Being streetwise about exams

Research the kind of exam format you will have

• Look up old exam papers for the courses you are doing (ANU Library website).
• Check whether the exam format is the same/changed.
• Check what percentage of assessment the exam is worth.
• Consider what result you need to aim for on the basis of your current progress in assignments and tests.
• If you have already done exams in a particular course (eg mid-semester exams), discuss your performance with your marker to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Did you lack knowledge of content, focus, reasoning, style, presentation - or was it a problem with time management in the exams?

Allocate your time effectively

• Budget time for each section of the paper, as well as for planning and proofreading your answers.
• Rehearse the time allocated for different parts of exams, that is, write out ‘mock’ answers in the time available.
  Too often students go into the exam ‘knowing’ the content, but not knowing how to apply the content.

Focus your revision on the process as well as the product

• It’s impossible to learn by heart everything you need to know.
• Learn the principles of the content you are learning.
• Study the content principles, but also how questions are asked in exams.

Review the course aims

• Review what the course is trying to teach you (look up the course description in your course outline).
• Review what the lecturer has highlighted/stressed – what big questions and themes were addressed?

Make summaries

• Revise your notes, summarising the main points and including necessary information.
• Use diagrams, mind maps, flow charts, tables, etc, to help you ‘see’ answers.

Don’t rely on your textbook
• Identify the principles of content - and practise applying them.

**Anticipate the amount of information you are required to provide**

• If the answer is worth 4 marks, then quite possibly, you will need to provide 4 key points.
• Lack of good time management is a key factor in poor exam performance. Consider how much you can write within the allocated exam time frames.

**Rehearse within the time limit**

• Set yourself questions on the material likely to be covered, and then answer them.
• Rehearse your timing such that you perform evenly across all parts of the exam paper.
• Get into the practice of writing by hand.
• Ensure your writing is legible and well set out.

**Start a discipline-specific vocabulary list**

• Identify terms you may need to use correctly/accurately - there's no spell check in exam rooms, and you may lose time trying to think of how to spell discipline-specific terms.

**Work with a study group**

• Articulating/discussing/explaining answers alerts you to the fact that you may need to improve the way in which you express yourself, or organise your answer.
• A study group can help you realise that you are not the only person worried about the exams, and help you tackle some of the things you do not understand.

**Listen to podcasts of ANU lecturers talking about exam strategies**

• There are a number of podcasts to listen to on the ASLC website, on topics such as 'Writing exams in CASS', 'Preparing for exams in first year Business and Economics', and more.

**Seek feedback after the exam**

Exams are valuable learning experiences, so even if you did well:

• ask to see your exam paper and go through it with your tutor/lecturer
• identify the strengths and weaknesses in your exam performance
• take action to address your weaknesses so that you can improve your performance for next time.