Exam Preparation

When to prepare

University exams test your understanding and your ability to evaluate and analyse information. Work at a steady pace throughout the semester to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject.

How to prepare from day one of the semester

Try developing regular study habits, such as:
- Using active note-taking strategies for readings and lectures.
- Reviewing the notes you take in lectures
- Discussing the topics with fellow students or teaching each other important concepts
- Making a note of questions you need to ask in tutorials.

How to prepare during the semester

Check the exam details
Consider which topics will be covered, what types of questions to expect, how many questions will be asked, how the marks will be distributed, the length and duration of the exam, and what materials are permitted.

Make a plan
Use weekly planners to schedule times for revising your topics. How many topics do you need to cover? Will some of them take more time than others?

Active Learning
Exam preparation is more than just reading through your notes; it involves using active study techniques.

Try active learning strategies such as:
- Using highlighters, or colours, to organise notes
- Grouping information into headings or topics
- Drawing diagrams
- Applying your knowledge by completing practice questions, e.g. from textbooks and past exams
- Teaching others

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• Writing summaries of the main concepts
• Using flashcards
• Covering up the diagrams and charts and trying to reproduce them
• Making your own visual cues and concept maps
• Writing timed responses to practice questions.

Apply critical thinking strategies
It is a good idea to consider:

• How does this topic relate to others in this unit?
• What do I already know about this topic?
• What examples can I think of to illustrate this?
• How can I connect these concepts to real life?
• What are the causes and effects?
• What are the problems involved, and how could they be solved?

Before your exam:

• Double check the correct time, location, and what materials are permitted
• Have a good night's sleep and set a backup alarm
• Ensure you have all necessary materials and your student ID
• Arrive early for the exam.

How to be prepared in the exam

Plan your answers
Spend time thinking about your answers before you begin to write. For longer responses, spend a few minutes organising your ideas and writing an outline. This will help you to write a coherent answer with a clear structure.

Write clearly
Write clearly and legibly to ensure markers can read your responses.

Use your time wisely
Plan your time carefully. Look at how many questions there are and the corresponding marks. Assign more time to questions that are worth more marks and answer the questions that you know first.
Check your exam responses
At the end of the exam, revisit questions you were unsure of. The answer may have come to you while answering a related question. Read over all your answers for accuracy.

Useful link
In some cases, arrangements can be made for students to have extra time in exams or have other exam modifications. Inclusion and Engagement can advise on whether you qualify:
http://www.canberra.edu.au/current-students/canberra-students/student-support/inclusion-engagement