

Supporting you through your Open-book exams

48-hour open-book assessments

An open book assessment tests your ability to find the information you need and apply it to the question or problem posed. Your response will be expected to be well structured and analytical, selectively using material rather than reproducing it. With 48-hour take-home or remote exams you may have significantly more time than in an exam hall, but this does not mean you should be using all of that time to do the exam and you still need to prepare well beforehand. Like other assignments, your work will need to be well presented, acknowledge source materials and observe the word limit (where applicable).

Standard duration + 1 hour open-book online examinations

In an open-book online examination which lasts for the standard duration + 1 hour, you are able to refer to your course materials whilst completing the exam. However, you should not spend lots of time referring to your materials as the time limit does not allow for this, and you should plan to approach the assessment as you would a normal examination. The additional hour is intended to allow you time to upload your answers.

Preparing for an open-book exam: revision tips

During the period of an open book assessment you will have access to the wide range of resources you have gathered during your studies including e-resources, printed material and your own notes. If you do decide to refer to this information, you need to be able to retrieve it efficiently.

You should look things up for the purpose of confirming your own understanding during the assessment, not to find things out for the first time.

The following tips can help you revise effectively for your upcoming open-book exams:

Know what you need to know. Look through all of the material associated with your course. How has the course content been structured? Ask yourself which topics are central or core ones and how different topics might be related to each other. What are the learning outcomes? Making lists, overview diagrams or concept maps can help.

For each of the exams you can make a list of the key topics and subtopics. You can use this to divide your revision into manageable chunks of learning. Find out where you may have gaps in your notes. You can prioritise studying topics with a high importance where your notes do not meet your needs or where you feel less confident. You can use our [handout](#) or devise your own spreadsheet.

Summarise and organise your notes. Make it easier to find things when you need them. Organise and label your notes and reduce the quantity of them.

When making a summary it helps to make yourself work hard. Rather than simply copying from your notes or texts you may have, leave a time gap between reading material and writing the summary (recall it and then check it). This time gap could be as short as an hour or as long as a day.

Using your notes in an active way helps you to learn effectively. For example, look for points for and against an argument from memory, then check these against your notes. You could summarise these points on a table or concept map. Try and link different parts of your course together in a way that makes it more interesting. Are there examples or case studies you could add in?

Our [handout](#) makes some suggestions and has a method for using slide notes more actively.

Self-testing. Research suggests [self-testing](#) is one of the most powerful things anyone can reinforce their own learning. The format of practice tests does not have to be the same as the exam to be effective. It is practising active retrieval that enhances learning.

Take control of your time

You are going to have to take charge of how you spend your time during the pre-assessment and exam periods, and take care of your own wellbeing to perform at your best. That means having a daily routine, building in breaks, eating healthily and maintaining good sleep patterns.

Tips on prioritising, the timer method and tools such as week planners are available in our [Time management section](#).

If your examination is the standard duration + 1 hour, then you should aim to approach it and organise your time as you would a standard examination. The additional hour has been added to allow you to upload your answers, and you should not wait until the last minute to upload your assessment.

If you have been given an extended period of time to undertake an assessment, such as 48 hours, you should schedule breaks, rest and sleep during that period (according to the time zone you are in). If you have multiple exams it would be exhausting and difficult to maintain working intensively.

For extended assessments, you are not expected to use all of this time on the assessment – the extended time frame allows for differences in time zones and helps to compensate for technical and connection issues. Aim to submit your assessment in good time. You could try scheduling it as if you are sitting a timed exam in an exam hall. For example, if your exam would have been two hours, allow three. You can add short breaks or split it into two 90-minute sessions with a break in the middle.

If you live in shared accommodation then agree a time with your family or flatmates when you will need a quiet and protected space to sit the exam. If more than one of you are sitting these kinds of exams, agree who is sitting an exam in a particular timeslot, and timetable that in. Remember that you have a 48 hour window to help organise the best time for you to complete the exam, so you should consider what the demands on your home WiFi are and when the optimal time might be to start the exam.

Advise anyone that you are living with that you are doing an exam and ask them not to disturb you for the time periods you are doing the exam.

Do not be tempted to share your answers for the examination with your peers. Please note that your open-book exam answers will be checked by Turnitin software to monitor for plagiarism and collusion.

Exam Bootcamp

Exam Bootcamp is the Institute for Academic Development's self-enrol resource on Learn to support students doing exams. It covers strategies that work and includes useful tools.

Three steps to exam success

1. Get set by preparing: plan, take stock and identify gaps.
2. Do the revision workout: learn to focus, read effectively, restructure and self-test.
3. Develop effective exam strategies: tried and tested techniques and tips to use during exams.

How do I enrol?

Exam Bootcamp is a course available on the Learn VLE. Self-enrol and add it to your own list of courses. Exam Bootcamp can be found in the [Self-Enrol \(Students\) section of the Learn space](#).

Past papers

Past papers can be a useful guide to question styles, format and the mark allocation. They can be used to practise question types. However, the questions in new exam papers will be different and course content changes.

Up-to-date information on the learning outcomes, subjects and topics covered in your courses and assessments will be in your course or programme handbooks and other information provided by your School. You should plan to go into the exams period with enough knowledge to answer questions on any of the major topics in a course.

[Exam Papers Online](#) is a service provided by Information Services and provides access for University of Edinburgh students to most degree examination papers. They may be used by students as a study aid only and some papers for some examinations are excluded.

Taking care of your health and wellbeing

- Practice any breathing, relaxation or anxiety management techniques that you are familiar with.
- Make sure you are getting a good amount of sleep throughout the revision and exam period.
- Set healthy routines – for example taking the hour before you go to bed to not use electronic devices and instead implement relaxation techniques, and having a morning routine where you get up at the same time.

- Ensure a regular eating pattern throughout the day (3 meals per day plus healthy snacks) and stay hydrated.
- Participate in outdoor exercise daily (self-isolation and social distancing regulations permitting).
- Maintain regular virtual contact with friends and family.
- Take regular breaks from your exam preparations – it is good for your mental wellbeing and for your studies.
- Engage in a relaxing activity daily and particularly after the exam.
- '[Stress: A short guide for students](#)' (from the Student Counselling Service) has practical advice and tips for recognising and managing stress.

Further information

Additional guidance on academic matters and support around health and wellbeing is available on the [Covid-19 webpages](#).