

# How to Prepare for Open Book Exams\*

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## Revision

- Prepare for the exams in much the same way as usual, i.e. by studying everything in as much detail as is possible.
- But, do not worry about rote-learning.
- You will not be able to consult every resource you've ever read – there will be an element of time pressure still. You certainly will not have time to read new papers – try to do this in advance.
- Make *brief* easy-to-read summary notes for each topic where you could find all the essential information at a glance.
- Organise these notes well so that you can find them quickly under time pressure
  - If you handwrite notes use a ring binder with file dividers.
  - If you type notes save documents clearly and use control + search to search them.

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\*I thank Michael Ashby for sharing these tips. Although these tips are based on preparation for the LLM exams a number of these points are also relevant for the 2020 Economics Tripos exams.

## Exam Preparation (Essay Exams)

- Pick 2 to 4 readings from the reading list (per subtopic) and know these very well.
- In some courses the most important papers are in the optional section. Use your discretion.
- Consider looking for papers published by the professor during the current academic year.
- Study along with any given slides. It can save time and you may find possible exam questions as well as the structure of the answer.

## Exam Preparation (More Generally)

- Practise locating your notes for different topics before the exam.
- Make sure to practise past essays/think of (and answer) possible essays. Having thought about the topics in this way will make it easier for you come the exam.
- Use a mix of written essays and essay plans (for higher throughput) for this.
- Do practice exams with your notes, if you find yourself spending excessive amounts of time adding information in, then that area of your notes needs clarification (this could be by streamlining or additional detail).
- After you have done several practice exams, patterns will start to emerge within questions which will help you.

## During the Exam

- You **must** plan your essay and think carefully about its structure. While good essays often have relatively little in common, one commonality is that they are well structured.
- Unlikely, but consider if there an essay you have already written on a similar topic.

## General

- This is not an easy option and is likely to require more confidence in what has been studied and a deeper understanding of the material.
- It is possible the grading scheme may be *implicitly* require a higher standard (essays often do).