

Enhancing Biology Student Success

1. Planning Your Course Schedule

Prerequisite Courses and Course Sequence:

All students must earn a grade of “C” or better in prerequisite courses. Use the Biology [degree plans](#) and the help of your advisor to efficiently plan your schedule, making sure you are able to complete the prerequisite courses in proper order so you can successfully advance to the more advanced courses.

Faculty Advising:

Take advantage of your instructor’s office hours and meet with them early in the semester to learn specific ways to study and take notes on the subjects they are teaching.

School/Life Balance:

Biology courses require a lot of study time. A general rule is that for each hour spent in class, you should be studying two hours outside of class. Time management is key to be successful when balancing your schedule.

2. Inside the Classroom

Effective use of the syllabus:

The syllabus is the essential guide to the class and is a great reference to keep on hand during the semester. Organize your papers and notes for each class using a separate folder or binder to keep everything in one place and easy to access. If there are deadlines in the syllabus, record them in your planner or calendar. Keep them up to date if changes occur.

Attendance and Preparation:

Students should try to attend every class; the material is cumulative and missing a single day will set students at a disadvantage. If serious circumstances cause you to miss class, you should contact a classmate for their notes, do the assigned readings, and visit your instructor during their office hours to catch up. Set an alarm on your phone so you will arrive to class on time. To prepare before arriving to class, put your phone on silent and in your backpack. Sitting at the front eliminates distractions and allows you to focus better and listen attentively.

Note-taking as a Study Tool:

Information covered during lectures is often what is on the exams. Your notes should contain all of the diagrams and labels that your instructor draws on the board, provides as handouts, or

PowerPoint images that your instructor references. Try to record new and specialized terms that are introduced and think critically to understand the content and relationships the instructor is explaining. Writing and re-copying your notes later is a proven effective study tool.

Preparing and Taking Exams:

In addition to studying your notes from class, utilize the exam guidelines provided by your instructor (e.g. type of exam questions, number of questions, and material that will be covered) and work with fellow classmates in study groups outside of class. When taking the exam, read each question more than once before answering to make sure you are interpreting the question correctly.

Returned Exams and Assignments:

Graded exams and assignments are great study tools! Carefully study the questions you missed and determine where things went wrong and why you answered incorrectly. If you are not allowed to keep your old exams, make an appointment with your instructor so you can review them.

3. Studying Outside of the Classroom

Budgeting sufficient study time:

Avoid underestimating how much time is required for studying, especially in your core classes. Pay close attention to the time needed for reading assignments and practice timing how long it takes you to read several pages of text, then calculate your average time per page to estimate how long it will take to read an assigned chapter. Plan ahead so you don't feel rushed or ill prepared in class.

Instructor Office Hours:

Biology faculty keep regular office hours that are listed in the course syllabus. Visit your professors during these times or schedule an appointment. Before visiting, prepare a list of questions and bring your class notes. Be specific about what topics you need more clarification on so they can best help you.

Individual Study:

Study regularly throughout the semester, not just before exams. By doing something repeatedly, such as studying the material, you will become more adapt at attaining new information and thinking critically and clearly will become easier during exams. Being able to explain the concepts and terminology verbally and in writing proves that you are prepared for the exam.

Group Study:

Effective study in groups is very helpful if everyone is disciplined and serious. Try surrounding yourself with other highly motivated students who will help keep the group on track.

Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring:

Supplemental Instructors (SI's) are students that have successfully completed courses and who hold scheduled sessions outside of class hours to review the material. All students are encouraged to attend these sessions as a way to better study for the course. UCO also offers tutoring through Tutoring Central, here is the [link](#) for more information.

Assignments and Academic Honesty:

There is often a penalty in most classes for handing in assignments late, or they may not be accepted at all. It's helpful to save often, make back-up electronic files, and print hard copies of all assignments in case they are lost or destroyed. **Sharing work on assignments with classmates is a form of academic dishonesty which is prohibited by the student handbook – even on group assignments.** All students are expected to do their own work preparing assignments and reports.

4. Special Requirements of Biology Courses with Labs

Introduction:

In most biology courses the laboratory work takes place during class periods that meet separately from the lecture class periods, but the lab work re-enforces and illustrates the lecture material.

Objectives of Laboratory Curricula:

Students will learn how to make observations and practical application of techniques through hands-on activities. Active preparation and participation in lab exercises is the only effective way to master the laboratory curriculum.

Laboratory techniques:

Instructors teach and demonstrate all of the techniques that are necessary to complete the laboratory curriculum but students must practice these techniques to learn the proper use of equipment.

Laboratory Study:

Read the assigned exercises and learn the lab material before the lab period starts. An important key to success in laboratory courses is for students to plan a schedule that allows not only working effectively throughout the scheduled lab session, but to also take advantage of open-study hours for review.

Laboratory practical exams:

Success on “laboratory practicals” first requires understanding the format, then utilizing study techniques that are effective for preparing for this type of exam.

Format – typically short answer tests, with numbered stations that each student will be given a specified amount of time to visit, observe the displayed material, and answer the questions.

Exam specimens – usually similar to those used in class and will include direct and microscope observations.

Question content – may involve identification/description of taxonomic classification, structures, adaptive functions, selection pressures, or ecological information.

Preparing for Lab Exams – a highly active and repetitive study approach works best, an effective initial strategy is to study more than enough to perform well on the lab practical

Diagramming instead of Photography:

Making diagrammatic drawings of lab demonstration specimens and carefully labeling them is far more effective than photographing the specimens. Detailed, hand-made diagrams are important study tools to study when you’re away from the lab.

5. Academic Extracurricular Activities and Opportunities

Take advantage of the clubs, internships, and faculty research programs to further develop your academic involvement and learning while at UCO.

<https://www.uco.edu/cms/academics/biology/student-organizations>

Career Services offers advisement on resume writing, connecting with employers, interview skills, and other internships outside of campus. Contact careers@uco.edu.