

How to prepare for the ESAT

The short answer

27 questions in 40 minutes per module, no calculator. Here is the plan, in six or twelve weeks.

The format

Everyone sits Mathematics 1. Most courses add two of Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics 2, so most candidates sit **120 minutes**. Each module is **27 questions in 40 minutes**, on screen, with no calculator. There is no penalty for a wrong answer, so fill every blank.

Each module is scored from 1.0 to 9.0. **There is no overall score**. 4.5 is the median and 7.0 is the top 10%. See where a score lands.

Mathematics 1 is GCSE content, and every other module relies on it. Mathematics 2 adds new material: differentiating x^n , definite integrals, logarithms, radians, the sine and cosine rules, the circle equation and the binomial expansion of $(1+x)^n$.

October sitting: 12 to 16 October 2026, results 16 November. January sitting: 4 to 8 January 2027, results 8 February. Access arrangements and bursaries close before registration.

The method

1. **Diagnose.** One timed set per module. Mark every spec line you cannot do in 90 seconds.
2. **Fix the biggest gap.** One topic at a time, untimed.
3. **Mix topics.** So you learn to spot what a question is testing.
4. **Mock under the real clock.** All your modules, back to back, 40 minutes each.
5. **Redo every miss.** From a blank page, tagged with its cause.
 - **Did not know it.** Learn the spec line, then retest a week later.
 - **Knew it, too slow.** Repeat against a clock, not more theory.
 - **Misread it.** Write the units and any 'not' before you start.
 - **Picked the trap.** Find the wrong step that gives that option.

Six weeks, about 41 hours

Week	The work	Hours
Week 1	One timed set per module. Mark every spec line you cannot do in 90 seconds.	6 h
Week 2	Fix your worst topic in your first module, untimed.	7 h
Week 3	Same for your second module. Add the daily arithmetic drill and one timed set.	7 h
Week 4	Mixed sets. Full mock at the end.	8 h
Week 5	Redo every miss and tag its cause. Second full mock.	8 h
Week 6	Two half mocks, then your miss log only. Nothing new in the last three days.	5 h

Twelve weeks, about 74 hours

Weeks	The work	Hours
Weeks 1–2	Diagnose, then Mathematics 1 without a calculator.	10 h
Weeks 3–4	Your weakest science module, untimed, then one timed set.	12 h
Weeks 5–6	Your other module, plus the daily drill. First mock.	14 h
Weeks 7–8	Mixed sets and old NSAA and ENGAA parts. Second mock.	14 h
Weeks 9–10	Speed: 27 questions in 36 minutes. Third mock.	14 h
Weeks 11–12	One more mock, then the week-6 taper.	10 h

Training the clock

$\frac{40 \times 60}{27} = 88.9$ seconds per question. The median candidate uses all 40 minutes, so your next mark is often a question you never reached.

- **Two passes.** Answer anything with a route inside a minute, flag the rest, then return.
- **Ten minutes of arithmetic a day.** Squares to 25, primes under 100, fractions, standard form, estimation.
- **Real setup.** Questions on screen, working on paper. Try the free timing gym.

Why the specimens feel easy

The specimens show you the format. A good run means you know the format, not that you are ready.

The live papers are harder. If you clear 80% with time to spare, move up to ENGAA Part B.

Free resources, in order

1. The [content specification](#), Appendix 1.
2. The five ESAT Guides from [UAT-UK](#), for your gaps.
3. The specimen and sample tests on [Pearson VUE](#), early.
4. The NSAA and ENGAA papers, 2016 to 2023: 20 questions in 30 minutes.

ESAT module	Old papers to use
Mathematics 1	NSAA Part A · ENGAA Part A maths questions
Mathematics 2	ENGAA Part B Advanced Mathematics
Physics	NSAA Part B · ENGAA Part A physics · ENGAA Part B Advanced Physics
Chemistry	NSAA Part C
Biology	NSAA Part D

Skip Section 2 of both. It has no ESAT equivalent.