



## How to answer questions in exams

Adapted from "Students Must Write", 1995

An exam is a test of:

1. your subject knowledge
2. your ability to understand the question
3. how you organise your knowledge effectively in the answer

### Top Tips

- Read the question carefully – answer the question you have been asked, not the question you were hoping for
- If essay questions, plan all answers first – this will give you an opportunity to review your essay plan before you start writing
- Mark the question number clearly – don't waste time copying out the question
- First paragraph should contain the essence of your answer
- Keep to the point – keep your answer well organised without digression or repetition
- Examiner can only give marks for what is written down – even if it is basic or simple. If it is relevant put it in
- Explain fully if your point is not obviously relevant – you need the opportunity to prove you are able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information
- If it is a "Discuss" question, you must include all aspects
- If it is a "Compare" question, it is helpful to refer to differences as well as similarities. Don't discuss each thing in isolation.
- If question is in several parts (e.g. a; b; c) it is advisable to answer in same format with clear markings
- If question is in several parts, allocate answering time appropriately – you will not get the best mark if you don't have adequate time to answer each part
- You will not be expected to provide full references in an exam situation, however, it can be helpful to cite sources, e.g. Smith, 1997
- Use a blue or black ink pen and make sure your writing is legible throughout
- Put one line through any rough work you do not wish the examiner to mark and for mistakes – do not scribble work out!