Open Book Law Examinations

Strategies and Common Problems

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• **ALL** examinations require you to prepare and study
  - preparation + consistent effort = results

• You should KNOW your work thoroughly

• An OPEN BOOK exam just means that you can have some ‘back-up’ to help your memory in the exam

• Well-prepared students may not even use the books in an open book exam
  - they KNOW the work.
Preparation for the exam:

- Go over ‘recent’ (<5 years old) **PAST EXAM PAPERS**, if they are available.
  - Older papers (>5 years old) may have different format/content
  - Some units/lecturers make these available through direct links on Moodle
  - All units—through the UNE Library site: [http://www.une.edu.au/library](http://www.une.edu.au/library)
Before the exam:

- Prepare early for the open book exam
- Identify and Review key topics and issues
- Make summaries from your text/s, lecture notes and other relevant resources
- Use a clear system to identify key issues you can access in the exam
  - External tags
  - Summary format
  - Contents page
Sample Summary Format 1:

Concept

1:

2:

3:

4:

etc

Supporting Cases, Legislation, Examples, References
Sample Summary Format 2:

Area of:
(e.g.) Business Law

Key elements

Supporting Cases, Legislation, Examples, References

Topic

Sub-topic
examples

Sub-topic
examples
examples
In the OPEN BOOK exam:

Remember:
OPEN BOOK exams are designed to find out about YOU:
◦ what YOU know about the topic
◦ how you APPLY your knowledge of the topic

Not how much you can find and copy from a source.

Use the exam time to think, develop and focus YOUR answer
Common Problems (1):

- Too many books to open
  - There is not enough time in an Open Book exam to find and read lots of material from many different sources
  - Keep it simple and focussed – limit your resources
  - Know your resources, have key issues clearly marked and easy to find.
Common Problems (2):

- Copying extensive sections

You will not receive marks, even if you reference the source correctly.

- Why?
- It is not YOUR answer, but a collection of information from other sources that just fills up the page
Common Problems (3):

- Referencing in the exam?

What does THIS exam require?
- Basic mention?
- Author/case/source?
- Full references?
- No references?

Find out **before** the exam and include that level of referencing in your summaries — **AVOID PLAGIARISM** —
When answering a question (1):

- Identify the general topic area/s
- What is the focus of the question within that topic area/s?
- What am I asked to **do**?
  - break down the question into its parts

**Consider:** 1. Instruction words 2. Topic words 3. Any focus/restrictions
When answering a question (2):

- What key terminologies should I include in my answer?

- Is there a reference/example I should include to support my answer?
  - State why it is relevant to the answer

- Make it easy for the reader (marker) to find your main points
  - BE specific and obvious
  - Don’t leave the reader guessing what you are trying to say
  - Don’t assume the reader will make ‘mental leaps’ to connect ideas in your answer – you must TELL them the links to prove that you know your content.
When answering a question (3):

- Focus on the specific task of the question
  - Keep your answer RELEVANT to what the question asks
  - Show how your answer is tied to the focus of the question
    - Use key words/terms from the question in your answer
  - Don’t fill your answer with everything you can think of or find in your exam resources about the topic – this is called ‘dumping’ information
  - ‘Dumping’ tells the reader (marker)
    - that you’re not sure what is important and what is not
    - that you don’t really know your work and how to apply it
    - that you expect the reader to search to find the answer
    - Remember – make it easy for the reader/marker to see your correct answer
FOCUS on

- Time – to answer the question, not search books
- Limiting the use of resources to essentials
- Identifying and answering the specifics of the question
Other UNE resources:


- **Academic Skills Office (ASO)**:
  - [http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills](http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills)
    - **Subject-specific writing: LAW**
    - **ASO Fact Sheets**: 2 page summaries – *MANY* topics, including exams
      - [http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills/fact-sheets](http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills/fact-sheets)
    - **Online Study Skills Workshops**: self-directed workshops
      - Learning Strategies (including exams)– Academic Reading– Academic Writing
      - [http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills/online-study-skills-workshops](http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills/online-study-skills-workshops)
Other UNE resources:

- **Counsellors:**

  - Support to succeed in all aspects of your studies

  http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/student-support/counselling

- **Tip Sheets:**

  - Including: Emotional Well-being for Law Students, Relaxation, Procrastination, Dealing with Exam Anxiety, Improving Concentration, Staying Motivated and many more...

  Scroll through the list at

  http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/student-support/counselling/tip-sheets
And after this . . .

. . .then this !!!