

Exam day, decoded

The short answer

Bring photo ID and your Pearson confirmation, and arrive 30 minutes early. Your modules run back to back on a computer, with an erasable notebook and pen provided. Everything else stays outside.

The room you are actually preparing for

Each module is 27 questions in 40 minutes on a Pearson VUE computer. Practise on the official free tests on a desktop: selecting, changing and reviewing answers.

The question is on the screen and your working is on the notebook. Practise moving between the two.

1 The tell

If your home practice involves a phone screen, a calculator, a wall clock or writing directly on the question, it is testing content in a friendlier room. Do at least two full sessions with a desktop monitor and one separate erasable or plain sheet.

The mini-whiteboard technique

You get an erasable notebook of no fixed size. Train on A4.

Divide the usable page into three zones:

- Top strip, 3 cm:** write $13 \rightarrow Q10 \cdot 26 \rightarrow Q19 \cdot 38 \rightarrow Q27$. Add only flagged question numbers and one-word return hooks here.
- Main field:** one compact block per question. Start each block with its number and the requested unit or sign.
- Right gutter:** write fragile facts only, such as $\text{cm}^3 \rightarrow \text{m}^3$, $q = -e$ or “strictly $>$ ”. Do not copy the stem.

Cross out, never erase: erasing wastes time and loses clues. Leave a return hook such as “Q14: B/C · sign?” in the top strip. Ask for fresh sheets when you need them.

Worked example Three lines, not a page

A question states that $x \neq 0$ and

$$x + \frac{1}{x} = 3.$$

Find $x^4 + x^{-4}$. Do not solve the quadratic for x . Use the structure:

$$x^2 + x^{-2} = (x + x^{-1})^2 - 2 = 9 - 2 = 7,$$

then square once more:

$$x^4 + x^{-4} = (x^2 + x^{-2})^2 - 2 = 49 - 2 = \boxed{47}.$$

On the board, the whole block is “Q12: $s = 3 \Rightarrow s_2 = 7 \Rightarrow s_4 = 47$ ”. The full derivation above teaches the idea; the compressed line is what you earn after it is secure.

Correct: structure replaces two quadratic solutions and preserves whiteboard space.

Trap: solving for x creates radicals, doubles the arithmetic and makes a transcription error more likely.

2 Try it

Use one A4 sheet for a nine-question, 13-minute set. At the end, circle any block you cannot understand without reopening the question. Your target is compact, recoverable working, not tiny handwriting.

Pace about 1.5 minutes; bank a question when stuck

Each module gives you 40 minutes for 27 questions, so pace for coverage: bank an uncertain route, fill every blank and save the closing minutes for the most finishable flag.

The full checkpoint method is in The 1.5-minute rule.

Bring this; lock up that

Arrive 30 minutes early. More than 15 minutes late and you may be turned away.

Bring to check-in	Keep outside the room	The centre provides
Original photo ID	Phone, watch, wallet, bag, books, notes, your own paper or writing tools	PC, keyboard, mouse, erasable note-book and pen
Pearson confirmation, electronic or printed	Food and drink, including water, unless approved	Fresh erasable sheets on request
Only approved comfort aids or access-arrangement items	Calculator and any unapproved electronic device	Staff help for procedural or technical problems

Bring one original, unexpired government photo ID with a signature, in exactly your booking name. Access arrangements must be approved in advance.

No scheduled breather between modules

There are no breaks, and the clock does not stop if you leave. In the last 30 seconds of each module:

- fill any blank answer first;
- stop carrying the old module in your head;
- sit back, exhale once, place the board for the next subject;
- begin the next module with its own 13 / 26 / 38 checkpoints.

If anything goes wrong, raise your hand straight away and get a case number before you leave. Report it within 24 hours at the latest.

3 The tell

Do not leave with only a verbal “we noticed it”. Before you walk out, ask whether the incident has been recorded and write down the case number. A clear record gives UAT-UK something it can investigate.

What October reports can and cannot tell you

October 2025 candidate reports described Mathematics 1 as markedly harder than the specimen and said familiar-looking science questions hid tricky conditions. Specific surprises included water’s density behaviour from 0 to 4 °C, Young’s modulus applications, a function rotated through 180° about an arbitrary point, and refraction in glass measured relative to vacuum. Candidates also mentioned boundary conditions, unit conversions and subtle wording in the options.

So:

- expect the live paper to demand transfer, even when the topic name is familiar;

- keep units, boundaries, reference states and signs visible in the whiteboard gutter;
- read every option before committing, because a nearly correct route can still miss one word;
- report a real test-centre incident while evidence can still be collected.

One final rehearsal

Seven to ten days before the test, reproduce the awkward bits on purpose: desktop screen, separate A4 sheet, no calculator or watch, three 40-minute modules in your booked order, and no pause between them. Use the Pearson timed practice version for one module and specification-filtered mixed sets for the others so you do not spend every official set at once.

Afterwards, record for each module: where you were at 38 minutes, blanks at 40, and your avoidable errors.