



Open Book Exams – Preparation Guide for Students

1. What is different about Online Open Book Exams?

Online Open Book Exams are not typically a test of memory; they require you to demonstrate your understanding of different topics and construct an argument to answer chosen questions. The greatest percentage of marks will be awarded for student demonstration of understanding and capacity to analyse and apply information.

2. You are allowed access to certain resources – so confirm which ones in advance

Check what resources you are allowed to use during the exam. Are you allowed access to the following: Lecture Notes, your own handwritten material, core textbooks, your own home drive, Moodle, Internet access etc.?

3. Preparation and revision are really important

Some students may think that because they have access to notes, they do not need to revise. This is a dangerous approach, because in open book exams, you are required to demonstrate that you can apply, discuss, and evaluate the knowledge you already know. If you have to continually search for information during an open book exam, then you will have little time left to actually think about it and apply it.

4. Be organised - have your notes and resources ready

- The capacity to quickly locate information is important - so a well organised folder of notes with clear labels and page numbers for specific topics will be very helpful.
- Use post-its to mark important pages/information and label the post-its clearly for easy referral. Personal notes in the book's margins, or on post-its, stuck to relevant pages, can be useful during the test. For maths and science exams, prepare a list of important data and formulas separately for easy access during the exam.
- Carefully select what you bring to the exam. Too many sources will waste time during the exam and will be confusing to work from
- If you are working from a computer, laptop, iPad, then a very well organised set of folders and sub-folders on your device will be crucial.
- Plan ahead to make sure that you have a copy of the correct edition of a core textbook on **the day of the exam**. If you know that certain chapters or sections are likely to be of core importance, then have these bookmarked in advance and studied; Use visual summaries of key points and connections between categories.

5. Be familiar with exam format

As with other exams, you should know the exam format and types of questions being asked. You should also be clear on the time allocation and how this time will be best used for different types of questions. Review how many questions there are; divide your time between these allowing more for those with the highest marks available.

If possible, review sample papers and have practiced writing sample answers. If these are not available, ask your lecturer for guidance on the likely areas of focus.

6. Referencing Information and Sources

- Be very conscious of plagiarism. Do not copy or cut and paste from the internet. Do not copy large amounts of text from a book. Reference your quotes/citations
- **Citation** - be clear on what is expected here. Because it is an open book exam, you may be required to use a formal referencing system that acknowledges where you got information from including author and year of publication & page number for quotations.
- (Generally -Reference Lists are not required at the end of Open Book Exam Scripts - unless specifically asked for)

7. Glossary of common exam terms

Before the open book exam -ensure that you have a good understanding of the following exam terms

Advise (on) - Provide specific advice about something.

Analyse - Discuss the main ideas/components of an idea or theory, explaining why they are important and how they're related.

Assess - Determine the value or importance of something; identify strengths and weaknesses and draw your own conclusion.

Calculate - Work out and show your workings/calculations.

Comment on - State your views and opinions on the topic clearly, backing up your points with evidence and examples.

Compare - List similarities (and sometimes differences) in two or more examples, perhaps reaching a conclusion about which is preferable and justifying why.

Compute - Reckon or calculate (a figure or amount)

Consider - Identify advantages and disadvantages or strengths and weaknesses in argument and justify your own position and conclusion.

Contrast - List points of difference between examples; set in opposition to clearly show the differences.

Compare and Contrast - Identify different views on a topic/subject and show both similarities and differences.

Define - State the precise meaning of a word or phrase as outlined in reliable sources; in some cases, it might be necessary or desirable to examine different definitions and outline limitations.

Describe - Give in detail the main features or characteristics of the topic.

Determine - Work out and show your workings/calculations.

Differentiate/Distinguish between - Look for differences between

Discuss - Explain, giving several different views on the issue; explore similarities and differences and draw conclusions on the possible implications as well as giving your own position on the issue.

Evaluate - Make an appraisal of the importance/usefulness/accuracy of something, stressing both advantages and limitations and back this up with relevant theories or evidence.

Examine - Investigate a subject/topic in detail.

Explain - Make clear or plain, giving details about how and why something is the way it is, perhaps using a step-by-step approach.

Identify - Pinpoint a fact or a figure or an example or an argument or a theoretical position.

Illustrate - Make your points clearer with the use of specific examples, figures, diagrams, graphs etc.

Interpret - Outline what something means in simple terms and give your judgement or comments in relation to the issue.

Justify - Present convincing evidence and reasons to support your argument and answer the main objections likely to be made about them.

List - Present concise, itemised information in bullet points or table form.

Outline - Give an overview of a subject in an organised way, without going into too much detail.

Prepare - Make ready for use or consideration.

Present - Put forward for consideration; show or display.

Provide - Put forward or set down.

Set Out - Outline or put in a specific arrangement.

Show - Justify each step, providing a convincing argument/explanation.

State - Present in a brief, clear form without too much detail or examples.

Support - Back up your argument/discussion with evidence and examples.