



Exam strategies

Doing better in exams

The lead-up to the exam

- Start your study routine early and build on it by doing a manageable amount of study each week.
- Find out from your lecturer what the exam will cover as soon as possible and make revision notes each week.
- Attend your lectures in the weeks before the exam. Your lecturer may cover exam content!
- Get to know the exam format. Will it be multiple choice, short answer, essay or a mix?
- Do a practice test! Past exams are available from short loans or on the library website.

Make up a revision timetable

- Plan what you will revise and when. Spend enough time to cover all relevant topics.
- The late preparation stage should be spent:
 - reviewing your notes
 - practising exam-style answers
 - extending some of the knowledge already gained through the course

Summarise

- Condense your notes into a master summary—what are the important points?
- Make mind-maps and diagrams
- Mnemonics can help with key ideas. Example: BECAUSE: Big elephants can always understand small elephants.
- Memorise key points but not entire chunks of texts

Before the exam

- The night before, pack your bag with what you need: pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, calculator, etc.
- Double check the date and time of the exam and the location. Visit the building in advance, if you are unsure where it is.
- The night before the exam, do some revision; do not stay up late trying to learn new material.
- Arrive early. Find a calm place and review your notes.

In the exam

- Focus on the exam rather than chatting to friends before going in.
- Carefully read the instructions and all the exam questions before writing anything.
- If the exam is more difficult than you anticipated, just do your best! You may surprise yourself.

- Calculate how much time you can spend on each section. The more marks for a section, the more effort and time needed.
- Check the clock regularly! Make sure you haven't spent too much time on one question.
- Positive self-talk will help! Tell yourself you got this and take slow deep breaths.
- Do not skip questions if you are running out of time. An unanswered question = zero marks. A part answer may get you some marks.

Question Types

Multiple choice questions

- Prepare broadly—these questions usually test whole course.
- Fast pace – usually one minute per question.
- Longer, more detailed, more qualified answers are more likely to be correct than shorter, less detailed, extreme or absolute answers.
- Make sure your answers go on the correct answer sheet!
- Don't get out of sequence.

Short answer questions

- Can be from one word to several paragraphs.
- Generally focus on understanding / recall / application of course content (“regurgitation”).
- Often one mark per key information point (even for several paragraph answers, focus on key points)

Problem type questions

- Focus on application of knowledge to specific cases.
- Practice will help you to recognise each kind of problem.

Essay

- Questions can be interpreted but “discuss” still requires your own argument.
- Usually you don't have to review the whole course.
- Don't lose marks by misreading or ignoring key parts of a question.
- Unlike an essay written at home, referencing can be minimal or non-existent.
- Introductions/conclusions should be briefer than home written essays.
- Gain marks for: a clear point of view, supporting evidence, ability to deal with conflicting evidence, clear paragraphs with focus.
- Lose marks for: waffle, repetition.
- Practise writing under pressure to get a feeling for how much you can write in a certain time (e.g. a page in six minutes).
- Don't try to “pick” the exam questions. Instead, see if your lecturer will guide you as to the general theme of the exam.