

SUCCESS IN EXAMS

By planning ahead from the beginning of the semester, you can maximise the effectiveness of your study and feel real satisfaction with what you are able to achieve.

There are two aspects to dealing with exams:

- what you do before the exam
- what you do during the exam

Planning and organising

Before the exam

From week one:

- revise for exams (from the very first class)
- make a realistic study plan for the semester (pick up a study planner from the Study and Learning Centre)
- set yourself specific and achievable study goals
- allocate how you use the time between your classes according to your needs
- make use of down time, such as gaps between classes, sitting on the tram, etc.
- use course guides and learning outcomes to identify what's important
- use active learning strategies.

As the final weeks approach:

- make a revision timetable
- familiarise yourself with the types of questions that are likely to be in the exam
- read old exam papers (check Library website)
- check that you know the time and place - visit the exam room if you haven't been there before
- check travel arrangements
- prepare your materials: collect pens, rubber, calculator, and ID card so it's all ready
- keep sensible hours for sleeping.

During

Reading time:

Read the entire paper thoroughly. Then:

- think about the amount of time you might spend on each section
- plan your timing according to the number of questions and marks for each - write it down
- read the instructions carefully and check the number of pages
- consider which of the questions you will answer if there are options
- re-read them and think about a strategy you might use
- identify how you are expected to answer - single word, short answer, complete a diagram
- consider options for multiple choice questions
- adjust your watch to match the clock in the room.

Exam strategy

Start planning the most difficult questions, but answer the easier questions first. This can boost your confidence and provide clues or prompts for answering questions on other less familiar topics.

Allocate time for questions based on the marks allocated.

Answering questions

Tips for short answer and essay questions

- Plan your approach: which questions first? It is often good to start with easier questions to build your confidence.
- Attempt all required questions.
- Read/analyse each question carefully. Identify **content** and **focus** words to determine which aspects of the topic are being examined and **instructional** words (outline, analyse, discuss) to determine how much detail is required.
- Answer the question – don't simply write everything you know.
- Use a step approach to both short answer and essay questions: read and analyse the question
 - recall what you know
 - select the relevant facts
 - jot down initial ideas
 - organise into logical order - follow basic essay procedure, i.e. introduction, main points, conclusion
 - begin writing.
- Write clearly.

Tips for multiple-choice questions

- Preview the questions - number and difficulty.
- Read carefully. Look for words such as always, never, rarely, sometimes, many, some or double negatives e.g. 'not lacking in' which can affect the answer.
- Do the questions you know first; then, do the others.
- Read all the options.
- Check your answers. Cover your answers - if the new answer is the same as the original, it's probably right. Do not change an answer unless you are very sure it is wrong.
- If you run out of time, guess the answers.

Tips for numerical problems

- Write down any required formulae as soon as you can.
- Write down something for every question. Marks are often given for completing particular steps in working out the solution.
- Use your estimation skills to check you're on track.
- Check your work for accuracy.

Final minutes

- Use all the available time; never leave the room early.
- Try to include time to revise your work so that you can:
 - check your answers
 - make sure your writing and figures are legible
 - check spelling and grammar.