

Introduction

A take-home exam is a mix between homework and an open-book exam. It can be done at home with access to lecture notes, internet and any books or resources which might be useful.

Questions are provided, answers are attempted without help from others, and the exam is returned or uploaded within a specified period of time. The materials used in a take-home exam are usually unrestricted.

It is always helpful to check your learning guide for detailed information on the work covered and the materials you need for the exam. It is also advisable to check with your lecturer to find out what you may use, both for the preparation and for writing the exam. It is important to note that the main restriction for take-home exams is that it must be your own work. In addition, a relatively high standard of work, in terms of understanding, accuracy, logic, structure and citations are usually expected in take-home exams since it is assumed that you have all the resources at your disposal.

Planning for your take-home exam

For take-home exams, find out from your lecturer:

- The time and date the exam should be handed in
- How much time you have to complete the exam
- The topic areas the exam will cover
- How long answers should be
- Whether you need to reference
- The types of questions to expect: essays, short answers, multiple choice, etc.

Prepare for a take-home exam

Take-home exams require you to:

- Learn for understanding rather than just remembering
- Understand how to find information
- Make well developed notes and organise materials for fast reference
- Apply the information in your sources to the questions
- Study as you would for any exam: this will help in understanding how and why topics are linked.

Organise yourself ahead of the exam

Work out which materials and resources you will use for the exam:

Gather relevant readings, notes and resources together beforehand and remember to organise them neatly in your study area at home. Set up a quiet space where you can concentrate and work without any disturbances or interruptions.

Do not restrict yourself to anticipated questions models:

When you prepare your notes, do not waste time guessing possible questions or preparing 'model' answers. Doing some practice on how to plan, organise your thoughts and structure your ideas may be useful, but preparing specific answers to anticipated questions beforehand often does not work. Essay style questions tend towards a free response rather than a fixed single right 'answer' question, so formula answers do not fit. However, you will need to have thought through conceptual frameworks and have some general conclusions in mind. Remember that you do not have to know everything, but you need to know how to find the relevant information, and how to use relevant information to guide your answers and structure your arguments.

Practise:

You might want to check out some past exam papers on the library website and practise with them. This could be useful during preparation for your exams, as they will give you an idea of possible question types to expect, theories or conceptual frameworks that you need to understand and learn to use before your exams.

Prepare notes and materials:

Prepare and organise your resources before the exams.

- Use tables of contents and index pages to locate relevant sections in the books that you plan to use.
- Bookmark useful chapters or pages. Post-it notes can be helpful.
- Prepare brief summaries, e.g. in margins of texts to provide a quick reference.
- Prepare a list of key information (formulae, important 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.

Prepare your notes:

- Make some useful notes for yourself
- Review the module to get a good overview of the content
- Work out the main themes and topics
- Identify important concepts or information
- Make brief and legible notes
- Summarise important information
- Use clear headings
- Organise notes by topics
- Identify how topics are connected.

Additional Resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdFDN3CwvME>

Summary

Make sure you plan well for your take-home exam and prepare your materials ahead of time.

References:

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