

### Organise your time

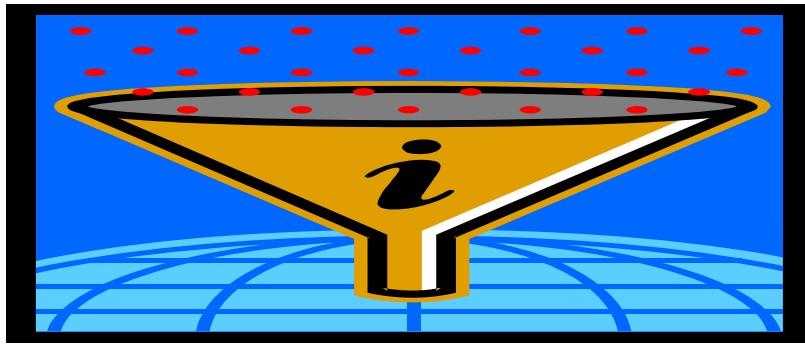
This is crucial: you cannot leave your revision to the day before the exam. This is for two reasons: firstly, at university there is just too much material to cover; and secondly, it is not just memorization that is required but understanding of complex subjects. It is important in exams that you show your understanding of the subject material: don't just regurgitate information.

In addition, good preparation can help to reduce stress.

- Make a study schedule so that you have enough time to revise each subject.
- Make sure your schedule covers all topics and, if possible, allows extra time for difficult subjects.
- Be as detailed as possible: write down the course section or topic, e.g. *Foreign Exchange Markets* rather than, for example, the whole subject, *Global Business Environment*.
- Set yourself a target topic for each revision session.
- Keep a revision checklist so that you're clear about what you've done, and what you still must do.

### Organise your materials

- Collect all the material you need to review: texts, lecture notes, reading notes, handouts, and all the completed assessment tasks.
- Identify key topics and ideas from course outlines; lecture, tutorial and assignment topics; tutorial readings and questions; practical exercises; and textbooks. Which topics have been emphasized and repeated? These ones are more likely to be examined.
- Before you begin your revision for exams draw a concept map showing the key ideas of topics and the relationships between them.



## Find out about the exam

Find out about the exam by checking your course outline. Listen for hints from your lecturer, and look at past exam papers (check that the format will be similar). Consider:

- What type of exam is it? Closed-book, open-book, take-home?
- What are the topics to be examined?
- How many questions are there?
- What is the allocation of marks?
- What types of questions are used: multiple choice, essay, short answer?
- How much choice is there in terms of the questions to be answered?
- What materials (e.g. dictionaries, calculators) are allowable and what special considerations apply?
- What are the most commonly used instruction words in essay questions?

## Revise the subject material

Revision should be an **active** and **varied** process, and include time to recall what you are working on. Be clear about what you are planning to achieve in each session.

Try some of the following ways to revise:

- Review lecture notes: if you have been in the habit of rewriting them immediately or soon after lectures you'll have them in an accessible form.
- Read actively and critically, and take notes.
- Summarise readings: condense notes into summaries. For example, reduce 40 pages to eight pages, then to one page. Choose one or two points and recall as much as you can about them.
- Making revision notes: organize the material into manageable portions. Relate it to key concepts in the course by drawing concept maps to show the relationship.
- **Studying past exam papers and practice doing them, under exam conditions.**
- Time yourself.

- Solving problems: practice as many variations of the basic problems as possible.
- Recalling: practice recall by setting yourself problems to solve or questions to answer.
- Write plans for possible essay questions.
  
- Setting up a study group with other students to share ideas, discuss problems etc.
- Explaining a particular topic to someone.
- Devising aids to help you remember such as mnemonics, and visual aids such as flow charts, diagrams, and graphs.
- Recording important facts key terms, formulae etc. on index cards.

**Note:** With changing technology most students use computers for their work; however, in exams you have to write manually for 3 hours. So, it may be a good idea to practise actually **handwriting** answers to possible questions for three hours, or whatever the length of the exam.

## Strategies during the exam

### Read the questions carefully

- Underline significant key words, which suggest how the question should be answered.
- Note the number of questions you must answer and any compulsory questions. If you only have to answer a set number of questions, then select those questions you feel most comfortable with.
- Note the marks allocated to each question
- Note the types of answers required

### Plan your time

- Work out the approximate time you need for each question.
- Allocate time differently for different sections: for example, multiple-choice questions require less time than short answer ones.
- If you haven't finished an answer when the time expires, move on.
- Place watch or clock in view
- Use the reading time productively – analyse question, jot down ideas, brainstorm, plan answers

### Organize your answers

- Organize the material you will put into your answer before you begin and be systematic

- Make sure that you answer the questions asked. Don't write down all that you know about a particular topic, regardless of relevance to the question. Your answers should be focused and well structured.
- Leave space in between your answers so that you can go back and add any information.
- Attempt all questions. If you are desperate, make an informed guess. If you don't have enough time write in note form.
- Leave some time to check your answers, if possible.

## Different types of exams

Closed book exams are the most common. These can include short answer questions, essay topics, multiple-choice questions, and problem solving. Occasionally exams are open-book ones. The major trap here is to assume that it is not necessary to study beforehand. However, open-book exams require just as much preparation as other exams. There is time to use the texts for specific referencing and formulae only. The same preparation applies to take-home exams.

## Different types of questions

### Essays

- Make sure that you write the number of the essay question beside your answer.
- Make sure that you understand the instruction words and exactly what you are asked to do.
- Before you start writing, note down your ideas and organize them into an outline.
- Essay questions: **structure your essay with an**
  - **Introduction.** This can be shorter and more explicit than in an assignment essay. You should state directly your answer to the question, and outline your answer in a few sentences.
  - **Body:** as in an assignment essay you should include evidence and arguments to support your answer. Use transitional signals to emphasize key points: e.g. *The most significant factor...*
  - **Conclusion:** sum up the main points of your answer and relate them back to the question, showing clearly how you have answered it.
- Write as legibly as possible. If your handwriting is hard to read, write on every second line or print.
- If you have time at the end, proofread your essay for grammatical errors, and spelling mistakes.

### Short answer questions

Short answer questions still require a plan but you need to get directly to the point.

- Analyse the question and particularly pay attention to what you are being asked to do. E.g. Compare and contrast... Explain the difference between... What are the main functions of...?
- Set your answer out clearly
  - Use paragraphs and complete sentences
  - Use topic sentences to introduce the main points of your answer
  - If you use bullet points, write complete sentences or meaningful information, do not simply list words
- Provide clear definitions of important concepts or terms
- Give examples to illustrate concepts and ideas
- If relevant, use diagrams to explain
- Use any technical language correctly
- Practice by answering review questions often provided in textbooks

### Multiple choice questions.

1. Read the questions carefully and form an answer before you look at the options; then try to match your answer with the choices given.
2. Read all the options. They're often fairly similar, and a good answer may not be the best.
3. Note key words such as *same, many, always, sometimes, never, more, less, least, best, to some extent*
4. Be careful of answers which include absolutes such as *always, never*
5. Note modal verbs such as *may, might, could, should*
6. Note negatives and double negatives such as *do not include, not unlikely*.
7. Watch out for any grammatical inconsistencies between a possible answer and the question. If, when combined, they read as a grammatically incorrect sentence, the answer is very likely to be wrong.
8. If you find a particular question difficult, mark it and leave it. Return to it at the end.
9. If you don't know the answer, eliminate the ones you know are wrong and make an educated guess. Check to see if marks are deducted for incorrect answers.
10. Note the layout of the answer sheet so that you don't put an answer in the wrong place, and thus get all the subsequent ones wrong. Check frequently.
11. Think again before you change any answers. In most cases your original answer is correct.

### Further references

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