Examinations are an effective means of gauging your knowledge and proficiency in the unit. Here are tips on preparing for and successfully completing an examination.

**Planning your time**

Around exam time it is a good idea to keep other commitments to a minimum, although it is important to allow time for exercise and recreation. Keep a reasonable routine of study, relaxation, exercise, food and sleep.

- Draw up a study timetable well in advance and try to stick to it. Allocate your time so that all subjects are covered and you don’t neglect the hard or boring bits. Set specific tasks with deadlines.
- Study for short periods of time, 30 min - 1 hour, depending on what works best for you, and have regular study breaks to give your mind some other activity. It is much more efficient to work in short concentrated bursts on a regular basis with breaks in between - **quality study is much better than quantity**!
- Be flexible, adaptable and honest with yourself - you may need to revise your study timetable depending on your progress and what you find works best for you.
- Reward yourself by doing something that you enjoy after you have finished your set revision.

**Know what to expect from the exam**

- Format - Will the exam include multi-choice, short answers, problems or long answer/essay questions? What mixture of these?
- Length - How long will the exam be? What time should be allocated to the different sections?
- Value - What % is the exam for the whole year’s work? How well are you doing in the other components of the assessment for the unit? Set yourself a realistic target result based on all the information at hand.
- Equipment - What may you take into the examination with you? Is it open book, are programmable calculators allowed?
- Anticipate exam questions - Will all topics from lectures be included? Are some topics or main ideas particularly important?

**Sources of information to help you prepare**

Part of being a good student is to be resourceful and to question things, seek answers and to persist. Many sources of information are available to you including the following suggestions.

**Course materials**

- Unit outlines, course guides, learning objectives, printed notes, laboratory manuals, etc.

**Teaching Staff/Unit Controllers**

- Lecturers usually indicate the format of the exam, topics that deserve special attention and may even provide some guidance on preparing for the exam. Tutors and demonstrators may also be able to provide some helpful information.
- Make a list of the topics and important concepts that you have covered during the semester.
• If information is not readily available to you, or something is not clear, don't be afraid to ask.

Other sources
• Other students are valuable sources of information. This includes students who have completed the unit previously or student mentors.

Past exam papers
• Look at past exam papers.

Learning the content
• Begin by assembling all of the relevant information (lecture notes, assignments, laboratory reports, tutorial notes, reading summaries, handouts, etc.). Get the structure of the unit clear in your mind, with connections on how each lecture, laboratory or tutorial fits into the unit as a whole.
• Become familiar with the content. Be an active learner; underlining passages or reading notes is insufficient. Instead, reorganise, summarise, and condense your notes as you go.
• The key to remembering things is repetition. Devise your own method of recalling information e.g. reading aloud; chanting, devise your own mnemonics, abbreviations; posters in unavoidable places at home; cards with must-know things that you can read anywhere, anytime; diagrams and mental pictures to condense information.
• Make sure you understand what you study - try to grasp the fundamental principles and the how and why. Identify your problem areas and seek help from the lecturer, tutor or demonstrator early - not the night before the exam!

The night before the exam
• Get a decent night's sleep or at least some rest. A well-constructed study plan that leads up to the exams should allow for a light refresh the night before and you should not be forced to "cram".
• Gather your equipment together (and back-ups!) including pens, pencils, ruler, calculators (and a spare battery), permitted books or summary sheets or anything else required. Put them all in a folder or pencil case so that on the day of the exam you only have to pick up one thing.
• Be sure to have your student ID with you as it will be checked by the examination supervisor. If you do not have your student card with you, you will not be permitted entry to the examination venue.
• Confirm the time and place of the exam.

Dealing with anxiety
Some anxiety can be accepted as normal, a natural healthy response to a challenging situation such as an exam. However, when anxiety becomes overwhelming, there are techniques such as meditation or breathing exercises that can help overcome this. If you believe that being anxious gets in the way, or have any study skill problems you would like assistance with, arrange to see a campus counsellor.

If you experience a panic attack during exams, say to yourself very firmly, 'STOP'. Shut your eyes and then say to yourself 'R-E-L-A-X'. Concentrate on breathing deeply. Begin this process by slowly but forcefully blowing all of the air out of your lungs. This allows you to slowly and effortlessly 'refill' your lungs with fresh air. Try to imagine a peaceful, serene setting, for example lying on the sand at a beach. When you feel calmer and ready to proceed with the exam, go to a doable exam question and re-establish your confidence.
On the day of the exam

Before the exam, try to keep your stress levels to a minimum:

- Allow yourself plenty of time in the morning to get ready and have breakfast without having to rush. Aim to arrive a little early at the place of the exam, allowing for traffic and other possible delays.
- Try to avoid the cluster of people outside the exam room asking each other questions if you feel this will distress you. Participating in such group discussions before the exam can leave you feeling that everyone else knows a lot more than you do. Try to remain positive - think of the things you can do.

In the exam room

- Take a deep breath and compose yourself. Get organised before the exam time commences.
- Listen to the examination supervisor and follow their instructions closely.
- Make sure you can see the time.
- Do the administrative bits and pieces such as putting your student ID details, date and time of the exam, etc., on the various forms and exam booklets on your desk.

Read and follow instructions

On the front of the paper there will be some instructions. Read them carefully. They will advise you which questions are optional / compulsory and how many you need to answer in each section. Examiners cannot give you marks for something you missed out, or extra marks for answering more questions than required.

Using your time wisely in the exam

- Reading time should be used to overview the whole paper and to plan which questions and in what order you will answer the questions.
- Allocate time according to marks. If you run out of time and you still have not finished, write down key words, equations and diagrams to show the examiner that you know the essential information.
- Answer easy questions first. This will help boost your confidence when you come to answer the more difficult questions. Ensure each answer is clearly numbered.
- Do not allow yourself to get stuck on a stubborn problem - return to it later. A change of questions can often enable you to gain a fresh perspective on the previous question. Be astute, often there is information given in one question that may help you answer another!

Answering the questions in the exam

Multiple choice:

- Read all choices before selecting the most correct answer. If in doubt about an answer use a process of elimination. If you don't know the answer, guess, never miss a question unless there are penalties for guessing.
- On multi-choice questions a good rule of thumb is NOT to change an answer unless you are certain that your change is correct. Statistics indicate that the first hunch is usually better than the second guess!

Short answer:

- For mathematical/problem type questions show your working clearly and orderly. This will allow you to understand what you have done if you get stuck and have to go
back to it. Also, marks will be allocated for the working even if the final answer is incorrect.

**Long answer/essay questions:**

- Make sure you understand the question. Take careful note of keywords in questions including 'explain', 'discuss', 'compare', 'contrast', 'evaluate', 'deduce', 'prove that', 'show that', 'decide' and so on.
- Plan your answer, or at least part of your answer, before you proceed.
- Keep re-reading the question as you answer it. When you have finished writing, skim over your essay to make sure you have made your point and so that you can add any important ideas that come to mind.
- If you are running out of time, write down the main points you want to make as dot points.

**Writing style and presentation**

There are ways to make it a more positive experience for examiners to mark your exam:

- Try to keep your writing and drawings legible. Try to keep sentences short and simple. Set out your answers clearly, especially for problems.
- Make it easy to see where you have finished one question and started another and identify which questions you have answered. If you were asked to answer five questions, examiners would otherwise mark only the first five questions you answered- such regulations are designed to prevent students from 'hedging their bets'.

**Don’t leave early**

Read over what you have done. There are always careless errors that can be fixed up that can earn you a few more marks. If you walk out, the chances are that as soon as you leave the exam room, you will remember something important that you could have added to your answers.

**Dealing with things that can go wrong**

You may miss the examination due:

**An accident:** In this case you can be granted a deferred examination. All you need to do is fill in an "Application for Deferred Assessment" form attaching supporting evidence and then give it to your course controller (usually the person who enrolled you) or contact your unit coordinator for further advice.

**A personal emergency:** In this case go to [Counselling Services](#) and ask them to support a deferred assessment.

**You wrote down the wrong time:** In this case go to your course controller and tell them of the situation.

If you have any problem that will stop you from showing your best in the examination tell someone, e.g. if you have a condition that prevents you from sitting for long periods, or perhaps a neck problem, the University has provisions to help you. This may be in the form of providing you with the opportunity to get up and walk about, or arranging a sloping board rather than a desk on which to write your examination. All of these services are provided by [Counselling Services](#).