Advice for Open Book Exams

In an Open Book Exam you are allowed to have access to books, papers and on-line content while doing the examination. This doesn't mean you have to study any less for this type of exam, it just means you focus more on understanding the key concepts, rather than memorizing facts, but you need to study just as much, and you need to memorize and master the key concepts.

Before the Exam

Decide on a reward you will give yourself after the exams are over (e.g. go for a walk in the park, download some music or a movie, visit a museum).

Identify key resources (web pages, documents, books) that are useful for this exam. For each important topic you are studying, create a one-page summary of that topic, including links to your key resources (URLs or page numbers). Your summary needs to start with the facts (figures, formula, dates, and values) and then add in your own interpretation and insight into this topic. Consider using a MindMap, Concept Map, or a collection of Post-it Notes; and if you can colour code things, that helps. Without looking at your summary, if you can clearly describe this topic in one sentence, that is a good sign you are getting a grasp on the topic.

Practice creating some exam questions (using the verbs below), and practice writing the answer, and time how long it took you to complete the answer. You can use the practice answers in the exam, but the chances are you won't be asked the exact same question. Chat to a fellow student online, and agree to take turns to teach a topic to each other.

During the Exam

You know how much time you have for the exam, you know how many questions you have; divide your time out so that you spend as much time on each question. Make sure you build in time to review your answers, and make any corrections.

<u>If there are any questions you can answer without looking at your notes, do those first.</u>

If you are answering a question and you get stuck, take a break for a minute, and if you still can't think what do to next, move onto another question, and once you have finished the new question, you should get back to the original question. If you start to feel nervous during the exam, take a moment; breathe in for three seconds, then hold your breath for three seconds, and finally breathe out for three seconds.

If there is a diagram in the exam, make sure you read the captions and legends on the diagrams, you'd be amazed how much information can be found there.

Never copy information directly from the reference material without putting it in quotation marks ("") and mention the source.

Once you have completed all of the questions, review the answers you have given. Check all the key facts and figures in your answers using the reference material, and see if there are any answers that can be strengthened by adding new points or arguments. Make sure you have left yourself enough time to upload your answers to the system.

After the Exam

Make sure you reward yourself for getting through the exams. Also try to do something relaxing like meditation or yoga. View the whole thing as a learning process.

Some Useful Tables

Possible Questions and What They Mean

Analyse	Break the question down into its components parts, e.g. if this is a case study, identify the people involved, the organisations, the technologies, and the policies
Assess	Judge the effectiveness of something, also look at its relevance, importance, suitability, and the value of it
Comment on	Write a brief summary of something, and drawn some conclusions
Compare	Explore the similarities and the differences between things
Construct	Build whatever is being asked, e.g. “Construct an ERD…”
Contrast	Explore the differences between things
Define	Provide the exact meaning of something, and include a reference if requested
Derive	Develop a result from the starting point stated in the question
Describe	Get a clear and detailed explanation of something, include important facts
Discuss	Describe in detail, highlighting different perspectives or issues
Evaluate	Describe how suitable something is for a given purpose, demonstrate judgement
Explain	Provide a clear meaning for something, with details and justification
Illustrate	Give an appropriate example of the scenario
Justify	Provide reasons to support a particular scenario
Propose	Select and describe a particular approach, with some justification
Recommend	This is exactly the same as **Propose**
Review	Give an overview, providing the key qualities and features
Show	Demonstrate a given proposal or result with evidence
State	Explain the details and facts of a given scenario
Suggest	Describe a range of approaches, with some justification
Summarize	Provide a list of the major ideas and themes of the scenario
Synthesize	Bring together different scenarios or component parts to create something new

Structure of an Exam Answer

Rough Work	Write out the key words, points, and plan for the answer
1. Introduction	Explain your understanding of your question, and how you intend to answer it
2. Points	Make one point per paragraph, and at the end of each paragraph show how this paragraph helps answer the question
3. Conclusion	Summarize the key points and how they answer the question

Structure of an Argument

1. Claim	Outline the main claim you are making, sometimes called the overall thesis
2. Grounds	Describe the evidence and facts that support your claim, best evidence first
3. Bridge	Explain and underscore how the **Grounds** supports your **Claim**
4. Backing	Add any additional logic or reasoning that support the **Bridge**
5. Counterclaim	Discuss the alternative perspectives that oppose your thesis
6. Rebuttal	Identify the weaknesses in the **Counterclaim** and present evidence that refutes it.