

Hello! I'm Lola Beal, a first-year English Language and Literature student. I took the ELAT exam in 2017 – and here are a few of my top tips to prepare.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE TEST

- Familiarise yourself with the format of the test – don't necessarily do them all, but look over all the past papers. Understand the sorts of questions you might be asked, and the average length of the passages you will be asked to analyse. You might want to start thinking about which texts you would choose and how you would approach them.
- Do 2 or 3 past papers, in timed conditions. Make sure you're able to write a good amount in the time. It's not all about length, you also need to ensure you're writing a cohesive and clear argument. Having said that, do try to cover the entirety of your chosen passages in the time, not just the first half.
- Use your teachers. They will be happy to mark anything you give them, and it's really useful to have that feedback and discussion so you can work on what they say and improve.
- For the papers you don't do, you might want to plan answers instead. This is a quicker way of revising, and is still very useful.
- Take a look at the University guidelines – there's a lot of info online about the ELAT and what is expected from you.

THE DAY BEFORE

- Take another look at the University guidelines, to refresh what you're expected to do in the test, and the various approaches you can take.
- Look over what you've already written and the feedback you received – it's not necessary at this point to write loads more answers. Don't wear yourself out! Trust yourself that you're passionate about your subject and you know what you're doing. All your English lessons in secondary school have been preparing you for this.
- Get a good night's sleep!

DAY OF THE TEST

- Eat a good, healthy breakfast to get your mind working and ready!
- Get to the exam location in plenty of time, to avoid unnecessary fluster. Also ensure you have everything you need, and that you are comfortable.
- Be versatile. Embrace the fact that you may not be at all familiar with what you are writing about. That is the exciting thing about this paper. Be creative.
- This may sound crazy – but do have fun with this test. There is so much creativity and individual thought allowed; it's not like A-Levels. Take a handle on the texts that intrigue you, and run with it.

AFTER THE TEST

- Don't talk about the test to anyone else – there is no point dissecting it with your friends. The very nature of this test dictates that everyone will write about very different things – it is not prescriptive but creative – so just be happy with what you did!
- Relax! You've done all you could do, and you should be very proud of yourself to have given it a go.