**Tips for BGGN220 Reports**

It is important that you do your best to understand each experiment. In many instances, it will be necessary to look up several background papers.

It is completely reasonable (and not cheating) to ask a colleague etc. about any specific experiment that you do not understand. Wouldn't you do that in real life, if you had a question pertaining to your own thesis research? The point is for you to have understood (as completely as possible) each experiment by the time you have completed your report. Or, in other words, there should not be anything that you do not understand. That is true for this course, and absolutely critical in real life research.

Don’t guess! Work in the realm of facts and knowledge.

Be precise and careful in your description and analysis of the data. Don't make mistakes. Don't misspell genes, organisms, words, etc.

Make sure that your reports are written in the best possible English. Please proofread it carefully!

Think independently about the results and conclusions. Not everything that is published is correctly interpreted. Authors will sometimes slant their interpretations to support their favorite theories. Also, authors sometimes overinterpret their data to 'hype' their results so that they will be published in a high profile journal. Thus, it is important to be careful and critical in the interpretation of published (and unpublished) data.

Where relevant, point out problems and inconsistencies in the data. Are there any missing experiments? List these items (numerically) at the end of the report.

If possible, try to think beyond the paper. What is the next step?