

Short Response Exams



University of
**Southern
Queensland**

Short response exams test students' ability to remember and apply knowledge. This type of exam will focus on how well you can integrate what you have learned in the lectures, readings, and discussions, and your ability to apply that knowledge. They usually ask you to write one or more paragraphs, although you might be allowed to use dot points and diagrams or solve mathematical problems.

Doing well in short answer exams relies on your ability to:

- Answer the question directly (rather than write about the topic)
- Write clearly, precisely and succinctly.

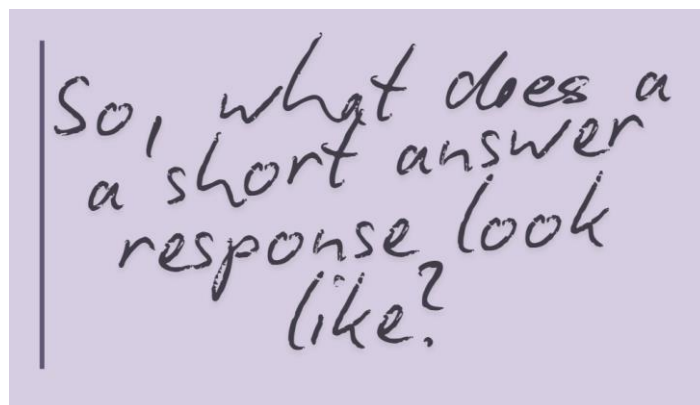
Preparation of the exam

Preparation and planning are the keys to exam success. Check that you know:

- the timing of your exam as stated in your Formal Exam Schedule
- the items you will require to complete your exams and the materials you are authorised to access during your exam
- the length and format of the exam
- how to divide your time between questions
- the identification you require for admission into the exam.

Studying for short response exams

1. Reread course outlines to get a sense of the themes in the course.
2. Review your lecture notes and look for these themes, and ideas and concepts that recur throughout the course. Then organise your notes around these major ideas. Integrate content from lectures notes, the text or readings as you create your study notes.
3. Study actively — explain concepts out loud, teach them to a friend, or use concept mapping to organise your thoughts and show how concepts are related or differentiated. Arrange a study group to discuss possible questions and key issues or concepts from the course.
4. See if there are previous (or sample) exams to help you predict and create possible questions. Then practice these within a limited timeframe.



Answering short response exam questions

1. Read the instructions carefully, noting how many questions you need to answer in each section. Pay attention to the task words, content words and limiting words.

Example question

Outline the diversity and classification of marine mammals found in Australian waters.

Type of word	Definition	Example from question above
Task word	Tells you exactly how to go about answering the question.	Outline
Content words	Tells you what topic area/s to focus on.	diversity and classification within Australian waters
Limiting words	Allows you to define what parts of the topic area you should focus on.	Answers must solely discuss marine mammals found in Australian waters

Other considerations

Scope of answer:	Include only 'marine mammals' local to 'Australian waters'; avoid mentioning species found in other regions; avoid discussing non-marine mammals.
Precision in response:	Ensure the answer strictly adheres to the outlined diversity and classification, respecting the geographical and contextual limits set by the question.

2. Use the mark allocation to plan how much time to spend on each question.
3. Use examples as evidence and help give your writing credibility.
4. Use simple, clear and concise language and keep your writing straight to the point. Use the words from the question in your answer to signpost your answer for the marker.

Common mistakes

- Misinterpreting the question
- Not answering the question sufficiently
- Not providing an example or application
- Not planning the answer
- Lacking structure or focus in the answer
- Spending too long on the questions worth fewer marks
- Running out of time and leaving questions unanswered
- Answering questions in order, complete the questions you can answer quickly to allow more time for the tricky questions.

Further support

Contact your student learning advisors via the Support for Learning team here:

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