LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Multiple choice exams

Overview
- Purpose of multiple choice examinations
- Strategies for success in multiple choice examinations

What do multiple choice exams test?
- Recognition of information
- Application of knowledge to specific contexts
- Breadth of knowledge and understanding of the subject

How do multiple choice exams test this?
- Questions are quick to answer
- Many questions can be asked
- It will test your ability to identify correct answers under time pressure

Common misconceptions about multiple choice exams
- The correct answer is usually ‘c’
- You can alternate ‘true’ and ‘false’ to pass
- You can’t study for multiple choice exams

Reality
- It takes skill to perform well
- You need to study strategically
- You need to be very sure of what you know before you sit the exam
- Different types of questions can be used to elicit the correct answer

What question types are used?
- Odd one out
  You need to choose the only correct answer from a series of options
- Most accurate
  You need to choose the answer which most closely aligns to your understanding of the course content and theory.
- Cloze format
  A sentence is given with a missing word or words and you need to choose the most appropriate answer

Studying for the exam
- Must achieve maximum breadth, but not too much depth
- Read & summarise:
  - all lecture notes
  - relevant chapters from textbook and/or prescribed readings.
- Work through past papers if available
- Don’t do extra reading into one topic area that interests you

24 hours before exam
- Quick revision
  - Summary cards, diagrams, mnemonics
- Prepare exam pack
  - What will you need?
- Have some time out
- Eat and sleep well – the most important!
In the exam room

- During reading time:
  - Quickly skim through entire test
  - How much time can you spend answering each question?
    - E.g. 2 hour exam with 80 questions = about 1.5 minutes per question.
  - Check marks allotted against time available
  - Read instructions carefully
  - Fill in the bubbles correctly – if you make a mistake rub it out completely otherwise the computer could mark the answer wrong (or the entire exam might need to be hand-marked holding up your results)

Completing multiple choice exams

- First, cover options, think of answer
  - Select option that most closely matches your answer
- Underline key words and phrases
- Read stem with each option
  - Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the “most true”
- Read questions accurately:
  - E.g. “which of the following is **not** an example of…”
- Use hints from questions you know to answer questions you do not
- Only change first answers when sure, or other cues in the test cue you to change
- Watch for modifiers and qualifiers
  - *always, never, none, must, without exception* = no exception (*tend* to be incorrect more often)
  - Rarely, usually, seldom, some, sometimes, frequently, often = some exceptions

Strategic thinking in multiple choice exams

- Be quick: don’t over-think answers
- Eliminate obviously wrong answers
- More qualified answers are *more likely* to be correct than less detailed, absolute answers
- Don’t assume there are trick questions
- Do not assume a proposition is false just because it is unfamiliar (and vice versa)
- All questions should be related to your course
- Try to avoid ‘distracters’ (false answers)
- Don’t know the answers? Guess only if no penalty for wrong answers
  - Process of elimination
  - Grammatical inconsistencies (sentences make sense?)
  - Repeated words
    - The apparent *distance* hypothesis explains…
    - *B) The distance between the two parallel lines appears…*

Stressed?

- Know that you have prepared as well as you can
- Maintain healthy lifestyle
- Think positively
- Allow plenty of time to get there
- Sit quietly and breathe
- Don’t talk to friends about the exam before you go in

Good luck!