**Open book assessments**

## **What to expect and how to prepare for open book assessments**

# What are open book assessments and exams?

Open book or take away assessments and exams permit you to access your learning materials during the time allocated for that assessment. In practice this means that you will be able to refer to your notes, books and other resources that you have available to answer the questions. This does not mean that the exam will be easier or require less preparation.

An open book assessment aims to assess your critical application of the course material. It will test your understanding of what you have learnt and your application of that knowledge. You should expect questions that ask you to find and apply information by comparing, contrasting, analysing or evaluating what you have been learning about. Alternatively, you may be asked to use your knowledge in a new context or even apply it to a hypothetical scenario.

Having access to your notes may sound like an easier assessment, however the exam will still require your attention and will also call for a similar amount of preparation to traditional exams.

# What do you need to know about your assessment?

As with all assessments there will be a number of key pieces of logistical information you should ensure you know in advance. It is crucial that you check the guidance provided to you with details such as:

* Where and when you should hand in the assessment.
* How much time you should expect to spend on the assessment as well as how long you have to complete it.
* How long your answers should be
* What format/style are you being asked to present your answers in — is referencing being requested

# How do you prepare yourself for this type on assessment?

There are two activities that will help you prepare for this kind of assessment.

* **Managing your time**
* **Organising your notes**

## Managing your time and revising

It will definitely be helpful to spend time preparing for your open book exam as you would for any other kind of exam that you have taken before.

* **Prioritise the content that you need to learn**: Use [KWL to reflect](https://medium.com/@mlemanchester/making-notes-with-kwl-8e6fc34715f2) upon what you know and understand well, and what you need to learn more about.
* **Create a revision plan:** You should go ahead and [create a revision plan](https://medium.com/@studentteam/how-to-create-a-great-study-plan-1a20da081811) where you practice recalling and applying your topics using different methods, and leaving space between each topic.
* **Use your usual revision strategies:** This type of assessment will still require you to recall, synthesise and communicate your answers so strategies like practice past paper questions are still just as useful as a revision technique.
* **Plan you time during the assessment period:** Use a daily planner to ensure that you are making enough time to answer the questions following the guidance provided by the University.

## Organising your notes

A final useful activity would be for you to spend some time [organising your course notes](https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/note-making/) and resources so that during the assessment time you can quickly and easily locate the information that you need. Think quality not quantity, and work towards having a well organised and useful pack of notes.

* **Revisit and condense your notes:** Gather all your notes on the topic together and condense them into an exam pack. To do this you may want to create a mind map to visualise connections between ideas from different lectures or units.
* **Organise your notes using colour and bookmarks:** To find the information you need efficiently try separating topics by page and using tabs or coloured bookmarks for each new topic.
* **Use index cards:** Condense information onto pieces of card and coloured Post-it Notes to represent different themes and connect different ideas.
* **Create flash cards on key concepts:** Don’t forget to include key information you are likely to need such as formulae models or theories. These can also be used to revise and practice your understanding of the topic.