

# Preparing for exams

## When to start

You should start preparing for your exam from **Day 1** of the semester. Effective and efficient exam preparation should involve gradual work over time **reading, notetaking and revision**. This improves knowledge retention and makes preparation manageable. You should be planning across your semester to ensure you have adequate regular time for **study, review and revision** of content.

## What you need to know

Here are some steps to follow to identify key exam details:

1. **Identify** what your exam will **assess** you on.
  - Check you course objectives outlined in the course specification document.
  - Refer to introductory study materials and any instructions provided by you lecturer.
2. **Identify** what **format** your exam will be in.
  - Check you course assessment materials and StudyDesk site.
  - Refer to practice or past exam papers and lecturer instructions.
3. **Find out** what you can **take into** the exam.
  - Is you exam open, closed or restricted – this will determine if you can study materials?
  - Check course materials to find out these details.
4. Determine **where** and **when** your exam will be held.
  - Check you exam timetable on **UConnect** when it has been released

## A revision guide

**Three weeks** prior to the exam we recommend that you:

### Develop an exam revision timetable

- Plan to revise the topics you will be assessed on two to three times before the exam.
- Work out when you will study modules or topics and plan out time for this.
- Allow sufficient time to revise difficult modules or topics.
- Work in manageable blocks of time 30, 45 or 60 minutes and take regular breaks short breaks.
- After larger blocks of study time take a longer break to recharge.

### Develop useful study techniques

- Study actively, take notes, make summaries, do activities or redefine concepts in your own words.
- Consider working in a **study group**. This can help you understand material and provide motivation.
- Prepare well-structured and detailed summary notes from course materials to aid quick revision or provide materials for open book or restricted exams.

### Plan for the exam

- Ask yourself, 'how long is the exam?', 'what is each question worth?' - have a way to work out how much time to spend on each question during the exam.
- Complete past or practice exams or questions from course materials to practice answering exam-like question.
- If you get very anxious, talk with a Student Success and Wellbeing counsellor  
<https://www.usq.edu.au/current-students/support>
- Check what type of exam it is (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, essay style, etc.).

The **day before** the exam we recommend that you:

- Review your summary materials for a quick final refresh.
- Gather any materials needed for the exam - ID card, pens, ruler, calculator etc.
- Check transport arrangements and parking, and check (twice!) where and when the exam is.
- Use relaxation techniques and try to have adequate sleep.

The **day of** the exam we recommend that you:

- Eat a good breakfast.
- Arrive 20-30 minutes early.
- Glance through summaries.
- Think positively, and try to relax.

## During the exam

There are several things to be mindful of **during your exam**. Please consider the following:

During your **perusal time**:

- Read instructions carefully, use the time to decide what is compulsory and where you can make choices.
- Calculate the time available for each question.
- Plan the order in which you will complete questions. Put questions you know vaguely at the bottom of the list and ones you know well at the start.
- Begin to analyse the questions – identify key words, tasks and note down ideas if permitted.

During your **working time**:

- Work through the easiest questions first as this can build your confidence.
- Keep an eye on the time and stick to the time for each question planned during perusal.
- If you find that one question is taking longer than planned then move to the next question.
- Label questions clearly and make sure answers are spaced out appropriately.
- Plan short written answers and essays in your exam book.
- What if you get a mental block? – Use the relaxation techniques prepared earlier - relax, breathe deeply, talk positively to yourself. If necessary leave that question and plan to return to it later.
- Stop after each question/set of questions and take a short break.
- Check your answers if you have time. Don't leave early, you can't come back!
- Out of time? Quickly write notes to finish the question.

## After the exam?

Take some time to relax, especially if you have another exam the next day.

## Need more help?

Study Support, USQ Library can help you to develop your academic learning language and maths skills for success at university. Consultations are available face-to-face, via video chat, by phone or email.

Web: [www.usq.edu.au/library/study-support](http://www.usq.edu.au/library/study-support)

Email: [library@usq.edu.au](mailto:library@usq.edu.au)

**THINK POSITIVELY – “IF I PUT IN THE WORK, I CAN SUCCEED!”**

