

Exam day, decoded

The Pearson VUE screen, an A4 whiteboard system, the 1.5-minute strategy, the locker rules, and what to do when something goes wrong.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Bring the correct photo ID and your Pearson confirmation. Arrive 30 minutes early. Your modules run as separately timed parts on a computer, normally with no break between them. Your own paper, pen, calculator, watch, water and notes stay outside; the centre provides an erasable notebook and pen. Each 27-question module lasts 40 minutes, so your system also needs a rule for when to bank a question and move.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 The room you are actually preparing for

The ESAT is delivered at a Pearson VUE test centre. Your chosen subjects are combined into one test, typically three separately timed parts. Each ESAT module contains 27 multiple-choice questions and lasts 40 minutes. The official free practice tests use the Pearson system that candidates see on test day, so open them on a desktop and rehearse selecting, changing and reviewing answers before the live sitting.

The physical split matters: the question and options are on a monitor; your algebra is on an erasable notebook beside it. Practise looking between those two surfaces. A solution method that works only when you can annotate the printed stem is not yet exam-ready.

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.

2 The mini-whiteboard technique

UAT-UK currently promises an erasable notebook and pen, not a particular sheet size. Some candidates describe an A4-like note board. Train the layout on A4, but be ready to shrink or repeat it on whatever the centre supplies.

Divide the usable page into three zones:

1. **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.
2. **Main field:** one compact block per question. Start each block with its number and the requested unit or sign.
3. **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 through abandoned working with one line. Never erase mid-module unless space forces you to; erasing spends time and can remove the clue needed when you return. If you bank question 14 after narrowing it to B or C, leave “Q14: B/C · sign?” in the top strip. That return hook saves you from restarting the question. Raise your hand for fresh sheets when needed. Check the pen before testing starts, exactly as UAT-UK advises.

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.

3 The 1.5-minute rule is a stop-loss

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 13 / 26 / 38 checkpoint method, banking rules and timed drills live in [The 1.5-minute rule](#); rehearse that guide before your full exam-day simulation.

4 Bring this; lock up that

Current UAT-UK instructions say to arrive 30 minutes early. You may be refused entry if you arrive more than 15 minutes late.

Bring to check-in	Keep outside the room	The centre provides
One original, unexpired, government-issued photo ID that meets the policy and includes a signature	Phone, watch, wallet, bag, books, notes, your own paper or writing tools	PC, keyboard, mouse, erasable notebook and pen
Pearson appointment 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 assistance for procedural or technical problems

Your booking name must exactly match your ID. Accepted documents depend on where you test, so use the current Admission and Photo ID Policy rather than a screenshot from a forum. If an access arrangement, comfort aid or medical need matters, it must be approved in advance and should appear on the booking confirmation.

5 No scheduled breather between modules

UAT-UK says there are no breaks between modules or papers. If you leave for an unscheduled break, the clock does not pause unless a pause-the-clock arrangement has been approved. Treat the final 30 seconds of a module as a handover:

- 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 a pen fails, the screen freezes, noise becomes significant or illness affects you, raise your hand immediately. Make sure the incident is recorded and obtain a case number before leaving. UAT-UK says performance-affecting incidents should be reported at the centre or, at the latest, within 24 hours; a request for investigation then goes to Pearson within three days.

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.

6 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.

These are qualitative reports from some candidates, not official frequencies and not a forecast of the next form. Use them to rehearse behaviours, not to predict topics:

- expect the live paper to demand transfer, even when the topic name is familiar;
- practise the Pearson player, but do not treat a specimen score as a predicted scaled score;
- 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.

7 One rehearsal that earns its time

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 five things for each module: question reached at 38 minutes, blanks at 40 minutes, banks that were correct decisions, avoidable errors and longest attempt. Those diagnose exam-day behaviour. A homemade scaled score does not.

8 Sources

UAT-UK, Test Day

Arrival, ID, confirmation, prohibited items, the supplied erasable notebook, no breaks between modules, and incident reporting. [Read the current instructions.](#)

UAT-UK FAQs

No calculators, centre-supplied erasable sheets or whiteboard, no own materials, and water restrictions. [Read the FAQs.](#)

Pearson VUE for UAT-UK

Computer delivery, separately timed parts, and the official specimen and sample tests in the test player. [Open the Pearson page.](#)

October 2025 post-sitting synthesis

The candidate surprise themes from our October 2025 post-sitting research, used as qualitative experience evidence only. [Read the source used in the synthesis.](#)

Rules can change. Recheck UAT-UK’s Test Day page and the booking confirmation during test week. UniGenius is independent.