

# Exam Day Strategies

UNE exams are mostly between two and three hours, depending on the subject. Managing time during an exam and understanding different types of questions will help you feel confident and in control. Here are some helpful tips.

## 1. Get an exam overview

For most exams, spend the first 10 minutes or so perusing the questions:

- a) **Read the instructions carefully to examine the options.** Identify the topics covered, read the questions carefully, and think about the type of writing required. Jot down a few quick notes on your whiteboard (if it is allowed for your online exam) if important facts come to mind and need to be remembered. Your first impressions are often important in the decision-making process.
- b) **Manage your time.** The exam paper may state how much time you should spend on each question. If not, use the marks (weighting of each section) as a guide to work out how much time to spend on each section or question. Keep an eye on time left. The countdown timer is in the navigation block.

**Example:** Exam length: 2 hours and 15 minutes (135 mins)

Question weighting: Multiple-choice questions (worth 20%), short answer questions (worth 40%) and essay (worth 40%).

Allocate time as follows:

- 10 minutes for planning = 125 minutes left
- 25 minutes for the multiple-choice questions (i.e., 125 minutes x 20%)
- 50 minutes for the short answer questions (i.e., 125 minutes x 40%)
- 50 minutes for the essay (i.e., 125 minutes x 40%)

## 2. Understand the question

Read the question carefully twice and identify the instruction words, topic words, and any restricting words. This will help you to demonstrate how you are meeting the learning outcomes being assessed and your overall understanding of the topic. Apply this technique to essay questions, multiple choice, short answer, and labelling tasks. For more information, see the Academic Skills fact sheet “Analysing the Question”.

## 3. Writing answers

- a) **Multiple choice questions.** usually test your memory about topical facts taught in the unit.
  - Look for answers that seem obviously incorrect. Remove these from your decision making. This increases your likelihood of picking out the correct response.
  - If you are still unsure which response is correct, always select a response. Don't submit your exam with no response selected unless there is a penalty for incorrect answers. This will be clearly stated in the exam instructions. In this case, if you are unsure of the correct response, making no selection is a valid choice.
- b) **Short answer questions** usually test your knowledge of the facts and content of your unit.
  - Short answer responses may need a few words, sentences, or paragraphs. There is often a suggested word count available in the response box.

- Another way to decide how much to write in your short answer question response is to look at the value (weighting) of the question. How many marks are on offer for the question? Questions worth more marks usually require a more detailed response.
  - In UNE Online Supervised Exams the size of the short answer response box is expandable. This means that if you need to write more than the box can fit by default, it will automatically expand to fit in your extra words as you continue to type.
- c) **Essays.** Exam essays are different from assignment essays as success depends more on recall than on research. In essay-based exams, you are often given a choice of topic. Do not waste too much time deciding which topic to tackle. Allow approximately 10 minutes to plan a 45-minute essay, 30 minutes for writing and 5 minutes for review.

### Plan

- **Decide on your point of view.** Many essay questions in exams are argumentative; that is, you are asked to agree or disagree with a given statement. Therefore, you need to have an opinion or a line of argument. There are four possibilities: agree strongly, mostly agree, mostly disagree, disagree strongly.
- **Make notes.** During the first 10 minutes reading time in the exam, jot down the points you are going to use to support your line of argument. For an exam essay, you will need three to five main points, one of which may involve counterargument or concession.

### Write

- Do not spend too long on the introduction: keep it to 30–50 words and use it to identify the topic and indicate your line of argument.
- Most of the marks will come from the essay body, followed by the conclusion.
- Work on the body for most of the writing time. Expand each major point into a topic sentence and back up your points with evidence or examples.
- If you have planned your essay well, your conclusion will flow from your argument. The conclusion should give a concise summary of your main points and re-state your position.

### Review

Allow 5 minutes to re-read and revise the essay. Check your answers by asking yourself:

- Have I answered the question?
- Is this a logical answer?
- Is it complete?

If not, you still have time to adjust. If you run out of time, at least jot down the main points you wanted to make.

## 4. After the exam

Try not to get caught up in going over and over what happened in your exam. You can't change your answers, so it's best to put your energy into getting ready for the next exam. Once you're done with all your exams, make sure to take some time away from study. Relax and enjoy having some free time. You deserve it!