

PAT

Physics Aptitude Test

SECTION BREAKDOWN

The PAT begins with multiple-choice and then transitions to long format questions. Each multiple-choice is capped at 2 marks whilst the longer questions can range up to 10 marks! The paper covers a range of topics that are detailed in the syllabus, with Maths and Physics mixed together and no longer in separate sections (as you may find in older papers).

Breakdown of how to answer each type of question:

Tackling the PAT requires a completely different mindset to what you would usually carry into A-Level examinations. You need to be able to train yourself for each type of question in order to maximise your final mark and shift your focus away from trying to get everything right (which you will quickly realise on your first attempt).

The first step towards tackling a PAT question is to understand that it is going to be difficult! Don't be demoralised if you don't understand it on the first read; keeping up spirits is fundamental if you want to smash the exam on the day.

Once looking over a past paper, you will find the multiple-choice questions only make up a quarter of the total available marks. Therefore, you would want to allocate no more than half an hour towards completing this section, whilst ensuring not to leave any answers blank. Keep in mind that it is unlikely you will have time to go back and retry them, so it is always best to make a guess if you happen to find yourself stumped. Aim for performance – not perfection!

When tackling long answer questions, always take your time to read it carefully and lay your working out clearly. Think about the relevant concepts in order to map out an approach and draw any necessary diagrams. The number of available marks vary greatly so use it as an indicator to set a mental timer. A key skill you must develop is to know when to let go, since wasting time at a dead end will detriment you for the remaining paper.

WHAT IS THE PAT?

The PAT is a 2- hour paper.

The paper is created as a single section but is made up of two parts (which are not labelled as such).

PREPARATION TIPS

Read the syllabus. You will find the PAT includes topics you may not have covered so far, as well as some that are not part of your A-Level course. These will require independent learning so that you are able to attempt every question. Try to do every past paper at least once and try starting with older papers since they tend to be easier.

Write down your own advice for your future self as you attempt papers; this will allow you to learn from your past mistakes and help you improve as you go on. Finally, start studying for the PAT as early as possible; you will need as much time as you can to prepare.

USEFUL LINKS

There are no official solutions provided for the PAT. Below are links to unofficial solutions that have lovingly been created for us to use:

- physicsandmathstutor.com/admissions/pat
- oxfordpat.wordpress.com

It is recommended to use and compare between both since there is no one right way to answer a question.

Past papers should take priority in your revision, but sites like isaacphysics.org and i-want-to-study-engineering.org can provide additional practice if needed. Feel free to use Cambridge ENGAA papers to supplement your revision and to get a taste of what you won't be missing out on when you apply to Oxford instead.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE A "GOOD SCORE"?

Previous statistics and reports show that you would want to achieve a score of at least 60 for a competitive chance of receiving an offer. Since there is no clear way to mark your practice solutions, avoid counting up your score every time you attempt a paper. Rather focus on doing the best you can. It may at first seem like a distant figure, but through dedicated practice you can push your score higher. Never forget that anything is achievable with enough commitment and determination!