Synoptic Essay Questions

This forms the last question on Unit 5 (Control in Cells and in Organisms). You will have a total of 2hr 15mins to complete a 100 mark paper (worth 140UMS). Of these, 25 are available for the essay question, you only need to do **one** of the two titles. It follows that the essay should take you about 40mins. **Do not** spend too long on the essay at the expense of the other questions.

There are usually 3 or 4 additional sides of ‘blank’ page to write it in as a guide to length.

It **does not need a title** – think of it as a long question rather than a separate essay. However, you should indicate if you are attempting **part (a) or (b)**.

The mark allocation is heavily weighted in favour of **scientific conten**t of the **entire AS and A2 course**, which could include ‘How Science Works’. This is worth 14 marks, with an additional 2 raw marks for relevant material **not** covered in the specification e.g. from BSR, New Scientist, broadsheet newspapers etc. Only even number of marks can be awarded in this section i.e. 10 or 12 but not 11. There is a copy of the mark scheme attached for you to see how marks are allocated in each part. This mark scheme is generic for any essay – the specifics are left to the examiner each year.

You can then have a go at topics to include in the essay:

*The transfer of substances containing carbon between organisms and between organisms and the environment.*

Include any transfers you have covered *on the whole course (LVI and UVI).* Do not forget that the essay should not just cover animals and certainly not just humans. The examiners have told us that they are very keen that some material relevant to plants is included (in almost any essay) and that this often helps them to differentiate between good and 'medium' candidates. Variety is the key but with **detail** where relevant, if you stray too far from the title it will cost you marks for *Relevance*. A strategy that might be useful is to list the 7 vital processes (Movement, Nutrition etc), or ‘microbes, fungi, plants and animals’ and see if you can find one thing from each that you could use in the essay. Even if there are a few left out or a bit thin it is a useful exercise to increase the breadth section.

In the exam itself a bullet point list can serve as part of your plan. You should not cross this out as it helps the examiner give more marks if you cannot finish the essay in time. It is important that you do make a plan but not one that is too long. If you decide to write an introductory paragraph make sure it is relevant and informs the essay not just mindless preamble which costs you time and marks.