



Exam Techniques and Preparation

Preparation

The best and most basic requirement of passing exams is [preparation](#). This does not mean cramming the night before, but working through the material over the course of the whole semester.

You should organise a [timetable](#) for studying for your exams as soon as the exam timetable is published. Allow yourself some time to relax: if you make a drastic change to your normal routine you will study much less effectively.

Cramming is a bad move for two reasons: firstly, you don't have time to see how the material fits together, and how it fits with earlier courses. Thus, you miss the opportunity to gain easy marks from work you should have already mastered. Secondly, research has shown that a good night's sleep after proper preparation not only makes exams much less stressful, but improves performance.

Our exams are designed to test what you know, not what you do not know.

In all our courses, most of the questions in the exam are similar to questions you have seen before, or are applications of methods you have been taught.

[Revise your lecture notes and the tutorial problems first.](#) Check over the class tests you have done to see where you went wrong. When revising, if you have trouble, [consult your lecturer](#). Write down the important formulas so you can quickly refer to these notes during the exam and do not have to waste time looking them all up.

The Exam

The exam is **open book** and you can access your course materials through Moodle. However, [using your phone or the internet to search for answers is strictly prohibited](#) and will be monitored during the exam proctoring process.

Can I leave the room during the exam?

No. Because this is an online invigilation process, you cannot leave the room during the exam **except to use the bathroom**. It is recommended that you make yourself comfortable prior to sitting the exam and ensure that you will not be disturbed.

Make sure you have your [calculator](#) and all the [books and reference material](#) you want to use during the exam close at hand. Any interruptions recorded during the proctoring process will be reviewed and may invalidate your exam attempt.

Exam questions:

The questions will only be active at the allocated exam start time and will be locked at the closing time. **All questions should be attempted and MUST be submitted within the allocated exam period**. If you miss this window, you will not be able to re-do the exam. You are able to leave questions unanswered, however it is best to have a go and get it partially correct than not complete it at all.

You must write the answer to each question in the electronic submission box. In some cases, you can upload your answer as a document at the end of the exam (where specified, e.g. where drawings are required).

It is recommended that you do your answer calculations on paper, scan it and then submit the scanned copy to the electronic submission box. This way, you do not have to spend too much time typing formulae on the screen. You can then submit your calculations separately after you complete the exam period.

Note: *The answer you type into the submission box will be taken as your final answer, thus your working out must reflect this answer.*

All documents submitted as part of your exam need to be **legible** with questions clearly numbered and **MUST** be submitted in the correct submission box within 30 minutes after the live online exam session has concluded or it will not be counted towards your submission!

Doing the Exam

Make sure you log in on time to read the exam information carefully. Getting to an exam late will needlessly increase your stress levels.

It is not always true that the questions get progressively harder; it is quite likely that some later questions are easier than earlier ones. So, answer the questions that you know how to answer first and come back to difficult questions later if time allows.

Plan your time. Look at how many questions you have to answer and how much time you have. If you have 60 minutes left and 15 questions to answer, plan to spend a maximum of $60/15 = 4$ minutes per question.

In all cases (easy or hard questions), do not waste time struggling with something and getting nowhere if there are other parts of the paper undone. If a calculation is going on too long, then it is probable that you have made a mistake.

Hints in the Wording

When we tell you to use a particular method (e.g. polar notation, Norton's theorem), then you will lose most or all of the marks if you do not use that method: we are testing your knowledge of that method. Wording like "using a trig substitution or otherwise..." is a hint that the method suggested is the easiest way, but another method is acceptable.

Show your Working

When answering the questions, first write down what the given variables are and what you are trying to find. Then write down the method and formula you are going to use. This helps clarify your thinking and shows us you understand how to answer the question. Do this for each question even if you do not have time to complete the calculation.

You do not have to type all calculation steps as long as you always type your final answer – and then submit your working sheet separately. However, it is highly recommended that you type the calculation steps so that you can get partial marks even when your final result is wrong.

Marks

Some exams have marks shown for each part. This is a clue – a part worth 2 marks should not take you 15 minutes and 3 pages of calculation.

However, this does not always work the other way around. A question worth 5 marks might only need a very short answer: the marks might be for displaying a deep understanding (or they could be for a long calculation).

Making Mistakes

Even if you know exactly what you are doing in a particular problem, it is always possible to make silly mistakes (losing a minus sign is a common one). Doing so does not result in losing many marks, because we are testing that you understand the topic and know how to answer the question. Of course, please try to avoid careless mistakes, as arithmetic is the fundamental of engineering.

Reference: <https://web.maths.unsw.edu.au/~jds/examtech.pdf>