Tips for examinations

220 exam papers = 46cm of reading
Caveat: Booklets aren’t filled or typed
Mark in slightly less than one week
+ other commitments
On average, your paper will be in the middle
& 100+ exam papers (2 courses) all trying to say the same thing ⇒ short term memory is taxed (long term memory is suppressed!)
⇒ write clearly and concisely (example coming)

Marking scheme:
• subjective alignment of student answers to written guide ⇒ potential for variation
• no time for bias (no desire either)
The last thing a lecturer wants after a week of marking: remark & supps

Example

Q: Someone at the Opera House asks “Where in Sydney is UNSW?”
How should you answer?

100%:
• A1a (if Q is worth 2% of exam): “Kensington, primarily, with other campuses in Paddington and other places.”
• A1b (if Q is worth 10% of exam): “The main campus is in Kensington, near Randwick, between ANZAC Pde and Botany, High and Druitt Streets. The Fine Arts campus is in Paddington, and there are smaller campuses elsewhere (Coogee, Randwick). Parts of UNSW are outside Sydney, e.g. ADFA in Canberra, and shortly a Singapore campus.”

80%±10%: “Kensington”
60%±10%: “UNSW is Australia’s finest university, offering degrees in engineering, law ... In 1949, the Kensington campus was expanded ...”
45%±15%: “I ate donuts for breakfast, before brushing my teeth and catching the bus to UNSW ... in Kensington ...”
30%±30%: “I ate donuts for breakfast, before brushing my teeth and catching the bus to UNSW. The grass was blue and the sky was green. The bus was crowded and there was this person ... in Kensington ...”
0%: “Earth”, “TELE 4363 lectures were held in LG1, WebsterA and G25.”

Example

Q: “What is the basic reason why traditional TCP performs poorly when used across wireless networks? (5 marks)”

A: Slows down in response to loss, assuming that loss is due to congestion, but more likely due to transmission error in wireless network.

Answers in order of decreasing merit follow:

5: Correct + insight about transience

The basic reason TCP performs poorly across wireless networks is that the loss of packets is due to the transmission medium, not due to congestion of the network. The transmission medium may be either high loss or low loss, not affecting future data. TCP assumes that this reduces congestion, and slows down accordingly.

This slowdown results in poor performance, as it is not required.
2: Allusions to correct answer, interspersed with incorrect information

Wireless networks generally have high transmission error rates, or may experience poor performance due to congestion or weather conditions. In such cases, network optimization measures can be employed to mitigate these issues. The use of advanced techniques such as adaptive modulation and coding (AMC) can improve network performance by dynamically adjusting the modulation and coding schemes based on the channel conditions.

3: Roundabout answer + irrelevant info

TCP is a protocol designed to ensure reliable delivery of data packets over the internet. It works by breaking down large files into smaller packets, adding sequence numbers and checksums, and then transmitting them across the network. This process helps ensure that the data is delivered in the correct order and that it is not lost or damaged during transmission.

4 (generous): Correct + extraneous info

TCP is designed to handle errors and delays in the network, such as packet loss, reordering, and corruption. It does this by using a combination of techniques, including error detection and correction, and flow control, to ensure that data is delivered reliably. TCP is commonly used in applications that require reliable data delivery, such as file transfers, email, and web browsing.
3

1: Answer is buried amidst junk

TCP is a connection oriented protocol that is designed to provide reliable, ... a packet arrives...

0: Irrelevant

As the transport protocol, TCP uses connection oriented control to send/receive
TCP therefore provides the wired link to perform reliable, ordered delivery of packets, especially because of its need for a connection phase to begin the transfer.

0: Stabbing blindly

The end of the exam was a rush between... produces packets, and the TCP for each packet... TCP is designed around the IP packets, which carry the actual payload across networks.

Lessons learned

Presentation matters ☺:
• Most important/relevant info first
• Underline main points? Risk of highlighting the wrong points
• Neat writing?

No 2 answers are identical – descriptive conceptual subject matter
• Yet marks are quantized and can be identical.
• Could argue that one answer is better than another with the same mark.
• Could argue that one answer deserves ± 1 mark
• Could spend whole life arguing...
• Subjectivity in marking individual questions should even out over multiple questions.
After the exam: Supplementaries

- Note previous warning about reluctance to remark/grant supplementaries.
- “If any supplementary exams are offered, then they will definitely be no easier than the primary exam. Supplementary exams are generally only offered when there is a significant case for Special Consideration. Any supplementary exams will likely be held in the week starting Dec. 13, 2004.” [course outline]
- Special Consideration: “You must make formal application for Consideration for the course/s affected as soon as practicable after the problem occurs and within three working days of the assessment to which it refers.” [UNSW regulations]