



Exam Preparation

Session Aims

Exams are a necessary evil of higher education study so being prepared is the key to success. You can help your mentees by making them familiar with the assessment style in your department and by encouraging them to find strategies to prepare.

This session aims to help mentees:

- Become familiar with the assessment style & structure
- Analyse exam questions

You will need:



To bring copies of past exam papers to distribute to the group

Activity

- Briefly describe the structure of assessment on your programme (if your mentees are not already familiar with this). *(5 minutes)*
- Divide the group into pairs/threes and give each an exam paper. Ask them to discuss in their groups what they think the question requires and does not require. *(20 minutes)*

In particular they could focus on:

- What format/structure should the answer have?
- Key points that need to be made in the answer
- The instruction terms – the keywords that guide how to answer the question (i.e. discuss, explain, analyse, measure, contrast, evaluate – see Key Skills Moodle site for examples of these and their definitions)
- Ask each pair to write their example question on the board/flip chart and feedback to the group the main points of their discussion *(20-25 minutes)*



Session:
40-50 mins
(Timings are approximate)

Useful Resources

Key Skills Moodle course
See reverse for Exam Preparation Tips to share with your mentees

Exam Preparation Tips



Practise Exam Techniques

This will make you familiar with the format of the assessment such as the way questions are phrased, how many questions you need to answer and what topics often come up. Do check with a tutor that the assessment format has not changed from previous years.

Use past papers to:

- Brainstorm and plan an answer to each question and then compare these to your notes. Have you covered all the key and relevant points?
- Do a mock exam in timed conditions to get a feel for writing answers in the designated time.
- Think up your own exam questions and how you would tackle them.

See also Revision Tips sheet

Before the exam

Get a good night's rest. Before going to sleep, relax and visualise yourself remaining calm in the test situation, and performing well in the exam.

Be organized. Take all the necessary materials to the exam. Pens, pencils, ruler, eraser, calculator (and batteries).

Be on time. If you are commuting, leave early enough to deal with potential delays.

Sit in a quiet spot. Talking a great deal with other students right before the exam about the material on which you will be tested can interfere with your prior learning and can also make you feel anxious. You may want to glance over key terms or mnemonic devices one last time, but do not try to learn any new information at this time.

In the exam

Get comfortable, take a few deep breaths and try to remain positive and calm.

When the exam is handed out, pay particular attention to any last-minute verbal instructions or instructions written on the board.

Skim over the test, making sure that you **understand all directions**. Check to see if different amounts of credit are given for different questions. Jot down any key terms or mnemonics which go with particular questions right away. Then you can come back later and complete those questions.

Make sure you know whether you have to answer all questions or only a certain number. Also, determine if you get credit for all correct answers (thus making it worth your while to guess if you are unsure of an answer) or if a certain percentage will be counted against you for incorrect answers.

Pay particular attention to **how the question is phrased** – is it asking you to compare, contrast, discuss, criticize, evaluate?

Budget your time – decide how much time you should spend on each question and make a note. Be strict with yourself; make sure you allow enough time to complete all the questions.

Plan your answers. Jot down a brief plan before you begin. This will help focus and relax you and allow you to plan how you will structure your response.