

Preparing and grading courses with continuous assessment



ANNOUNCING COURSES

All courses that are *not* lectures (i.e., practical courses, seminars, proseminars, lectures with exercises, etc) are considered as courses with continuous assessment (German: *prüfungsimmanente Lehrveranstaltungen, piLV*). For such courses, the final grade is determined by two or more **partial course components** (*Teilleistungen*), which could be a test, homework, written report, student presentation, practical or computer exercises, etc. These components and their **contribution to the final grade** (e.g., 60% practical exercise, 20% written report and 20% final written test) as well as the **grading scale** and **assessment criteria** must be described in the course catalog. **Minimal requirements** for a positive grade must also be described (e.g., all course components must be positively assessed).

Unlike the lecture courses, the organizers of courses with continuous assessment may define the **attendance rules**, including compulsory attendance; these rules must be announced in the course catalog. Notice that attendance is merely a prerequisite for successful course completion and therefore cannot be one of the partial course components.



Course-specific rules (i.e., safety regulations, wearing PPE, how many units can be missed, rules regarding group work, usage of AI, allowed aids during tests, presentations, etc) must also be announced in the course catalog before the registration period. If a student disputes a grade, course-specific information described in the course catalog is the first thing inspected by the SPL and/or Office of Study Law (Büro Studienpräses) when considering the case; you should therefore keep this information current using <u>u:space interface</u> (log in, then select Teaching \rightarrow Courses, choose the course and enter information into "Details" tab). Course-specific rules may change between semesters but must remain the same during the semester; any changes should be prepended with the word "UPDATE" and its date.

REGISTRATION OF STUDENTS

Unlike the lecture courses, courses with continuous assessment usually have limited spaces for participants. To ensure their spot, students must therefore **register** for such courses. Typically, registration takes place in **September** for courses in the winter semester and in **February** for courses offered in summer semester; a later registration deadline (e.g., when a prerequisite course takes place in the same semester) is possible and can be arranged upon consultation with the SPL.

Students register for the courses with continuous assessment using student's u:space interface. In case there are fewer spots than registered students, these are allocated based on students' **study progress** (course prerequisites or completion of the curriculum) and/or the number of **points** students bid for a particular course. In case of equal study progress and/or points, the software allocates the places randomly. Students who did not get a place in the course are placed on a **waiting list**.

NB: in case there are too many students on the waiting list, the SPL may approach course organizers asking to arrange a parallel group; your cooperation in arranging additional groups is essential for ensuring students' study progress.

According to the University rules, for all courses with continuous assessment **attendance during the first course unit is mandatory**; students who do not show at the first unit <u>must be</u> <u>de-registered and their place must be filled with students from the waiting list</u>. Responsible course heads may do so themselves using "Registrations" (*Anmeldesystem*) tab in the u:space interface. First units could be used for course orientation (see Best Practices below).

ORIENTATION MEETING (VORBESPRECHUNG): BEST PRACTICES

Many course organizers find **orientation meetings** (German: *Vorbesprechung*) useful: they count as the first unit, which allows the organizers to identify students committed to the course, de-register no-shows, fill free spaces with students from the waiting list and discuss course goals, content, rules, etc with the students. Orientation meetings are optional; <u>the decision to organize one lays with the responsible course head (course organizer)</u>. Below are some best practices if you opt in for this format:

- Announce the orientation meeting as **compulsory** in the course description in the course catalog and include info about its date, time and venue
- Include specific date, time and venue for the orientation meeting in the **course schedule**



NB: if you do not do so, the date of the orientation meeting does *not* appear in the students' calendar (an app, which shows students dates and times of the courses they are registered for)

- Schedule the orientation meeting <u>soon after the end of the registration period and</u> <u>close to the semester start date</u>: if your orientation meeting is too late in the semester, chances are that students on the waiting list have already made other arrangements
- (optional) Remind students about the orientation meeting via email several days in advance (use "Send emails" tab in the <u>u:space</u> interface)
- Specify the **format** (on-site or online) and if students must appear in person or not (you may allow them sending delegates for the orientation meeting, if you choose so)
- Specify if the students from the waiting list must participate in the orientation meeting and define any other relevant procedures (e.g., de-registration of no-shows, waiting list rules, late registrations, etc).

GRADING COURSES

All **students who have been allocated a place in a course must be assessed** if they have not deregistered within the announced period. If a registered student presents a genuine reason for interrupting the course or any of its components (e.g., sick leave, pregnancy, severe panic attack, etc), course organizers decide on a case-by-case basis if they can offer compensatory assignment, exam, etc OR de-register the student from the course.

Courses with continuous assessment must be graded **within four weeks (28 calendar days)** after the completion of the latest course component (e.g., final exam, student's presentation, report submission deadline, etc).

Each of the course components must be assessed; please keep relevant documentation for at least 6 months after the end of the course. The final grade must take into account the weight of individual course components. You may define if all course components must be assessed positively (or not); this information must be described in the course catalog. Students should be given an opportunity to repeat the partial course component carrying the heaviest weight in case they fail one.

Only integers (1..5) or in some cases *pass/fail* are allowed as a final grade. 1 (excellent, *sehr gut*), 2 (good, *gut*), 3 (satisfactory, *befriedigend*) and 4 (sufficient, *genügend*) are considered positive grades; 5 (not sufficient, *nicht genügend*) and X (fraudulent performance, *erschlichene Leistung*) are negative grades. "AB" (de-registered, *abgemeldet*) and "NE" (no-show, *nicht erschienen*) are non-grades. Notice that fraudulent performance (usage of non-allowed aids) in a single partial course components must result in X being the final grade.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS IN REGARD TO COURSE GRADES

Students have a right to repeat a negatively assessed (5 or X) course with continuous assessment; there is no limitations regarding allowed course attempts. *Commissional exams* (*kommissionelle Prüfungen*) in courses with continuous assessment are not allowed.

Students have a right to **inspect and photocopy** their examination papers and other relevant course documentation (including making photos, photocopies, scans, etc). Such



documentation may be inspected within 6 months after the grade has been released (entered into <u>u:space</u>). Course documentation (protocols, reports, test papers, etc) must be retained for 2 years after the exam date, after which they must be safely destroyed.

Students have a right to **dispute negative grades** (5 or X) or severe deficiencies in course implementation with the Office of Study Law (Büro Studienpräses) **within 4 weeks (28 calendar days)** after entering the grades into <u>u:space</u>. Positive grades (1..4) cannot be appealed, but must reflect fair, objective and reliable assessment of students' achievement of the course learning outcomes.

EXAMPLE DESCRIPTION IN THE COURSE CATALOG:

Aims, contents and method of the course

Practical course in basic molecular biology techniques. At the end of the course students are familiar with and follow basic lab safety rules, can calculate concentrations and dilutions and prepare stocks and simple buffers, follow formal requirements of laboratory notebook-keeping, are familiar with the theoretical background and practical implementation of DNA extraction from bacteria and yeast, simple subcloning techniques, DNA digests and ligation, bacterial transformation, PCR, protein (over)expression in bacteria, SDS-PAGE; can comprehensively annotate empirical results and concisely describe experimental goals, expected results, empirical observations, conclusions and propose troubleshooting strategy.

Participation in the practical course requires strict adherence to laboratory safety regulations; gross disregard of lab safety rules will result in immediate expulsion (deregistration) from the course.

Assessment and permitted materials

Assessment is based on active participation (33%), written protocol (33%) and final written test (34%). For a positive grade, all partial course components must be positively assessed. For the final written test, a pocket calculator (not the cell phone!) is allowed.

Minimal requirements and assessment criteria

Minimal requirements: compulsory attendance (a maximum 1 day can be missed due to an important reason); active participation, written protocol submitted before the final test and final test. For a positive grade, all partial course components must be positively assessed. The final written test must be positively assessed; an opportunity for improvement will be provided.

Assessment criteria: Active participation refers to reading and completion of the materials and activities on course Moodle pages, active participation in experimentation, proactive learning of experimental methods and experimental design, data presentation and analysis, completion of tests and assignments during the practical, contribution to in-class discussions, formulation and utterance of questions and comments, own contribution to course teaching materials. Labbook and report: following formal requirements of labbook keeping; consistent note-taking; exact description of protocols, including deviations; comprehensive annotation of images, graphs and tables; concise description of experimental goal(s), expected results, empirical observations and conclusions; description of troubleshooting strategy.

Examination topics

Concentrations and dilutions, buffers, plasmids and their functional elements, plasmid extraction, PCR, restriction cloning, protein expression, SDS-PAGE, DNA (Sanger) sequencing. For methods used in the practical, it is essential to remember and understand the steps and their significance (what happens at each step). For buffers used during the practical, it is essential to understand the function of each component (remembering the exact concentration of each component is a plus, but not required).