

Once you're in the exam

Question type Some suggested approaches

<i>General advice for all question types</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the questions very carefully to make sure you fully understand what you are being asked to do. • If you have choice – choose the question where you can best display your knowledge and critical analysis. • Decide on the order you will answer the questions and allocate time for each one. Then stick to that time. Don't get stuck on one question. • A good technique is to answer the “easier” questions first as you may then gain extra time to allocate to the “harder” ones. Plus it will improve your confidence, help reduce your stress and maximise your marks. • If you have a mixture of question types, sometimes it is better to do the shorter questions first. Again, you may be able to gain extra time and doing multiple choice and short answer can often jog your memory and help you answer the longer questions. • Remember – do not get stuck on one question at the expense of other questions in the exam. • Answer every question.
<i>Essay</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essays in exams take the same format as any other essay: they have an introduction, body and conclusion. Because they are short, usually the introduction and conclusions are quite brief. You should have an argument. Paragraphs should be structured with topic sentences and supporting evidence. Ideas should flow logically to support your main argument. • Take a few minutes to write out a basic essay plan on the blank page of the exam booklet. This will help you write the essay, but also if you don't get to complete, the examiner can see your overall logic/main ideas. • Make sure you acknowledge other people's ideas – in closed book exams you will not usually be expected to do full citations, but you should include as much information as you can recall.
<i>Short or long answer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First think back through your course topics and identify what ideas, concept or theory that the question is testing. • Answer in whole sentences • Don't waste time repeating the question in your answer. • Even if you don't know the answer, attempt it anyway.
<i>Multiple Choice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First go through the questions one by one quickly answering all the questions you are confident about, mark the ones you are unsure of with a question mark and the ones you don't know with an “x”. Try to think of the answer before looking at the choices then find the choice that most closely matches your response • Go through the questions a second time looking only at the ones with a question mark. Often you will be able to answer them now after having gone once through. Use a process on elimination to narrow down the choices. Often some choices are obviously incorrect. Any you still can't answer, mark with an “x”. • Finally go back through all the ones with an “x”. If you still don't know the answer, if there is no penalty for incorrect answer, guess.
<i>Problem-solving</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain storm all the ideas, concepts or formulae that might apply to the problem – you could do a quick mind map on the blank sheet in your booklet • List out any formulae you plan to use • Write your steps clearly and put as much information as you can even if you are unsure of the answer.

Sample exam plan

The following is a sample plan for a 3 hour exam. Actual times allocated would depend on what you find once you get into the exam – this is a rough plan of action to tackle the exam in the most efficient way possible and avoid non completion of questions. Having such a plan also can be beneficial in reducing anxiety.

Question type	Value	Total time	Approx. Time per question
30 multiple choice	30%	54 mins	1½ mins
10 short answer	30%	54 mins	5 mins
1 essay	40%	72 mins	