Log Likelihood Ratio: 628			Information Content: 120.3			Relative Entropy: 113.2			Bayes Threshold: 8.79726		
Name	Start	p-value	Sites								
3. Drechslera	37	2.59e-44	APATNTNDIP <b>FKPFPFAYPSGHA</b> TFGGAVFQMVRRYYNGRVGTWKDDEPD NIAIDMMISE								
1. Curvularia	393	2.59e-44	APATNTNDIP <b>FKPFPFAYPSGHA</b> TFGGAVFQMVRRYYNGRVGTWKDDEPD NIAIDMMISE								
2. Embellisia	396	9.84e-38	PQLQNSDEAP <b>FKPFPFAYPSGHA</b> TFGAAAFQMVRRYYNGRLGKWATTSRD TIAVEMFVSE								
6. Ascophyllum	407	1.34e-33	TYLLPQAIQE <b>GSPTMPSYPSGHA</b> TQNGAFATVLKALIGLDRGGDCYPDFV YPDDDGLELI								
8. Fucus	526	4.72e-33	TYLLPQAIQV <b>GSPTMPSYPSGHA</b> TQNGAFATVLKALIGLDRGGECFDFV FPSDDGLELI								
4. Nostoc	329	1.87e-28	PLSPNPDGTR <b>FSPFPFAYISGHA</b> TFGAIAGILRNFFGTDNVTFTATSEDP PSARGANGIR								
5. Deinococcus	71	9.48e-28	HVQPGWAPSL <b>FTPFPSYPSGHA</b> TVSGAAAEVLAQFFPLQARQLRRDARD AAFSRVVGGI								
7. Corallina	476	1.57e-27	SFLLPQAFAE <b>GSPFMPSYSGHA</b> AVVAGACVTILKAFFDSNFQIDQVFEVD KDEDKLVKSS								

REMEMBER TO LABEL THE ALIGNMENT AND SCORE OF MOTIF 1 IN THE ABOVE PICTURE

The sequence logo for Motif 1 represents the consensus sequence across 8 sites, the x-axis shows positions 1 to 40 and the y-axis indicate information content in bits, reflecting conservation at each position. The height of the letter shows how conserved a position is, therefore the letters are taller, for example at positions 3–13 (PPYSGHA), indicating high conservation where nearly all sequences share the same amino acid, such as "P" at position 3 and 6. Shorter stacks with multiple letters, like at positions 26–40 (e.g V, E, N), show lower conservation with more variability across sequences. Within each stack, the size of individual letters reflects their frequency therefore a taller letter like "S" at position 10 means it's more frequent at that position.

**c) Change the parameters to find the maximum possible number of motifs. How many of them are significant? Submit a screenshot of the graphical view of the motifs.**

We adjusted the meme suite parameter settings to search for a maximum of 30 motifs instead of our previous 3, the output identified all 30 motifs. The first 18 motifs are colorful, indicating they are statistically significant (with E-values ranging from 1.8e-071 for Motif 1 to 2.3e-002 for Motif 18), while the last 12 motifs (19 to 30) are dimmed and not colorful, suggesting they are not significant as their E-values (e.g, 8.3e-002 for Motif 19 to 6.4e+003 for Motif 30) are higher and likely above the default significance threshold. Therefore out of the 30 motifs 18 are significant. (Graphical view of motifs given below)

Graphical view of the motifs:

