Tips for examinations

220 exam papers = 40cm 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

Rough marking guide for individual questions

0%: No attempt, answered wrong question, answer shows no evidence of knowledge from course (e.g. just restated question).
20%: Tried: Answer is basically wrong, but contains something relevant.
50%: Satisfactory. Not completely correct, but rights outweigh wrongs.
70-80%: Right, but not complete. Correct answer without working out/justification.
100%: Perfect: Captures key points + nuances, without errors.

• Penalties for making irrelevant or incorrect statements.

Marking approach: 1st couple of lines should indicate if they are on track. May decide there to give full marks, or if not full marks, wade through remainder trying to find redeeming features.

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 Barker 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%: “Kensington” or “UNSW is Australia’s finest university, offering degrees in engineering, law ….”

60%: “I ate donuts for breakfast, before brushing my teeth and catching the bus to UNSW ….”

45%: “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 ….”

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.”

Realistic 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 main reason TCP performs poorly across wireless networks is that the loss of packets is due to the transmission medium and due to congestion of the network. The transmission medium may have resulted in temporary errors for some packets, not affecting future data. TCP ensures that this indicates congestion and acts upon accordingly. This slowdown results in poor performance, so it is not required.

4 (generous): Correct + extraneous info

TCP performs poorly because it cannot distinguish between connection error or transmission error due to packet loss.

The reason delays are set in what the minimum of the connection needs will result in the preference would regulate connectivity with all of the same.

3: Roundabout answer+irrelevant info

Due to being fast and efficient, TCP will lose its transmission. TCP's routing ability is greatly limited by its self-prioritization to its past performance.

2: Allusions to correct answer, interspersed with incorrect information

Wireless networks generally have high frequencies, high rates, or misquoting of packets. This results in a delayed connection. With this, excepting or above a degree, TCP requires more packets due to congestion. The other forms the transmission. In the absence of these, TCP can be largely increased by all of the connections between them static and mobile, but in keeping high throughputs.
2: Brevity sacrifices details needed to demonstrate technical understanding

TCP is designed for wired networks where loss mainly comes from congestion, where wireless networks suffer more from error-handling problems.

1: Answer is buried amidst junk

TCP is a connection-oriented protocol that is designed to provide reliable services, which is why it is complex.

[Text continues with technical details about TCP]

0: Irrelevant

As the transport protocol, TCP is connection-oriented and requires a call setup, unlike UDP, which relies on connectionless delivery service and doesn't guarantee reliability.

TCP transports the client link to perform the receive in order to transfer packets, especially because of its need for a connection phase to begin the transfer.

0: Stabbing blindly

TCP is designed around the idea of creating a reliable connection for data transfer. Problems can arise if the TCP protocol is not properly configured or if there are network issues.
Lessons learned

Presentation matters:
- Most important/relevant info first
- Underline main points? Risk of highlighting the wrong points
- Neat writing?!
  But content is even more important. Sound structure to answers should overcome problems from language barriers.

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.

Other tips

- Answers that exactly repeat what has been presented in lectures rarely receive full marks: they demonstrate memorisation, but not understanding. Express things in your own words.
- Your answers should contain technical detail that you have learned from the course.
  e.g. “Difference between MAC protocols for wired and wireless networks” don’t answer: “wireless requires no wires”, but describe specific techniques used, e.g. hidden terminal problem and RTS/CTS, collision avoidance.

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 20 (6 weeks after the last week of session).” [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]

- And now to review the course...
from 1st lecture – perhaps include that with details about consultation – before these slides