

Preparing for Exams

Anna Jones

Teaching and Learning Unit

Faculty of Economics and Commerce

What exams measure

- What you know
- How well you have studied throughout the semester
- How well you have revised
- How carefully you have read the question
- How well you have managed your time in the exam
- How calm you were during the exam

Long term preparation

- The best exam preparation begins at the start of the semester
- keep an organised and complete set of lecture notes
- keep up to date with readings and tutorial problems
- find a study partner or group and meet once a week to discuss the work

Short term preparation

- Revise actively:
 - make notes
 - draw diagrams
 - organise ideas into tables
 - use concept maps
 - go back over tutorial problems

Short term preparation continued

- Use the SQ3R approach
 - Survey
 - Question
 - Read
 - Recall
 - Review

Short term preparation continued

- Study with others
 - find a study partner or join a study group
 - go through tutorial questions together
 - quizz each other
 - make up exam questions for the others to do
 - talk through problems and misunderstandings together

Planning your time

- Make a revision timetable
- Plan for leisure and sleep
- do some revision every day
- study in concentrated bursts
- Study for different subjects in turn
- Mix studying alone with studying with others

Planning your time continued

- Study consistently rather than leaving it to the last minute
- Allow yourself enough time to work out what you don't understand and discuss it with friends/pitstop tutor etc

Different Types of Exam Questions

- Multiple choice Questions
- Short Answer Questions
- Essay Questions

For all exam questions, read the question very carefully. Be sure you know what it is asking you before you begin answering.

Multiple Choice Questions

- Look carefully at the options -don't be tricked by the one which initially seems correct
- Make sure you know whether you are being asked for the 'best option' or the 'odd one out'
- Think about your reasoning, your ability to solve problems

Short Answer Questions

- Read the question carefully and be sure you know what it is asking you
- Only include material in your answer that is immediately relevant to the question
- check how much each question is worth and keep to time

Essay Questions

- Read the question
- Underline the key words
- Make your self a plan in 2-3 minutes (don't skip this stage)
- Make sure your ideas are clearly expressed
- Save enough time to read through what you have written.
- Check that you have answered the question

Before the Exam

- Get enough sleep
- Check the details of where and when the exam is to be held
- Plan to arrive in plenty of time
- Get everything you will need for the exam together the day before
- Have something to eat

Before the exam continued

- Don't cram immediately before - you will just make yourself nervous. If you don't know it now, it is too late.
- Do something just before the exam that will make you feel calm and relaxed - sit quietly by yourself, have a cup of tea, a long shower, read the paper etc

During the exam

- In reading time take a minute or so to calm yourself
- Make sure you have the correct paper
- Read the instructions carefully
- Check how many marks each section is worth
- Plan your time - spend longer on questions that are worth more marks

During the exam continued

- Allow 10 minutes at the end to read through the answers
- Read the questions very carefully
- Focus on the key words

Answering the Questions

- Underline key words
- What is the question asking you to do
- If you get stuck on a question, leave it and come back to it later
- Keep to your time plan
- Answer question methodically
- Jot down formulae, equations, relationships

Answering Question continued

- Show all your workings
- Use diagrams where appropriate. Make them large and clear and accurately labelled.
- Make sure you are answering the question
- Don't waste too much time on questions that are not worth much

Answering Questions continued

- Keep your work clear and readable
- Don't waste time with white-out
- Try not to panic. If your mind goes blank, go on to another question

Some common problems

- Running out of time
 - practice doing past papers under exam conditions before the exam

In the exam

- note down your main ideas in point form

Common problems continued

- Feeling that you can't answer anything
 - try not to panic
 - write something rather than nothing
 - as you write you will find your memory is prompted
 - go on to the next question