

# Open Book Exams

Open book exams enable students to show their knowledge and understanding in a subject as well as demonstrate their ability to find and apply information relevant to the topic. The emphasis in these exams is on conceptual understanding and application of knowledge, rather than simply recall of information.

## Preparation for the exam

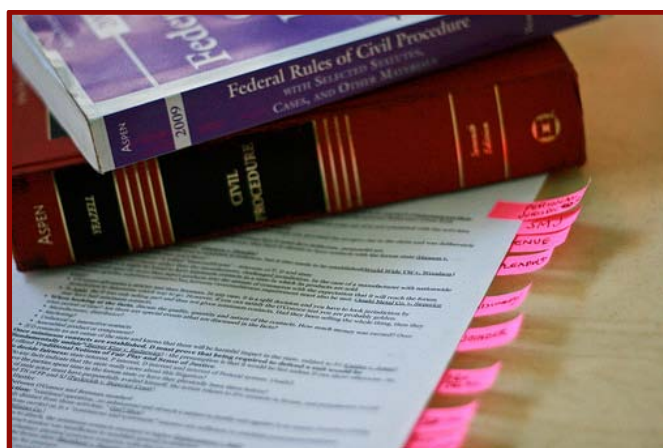
In-depth understanding of any subject takes time to develop. This is why lecturers expect you to build knowledge by reading, revising and taking notes throughout the semester rather than cramming everything at the end. Our brains need time to process, to 'incubate' our understanding.

Here are some study tips to make your study *much easier* when it comes to exam time.

### Attend

Turn up to classes, particularly the first and last lectures when it is most likely that the lecturer will talk about what will be on the exam.

Actively participate – do the readings before class, listen, take notes, ask questions about the things you do not understand.



### Read

Keep up with your readings each week. If you can't get through all the weekly readings at least make sure you do some. Skimming is a quick method of reading that creates an overview of material. (*Refer to Studywell > Reading and Notetaking > Fast Reading Techniques*). Do not wait until the end of semester to read.

Take notes of the main points and their links to other aspects of the subject. Understanding involves not only being able to remember facts and ideas but also being able to explain the connections between them, often through the use of examples.

### Rewrite

After attending classes and reading the assigned material each week, you need to rewrite the ideas in your own words. Use text, diagrams or concept maps to make the ideas memorable.

A suggestion for rewriting is set out in the table below.

Main Idea/ Topic/ Theme/	Explanation in your own words	Example of how, when, where, why can/do I apply this?	Connections to other topics	References relevant to the topic

### Chunk

When the time comes for you to revise for your exams you need to summarise all the information you have collected over the semester.

'Chunking' means to summarise large amounts of information into smaller, connected 'chunks'. These chunks provide headings and summary information to help you link back to more complex ideas.

You need to develop an overview of all the topics which may be on the exam and an understanding of how they link together.

## Prepare your Notes

A key feature of the open book exam is that you can find information quickly to help you formulate your ideas and back up your answers.

### Organise and mark your reference materials

Be familiar with the layout of any books you may need to take in with you. Use sticky notes to mark important chapters or pages.

Number the pages of your lecture/reading notes for quick reference and use sticky notes to mark important pages.

Write out important information – formulae, data, definitions, etc one a single card or piece of paper.



### Develop a summary of each topic.

Write a summary for each topic on a separate card or page.

Add information on where to locate more detailed notes on the topic and related topics.

Write an index of all your topic summaries so you can find the topic you need quickly.

## Sitting the Exam

### Be organised

Make sure your notes and books are all organised to take into the exam. Put notes in a folder or clip them in some way so that they remain in order.

## Answer questions carefully

Questions in open book exams generally require more than just formulaic answers. There is often no right or wrong answers. You are expected to give a considered answer, using reason and evidence to back it up.

Read the questions carefully and do the easier ones first. Allocate time for each question so that you don't use too much time on one question and then have to rush others.

***Have your notes well organised so that you can find information quickly and easily during the exam.***

## Keep your answers to the point

Answer questions directly and concisely giving supporting evidence from your notes. The more you integrate your readings from the semester, the more likely you are to do well.

Avoid using too many quotations in your answers. The marker is looking for your understanding of the topic expressed in your own words.

Consider counterarguments to your solutions in your answer. Provide reasons why these counterarguments are not successful.

### PHOTO REFERENCE

hexodus, 'Civil Procedure Exam about to be Sent to Hell', In: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dsnet/4184876015/>, ed, 2009, Law books sitting on pages of notes

audreym, 'revision wall 1', In: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/audreyrobowen/271214699/>, ed, 2006, A poster of the periodic table with study notes beneath.

