

LAW EXAM STRATEGY

Tips for 1Ls

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Don't cheat. It's not worth it.

Academic integrity is a big deal. The Law School and the Law Society take it very seriously. For a lawyer, dishonesty is worse than a criminal conviction.

Keep perspective: it'll be okay!

The screenshot shows a CBC News article from November 24, 2020. The article title is "100 UBC students accused of cheating on math midterm". Below the title are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, YouTube, and LinkedIn. The article text states: "University investigating after professor wrote chilling note to students, saying anyone guilty may be expelled". It also includes a timestamp: "CBC News - Posted: Nov 24, 2020 10:59 AM PT | Last Updated: 4 hours ago". At the bottom of the article is a framed image of a letter addressed to students, signed by "Mike".

Dear Students,

Math 100 midterm 2 is now complete. I am extremely disappointed to tell you that there were over 100 cases of cheating. We are currently investigating these and, if confirmed, the students involved will receive a 0% for the course (not just the midterm) and I will recommend their expulsion from UBC. The same will apply to the final exam and will include any and all academic misconduct, such as viewing illegally uploaded privileged material.

Yours truly,
Mike

PREPARING FOR EXAMS



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- CAN the syllabus. See [2021 CanLIIDocs 1859](#), p ii.
- Practice, practice, practice! See <https://blogs.ubc.ca/beswick/torts-quizzes/>.
- Study and practice with friends: attempt problems individually; discuss answers together.

- Read the exam cover page 24 hours before the exam.
- Keep perspective: it'll be okay!

- Follow the Prime Directive.
- Read instructions carefully before beginning.
- Pinball method of issue-spotting: hit the bumpers = points.
- Apply law, not emotions. (Beware the trap of sympathising with one party.)
- It is good to distinguish doctrine. It is not good to discuss irrelevant doctrine.

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SITTING ISSUE-SPOTTER EXAMS



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- Breathe.
- Do a plan:
 - Issue-spotting: what are the major and minor issues?
 - Issue-sorting: what order/structure to address them in? How much time on each?
- For each issue: follow the IRAC structure.
- Use headings (for each issue) and signifiers/markers where useful.
- Abbreviate case names after first use (and underline/italicise if possible).
- No need to repeat the details of rules if they come up more than once.
- Very brief quotes are fine (no more than a sentence), but do not quote at length.
- Don't copy/paste.
- Do use symbols to signal when content jumps around the page.
- Remember to answer the question asked!

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WHAT IS THE EXAMINER LOOKING FOR?



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- Spotting and sorting relevant issues.
 - And side-lining irrelevant issues: don't throw in the kitchen sink.
- Applying relevant rules/law to the facts in a considered and balanced way.
 - Reasoning with respect to relevant facts.
 - Citing, and applying or distinguishing, relevant authorities. Binding or dicta?
 - Considering arguments on both sides.
 - Allocating time/detail according to importance/complexity of issues.
- Reaching conclusions that are supported by analysis.
- Clarity (structure, comprehensiveness, and persuasiveness) of answer.

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PROBLEM Q ANSWERS VS ESSAY Q ANSWERS



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Issue-spotter structure:

Issue 1
- R, A, C
Issue 2
- R, A, C
Issue 3
- R, A, C
...

Essay structure:

Introduction
Point 1
Point 2
Point 3
Conclusion

SO YOU WANT A JOB AFTER LAW SCHOOL?



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- Find two professors who will know and appreciate you well enough to be able to write you reference letters in future. How?
 - Upper-level seminars/courses/clinics.
 - Self-directed research papers.
 - Research/teaching assistant positions.
 - Office hours.
- Identify people whose careers you admire. Consider their path. Reach out to them.
 - Maybe blog or write an article in the same fora or on the same topics as they do.
- Treat your classmates/peers with respect. Reputations travel fast ... and stick.

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