**“How do I prepare for online assessment?”**

Many students feel uncertain about how to prepare for online assessment, as it involves both a new platform and an unfamiliar test and exam format.

To address this, let us first take a step back and remind ourselves of the purpose of assessment, whether online, practical or written. The purpose of assessment is for lecturers to determine whether their students understand the work covered, and have the ability to apply their newly acquired knowledge. Therefore, even though the assessment occurs online, you can expect the same line of questioning as in a paper-based exam. While the lecturer might choose a different question structure (perhaps including more multiple-choice questions, or shorter questions instead of essay-type), you’ll still be assessed on the same content to check your understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge.

So, revisiting past papers and looking at the type of questions asked in lecture notes, tutorials or practicals remain a good indication of what to expect in the online exam or test. Also refer to the learning outcomes set out in your module guides. When you take these outcomes and turn them into questions, you are already anticipating how the content could be assessed. To help you with this, go to [the resource section on our website](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/cscd/academic-counselling/resources) for a list of common instruction words used in assessment questions.

Here are a few helpful hints for tackling **online assessments**:

* Be sure to read the instructions before you start. (For instance, do you need to complete all the questions or only certain sections, and does the time allowed include document upload?)
* If additional time is granted for online assessments, set aside some of that time to allow for technical glitches.
* Think ahead of things that might take up additional time – such as scrolling between questions and answers to re-read keywords/questions – and how to compensate for them – such as by writing down keywords of the question on a notepad. But guard against rewriting the entire question, as you will lose a lot of time!
* Think ahead of how you might need to adjust the way you usually tackle a question paper. For instance, instead of highlighting or underlining keywords on a question paper, you might need to write down keywords from an online assessment.
* Read the questions carefully and make sure you know exactly what you’re expected to do. To do this, identify (i) the instruction word (“elaborate”, “compare”, “evaluate”); (ii) keywords (what exactly you need to elaborate on/compare/evaluate); and (iii) the range or scope (do you need to elaborate on/compare/evaluate new developments over the past ten years only, or all developments since the inception of the theory or concept).

In preparing for **open-book tests/exams**, consider the following:

* Properly prepare your notes or textbook (use tabs, sticky notes, etc.).
* Study as if you will not have access to any material. Think of your notes or textbook as a back-up only, or as a quick reference for details.

For any further guidance or questions, do not hesitate to approach your lecturer or course coordinator.

Good luck with your assessments!