

What is an open-book exam, and what does it mean for me?

Over the course of the next few weeks we will be providing information and advice for students to help prepare for remote teaching and learning in Trinity term. This time we're introducing open-book exams. For wider information for students about the impact of coronavirus, please see the [student coronavirus advice page](#).

What are open-book exams, and how do they differ to written examinations?

Oxford assessments usually take the form of invigilated, handwritten exams taken by large cohorts dressed in *sub fusc* usually in the Examination Schools or Ewert House. Open-book exams, on the other hand, are sat remotely by students on their own – usually in their own homes. Students are able to access their textbooks, notes and other resources. Once you have finished, you will submit your paper to an online portal. You will have slightly longer than conventional exams (for example, a three-hour paper will be extended to four hours), to account for the different format.

While the technology is different, there are many similarities. The papers you will take will be similar in format, content, timeframe and required effort to what you were expecting – so a lot is staying the same.

Will open-book exams be used for all subjects?

No. For questions that require simple factual recall, or which cannot be fairly tested by an open-book approach, different assessment formats will be used. Departments and faculties have carefully considered the merits of this type of exam, as well as longer pieces of assessed work for their subject matter, taking student opinion into account.

Will I hand-write or type my answers?

You will be able to choose. Typing is likely to suit students writing essay-based answers, whereas hand-written responses may be more appropriate for questions involving extensive use of mathematical formulae or diagrams. Some people worry that people who can type quickly will have an unfair advantage, but the examiners are interested in quality not quantity, and are not looking for longer essays than normal. You will also have more time than in conventional exams. Given the time available, typing speed should not be a major concern.

Will I need to include footnotes and referencing?

The level of referencing expected will be the same as in conventional handwritten exams.

Will I still have alternative arrangements if I have specific learning needs?

Yes. Time available will be adjusted if you would usually have extra reading or rest time in examinations. As all students will be able to choose whether to type or handwrite their papers (as above), and any prior permission to use assistive software will remain in place. If you require other reasonable adjustments due to a disability or specific learning difficulty, or have questions about how the examination recommendations in your Student Support Plan apply to open-book exams, please contact the Disability Advisory Service to discuss your individual requirements.

I am worried I won't be able to find a space to do the exam, or have access to the right technology. What should I do?

We understand that this is a concern for some students and we are currently liaising with departments and colleges to determine what additional support can be put in place to address specific concerns. We aim to put in measures to support you as much as we can, and your college

will write to you in the near future about this.

Will I still need to revise?

Yes, absolutely! Although in theory you will have the opportunity of looking in books and searching the web, the relatively tight time window makes it highly unlikely that you will have the time to do this to any great extent. Instead, you will do best if you approach the exam as you would normally, revising in the usual way and spending the time in the exam focused on writing the best answers you can. This will quickly become apparent if you practise a couple of mock papers. Past papers can be accessed at [OXAM](#).

How can I best prepare?

You won't have time for extensive reading during the exam, so focus on carefully selecting the notes you want to have with you, and organising them so you can find anything you need quickly. As with any exam, you will want to practise beforehand, to get used to how to approach the exam and handling the timing. We will also provide a dummy upload site so that you can practise uploading a script in advance, to ease any technical worries you may have. We're confident that, once you have practised, you will find it's not that different to a normal exam.

How will you deter cheating?

In an open-book exam, you must submit your own work, without any help from others. When you take an exam, you will be required to sign up to an 'honour code'. This will confirm that you have understood and abided by the University's rules on plagiarism and collusion. We will be making extensive use of plagiarism checkers, as we already do for submitted work, and we reserve the right to conduct follow-up *viva voce* exams to check students' understanding of the examined material. We are also depending on students' integrity. We regard integrity and honesty as central to the ethos of the University, and among the qualities of our students we value most highly. You will be expected to apply this to open-book exams.

I am feeling anxious. Do you have any advice?

Much of the advice on the [Exam Wellbeing page](#) still applies to open book exams, so we would encourage you to look at this information. We will also be providing much more advice and support over the next few weeks, and the usual welfare support will still be available to you (albeit in a remote form).

I still have questions or concerns. What should I do?

We will be providing much more guidance over the coming weeks to support you, and we already have a number of questions on the [coronavirus student advice page](#). If you have any immediate concerns, you should speak to your tutor or supervisor in the first instance.