

TACKLING EXAMINATIONS - SOME TECHNIQUES

CHECK THAT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE CORRECT PAPER

Mistakes have happened!!!

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

Read the instructions slowly, at least twice. They should tell you:

- how many questions you must answer and what weighting they carry (if any)
- to write your name, ID number etc. at the top of each page.

READ THE WHOLE EXAM PAPER

Read the whole exam paper, carefully and slowly, more than once. Study the wording of the questions, so that you can go on to:

SELECT THE QUESTIONS YOU ARE GOING TO ANSWER

- work out what is expected in general for each question.
- beware if the question looks like one you have done before, either as a practice question or as an essay. Just one different word may mean an entirely different answer.
- take into account the topics you have revised and your confidence with the issues the questions cover.
- decide which questions you can answer best. Do not rush this process, as it crucial to your success.

DECIDE THE MAIN POINTS YOU NEED TO MAKE AND DO AN OUTLINE PLAN OF YOUR ANSWER

This is just like planning an ordinary essay –exam questions are mini-essays (unless they are multiple choice). For each of your chosen questions:

- highlight the key words and phrases in the title, and break down your answer into manageable chunks. Remember to interpret terms such as *discuss* and *criticise* correctly – you should have practised this when doing ordinary essays. [[link](#) to Do words in essay titles info sheet]
- do an outline plan of your answer, in whichever format you prefer
- structure your answer in the same way as you would an essay. [[link](#) to Essay structure info sheet]

WRITE LEGIBLY IN PROSE

- if you normally word process your essays, you may have to practise writing at speed beforehand.
- always write in prose (full sentences) – again, as you would in a normal essay. Even if you are short of time, try not to submit your answer in note form.

SPLIT YOUR TIME EVENLY BETWEEN ANSWERS

This assumes that all answers carry equal weight in the marking system. Check the instructions to make sure that this is the case – sometimes, different parts of the exam paper carry different weights. Then allocate your time accordingly.

Always take a watch into the exam room – you cannot assume that there will be a clock in the room.

Make sure that you:

- **Answer the questions**
- **Draw on material from the course**
- **Stick to the point**

Materials developed by Chris Pinder, University of Hull. © University of Hull, 2008.