It is normal to feel some anxiety about tests and exams. Accept a higher level of anxiety at exam time, but if you are not coping, contact the Health and Counselling Service; a counsellor can help you to devise strategies to combat stress.

**WHY HAVE EXAMS?**

Exams test your knowledge, your ability to apply that knowledge, and your ability to explain and justify your opinion on a specific topic.

**EXAM TECHNIQUE**

Some students enjoy exams and thrive on the challenge. Others find exams highly stressful. A good exam technique can be the key to how well you perform under exam conditions. Yes, there are strategies that you can use to help you to prepare for exams! Many students have found the following guidelines helpful.

**PREPARATION: REVISE DURING THE SEMESTER**

Unfortunately, cramming during Study Without Teaching Vacation (SWOT Vac) is not considered adequate exam preparation. Exam preparation starts early in the semester, and should be an element of your weekly schedule. This is called revision. Allocate one hour per topic per week to look over your lecture notes and textbooks.

- Revise with a purpose: look for the main concepts, principles, theories, facts or processes to do with the topic. You may have to memorise (e.g., formulas, definitions) or identify major points.
- Build a set of study notes. Try summarising the key points, or make a set of flash cards with a question on one side and the answer on the other.

**THE SQ5R METHOD**

- **Survey** the whole topic and look for summaries.
- **Question**: ask yourself questions based on headings in the book or lecture notes (e.g., for Biology, ‘Involuntary muscles’, ask: what are the involuntary muscles of the body? What is meant by involuntary?)
- **Read** actively with definite questions in mind. Read only to the end of each section.
- **Record** in note form up to 5 main points under each heading. Make key points stand out by drawing lines in the margin next to the idea, underlining or highlighting in colour (on your OWN books, of course).
- **Recite** from memory the answers to specific questions. If you can't answer the questions without looking at the material, go back to reading and recording and try again.
- **Review** each section as you complete it. Test yourself by writing and reciting.
- **Reflect** on the meaning of the reading. Ask: how can I apply this? Try to make a picture in your mind or tell yourself a story to consolidate the material.

**CHARTS AND GRAPHS**

The SQ5R method works for charts, graphs and diagrams, too.

- **Charts and graphs** are important summaries of material. Turn their headings into questions and use the SQ5R method.
- **Diagrams** are usually labelled. Ask yourself questions about the labels and the relationship between the parts and try to answer them.

**BEFORE THE EXAM: SWOT Vac.**

- Keep a positive attitude
- Remind yourself of past successes
- Keep fit and healthy
- For peak performance, keep regular and proper eating, sleeping and exercise patterns
- Take regular recreation breaks
DRAW UP A REVISION TIMETABLE

- Allocate your time so that you can cover all your topics in short sessions.
- Schedule relaxation and recreation breaks.
- Take time off work and other activities if necessary.
- Work to a varied and flexible plan: this will keep you motivated.
- Plan study time in proportion to how much the exam counts towards the final grade.

KNOW WHAT THE EXAM REQUIRES

- Find out what will be covered and what will be omitted. Refer to course outline.
- Know what types of questions to expect: multiple choice, essay, or short answer.
- Find out the number of questions, the total time allowed and the distribution of marks.
- Check the equipment you will need: special pencils, calculator, dictionary, or texts for open book exams.
- Get copies of previous exams if possible.
- Form a study group and fire questions at one another.

IN THE EXAM ROOM

- Check that you have all the pages, questions, answer sheets, scrap paper that you need.
- **Schedule your time.** Determine how many questions there are. Work out the weighting of marks per question.
  Estimate how long each part will take to finish.
- Give yourself time for selecting a question, planning, and writing.
- Check the time after completing each section.
- Allow time for proofreading and checking.

WRITING AND PLANNING

- Begin with the easiest question.
- If you get stuck, move on to the next question.
- Write legibly! Use diagrams where appropriate.

ESSAYS

- Use 10% of the allotted time to draw up a plan of your essay. This prevents you running out of time because you got off track.
- A clear structure will enable examiners to follow your argument.
- If you are short of time, write an introduction in full, outline the argument in note form, and then write your conclusion.

MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS

- If there is a penalty for guessing, leave a blank space.
- Do not choose too soon. Read all the options and pick the best and most completely correct, especially if there is more than one correct alternative.

KEEP CALM

- Take a slow, deep breath; look at your plan; leave a question; move to the next question.

REFERENCES