

Maximising Exam Performance

- What to do during planning time
- Queensland Economics Teachers Association
- Masterclass

QETA
QUEENSLAND ECONOMICS
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION Inc



About me

- Mr Justin Virly
- Mr Newsletter
- (Toronto Canada)
- 2008 to 2019: Pimlico SHS in Townsville, Qld
- 2020-Present: Brisbane State High School
- “Helping young people better understand the world so that they can continue to improve it.”



Masterclass Objectives

Learning Intentions

- Pedagogy and priorities a week or two before exams
- What to do during Planning time for IA1 and IA3
- What to do with the seen sources for IA3

Success criteria

- New ideas and for activities to run a week before exams
- New or refined approaches for teaching students how to prepare for exams going into and on exam day

What this isn't

- A lesson on cognitive verbs
- Suggestions on things like index cards, apps to help you study, productivity tips, etc.
- A template or flowchart for how to answer exam questions



Key questions for students

1. "How much time do you spend on Part A vs Part B?"
2. "How many minutes do you need to write a good response?"
3. "How much time can you spend planning?"
4. "What do you do when planning?"
5. "What do you do with the seen sources?"



IA1: Combination Response Exam

15 Minutes Planning Time; 2 hours to write

5ish multiple choice

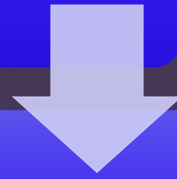
5ish short response

1 extended response (with unseen sources, 1 question)



The week or two before IA1

A formative task and (peer) feedback



Big retrieval, whole class collaboration



"Guessing questions, preparing answers"



IA3: Extended Response to Stimulus

15 minutes planning time; 2 hours to write

Seen sources a week prior with no teacher discussion

Unseen sources and 1 question



The week before IA3



Discussing the general performance of the economy over the last 15 years



(Formative and peer feedback) Big retrieval, whole class collaboration; indicator meanings and relationships; models



"Guessing questions, preparing answers"



What to do with the seen sources (part 1)

1. Make sure you know what each indicator/source means
2. Try to place some judgements on the general economy and how it's been performing based on the data. Things like..is it slowing or expanding, are there significant problems present, are these problems improving or worsening over time, etc
3. Attach "theory" to sources. AD components, CF sectors, Gini, Price mech, essential/non-essential, demand-pull or cost-push inflation, poverty line...etc
4. Connect the sources together...if Source X is showing a trend increasing, what other sources explain or support this and how?



What to do with the seen sources (part 2)

5. Slot the sources into possible economic criteria. Which sources best allow you to talk about income/wealth inequality, standard of living, sustainable economic growth, full employment, the household sector, etc...whatever the criteria are or may be
6. Flag potential critical reasoning points. What sources can you use to fram “counter-arguments” or “trade-offs”, what can you use to distinguish between short and long term trends or impacts.
7. Guess the potential questions, guess unseen sources which may be useful, dotpoint plans for potential answers



Students walk into the exam with:

- A clear understanding of the sources and applicable theory
- Prepared “relationships” across stimulus whether that be
 - Theory connections (i.e., these are both components of AD)
 - Cause and effect (i.e., Increased disposable income likely pulled CPI up)
- Readiness of likely contexts of the question and unseens, ie.,
 - There’s a lot of sources about manufacturing in decline
 - The foreign sector (exports and imports) both seem be presented
 - Every single source includes data between 2017 and 2022
- And...



Students walk into the exam with:

- A clear plan for planning time:
- “800 to 1000 words”....Sir says not to spend time counting my words, but I know that for me that’s about 5 pages of exam paper....if I have it all planned out...and can get in the zone....I just need 90-100 minutes to hammer that out....so I can plan for 30 minutes and make sure I get my answer, and criteria sorted.”
- (This is not a quote at all, but what I tell my students they should be “thinking” when they sit down on exam day)





So what's the plan for planning time?

AKA What to do during planning time

What to do during Planning Time (part 1)

1. Read the question
2. Highlight/note the time-frame, criteria (or macroeconomic objectives), and a "trigger" if there is one
3. Look at seen sources and highlight/annotate your work from the previous week, as relevant to the question
4. Look at unseens, highlight time frame, note meaning of indicators, key trends, relationships across sources and flag theory
5. Begin framing analysis (how has the economy performed during the time frame)



What to do during Planning Time (part 2)

6. Plan out criteria (how do the sources and applicable theory slot in to the criteria)
7. Write your "answer" (or thesis) prominently at the top of a planning sheet
8. Flag your "critical reasoning points"
9. Dot point your main arguments or paragraphs
10. Grab the response booklet and start writing



Students “Start writing” with:

- 1. A clear “answer” to the question. I.e.
 - “While CPI briefly fell within the RBA’s target band between 2017-2019, the slow recovery in the labour market and weak household spending suggest that for the majority of this time period price stability was not achieved. What little growth there was in economic activity was largely due to a favourable export sector, so while Australia was in an upswing, this was not strong enough to be considered optimal economic conditions.



Students “Start writing” with:

- 2. Their criteria planned out (with sources tagged or slotted)
 - Source 3 shows a 1ppt drop in unemployment from 2017-2019, indicating the strengthening labour market. Unemployment dropping at this time is likely explained by the both the boost in Terms of trade and increase in consumption (S5 and 6). The increase in export prices relative to import prices suggest high export demand which increases aggregate demand. This growth could lead to increased consumption as injections expand circular flow, but would also imply that the mining sector, which is worth a bajillion dollars (S9) likely brought higher incomes to workers and therefor increased demand. As these factors boost aggregate demand, there's upward pressure on prices, which help explain why CPI increased from 1.2% to 2.1% during this time, and reaching the RBA's target rate of inflation for the first time in 8 years.



Students “Start writing” with:

- 3. Theories or models drawn that they can use or talk about:
 - Circular flow (with sources on HH, BUS, INJ, etc)
 - $AD = C + I + G + (X - M)$ (with sources tagged....)
 - The economic cycle showing where on the thing the economy was in relation to the question
 - AD/AS model, to help trigger their memory (because AD increased....inflationary gap!!)
 - PPC model (the economy was producing at a sub-optimal point)



Students “Start writing” with:

- 3. Confidence about what to say and the time they have to say it
- “Sir we did what you said....I started writing at about the 95 minute mark....I got about 4 pages out with a few minutes to proof read...my mates wrote 5, but my writing is smaller than theirs....Clear answer...both criteria....I’m not reallllly sure I knew what to do with a few of the unseens....but yes, I didn’t cross paragraphs out, I didn’t write 3 pages about criteria 1 and then 3 sentences about criteria 1 because I lost track of time.....it seemed good.”
- (This is kinda a quote...it’s a made up quote that is based on real quotes)

How we teach this

- Formative task ranging from a small paragraph response to a full IA3 sized doozy
- “Open planning” – Notes, groups, teachers may model what they’re doing with the seens sources
- Closed groups – no notes, but they can talk to each other during planning time and copy each others “planning papers” and “annotations”
- Exam conditions >> Peer Feedback on planning
 - They work individually in exam mode, but then swap planning notes – comment on steal ideas, etc.

That's it...questions?
Feedback?

