

Exams: how to achieve success in examinations



- Well before, make sure that you clearly mark the date, time and venue of the exam in your diary or calendar.
- Make sure you know in plenty of time before the exam what is expected of you and prepare accordingly.
- Try and get a good night's sleep the night before the exam.
- On the day, make sure you arrive at the right place and in plenty of time.
- Be sure to write your name and/or exam number on all of your answer sheets.
- Check the back of the exam paper for important information or instructions.
- Think positively. This is an opportunity to demonstrate what you have been learning.
- Have a clear strategy for tackling the exam paper.
- Scan the paper for questions that you feel you can confidently answer and mark them.
- Read the questions all the way through before starting.
- Tackle your best question first as this will help you get started.
- Make a brief plan for any essay type question before you begin.
- Make a note of any new thoughts that occur whilst writing.
- Make sure you answer all the questions you need to.
- Allow yourself plenty of time to answer each question - try and stick to the times you have allocated to yourself to answer each question during the exam.



Demystifying the exam process

The examiner will not spend hours marking your exam. They will have a number of exam scripts to mark so they will want to get through them as quickly as possible. They may check your introduction and conclusion for the gist of your argument and then just skim the rest of your answer to evaluate your line of reasoning and to check that you are using material from your course that supports your answer. From this they will be able to give a rough evaluation of the grade you have achieved. A second marker is often used to ensure consistency and quality.

Common mistakes (and how to avoid them)

Managing your time poorly in an exam and answering too few questions

- Give equal time to questions that carry equal marks, and more time to any that carry extra marks.
- Try to give reasonable answers to the given number of questions. It is better to at least make an attempt at answering all the questions than spending all your time on one question and completely miss out on answering other questions.
- If you run out of time that you have allocated for one of your answers then leave a space so that you can return to it later on. You may gain some time so you are able to return to it.

Writing everything you know about a topic

Exams are not about remembering everything. The examiner is not interested in how much you know about a particular subject. Exams are about showing what you have understood. In the run up to exams it is better to consolidate what you have learned rather than worry about what you haven't.

Remember...

Examiners are interested in how you:

- Make sense of the question
- Relate it to the course
- Develop a line of reasoning
- Evaluate opposing viewpoints
- Offer evidence that supports your argument

