Overview
This online tutorial is designed to help you prepare for and understand the requirements of the different types of exams you may have at uni. It focuses on the most common 3 exams, these being essays, multiple choice exams and short answer exams. We’ll be looking at these and looking at how to prepare for them and also strategies for taking these exams.

Applying information
Keep in mind that exams assess how well you can select relevant information you have remembered, and apply it to a task. Because of this, revision needs to include practice at applying information and one way to do this is to use recent past exams if available. Also be aware that different exams require slightly different things from you. For example, multiple choice exams require you to work in a different way than essay exams. For all exams though, a part of your revision should include practising writing to time and by hand. The last point is important as it’s a way of ensuring that your handwriting is legible.

Types of exams
There are a number of different types of exams that you might have to do while you’re at uni. Some of them are listed below: essays, multiple choice, short answer questions, case studies, open book exams, take home exams, oral exams and practicals. The first three are probably the most common and we’ll be looking at these in more depth.

The essay
In exams involving writing essays you need to demonstrate analytical skills (when you are analysing the question), the ability to recall information and then to apply that knowledge in a specific way, through the essay format. There are numerous ways to help prepare for this kind of exam including:

• Identifying the main themes within the course, so that you have a good knowledge base to draw from.
• Developing sets of likely questions within each theme.
• Identifying important references for various topics and working out how and where you might use them.
• Another important way to prepare for essays exams is to practise writing to time and under exam conditions.
• Knowing and understanding the structure of essays is important too and your essay should demonstrate this.

Writing the essay
As essays have a particular structure, make sure that your writing shows and an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

• The Introduction needs to state what aspects you are dealing with and your overall message/position
The Body needs to be made up of several paragraphs, each with topic sentence, followed by supporting sentences.

And even in an exam you should have a brief conclusion to sums up your position.

Analysing short answer and essay questions
In both short answer and essay questions you need to spend time analysing the question so that you address the task you’ve been asked to do. Make sure you analyse the essay questions carefully by looking at and:

- Identifying task words (What are you being asked to do?)
- Identifying content words (What is the question all about?)
- Noting the limits (in terms of time, length or any other aspects)

If your question has several points to cover, make sure you address all of them.

Essay exams – taking the exam
When it comes to actually taking the exam points to consider include:

- Making sure you plan time at beginning so that you give yourself a schedule to work towards
- Consider all questions. Take care that you don’t discard questions too quickly
- Analyse each question carefully
- Draft an essay plan. Note down what you will put in Introduction, Body and Conclusion
- Check that you have answered all parts of the question
- Use dot points if you run out of time
- And finally keep an eye on the time. Try to maintain your schedule so that you allow time to review and edit.

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
With Multiple Choice Questions, keep in mind that you are required to:

- Focus on showing that you know content.
- You will need to recall and apply knowledge quickly, and you
- Must analyse questions effectively and quickly.

So when you’re preparing for this kind of exam or these kinds of questions, try to:

- Identify main themes within the course.
- Make sure your notes are complete, thorough and organised into key topics.
• Memorise the key terms, theories, and applications so that you can answer a lot of questions in a set time.

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• Practise the types of questions in your exam and check that your answers address each question fully, and finally make sure that you
• Practise to time.

MCQs – taking the exam

When it comes to actually taking your multiple choice exam, strategies include:
• reading all the options for each question.
• answering questions you are confident about first.
• not being misled by the wording of the question.
• checking absolute claims such as ‘all’ or ‘never’, for example
• marking any of those you need to go back to and reconsider.
• carefully reading the statement at the beginning of the question.
• eliminating the obviously wrong choices first.
• doing as many questions as you can.

Remember that sometimes a calculated guess may be better than no response - but before you do this check to see if you will be penalised for wrong answer.

Short answer questions

With short answer questions, keep in mind that there may be some variation as to what you are required to do. Generally you will be given a number of questions with answers up to a paragraph.

The variation is with what kind of questions you will be asked. Some will test memory work, while others test your ability to apply learned concepts. Regardless of which of these you will be asked to do, you will need to show good question analysis skills.

To prepare for these:
• Follow the advice for multiple choice question answers.
• Practice with the variety of questions/problems that may be presented.
• Check your responses (perhaps with another student)
• And finally make sure you answer the set question fully, rather than react to key words. If you only write on the key words your response might end up being irrelevant.

Short Answer questions – taking the exam

When it comes to taking the exam:
• Determine where the marks are being allocated so that you can divide your time and energy according to the marks
• If a paragraph or sentence is required, try to write in full sentences rather than notes or dot points.
• If time is an issue, cover questions in areas of strength.
• And finally, plan to allow time to check your answers.
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During the exam
Part of the exam time you have is called reading time. Use this time (10 minutes) to choose questions. After this write an exam plan and make sure you have factored in prep time, writing time and reviewing time. Managing time is important in exams so start all questions where possible. Keep in mind though that you shouldn’t answer more questions that you are asked as extra questions are not marked and you should be using this time to go over what you have done. If you do run out of time, copy your plan onto the page and/or finish in note form. Also cross out any material you do not want examiner to mark.

General tips
I just want to conclude with some general tips. These are:

- Start with easiest questions first.
- Keep in mind the marks that are allocated to particular questions and how they are allocated to the question you are working on.
- Skip hard questions - go to the next. Other questions may jog your memory. Some students do ones they find the easiest first – if you do this, mark it clearly for the examiner.
- If you go blank or forget things – stop, breathe, relax and tackle something else. Try to stay calm.

Exam preparation resources
This slide is just to remind you that there are other resources which you might find helpful such as the Exam Forum where you can post any question you have.
And the [L³ EASS](http://resource.unisa.edu.au/mod/book/view.php?id=25645) site has resources specifically dealing with exam tasks and questions.

For further information
For further information or help with exam preparation:

- Check your course homepage
- Contact the LTU for appointments with:
  - Counsellors
  - Language and Learning Advisers
  - Disability Advisers
- Access exam strategies information on the L3 EASS website.
- LTU ph: 8302 0022 email: ltu@unisa.edu.au