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EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

EXAM STUDY GUIDE



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General Exam Tips

- Start preparing as early as you can. It can be difficult as assignments' due dates fall at the end of the semester, but the earlier you start the less stressed you will be come exam time.
- Make a revision schedule and stick to it! You can do this however you want, but here are some critical things to keep in mind:

EFFICIENCY

Structure your time appropriately with time for breaks. Be smart in what you study. Focus on topics you know are likely in the exam, important topics and topics you struggle with.

CLEAR AND DEFINED TASKS

You need to revise, but you need to know what you are revising. Make a list of each topic, principle and case you need to develop notes for and set realistic deadlines for completion.

CONSISTENCY

Revising every day (or as much as practical), and incorporating the study techniques from this guide or elsewhere will allow you to remain consistent and effective in your study.

FOCUSED

Study with maximum focus for a specific period of time and make sure to take a break. Avoid spending a large amount of time studying and then taking an equally long break.

BALANCED

- Determine how many days you need to spend on each subject based on the difficulty and your level of understanding of the material.
- Aim to collate/rewrite/arrange all notes and content before SWOTVAC (or by the first week of exams at the very latest)
- Make sure you have all notes on lecture material, cases, legislation and required readings (at a minimum)
- Devote your time in SWOTVAC and the exam period itself to capitalising on topics/principles you do not completely understand and answering past exams; problem questions and essays
- Achieve a balance of study with everything else you do!
- Take breaks to accommodate commitments such as work, spending time with friends and breaks.



Where it all begins...

Exam preparation starts at the beginning of every semester. To avoid major burnout come SWOTVAC period, gradual revision throughout the semester can really save you the unnecessary stress and cramming.

The best resources for early exam preparation are often provided from the beginning of the semester, in the form of lectures, seminars, readings and extra resources on MyUni. Fully engaging and making the most of these preliminary resources is the best way to consolidate and expand on your knowledge gradually over time, which really heaps with jogging your memory later on in the semester and during SWOTVAC.

Skills are built gradually over time through repetition, so it is important that you have a long-term approach to learning and mastering Law exam-taking—last minute cramming is not the most effective way to learn and develop these skills.



Lectures

Lectures are your number one resource for all examinable material. Course co-ordinators will often provide lecture recordings and slides on MyUni. Make sure you watch and keep up to date with your weekly lectures – they are the best way to initially learn the content as they provide simplified explanations of key concepts. A solid understanding of the fundamental principles mentioned in lectures is crucial as these concepts will be expanded upon in seminars to further your understanding.

The pros to watching lectures online include the ability to stop and start the lecture, which allows more time for notetaking. You can also speed up gaps and rewind if you missed any important details.

If you are one to get easily distracted, attending lectures in person (and sitting at the front) is the most effective method of forcing focus for the entire 1-2-hour period. You will be surprised how much more you retain by sitting at the front and actively listening and engaging with the lecture. Even if you aren't usually distractable, this is still a great way to maximise information retention.

The ideal combination would be to watch the lectures in person, and then re-watch them online closer to the exam date to jog your memory. This method is extremely effective in consolidating your knowledge and improve recall come SWOTVAC. You may also pick up on any details you glossed over in the face-to-face lecture while rewatching online.

It is recommended that you attend lectures in person as they encourage face-to-face interaction and engagement with the lecturer and content, however, some students find watching lectures online a better learning method. Below we have curated a list of pros and cons for the different lecture watching methods!

STUDENT EXAM TIP #1:

“READ WHAT’S IN THE EXAM, NOT EVERY WEEK IS EXAMINABLE. DON’T GET SUCKED INTO DISCUSSION BOARDS.”

- TONY, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT



The pros and cons of lecture formats

	In-person lectures	Online lectures	Both
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better interaction and engagement with lecturer and content • Can force you to pay attention • Can ask questions then and there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can stop, start, rewind, allowing more time to digest information, write more in-depth notes, skip interruptions and pauses. • Follow up questions can be asked in MyUni discussion which many students prefer over raising their hand in a full lecture theatre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition ensures it stays in your long-term memory • Easier to recall later on
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturers talking too slowly or too fast - no real-life rewind and fast forward. • Pauses and interruptions cannot be skipped. • Multitasking note taking and listening to the lecturer may result in the content going over your head • Asking questions can be intimidating in front of a full lecture theatre, especially for shyer students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to zone out • Procrastination tendencies more likely to emerge when sitting in front of your laptop in the comfort of your own home • Some people prefer the interactive visuals from the lecturer that accompany explanations. Without this it can be dry • No live questions (you may also forget) • Lecturers may misinterpret your questions on the discussion board and not provide the answer you need. In-person interactions have more leeway for you to express your confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • May be redundant if you understood and remembered the content upon learning it initially

Seminars

Seminars are crucial for learning how to answer exam-style, problem-solving questions. You will likely refer to seminar notes frequently throughout your exam preparation because they provide invaluable tips and guides for solving exam questions.

Seminar leaders will run through, in detail, the necessary steps in solving a law question and the key words, phrases and concepts you need to include in your answer to secure your marks. By missing out on this information, you are doing yourself a great disservice in terms of valuable exam preparation. Seminars = exam preparation gold!

Because seminars delve deep into the problem-solving process, a fundamental understanding of the relevant week's lecture content is crucial. With at least a basic understanding of that week's lecture, you should be able to get the most out of the seminar and supplement your current understanding of the content. If not, following the seminar will be quite difficult and oftentimes pretty much impossible.

STUDENT EXAM TIP # 2:
**“NEVER WALK INTO AN EXAM WITH
SOMEONE ELSE’S NOTES NOT HAVING
STUDIED THE MATERIAL”**
- KANE, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT

Readings

Don't listen to those who advise against readings! Readings provide a great means of gaining a deeper understanding of a topic or specific concept you may have trouble grasping.

It is not uncommon for students (usually in earlier years of their degree) to do relatively well without consulting a textbook or completing any readings. However, as you progress in your degree, and the concepts become increasingly difficult, outsourcing for further context may be the difference between a Pass and a Distinction.

Lectures usually cover all relevant exam topics, so if you are very pressed for time, you can still pass (and in some cases do relatively well, depending on the student) without completing all the readings in their entirety, however this is not recommended. The bottom line is, all students vary greatly in their ability to learn concepts and retain information, so if skipping out on the readings works for one student, that does not necessarily mean it will work for you! We advise that you play it safe and stick to doing as many readings as possible.

If you're struggling to keep up with the readings (which is very normal), be selective and focus your reading time on the topics you're more uncertain about. The textbook is probably the most valuable reading source you will be allocated by your lecturers, so be sure to spend most of your reading time consulting the relevant textbook.

PASS classes and student mentorship

PASS classes, or Peer Assisted Study Sessions, are run by students who have previously completed the course. They provide an intimate and un intimidating learning environment, which encourages students to ask as many questions as they please regarding course content (specifically exam-relevant material). If you've missed your chance to ask a Lecturer or need to clarify a few concepts, PASS leaders are your next best port-of-call. Many students gain a lot from these sessions as their structure is quite flexible, allowing as much time as needed to be spent on an individual student's question until they walk away satisfied with their understanding.

The benefit of consulting a PASS leader is that they are fellow Law students who have very recently been in your position, undertaking similar assessments and studying the same course that has unlikely undergone any major changes. Their perspective is one of a student who has recently completed the course, so they know which topics are important to emphasise during exam preparation and what exactly the markers look for in exam answers. Being fellow students, they will feel comfortable simplifying tricky concepts in layman's terms to make sure you understand the content, encouraging an approach that embodies the notion, 'there's no such thing as a silly question'.



If all else fails, lecturers and students are always available for you to consult. While we advise consulting a lecturer over a fellow peer, we understand that lecturers are busy and oftentimes require prior notice or planned meetings to answer your questions. For your burning questions, however, there are always friendly students on-campus that would be happy to help out. You'd be surprised at the level of knowledge a lot of students have regarding certain Law topics!

SWOTVAC Period

If you are super organized, then hopefully you will have prepared all, if not most, of your notes by the time SWOTVAC comes around. This is the ideal scenario because you can then progress onto practicing past questions and consolidating your understanding of specific topics.

Do not stress if this scenario does not come to fruition for you though! At the very least, your notes should be consolidated by the first week of exams. This will give you enough time to practice some past exams and reinforce certain topics.

STUDENT EXAM TIP #3:
“I WISH I WAS LESS OCD ABOUT FORMATTING MY NOTES, AND MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE CONTENT”

- WINSTON, FIFTH-YEAR STUDENT



STUDENT EXAM TIP #5:

“1) WRITE UP DETAILED NOTES THAT ARE SECTIONED INTO TOPICS BUT SUPPLEMENT IT WITH NOTES ON “HOW TO ANSWER” A QUESTION WHICH SHOULD BE A SHORT DOCUMENT OUTLINING THE BROAD STEPS TO APPROACH A PROBLEM QUESTION REGARDING EACH TOPIC

2) USE LOTS OF TABLES AND FLOWCHARTS IN YOUR NOTES - EASIER TO NAVIGATE INSTEAD OF JUST BLOCKS OF TEXT

3) PRE-WRITE SOME GENERAL SENTENCES ON THE LEGAL RULES/PRINCIPLES SO YOU’RE NOT WASTING TIME IN THE EXAM FIGURING OUT HOW TO DEFINE SOMETHING AND INSTEAD SPENDING YOUR TIME ENGAGING WITH THE FACTS/ANALYSING”

-SOFIA, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT

STUDENT EXAM TIP #4:

“I USED TO RECORD MYSELF READING MY NOTES, GO TO THE GYM OR FOR A RUN, AND THEN LISTEN TO THE NOTES. THIS HELPED ME AS I GOT A BREAK FROM STUDYING WHILST STILL LEARNING AND NOT FEELING GUILTY ABOUT DOING NOTHING”

- LUCAS, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT

Condensing notes

For an exam, you will need all your notes summarised in a document that you can print and take into the exam. It is up to you to structure your notes, but here are a few ideas:

- You can simply combine your lecture and seminar notes, cut them down and refine them.
- You can use tables and flowcharts to help guide you through elements and topics.
- You can condense your lecture notes and create a separate 'step by step guide' for each topic that clearly steps out key parts of each topic in a logical order.
- Whatever way you choose to structure your notes, there are a few incredibly important things to remember and include:
- Your notes should layout key processes for answering different questions. In an exam when you identify a specific topic you should have notes to step you through answering that type of question. You want to focus as much of your thinking on the specific question and facts rather than the process. Your notes should prompt you on what to write and can even provide things to simply copy and paste in an exam such as definitions or statements of law. For example:

6) State Immunity from Commonwealth Laws

1. State: The State has immunity from Cth laws that curtail the capacity of States to function as governments (Austin).
2. Is X part of a government authority? Do they want to avoid a Cth law?
3. Do the facts involve the application of a Cth law to a part of a State government?
 - a. Yes – go to Q4
 - b. No – there is no immunities issue
4. Does the Commonwealth law bind the Crown in right of the State?
 - a. Yes – go to Q5
 - b. No – there is no immunities issue (but explain why)
5. Does the Commonwealth law curtail the capacity of the State to function as a government?

STUDENT EXAM TIP #6:

**“COLOUR-CODE EVERYTHING
AND TREAT YOURSELF ON THE
WEEKEND”**

- CHARLIE, FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Condensing notes continued...

- A table of contents with page numbers is extremely useful for quickly finding relevant notes in an exam
- A binder or plastic sleeve folder can be useful as they are easy to flick through and navigate. You can also simply staple your notes and use tabs to help you navigate.
- Tabbing and highlighting can also help. A specific colour for cases and another for legislation will help direct your attention.
- For legislation, treaties and any other relevant sources of law, you can simply include them in your notes, or print off the entire legislation and tab key sections, or just print off certain sections.
- For legislation it is crucial to know which sections you will need and to already be familiar with them. During an exam be as specific as possible in your answer regarding which section of legislation you are referring to (i.e., s 24(1)(a) rather than just s 24(1) or s 24).
- You should also try to summarise as many cases as possible, particularly the key ones (i.e. High Court cases or key precedents). See below for creating case summaries!

Case summaries

Having simple case summaries will help you in the exam to find cases that are similar to the facts to use a precedent. Be smart in how many cases you create case summaries for. It might not be the best use of time or feasible to create detailed summaries of every case, but ensure at the minimum you have summaries for High Court cases and important precedents.

EXAMPLE:

R v Sharkey (1949) 79 CLR 121

Facts: The General Secretary of the Communist Party in Australia made seditious comments. The crime of sedition in the *Crimes Act* concerned not just the making of seditious comments in Australia but also in other countries.

Issue: Whether the *Crimes Act* fell under the external affairs power? The facts in this case did not concern comments in other countries, only in Australia.

Held: The law was held valid. Technically, this may be obiter as this case did not specifically relate to other countries.

Latham CJ: The relations the Commonwealth are within the subject of external affairs. 'The preservation of friendly relations with other Dominions is an important part of the management of the external affairs of the Commonwealth'

NB: Does the 'preservation of friendly relations' mean that laws have to preserve relations or can they affect them adversely?

Case summaries continued...

- Read the headnote and look at the catchwords. This will help you to understand what the case is about generally. Use Ctrl F to quickly find relevant extracts or keywords.
- Read the case, highlighting key sentences you want to include in a summary. Remember you will need to read this in an exam so make it succinct
- After reading the case, note the following:
 - The case citation: You will need this in an exam. Most of the time just the party names are sufficient for exams, but check with your course coordinator.
 - Name of the court: This is especially important to note whether the precedence is binding or not and to work jurisdiction.
 - Judges: Higher level answers will note whether judgements were joint, separate or dissenting. For particularly influential statements of law, it can be useful to cite the Judge who delivered the statement.
 - Parties: This depends on the matter. For an appeal you will refer to the parties as appellant and respondent. Otherwise, refer to the parties as plaintiff and defendant.
 - Remedies/Orders: What did the Court grant the plaintiff/appellant? This can be helpful in your answer to advise on types of remedies granted for such matters.
 - Prior proceedings: Did the case overturn or affirm a previous decision? This can help understand the context of the case.
- Note the material facts. Keep the facts simple and succinct. Knowing the facts of cases will allow you to draw analogies/distinctions between the facts in an exam. This is what separates a Distinction from High Distinctions.
- Identify the key legal issue.
- Identify the court's findings. What was the decision/outcome and how did the court come to the decision? Consider if there was a particular piece of evidence key to the outcome? Also note any dissenting judgements.
- Also note the significance of the case. Was it a significant case establishing a legal principle? Have later cases cast some doubt on the outcome or reasoning of the case? Has the case been overturned/affirmed since? This will help you advise your clients in an exam on the likelihood of their argument succeeding.

Study planners

Creating a study plan can be extremely helpful in organising and planning your study. We suggest a weekly timetable to pace your revision, as well as a daily schedule to keep yourself on track and account for breaks and mealtimes.

Organising topics by week can also be helpful.

Keep in mind that the below timetables are intended for SWOTVAC period and so are intended to be more intensive than a typical beginning to mid-semester schedule.

Weekly SWOTVAC timetable example

Date	Subject	Topics	Action	Status
19/10	Contract Law	Week 1	Condense lecture notes	Complete
		Week 1	Review seminar	Complete
	Property Law	Week 5	Review reading material	Incomplete
	International Law	Week 7	Seminar video	Complete
	PPL	Week 6	Pre-lecture videos	Incomplete
20/10	PPL	Week 2	Rewatch lecture	Incomplete
	Property Law	Week 9	Review seminar	Incomplete
	Contract Law	Week 5	Review reading material	Incomplete
	International Law	Week 10	Case summaries	Incomplete

(...continue for 5 more days)

Daily SWOTVAC schedule

7:00am – wake up, go for run.
 8:00am – have shower, eat breakfast.
 8:45am – contract law: condense week 1 lecture notes, re-watch entire lecture or uncertain parts of lecture.
 10:00am – contract law: review week 1 seminar questions.
 10:30am – contract law: review week 1 readings.
 11:30am – contract law: consolidate all week 1 notes. Flag and review uncertain concepts.
 12:30pm – lunch.
 1:30pm – property law: review week 1 lecture.
 3:15pm – property law: review week 1 seminar.
 4:45pm – property law: review week 1 readings.
 5:45pm – property law: consolidate all week 1 notes. Flag and review uncertain concepts.
 7:00pm – dinner.
 8:00pm – review of today's study and any uncertain concepts. Printing, flagging and highlighting, ready for use on exam day.
 9:00pm – wind down, meditation and mindfulness exercises. No screen time.
 10:00pm – bedtime.

STUDENT EXAM TIP #7:

“WHEN YOU’RE STUDYING, MAKE SURE YOU START ON THE MONDAY OF SWOTVAC AND NOT ON THE FRIDAY”

- FELIX, SIXTH-YEAR STUDENT

STUDENT EXAM TIP #8:

“DEFINITELY DON’T WATCH A WHOLE SEASON OF TV ON NETFLIX A WEEK BEFORE YOUR EXAMS. RESIST THE URGE, RESIST THE TEMPTATION.”

- THU, FIFTH-YEAR STUDENT

Tips for on the day...

- During the 10-minute reading time, plan how long you will spend on each question. Write down timestamps on a blank piece of paper, accompanied by which questions you will complete by that time. Referring back to this while writing your answers is a great way to keep track of how long you are spending on each question. It also allows you to know when to be brutal and move on if you are spending too long on one question.
- Divide your time based on how many marks each question is worth. Allocate more time for questions that are worth more marks.
- Decide whether answering questions in a different order works for you. Some people find it helpful to start with the hardest question first, while others find it best to start with the questions they are confident about. Our best advice is to try different strategies while taking practice exams and see which method is most effective for you.
- Highlighting keywords in the questions can help you break down information into smaller, less intimidating chunks.

STUDENT EXAM TIP #9:

“THE NIGHT BEFORE, HAVE ALL YOUR PENS AND BAG READY TO GO. FILL UP YOUR DRINK BOTTLE. AN HOUR BEFORE YOUR EXAM, STOP STUDYING.”
-RUBY, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT.

STUDENT EXAM TIP #10:

“I DRINK CHAMOMILE TEA BEFORE MY EXAM SO I DON'T GET SO STRESSED THAT I MENTAL BLANK.”
- ERIN, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT.



STUDENT EXAM TIP #11:

“GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND BRING YOUR ID CARD SO THEY'RE NOT INTERRUPTING YOU DURING YOUR EXAM”
-PATRICIA, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT.

Wellbeing

Maybe the most important thing to remember is that study should not come before your mental health and wellbeing. It is ok, and often normal, to feel stressed during exam period. Just remember many of your friends will feel the same way and together you can all pull through.

- Balance study with your regular life, whether that is work, sport, hanging out with friends or just relaxing at home with a TV show or book—whatever makes you happiest!
- You should not and do not need to study all day every day to get good results—take a break!
- Reach out to older students for help.
- If you are really struggling, reach out to family members, counsellors or consult a doctor or mental-health expert.

STUDENT EXAM TIP #13:

“DRINK GREEN TEA OR LISTEN TO VERY LOUD AND ANGRY MUSIC (LIKE THE SUICIDE BOYS). WORKS ON LATE NIGHTS. EAT SNACKS THAT NEVER FILL YOU UP, LIKE NUTS OR POPCORN.”

-CERYS, THIRD-YEAR STUDENT

STUDENT EXAM TIP #12:

“TALK TO PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING HARDER SUBJECTS AND ASK THEM HOW THEIR STUDIES ARE GOING”

- IKHWAN, THIRD-YEAR STUDENT

Replacement exams

If you are unable to sit your exams during the designated period, replacement exams are always available to students upon request, given the reason is deemed appropriate by the faculty. Replacement exams are also offered to students who fail. They take place a few weeks after the usual exam period and their content is completely different to the original exam.

Disability and modified arrangements

It's important to keep in mind that disability and modified arrangements for exam taking are available to all students under circumstances deemed appropriate by the faculty. For example, some arrangements include extra writing time, the option to complete the exam on a computer rather than hand-written and in a room by yourself. There are many more arrangements made by the Uni, and these can be organised prior to the exam. Make sure you contact AskAdelaide or visit their office in the Hub for more info!

After the exam

Once you finish the exam be proud of yourself, one more subject complete! You can now shift focus to your next exam or if it is your last exam then you can relax. If you have more exams take some time after your exam (even the whole day) to relax and refresh. Some key things to do after an exam:

- Relax! Take time for yourself and treat yourself—you deserve it!
- Do not stress about your result. The exam is done, do not worry about comparing what you and your friend wrote. You cannot change anything now. If you tend to ruminate and doubt your answers, talking about the questions post-exam with your friends may not be helpful.
- If you think you did badly, it is normal to be upset. Remember you will do a lot of subjects at uni and one bad result is not going to hurt your future job prospects or GPA.
- After your exam period, hang out with friends, drink (responsibly, of course) and make the most of your time off!

STUDENT EXAM TIP #14:

“I WOULD BOOK A TABLE AT THE GOODY JUST SO I HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO AFTER THE EXAM.”

-BRYAN, THIRD-YEAR STUDENT

