

# Course Specifications

From the academic year 2016-2017 up to and including the

## Computational Biosciences (C003301)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)

Credits 5.0      Study time 150 h      Contact hrs 60.0 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2018-2019

A (semester 1)	English	lecture	30.0 h
		seminar: practical PC room classes	30.0 h

Lecturers in academic year 2018-2019

Dawyndt, Peter      WE02      lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2018-2019

	crdts	offering
<a href="#">Master of Science in Biology</a>	5	A
<a href="#">Exchange Programme in Biology (master's level)</a>	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

programming, problem solving, Python programming language

Position of the course

Researchers are often confronted with time-consuming and repetitive tasks when processing and analyzing information using computers, namely, collecting data from websites, converting files from one format into another, and analyzing, summarizing and visualizing the obtained data. The exponential flow of newly incoming information requires modern researchers to be able to automate these tasks, in order to speed up their daily routine jobs. This course teaches you how to translate these time-consuming and repetitive tasks in such a way that these can be performed automatically by the computer. The necessary programming skills for that purpose will be acquired by learning to work and think in the programming language Python.

Contents

Programming is the process of designing, writing, testing, debugging and maintaining the source code of computer programs. This requires knowledge of the syntax and semantics of a programming language and the skills to write programs in that language. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, in writing computer programs one must learn how to think as a programmer. This computational thinking process, or in other words, learning the skill of problem solving by programming, is underlined throughout the whole course. The programming language Python is used in particular to solve problems in terms of

- basic components: instructions, variables, data types and operators
- control structures: conditional tasks, control loops and functions
- data structures: strings, lists, tuples, dictionaries, sets, files and modules
- object oriented programming: objects, classes, attributes, methods, inheritance, polymorphism and exceptions

Example programs will show that the acquired programming skills can also be applied in other programming languages and programming contexts.

Initial competences

Some basic computer knowledge is advantageous. Prior programming skills are not required at all.

## Final competences

- 1 Translate a task described in natural language into a program in the Python programming language and have this program being executed by a computer in order to generate a correct result.
- 2 Test and debug a program.
- 3 Make the right choices between different alternatives when implementing a program, taking into account performance, coding style and correctness.
- 4 Have a working knowledge about the basis principles of object oriented programming.

## Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

## Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

## Teaching methods

Lecture, self-reliant study activities, seminar: practical PC room classes

## Extra information on the teaching methods

Interactive lectures and guided hands-on sessions in a PC-room. Use of the electronic learning environment Pythia ([pythia.ugent.be](http://pythia.ugent.be)) for automatic evaluation of programming exercises. Interactive coaching (between students themselves or between student and lecturer) is stimulated by making use of the electronic learning environment Minerva ([minerva.ugent.be](http://minerva.ugent.be)). The study handbook is highly recommended for self-study.

## Learning materials and price

Course book: The Practice of Computing using Python (3rd edition)  
Authors: William Punch, Richard Enbody  
Publisher: Pearson  
Language: English  
ISBN-13: 978-1292166629  
Estimated cost: €70

Slides shown during the lectures will be made available on Minerva, together with additional learning material (background information, links to relevant websites).

## References

- Mark Lutz (2009). Learning Python: Powerful Object-Oriented Programming (4th edition). O'Reilly Media, ISBN-13: 978-0596158064.
- Mark Pilgrim (2009). Dive Into Python. CreateSpace, ISBN-13: 978-1441413024. (free download @ <http://diveintopython.org>)
- Hans Peter Langtangen (2009). A Primer on Scientific Programming with Python. Springer, ISBN-13: 978-3642024740.
- Tony Gaddis (2009). Starting Out with Python. Pearson Education - Addison Wesley, ISBN-13: 978-0321549419.
- Michael H. Goldwasser (2007). Object-Oriented Programming in Python. Prentice Hall, ISBN-13: 978-0136150312.
- Jason Kinser (2008). Python For Bioinformatics. Jones & Bartlett Publishers, ISBN-13: 978-0763751869.
- Sebastian Bassi (2009). Python for Bioinformatics. Chapman & Hall, ISBN-13: 978-1584889298.

## Course content-related study coaching

Syntax and semantics of the programming language Python are presented in the course book and the slides, and need to be acquired largely through self-study. Some programming exercises are solved during the lectures so that students learn how the programming skills can be applied in practice. During hands-on sessions, students learn themselves how to solve programming challenges by working on a series of mandatory exercises, that need to be solved independently. An electronic learning environment gives students instant feedback on their submitted programming exercises and contains additional exercises to practice further. Use of the forum of the electronic learning environment Minerva is stimulated, allowing students, the lecturer and his assistants to solve certain problems outside contact hours. Permanent evaluation of mandatory exercises and evaluation exercises will be used as feedback moment, and after the weekly deadlines and evaluations, solutions of all exercises will be made available.

## Evaluation methods

end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Open book examination, skills test

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Open book examination, skills test

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Open book examination, skills test

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

In computing the final score we take into account both the permanent evaluations (20%, 4/20) and the periodic evaluation (80%, 16/20). The permanent evaluation has two components that both influence the score for the permanent evaluation.

For the first part of the permanent evaluation, the students have to work on a series of 60 mandatory exercises. Based on the covered programming techniques, these exercises are subdivided into 10 series of 6 mandatory exercises each. The first exercise of each series always is a variation on the manipulation of ISBN numbers. A sample solution of this exercise is available from Minerva, and in an accompanying instruction video we explain how we came to this sample solution. As such, the ISBN exercises explain how the new programming technique from the series can be brought into practice. After this preparatory steps, students are ready to apply the new programming technique themselves in solving the other five programming exercises from the series. Students must submit their solutions of the mandatory exercises in each series (including the ISBN exercise) through the online learning environment Pythia before a set deadline (deadlines always fall at 22:00 on the Tuesday that follows the hands-on session dedicated to the series of exercises). Students can use the Pythia scoresheet to get an overview of the exercises for which they have already submitted a correct solution. The scoresheet provides a nice overview of the mandatory exercises in each series, the submission deadlines, the current status of each exercises, and the time a first correct solution was submitted for the exercise.

For the second part of the permanent evaluation, we organise two evaluation sessions during the hands-on sessions that follow after five exercise series. During these evaluations, students have to solve two new programming exercises within the time frame of two hours. It is allowed to make use of the Pythia platform during the evaluations, so that students can check the correctness of their solutions at all times. The submitted solutions for the evaluation exercises are manually evaluated by the lecturer or the teaching assistants and scored based on correctness, programming style used, choice made between the use of different programming techniques and the overall quality of the solution. The level of difficulty of the evaluation exercises is lower than that of the exercises that need to be solved during the periodic evaluation (exam), as we mainly want to check at this time during the semester if the students master the basic programming skills. In addition, these evaluation sessions follow the same procedure that is also used during the periodic evaluations, so that students can use this experience to adjust their approach towards the exam.

The score for the permanent evaluation is determined using the formula  $s * c / a$ , where  $s$  is the score a student has obtained based on his submitted solutions for the evaluation exercises (expressed as a score out of 20),  $c$  is the number of mandatory exercises for which at least one correct solution has been submitted before the weekly deadlines, and  $a$  is the total number of mandatory exercises (30 per evaluation series). A student that for example has obtained a score of 16/20 for his evaluation exercises and that has submitted correct solutions for all 30 mandatory exercises before the weekly deadlines, obtains a score of  $16 * 30/30 = 16$  out of 20 for the evaluation series. If that student still had obtained a score of 16/20 for his evaluation exercises, but only submitted 18/30 correct solutions for the mandatory exercises before the weekly deadlines, he sees his score for the evaluation series reduced to  $16 * 18/30 = 9.6$  out of 20.

Students will receive an email with their score for the evaluation series as soon as possible after each evaluation session. During the next hands-on session, students can collect their submitted solutions that will have been annotated with feedback that indicates where they can improve their code. They can use this feedback in solving other programming exercises.

It is not possible to retake the permanent evaluation during the second examination period. To compute the score for the second examination period, we compute two scores. One score takes into account the score for the permanent evaluations (with weight 20%, as was done during the first examination period). The other score ignores the score obtained for the permanent evaluations, and is only based on the score for the periodic evaluation. The final score for the second examination period is the maximum

of these two scores.

During the periodic evaluation (exam) students are given 3.5 hours to solve three programming exercises. It is allowed to make use of the Pythia platform during the periodic evaluation, so that students can check the correctness of their solutions at all times and receive immediate feedback on the correctness and the programming style of their submitted solutions. To determine the score for the periodic solution, the submitted solutions are manually evaluated by the lecturer or the teaching assistants and scored based on correctness, programming style used, choice made between the use of different programming techniques and the overall quality of the solution.

#### Calculation of the examination mark

In computing the final score we take into account both the permanent evaluations (20%, 4/20) and the periodic evaluation (80%, 16/20).

It is not possible to retake the permanent evaluation during the second examination period. To compute the score for the second examination period, we compute two scores. One score takes into account the score for the permanent evaluations (with weight 20%, as was done during the first examination period). The other score ignores the score obtained for the permanent evaluations, and is only based on the score for the periodic evaluation. The final score for the second examination period is the maximum of these two scores.