



## Assignments and Exams



### Top tips for exam preparation

**Revise actively.** Get creative with your note-making. Use colour, pictures, videos, podcasts, audiobooks, or movies. Answer questions. Work in small groups. Compare each other's work. Talk to – or teach – your friends, family and/or classmates. Switch between subjects and activities to stay engaged. Follow something challenging (such as answering exam questions) with something easier or more enjoyable (such as re-organising your notes).

Try to **replicate exam conditions**. Practice doing exams within the two-hour time limit, without referring to your notes or other learning materials. Past papers for many modules are available on the Library website. If no past papers are available, or if the papers are not relevant because there has been a change in format, content, or teaching staff, ask for practice questions. If you can't get these, make up your own: What questions would you set if you had taught the course? Did the lecturer(s) give hints, in classes or online? Which areas did they emphasise most?

**Visit your exam venues** ahead of time if you can. Doing this can help to reduce anxiety at the time of the exam, and can also help you to visualise success in the exam.

Try some **memorisation techniques** if you worry about remembering everything that you need to, but remember that university exams are usually about more than just memorising facts. Some popular techniques (or 'mnemonics') include:

**Acronyms:** Acronyms are made up words composed of the first letter of each word that you need to remember. A famous acronym is PEMDAS, used to remember the order of mathematical operations (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction). You can make up your own.

**Acrostics:** Acrostics are sentences in which the first letter of each word serves to remind you of something else that you need to remember. Well-known examples include 'Every Good Boy Deserves Favour' (to remember the musical notes EGBDF) or 'My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Noodles'



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(used to remember the planets of our solar system in order of their proximity to the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune). Again, you can make up your own acrostics.

**Rhyme keys/peg words:** These can be helpful if you want to remember a list of points or facts. Take the number 'one' and find a word that rhymes with it, such as 'bun', or 'done'. Now create an image around the rhyme key to help you to remember. For example, if you need to remember four contentious aspects of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921): One rhymes with gun/run, gun-running → imagine guns coming into a port (Treaty ports). Two rhymes with who → allegiance to who? (Oath of allegiance). Three rhymes with free → Free State (Dominion status). Four rhymes with door → imagine a wall around Northern Ireland with a door to a possible united Ireland in future (Partition).

**Method of loci:** This ancient technique involves visualising whatever (or whoever) you need to remember in sequence in a place that is familiar to you. For example, you could imagine meeting Socrates as you turn into the street where you live (and having a chat with him about his contribution to classical Greek philosophy), then Plato standing at your front door, holding some of his Dialogues (another discussion), and, finally, Aristotle in your kitchen, with his treatises on your kitchen table...

**Rhythm and song:** Extensively used to remember such things as the length of each month ("Thirty days hath September..."), you may like to make up your own song, rap, or verse to memorise key points.

**Cramming** is never a good idea, but if you have really not put in the work, treat it as a once-off emergency strategy. If you feel that you must cram, select, learn and review main points only. Forget about reading new material the night before an exam; it will just cause panic and confusion.

**Stay positive!** Acknowledge the work that you have done and tell yourself that the exam is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. It's also a chance for you to show how you can 'think on your feet' and cope under pressure – valuable skills for work and life.