

Open Book Examination Information Document

What is an Open Book Examination?

An "open book examination" is an assessment method designed in a way that allows students to refer to lecture notes, articles, textbooks, or other approved material while answering questions, in an agreed timeframe.

- Open-book exams don't test your memory; they test your ability to find and use information, and to deliver well-structured and well-presented arguments.
- Open-book exam questions do not merely ask you to 'give back' information. They usually require you to analyse, evaluate, reflect and apply knowledge, to self and/or real life situations.
- Open-book exams require you to learn for understanding rather than just remembering
- In the case of SNMCI, Open-book exams are essay style.
- Open-book exams are not an easy option. Answering the questions well requires more than just copying information straight from texts. For example, having access to a textbook can stop you from giving a wrong answer if you can't remember a fact, but just getting that fact correct won't get you good marks.
- In open-book exams, it's how you locate, apply and use the information that is important.

Should I study for an Open-book Exam?

Yes

- Probably the biggest misconception about open-book exams is that there is no need to study. You should study just as you would for any other exam. Having books and notes to refer to might mean you don't have to memorise as much information, but you still need to be able to apply it effectively.
- You must fully understand and be familiar with the content and materials of your module so you can find and use the appropriate information.
- In open-book exams, you need to quickly find the relevant information in the resources you have. If you don't study, you won't know where to find the information. This style of learning equips you well for exams and 'real life' experiences.

- **You don't need to know everything, but you need to know how to find the relevant information.**

Before the Exam

Get a good night's sleep

On the night before the exam, don't stay up until all hours studying. You will be fuzzy, stressed and unable to think clearly.

Don't panic

- When you're sitting an exam, it's OK to be nervous, but try not to panic. An open-book exam is another form of intellectual analysis. It is not very different from preparing an assignment at home, except that time is more limited.

Prepare your examination space

- Gather module notes and resources together beforehand and organise them neatly in a quiet study area at home.
- Set up a quiet space where you can concentrate and work without interruptions.

Getting Started

- Find out the exam requirements
- For open-book exams, know:
- How much time you have been allocated
- Whether you need to reference
- Read the guidelines as stated on your paper

Information Gathering

- Once you have received your exam question **Read it carefully** and make sure you understand what you are being asked to do. Look for 'clue' words in the questions.
- Underline key parts of the question
- Work out the main concepts or information.
- Select your materials and resources carefully and organise them for quick reference.
- A large amount of materials might make you feel secure, but you'll probably work best relying on no more than a few pages of notes and a few well-chosen texts.
- You are on a time limit so try to have the essential facts, etc. at your finger-tips.
- Make brief and legible notes and prepare a list of key information (key definitions etc.) likely to be used.

- Use index cards to list key topics and relevant page numbers of texts. Use one card per book. This can help you find information quickly.
- Apply the information in your sources to the questions

Writing your essay

- You **can't copy** chunks of text directly from textbooks, notes or the internet. This is **PLAGIARISM**.
- In open-book exams, the resource materials have been made available throughout your module, so you are expected to do more than just reproduce them.
- You must be able to find, interpret and apply the information in your sources to the exam question/s.
- You usually need to reference as well, just as you would for any other assignment but don't use too many quotations. Use the time and information to build a well-constructed answer.
- Don't over-answer: With lots of materials available, it can be tempting to over-write and waffle on. **Answer the question**, and aim for concise, accurate, thoughtful answers that make good use of supporting evidence.

Eat something and take breaks

- You might feel too nervous to eat, but your brain needs fuel! If you don't eat, halfway through the exam, you'll find yourself feeling tired, hungry and losing concentration.
- Take some bottled water into your 'exam' room /area.
- Take breaks as needed.

Summary

Open book exam checklist

- Find out the exam requirements.
- Find out practical details i.e. start time and finish time.
- Find out upload details

Preparation

- Study your module materials.
- Prepare your study/work area.
- Prepare useful notes.
- Organise your materials.
- Get a good night's sleep.

On the day

- Don't panic.
- Avoid 'panic talk' with other students before the exam.
- Prepare your quiet room.
- Only take in to your 'exam-space' what you really need.
- Eat something before and during your work. .
- Allow yourself plenty of time to do the exam (for example 10.00am-10.00pm)
- Read the exam question carefully.
- Use quotations sparingly.
- Don't over answer (or 'waffle' on).
- Just answer the question that you are being asked.
- Be aware of the time for uploading your answer.
- GOOD LUCK