

BIOLOGY

Joe Reville from Terenure College and Tommy Murtagh from Maryfield College came into studio to talk about the Biology exam.

We began by looking at how the paper is divided.

The paper is divided into 3 sections. While Section A and B demand you cover the entire course the answers required for Section C are more specific and require you have a more in-depth knowledge of an area. In the exam, spend an hour on sections A and B - and two hours on Section C.

Section A are short questions. You are asked to complete five out of six of them - but Joe says do all of them - you having to lose and you will be marked on your five best ones. Your answers should be short and accurate. Leave no blank spaces.

What is the best way to prepare for this section?

Answer all the sample questions from your text book and past/sample papers. Read generally through everything in your book even topics you are not concentrating on. Ask a friend to quiz you from the book.

It's not easy to prepare for this as it can cut across anything - use your text book - old sample questions. Read generally through everything - you never know what might come up. Never leave a blank space. There will be two questions on Unit 1, two on Unit 2, and another two on Unit Three.

Ask a friend to quiz you. Sample questions, questions from text books - just read things - the more information you get in the better.

What kind of questions come up?

This section can cut across any topic on the course so you have to know everything - there are no shortcuts.

Let's move onto Section B... it's the MPA - the mandatory practical activities section - what do we need to know for this?

This section covers the questions on the mandatory experiments. Learn all experiments - you never know what is going to come up and therefore give yourself the best chance. If you are going to learn 22, you may as well learn 23.

How do you learn experiments?

Do all the experiments - it's the only way to really know what happens. Learn three a week and learn them really well. Get a friend to quiz you. Learn the theoretical background to the experiments. Our panel recommend you do all 3 questions and again leave no blank spaces For this section you have to learn all the experiments. Don't take a gamble.

The purpose of these mandatory experiments is to ensure the student experiences science outside the textbook and also to observe the small problems that can arise while doing experiments. In fact there may be small questions on the actual experience which will not be in your book so you can't fake it. Questions from the experiments can also appear in Sections A and C.

What do you need to know for the experiments?

You need to know diagrams of apparatus, diagrams of results and know what the controls are, what controls were used, what precautions used and what the experiment

is about. But it is not enough to know the sequence of steps - you MUST know the reason for each step.

Note the first six marks in these questions are for the theory part of that question - the rest of the marks go for the running of the experiment and diagrams.

Let's move on to Section C - you should spend two hours on this section - is that right?

Section C - here you are asked to do four questions and according to the Chief Examiners Report this was the Section where the students average mark was dragged down. A lot of terminology in biology which you must learn - it does require sweat but will be worth it in the exam. Accuracy is crucial in Section C questions - learn your definitions off by heart and do not make them up.

Joe has shortcut for those who are aiming for a C.

He says: For students who are working towards a C grade - not A or B - they can reduce the amount of work they have to do - and just use Units 1 and 2 of the syllabus - which covers 80s percent of the syllabus. Anyone who wants a higher grade will have to also learn Unit 3.

What about drawing graphs and diagrams... what should students remember about these?

Don't draw them too small - draw big - do not be afraid. Be accurate - don't miss anything out - and double check to make sure all the important parts in the right place label correctly - If the questions asks you to label, then label everything unless it asks for specific labels.

From now until the exam

Do your homework from now on under exam conditions

Study what you did in class - then do your written homework without your book. This is the best way to find out what you know and what you don't know

In the exam

Remember the importance of definitions

Do spend some time in the exam at selection

Do use up any spare time checking your answers - as you have questions with sub divisions double check you have given a sufficient answer to ALL sub sections

Accuracy is vital