

Doing well in exams



Five common pitfalls in examinations....	... and how to avoid them
1. Doing silly things	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well before the exam find out what is required• Make sure you arrive at the right time at the right place• Be sure to write your name and/or exam number on all the answer paper sheets/pages• Read the questions before starting• Check the back of the exam paper for important/ instructions• Answer the right number of questions• Allow time to do all of this
2. Mystifying the exam (The examiner will not pore over the script for hours – you have to deliver)	<p>Examiners have numerous exam scripts to mark and they wish to get through them as quickly as they can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They may check your introduction and conclusion for the gist of your argument• Skim the answer to evaluate your line of reasoning• Check you are using material from the course to support your answers• Evaluate roughly what grade the work is worth <p>A second marker is often used to ensure consistency and quality</p>
3. Using exam time poorly and answering too few questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give equal time to questions that carry equal marks and more time to any that carry extra marks• Give reasonable answers to the set number of questions, it is better to attempt all questions than spend all your time on one and then have to miss out on a number of questions• If you run out of allocated time for one answer, leave space to return; you may have time at the end to write more

<p>4. Writing everything you know about a topic</p>	<p>The examiner is not interested in how much you know, but in how you illustrate how much you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sense of the question • Relate it to course/programme issues • Develop a line of reasoning • Evaluate opposing viewpoints • Offer supporting evidence
<p>5. Abandoning structure and the usual essay writing techniques</p>	<p>Exam markers appreciate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers with clear, well-organised structures • Good introductions and conclusions • Correctly numbered questions • Clearly labelled scripts which are easy to read • You lose goodwill if your script is messy, illegible or confusing to read

Adapted from: Cottrell, Stella (2013). *The exam skills handbook: achieving peak performance*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.