

# Taking exams

Exams are a fact of life. Some students feel intimidated by the whole exam process. This leaflet provides some advice on how to improve your exam technique so that exams become less stressful.

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## Why are exams necessary?

Exams give you a chance to make sense of your learning and to apply your knowledge under time-limited conditions. In a sense, this is the kind of skill you need in the workplace; rather like 'thinking on your feet'.

## Exam techniques

Many students lose marks through poor exam technique, rather than what they know.

- *Look at the list of exam techniques. Do you think any of these suggestions might improve your exam performance?*

Do I.....	✓ I need to do this
<b>remain calm and focussed?</b>	
➤ start off the exam by taking some time to settle down?	
➤ read, understand and follow all the exam instructions?	
➤ read the whole exam paper through from start to finish?	
➤ make sure I understand how many questions I need to answer?	
➤ make sure I answer questions from the correct sections?	
<b>use my time sensibly?</b>	
➤ plan time, so I can check my answers?	
➤ know exactly how long I have for each question?	
➤ check the distribution of marks?	
➤ divide time according to the marks available?	
➤ use all the available time?	
<b>understand the questions?</b>	
➤ decide which questions I am going to answer and in what order?	
➤ underline the key words in the question and ensure I am clear about what the question is asking?	
➤ take care to read questions right through before I choose which to answer?	
➤ ask myself what the examiner is looking for?	
<b>choose which order I answer the questions?</b>	
➤ start with the easiest question to help settle down?	

Do I.....	✓ I need to do this
➤ start with the question I feel most confident about or do I prefer to get the hardest question out of the way first?	
<b>plan my answers?</b>	
➤ brainstorm what I know and plan how I will answer the question?	
➤ write a brief plan for longer answers, so that I stay on track?	
➤ take care to sequence my ideas logically?	
<b>answer the question correctly?</b>	
➤ ensure I fully answer the question set?	
➤ avoid irrelevant detail and going off at a tangent?	
➤ keep strictly to answering the question set?	
➤ use appropriate examples?	
➤ get to the point quickly?	
➤ know which style is appropriate?	
➤ know the correct format and layout?	
➤ know what a 'good' answer looks like? <i>This might be from previous exam papers, feedback from Module Leaders or from understanding the assessment criteria.</i>	
<b>check my answers at the end of the exam?</b>	
➤ try to leave some time at the end of the exam so that I can check my answers?	
➤ check my answers for mistakes?	
➤ check my answers that they make sense?	

## Exam skills - after the exam

Avoid a prolonged review of your performance at the end of the exam. Instead take some time to be alone and think about how you prepared for the exam and what you might do differently for the next exam.

Ask yourself questions e.g.:

1. Did you revise the key topics in a structured way so that they were easy to recall?
2. Did you run out of time?
3. Did you fulfil all of the exam's requirements?

## Other study guides

Other study guides you might find useful can be downloaded from: <http://lib.bue.edu.eg/wiki>



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Adapted from Loughborough University and Edinburgh University.