

The Academic Skills Centre's top tips for surviving exams

The exam period always comes around quickly, so it is a good idea to integrate some revision into your weekly routine earlier rather than later. This way, it will become a habit and you will not have to squeeze it into an already packed timetable later on.

There are a few things to remember when getting into the revision mentality needed to be successful in exams:

- Remember that exams DO count towards your final grades – sometimes it is easy to disassociate them from your everyday course participation, but it is really in your best interests to embrace the fact that they are coming. Do not ignore them, they will not go away!
- Each exam you will take has a particular set-up and format. If they are available, via the my.bham portal, look at past incarnations of the papers you will be sitting. What do they have in common in terms of content, question type and style of answer expected? Learn to tackle these and you will be better prepared on the day.
- Active revision is always more effective to passively leafing through notes or journals. Set yourself tasks to accomplish, summarise reading in your own words, devise and answer exam-style questions based on past papers, plan model answers and time the whole process – in short, model your revision as closely on the exam as possible.
- Try to collaborate with others on your course. Your student colleagues are a valuable resource, and getting together to discuss topics allied to the exams can really sharpen your skills. Activities like setting exam-style questions for each other, and meeting to discuss and debate proposed answers are a wonderful way of thrashing out and clarifying your ideas. If you agree to be critical with each other, this has the added bonus of forcing you to defend and revise your position in a much more agile manner than you would when working alone.

It is inevitable that exams will bring up some feelings of stress and anxiety but, if you have prepared well, these can be mitigated into non-existence. As well as the tips outlined above, there are several lifestyle hacks you can incorporate to stave-off the jitters and increase your confidence:

- Think positively - your exams are not designed to trip you up or to catch you out – they are there to provide you with an opportunity to show what you can do. Plan to wow the examiners with your answers!
- In the days and weeks leading up to the exam period, consider smoothing out your sleep pattern and getting as close to the ideal eight hour night as possible. The less

fatigued you are, the better you will feel. The better you feel, the better you will perform on the day.

- Get into the routine of eating regular, balanced meals. Incorporating these into your revision plan will ensure that you are getting all the nutrition you need to keep your brain ticking over. Do not be tempted to blow out on high fat, sugary treats – imagine you are an athlete in training for a sports event, getting into prime condition for the big day.
- Do not get wrong-footed by the seemingly minor details on the day of your exam. It does not matter how confident and prepared you feel, if you turn up at the wrong venue you could blow it. There is no guarantee that you will even be in your usual building, so make sure you know where and when your exam takes place. If you are relying on public transport to get you there, check the details in advance – are there adverse weather conditions, industrial strikes or roadworks to contend with? Check for the unexpected.

The Academic Skills Centre runs workshops in revision and exam technique at various times of the year, open to all students. You can check availability and book your place by visiting our [intranet site](#). Undergraduate students can also book up to four 1-1 meetings with Academic Skills Advisors per year, in which they can discuss any study-related issues, including exams and revision.