Exams Skills

VALUE MaP
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Agenda

1. Preparations for the Exam

2. In the Exam Room
Long-term Preparation

• [Revision]
• Practice questions and answers
• Familiarity with past papers
• Familiarity with UoK rules and regulations
  • http://www.kent.ac.uk/student-records/exams/students/?tab=regulations
• Knowledge of exam time-table
• (Re)check location
Preparation for Exam Day

• Night before - RELAX & SLEEP
• Breakfast - BRAIN FOOD
• Exam requirements - student card
  - writing materials
  - calculator (if required)
  - ‘mascot’
• Clothes – be COMFORTABLE
• Try several layers of clothing [Sports Hall]
• Travel - enough time to arrive without rushing
Arriving at the Exam Hall

- Don’t mix with people who make you nervous
- No last minute cramming
- Use the loos & have a snack
- Wish others good luck
- Walk assertively, smile
- Get there (reasonably) early
- Leave time for relaxation exercises
Inside the Exam Hall

• Find your place
• Check table and chair for wobbles
• Check exam paper is the right one
• Settle in and organise your workspace
• Make yourself comfortable
• Breathe deeply
• Listen to the invigilator’s instructions
Reading the Paper

- Check the instructions…!
- Choose your questions
- Sketch out a time plan
Essay Questions

If you have a choice of questions....
- First selection of questions
- Read questions again, carefully
- Final selection of questions
- Sketch out time plan

If all the questions are compulsory....
- Read all the questions
- Check again: read questions rapidly but carefully
- Calculate your time plan
- Go for the easy and highest scoring ones first
What are Examiners Looking For?

- An answer to the question!
- A thoughtful, reasoned response
- A response that demonstrates your learning
  - concepts, ideas, theories, link, key date or dates, connections, positions, arguments
  - application of theories (see LOs)
- As clear handwriting as possible & clear presentation
- Concise, fluent argument and logical answer
What are Examiners Looking For?

Exams are intended to be *fair*

Examiners want to award marks, not take them away

Tutors want students to pass, not fail

BUT: Examiners can only mark what is on the paper
Tackling the Question

- Check you understand the question
- Make immediate notes of
e.g. ideas/key points/ data/authors/case-studies
- Look for key instructions, e.g. compare
- Underline key words/phrases
- Note down main ideas
- Make links to module
- Draw up essay/answer plan

Check essay plan against question title......
.....does it answer the whole question?
You Need TEACUPS…

• Theories
• Evidence/ examples
• Authorities/ representatives
• Connections
• Understanding
• Position/ argument
• Sign posting/ structure
Writing the Exam Essay

• Plan time for each answer (depending on weighting)
  e.g. 1 hour essay
    10 minutes for planning
    45 minutes for writing
    5 minutes for proof reading & editing

• Check the time: try and stay on target!
• Keep the title in front of you
• Write according to plan
Structure of Exam Essay

• Introduction
  – Link to module
  – Set the scene,
  – Interpret the question, ‘delimit terrain’

• Body
  – Present evidence, theories, argument
  – Analyse and interrogate evidence
  – Logical build up
  – 4-5 paragraphs

• Conclusion
  – Summary: tie together strand of argument
  – Generalisation/ evaluation/ judgement …
Structure of Exam Essay

• Structure paragraphs on the five-point principle
  – Topic sentence
  – Supporting sentences
  – Evidence
  – Evaluation of evidence
  – Links/signpost statements
Multiple Choice

• Make a time plan
  – write ‘finish time’ on bottom of each page
  – leave 10 minutes to go over answers

• Not sure of the answer?
  – ‘Gut answer’, mark it for editing [small star in margin?], move on, come back later

• Never leave questions unanswered
Multiple Choice

• More than one answer appears correct?
  - Does each answer address question completely?
  - Is one answer only partly true?
  - Check: does question assume certain conditions?

• Trick question?
  – Turn it around without changing the meaning
    ( Few people find it impossible to love babies.
    = Most people find it possible to love babies.)
Short answers

• Look at the weighting
• Little point in spending too much time on a question that gains 5 marks!
• Divide time/energies appropriately
• Jot down any key points/data etc. as you think about them and read through the paper
Short answers

• Practice minimalist planning for each short answer
  – THINK before you write
  – What is the sequence of information/order of points?
  – Point/evidence/data etc. in the margin
  – STEM papers: jot down key formula/methods/data/equations etc at the start
  – Cross out rough work after!
Tips and Tricks

• Always start **all** the questions you need to answer
• Think positively; act positively
• Look at weighting
• ‘Strong’ questions first
• Or get the ‘weak’ ones out of the way?
• Follow all instructions
• Number/label answers clearly
• Try and leave time for checking/editing
Tips and Tricks

• Write on every other line
• Leave page empty between answers
• Try not to waffle
  – e.g. “What I mean to say is …”
• Try to write legibly
• Number Answer Books (e.g. 1 of 3)
• **Delete rough work clearly**
If You Get Stuck…

• Check your plan
• Re-read title and your answer so far
• Look up
• Relaxation exercise
• If you really can’t get going again, move on…
• Come back to the question later
If You Get Stuck…

• [Only as an emergency fix! Don’t write ‘bits’ of answers all the time!]
• Don’t leave the Exam Hall early
• IF you run out of time, put down some notes – don’t try and write more quickly!
• Keep writing calmly to the last second …
The Last Few Minutes…

• Re-read everything, make corrections and additions
• Tidy up your script
• Cross out rough work
• Number/sort answer booklets
• Make sure all answers are correctly identified – no ambiguity as to which question you are answering!
Afterwards...

• Avoid post-mortems!
• Take a clear break
• Move on to the next period of revision/exam and maintain sleep routine
• Do you feel it’s gone badly?
  – You may be surprisingly wrong!
  – Start thinking about the next exam..or
  – Take a break before results…
  – Too much introspection damages motivation!
Good luck....

• For all your studies, and for the 2016 Examinations!
• Any questions: Shaun Theobald
  – srt@kent.ac.uk
• Further support:
  – www.kent.ac.uk/ualt/learning