

TACKLING EXAMS

Many of the units at CQUniversity require you sit for an exam. Exam preparation helps you to revise and consolidate what you have learnt over the term or, in some cases, over the year. While exams can be stressful, thorough preparation will help you to stay calm and perform to the best of your ability and knowledge.

A good set of notes is important for exam revision. If they have been compiled properly they should be a comprehensive summary of what will be in the exam. Preparation should, to a large extent, involve revising and extending your notes.

Further info on exams is available at: <https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/exams-and-timetables>

Contact Student Support Services if you require any special consideration during exams: <https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/student-support/>

CQUniversity's exam procedures are outlined in the University's Assessment of Coursework Policy (see under A) at: <http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>

DEVISE A REVISION STRATEGY

A good way to begin your exam preparation is to clear your work space. This is a new phase of the term. New learning has finished and it is now time for consolidation, revision and application. Prepare a revision plan, taking into account all the exams you have and the amount of time you will need to revise for each. Cover each week of term systematically. What were the key points, theories and ideas covered? Write a summary for each week, or each topic/aspect of the unit. Think critically about the unit content. If you were the lecturer of this unit, what questions would you ask to test if students understood? Form a study group to revise together, if this works for you. This can also serve as an environment to practise test questions. You might devise and ask each other questions about the unit content. Ensure that you check whether there are previous exams available for the unit. Complete the past exam questions and compare your answers with those in your study group. You can also collaborate with others if you are a distance education student—for example, by emailing, phoning, video calling, sms'ing, or instant messaging study group members.

Past CQUniversity exams are available in your My Units portlet in MyCQU: <https://my.cqu.edu.au/>

Or under the Assessment Information tab in each unit in the Handbook: <https://handbook.cqu.edu.au/courses/index>

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TAKE THE EXAM

You also need to prepare mentally for your exams. Make sure your revision plan includes breaks and rewards: for example, a swim, a run, a social event or a movie. It is important to remain motivated and to feel you are achieving your goals. When you feel tired, take a break. Also, make sure that you sit in good light and a reasonable distance from your computer. Revise well but do not overdo it. Know your limits! Try to remain positive—if you attended classes, and have understood and revised the content, you should do well.

Make sure you get enough sleep, both during your preparation and the night before your exam. Consider your diet too; you want to be well. Eat healthy food, drink plenty of water, and limit your nicotine, alcohol and caffeine intake. Make sure you exercise as much or more than you normally do. A jog or walk can be good for your body and concentration. Make sure you know exactly where your exam is being held, plan to arrive early, know exactly where your exam is being held and for how long.

Watch a student being interviewed about his top tips for the night before the exam at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk0ynsqBY2s>



MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME DURING THE EXAM

Time will pass quickly, so be ready to use it effectively. Check the time before you begin and regularly throughout. Read the whole exam before beginning. Allocate appropriate time to the different sections. Do the sections that are worth more marks first. Write legibly. Ensure that you answer the question well: ask yourself “What exactly am I being asked to write about?” Leave some time towards the end to check everything before you hand in the answer book. Wherever possible answer every question that is required. If you become overwhelmed, try to stay calm and breathe slowly and deeply; take a short break and try to clear your head and get back on track.

Make sure you answer the question as properly as you can. At worst, and even if you are really unsure of what to write, make sure you write something - you might pick up some marks for it. You will get no marks for handing in a blank piece of paper. Above all, stay calm. Breathe deeply if you become overwhelmed, and re-focus. Reward yourself when your exam is done.

TACKLING DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXAMS

Online and open book exams are different from traditional closed book exams, where no additional materials are allowed in the exam room. In an open book exam, you are likely to have access to your unit materials. Your preparation should include bookmarking pages and re-familiarisation with your unit chapters, weekly topics and learning materials.

SOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Burns, T & Sinfield, S 2016 *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at University*, 4th edn, Sage, London.

Cottrell, S 2012, *The exam skills handbook*, 2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Cottrell, S 2013, *The study skills handbook*, 4th edn, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Faigley, L 2014, *The little Penguin handbook*, 3rd edn, Australasian edn, Pearson Australia, Frenchs Forest.

McMillan, K & Weyers, JDB 2012, *The study skills book*, 3rd edn, Pearson, Harlow.

See Sage Publications for a series of great resources:
<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/series/Series1185/>