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%±20%: “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 9301 lectures were held in 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 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 result in temporary errors for single packets, not affecting future data. TCP assumes that this indicates congestion, and slows down accordingly. This slowdown results in poor performance, as it is not required.
Traditional TCP utilizes wired networks (i.e., knows the location of the nodes). But in wireless, traditional TCP performs poorly because it cannot distinguish between congestion error or transmission error due to packet loss. When this occurs, duplicate ACKs are sent in which the minimization of the congestion window will result and the performance would degrade enormously with respect to this issue.
3: Roundabout answer+irrelevant info

It is known that TCP in wireless experiences non-congestion induced loss - a lost and long round trip time. However, TCP will treat all packet loss the same and upon receiving 3 duplicate packets, it will perform its error control mechanism.

To halve half size of congestion window and retransmit packet to avoid further loss.

Due to frequent loss experienced in wireless networks, TCP will lower its transmission rate so frequently that it will contribute to its poor performance.
2: Allusions to correct answer, interspersed with incorrect information

Wireless networks generally have high transmission error rates, or missequencing of packets; this results in a delayed dupack. With the receipt of such a dupack, TCP source

presumes error due to congestion and so goes into last retransmit. At the same time reducing window size.

This can be simply avoided by link layer retransmissions between base station and mobile host so to maintain high throughput.
2: Brevity sacrifices details needed to demonstrate technical understanding

TCP is designed for wired networks, where loss mainly come from congestion. Where wireless networks suffer mostly from error, handoff problems.
2: half the answer

e) traditional TCP can not distinguish loss of packets due to transmission errors from that due to congestion. (Bit error are common in wireless networks than in wired hence transmission errors)
1: Answer is buried amidst junk

Traditional TCP performs poorly when used across wireless networks because TCP was never designed to be used in wireless environments.

TCP is a connection-oriented protocol that is designed to provide performance guarantees, ie it acts like a virtual circuit.

Wireless environments break the connection-oriented assumption as it is hard to guarantee transmissions in a wireless environment.

In addition, wireless networks have different transmission and routing times, schedules, and protocols compared with fixed-line networks. This means that the assumptions TCP makes about congestion, window size, round-trip times, and interference (or the lack of it) are wrong and are not optimal compared with what TCP was originally designed for hence TCP performs poorly when used across wireless networks.
0: Stabbing blindly

f) The need for Base station to negotiate between the Fixed host and Mobile host arises the fact that the added host is Mobile and can move from BS to other BS, which means the creates problems, violate the end to end principle in which TCP is designed around. TCP under those circumstances can be implemented in split connection approach. That problem can be addressed by special protocols such as Snoop, WTCP or Delayed Unpacks to solve the problem. Return the end to end principle, given the fact that re-transmission route can be change (mobile host moving) and more problems that result in from the wireless operation mode.
0: no evidence of learning from course

- Traditional TCP performs poorly because over correction is really hard to achieve.
- TCP is connection oriented whereas connection has to be made before using.
  While wireless network is connection less.
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 should demonstrate your understanding, not recall of course materials.
  – Completeness: Explanation should be self-contained s.t. understandable if that part of course materials had been omitted
    • reference to relevant part of course might receive 20%
  – Express in your own words to indicate your understanding.
    • Verbatim echo of relevant part of course might receive 70% or less. Correct, but only demonstrates memorisation, not understanding. Lecturer gets bored, not flattered, by own expression being echoed.

• 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

Use proper communication channels – e.g. course email address tele####admin@ee.unsw.edu.au – you won’t get a response from emails sent to other addresses.

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]

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]
Dear Dr. Moors,

Can I ask for a remark of my exam paper please? I'm afraid I watched too much World Cup during the review period, and I was so sad when Australia lost to Italy, there were only few seconds between Australia and World Champion. Also, there are only 10 mark between heaven and hell for me. I wish you would not be too strict on my answers. PLEASE have a look at my case, and looking into my paper...
• And now to review the course...