

STUDENTS' GUIDE TO OPEN BOOK EXAMINATIONS

Higher Education Institutions are revamping the education systems to transform learning and transmit knowledge in the 21st century. Students should be allowed to think independently and creatively. An “Open Book Examination” (OBE) is one in which examinees are allowed to consult their class notes, textbooks, resource materials during the examinations. This may sound at first all that students need to do is to look for answers from re/source materials. The OBE requires a critical understanding of the subject matter to think and interpret with skills to organize the answers with coherent presentation and well-articulated descriptions. It requires on the part of the students'preparation, skills of note-taking, and strategies to appear the OBE. OBE does not ask memory-oriented questions nor students are expected to have thorough knowledge on subject-matters, rather a comprehensive knowledge, and critical reflection/ interpretation.

OBE is not a mere “dissemination of knowledge”, rather interpreting texts from textbooks/ resource materials to students’ minds. At the time of OBE, the studentretrieves the informed/ retention knowledge. It is the quality of reflection that is important than the quantity of reproduction of materials at hand. This requires students’ ability to contextualize by appropriating theological contents that they have acquired in classrooms and personal studies. The objective of OBEin theological education is to attempt at problem-solving through critical thinking. OBE reflects students’ comprehension of the subject matter. Students will be able to evaluate critically the concepts and categories that they have learned in classrooms and personal studies.

In the future, the theological teachers must focus on their teaching pedagogies the tools that are required for OBE. In the OBE model of examinations, the focus of teaching is on acquiring, modifying,and creating knowledge; that is processing information rather than transferring the content of the syllabus. The theological teachers need to deliver learning through questions, exercises, projects, assignments and to guide, by providing comments, criticisms, feedback. In the Senate of Serampore College this is very much in place but are we doing effectively delivering?

In higher education, the institutions have two ways to conduct OBE.

1. Restricted Type: They are limited to specific documents, class notes, or textbooks/ set of resource materials. Students are permitted to bring into the examination room. Such a single textbook or collection of resources as prescribed in the bibliography and the questions are limited to the prescribed resources.
2. Unrestricted Type: It is a system where students are permitted to consult printed materials, class notes, and unpublished work. In unrestricted types, the students should be able to discern what resources are relevant to the Course. It is the selection of students that determined the answers they write in OBE. Since this examination is given to the final year students, we are confident that they have acquired skills to select the materials as they have been by now through with writing assignments, projects, book reviews, paper, and paper presentations in-class seminars. The Senate has chosen unrestricted type of OBE.

The Affiliated Colleges are using multiple teaching pedagogies and each teacher has the freedom to use his/ her hermeneutical tools, so also institutional approaches to pedagogies. In the absence of a single book as a resource for a course and because of diverse topics in a syllabus, each subject may require more than one book to be prescribed as textbooks. Therefore, the Senate of Serampore College is comfortable with Unrestricted Type and thus students have been oriented in their studies.

If OBE is successful and produces the desired results, it may further be explored specifically for courses that may be possible for blended teachings, both online and classroom. Education may become exciting, and students while doing their studies be able to choose their specialization and areas of research and pursue their objectives. This may also bring a fundamental change in students learning behavior and attitude.

The new approach should help students rely less on memorization, and learn more to use skills of knowledge-building, critical-thinking problem-solving. The teachers have responsibilities to design the task for students in such a way that helps students apply tools of analysis. Keeping in mind OBE as a way of evaluating student, the teachers may approach pedagogies that motivates students to attend classes regularly, participate in group discussions, submit assignments, work on project and field exposure and research.

It implies that the nature of the examination will determine the methods of teaching. Students will be oriented to ask reflective questions in their classes and they will be tested on their problem-solving skills.

Ten Points to Remember in OBE:

1. Memorization is unnecessary. Locate and mark key points. Organize the notes.
2. Highlight key terms, dates, materials that are difficult to remember.
3. Students will be tested primarily on interpretation – write down your commentary and insight alongside your notes.
4. While teaming up with other students, the answer should not be from the same source or notes.
5. Organization and presentation are key to approaching OBE.
6. Write legibly in a black-ink ball pen since enough time is given in OBE for answering questions.
7. Answer questions that you can write confidently without referring to notes or with least/minimum reference.
8. Use time and selection of resources judiciously and conscientiously.
9. Do not be over-ambitious to refer ‘so much’ – this will lead to poor organization, lack coherence, exceed time limits – ultimately it will produce anxiety whether the answer has trespassed the limits of the boundary of plagiarism.
10. Each comprehension answer is to be written between 35 to 40 minutes, and the short answers between 12 to 18 minutes. The rest of the time must be given for revision, arranging the paper, checking anything that may have been left out before the answer book is to be uploaded.

There are specific ways to prepare for examinations and students may find the following points helpful. However, these are only suggestions. Students may assess their capacity and apply it while writing the OBEs.

1. Preparing for Examinations

- a. Understand the Rationale behind the OBE – Questions are applicative and reflective.
- b. Locate and mark key information beforehand. Organize your notes and materials well in advance.

- c. Strive to understand the material/s. Write your commentary and delve on issues that the teacher may have raised in the class. Discuss and debate the topics with the peer groups to have a wider reflection.
- d. It is not necessary as to how much notes/ resources that one has at his/ her disposal at the time of writing OBE. Rather it is the quality of answer and preciseness in approach. It is not how much resource materials you have brought into the examination hall, rather how you have interpreted the sources in your own words.

2. **Developing Note Taking Skills**

- a. Attend all lectures and classes. Understand distinct areas of focus for each subject. Understand the objectives of the course. Reflect teachers' notes you're your additional reading notes for a critical understanding.
- b. Organize together the notes.
- c. Focus on important aspects. Pay attention to where the focus is given. Listen to the summary of the lectures.

3. **Taking the Examination**

- a. Stay Calm.
- b. Use test-taking strategies during the examinations.
- c. Review your answers.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to interpret the subject's theories or content that they have learned in a classroom situation and additional readings and practical work.
2. Helping students acquire skills to apply the knowledge that they have received in their learning environment – classroom, field exposure, library, laboratory, research, project, findings, experiential, experimental.
3. Open-ended tasks that reflect real-life situations.
4. Opportunity to better understand and respond to a question in a reflective manner keeping in mind the course objectives.

DO'S AND DON'T'S:

1. The OBE is aimed not to test the conventional memory, rather test the applicative skills of the student.
2. OBE is not learn-and-regurgitate learning. It is neither a Banking model where students invest in the reproduction of theoretical knowledge nor make generic answers to every question.
3. Most of the resources from free online sites are spurious. Do not rely on them.
4. Do not 'copy-paste' answers. Acknowledge all the sources with minimum footnotes references such as Title of the book/ journal, name of the author, year of publication, and page number/s.

EXAMINATIONS RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR OPEN BOOK EXAMINATIONS:

1. Personal Honesty, Integrity, and Transparency are the hallmark of OBE.
2. There will be no Examination Invigilator for the OBE.
3. Students are allowed to bring notes, books, online resources while writing examinations.
4. Students should bring their answer papers and other documents, admit cards, pens, pencils, etc., personal computer (if accessible).
5. Students are given five hours to complete the entire process of examination.

AT THE TIME OF WRITING EXAMINATIONS:

1. Since it is a handwritten examination you need to have your admit card, registration number, and roll number, question paper downloaded from your email account or the Telegram on a prescribed time (if no wifi/ net connection, the students may ask for the question which may be SMS/ MMS/Other modes by the College on request. A sufficient time will be given.)
2. Students shall carry the Answer Book (includes Answer Book Cover, Acknowledgement and answer sheets- A4 size), thread to tie (no pin to be used), Envelop, Paste)
3. You should have a quiet place with a desk, comfortable chair, and adequate lighting.
4. Choose a place where wifi and/ or mobile network connection is available.
5. Monitor your time – use alarms and divide the time for answers and give enough time to arrange the papers and fill in the cover page for the columns which are to be filled in after the writing is complete.
6. Bring your books, notes, and other resources that you may require.
7. Water/Tea. Good to avoid snacking while writing examination.
8. Write legibly.
9. Scan clearly. See that the margin should be maintained on left and right and on top and bottom to get a full view of the manuscript. Check the scanned manuscripts after downloading but before submitting them.

SOURCES:

<http://www.vkmaheshwari.com/WP/?p=2259#:~:text=OPEN%20BOOK%20EXAMINATION%20%E2%80%93%20examination,miss%20...%20More%20items...>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Take-an-Open-Book-Exam>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/open-book?wssl=1>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/revision?wssl=1>

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