

TRANSFERABLE  
ACADEMIC  
SKILLS KIT

TASK

module

12

University Foundation Study

# Examination Technique

Course Book

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*Garnet*  
EDUCATION



University of  
Reading



# Skills Map

**Unit 1**

## Planning for examinations

Prepare your revision schedule by planning and building on your existing knowledge.

**Unit 2**

## Memory styles and active learning

Find out how you understand, learn and remember best.

**Unit 3**

## Revision strategies

Familiarise yourself with a range of study aids and revision techniques.

**Unit 4**

## Understanding the exam paper

Learn to maximise your exam performance by following question paper instructions.

**Unit 5**

## Understanding exam tasks

Learn to recognise what the exam task requires of you.

**Unit 6**

## Managing exam stress

Discover some techniques to manage exam nerves.

**Destination: Examination Technique**

# 1

# Planning for examinations

At the end of this unit you will have:

- a good understanding of your examinations' requirements;
- a revision plan.

## Task 1 The purpose of examinations

Examinations, or exams, are an important part of most students' life at university as they are such a common method of assessment.

1.1 Work with a partner. Discuss the following questions.

- Have you taken a written examination before?
- If so, how did you prepare for the examination?
- How did you feel a month before the examination?
- How did you feel on the day of the examination?

1.2 Work in groups of three to five. Share your ideas about the following questions.

- What is the purpose of exams?
- What are the advantages of examinations?

## Task 2 Examination requirements

Although you are not likely to know the exact content of your examinations in advance, there are several ways in which you can prepare and plan for the examination experience.

2.1 Work with a partner. Discuss all the possible sources of information about examination requirements and complete the list below.

- student handbook
- 
- 
-



- 2.2 Work individually. Consider each module/subject for which you will have an examination and complete a table similar to the one below. This will help you to identify what you already know about your examinations. Write down information about the topics you will be examined on and the location/timing and structure/organisation of each exam.

Module/Subject title: .....		
Exam location and timing	Exam structure and organisation	Topics

- 2.3 Compare your table with another student who is sitting an examination in the same subject/module.

## Task 3 Exam planner

When you have completed Task 2, ask your subject tutors to help you complete the sections in the exam planner below. This will help you to get organised in advance of the big day.

Exam Planner	
Module/subject	
Date of examination	
Location of examination (Campus, building, room)	
Items required (e.g., a form of identification)	
Materials permitted for use in examination	
Contribution of examination to final grade	
Date of revision classes	
Number of papers in examination	
Recommended time allocation for each section of examination	
Types of question in each of the different question papers	
Subject areas covered in examination	
Recommended books and further reading	

## Task 4 Revision timetable

Using the information from the Exam Planner you completed in Task 3, complete this Study Planner. Plan to start revising at least four weeks before the day of your first examination.

Study Planner	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<b>Week 1</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Week 2</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Week 3</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Week 4</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Week 5</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Week 6</b>	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)	Subject: ..... Time: ..... (Hours completed: .....)
<b>Date and time of examination:</b>			



Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Subject:..... Time:..... Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)
Subject:..... Time:..... Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)	Subject:..... Time:..... (Hours completed:.....)
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## Task 5 Revision timetable

- 5.1** It is important to spend some time relaxing during your revision period. Too much revision without incentives or free-time activities can lead to boredom and lack of concentration.

Take another look at your study plan and add at least two fun activities for each week. Focusing on your studies may be easier if you have a few enjoyable activities to look forward to in the near future.

## Reflect

Now you have finished your study plan, reflect on what you have done. Are you sure you have the right balance? For example, think about what time you are most focused. At what time of day do you find it easiest to study?

Spend time reflecting on all the relevant issues before making any changes to your study plan.

## Student notes for Unit 1



# Unit 2 Memory styles and active learning

At the end of this unit you will:

- understand your personal memory styles better;
- know strategies to help you memorise.

## Task 1 Your memory style

1.1 Work individually. Answer the questions below. When you have finished each question, write down what you did to help you remember.

a) What colour are your best friend's eyes?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) What is your (mobile) phone number?

\_\_\_\_\_

c) How does your favourite song start?

\_\_\_\_\_

d) What was your favourite food when you were a child?

\_\_\_\_\_

e) What is your computer login?

\_\_\_\_\_

f) How do you get to the closest bus stop?

\_\_\_\_\_

g) On what date did you start your course?

\_\_\_\_\_

1.2 Work with a partner and compare how you remembered the information.

1.3 Work individually. Look at the word list on the next page. Use a highlighter to colour four words. Draw an appropriate picture around or next to four words. Underline four words. Draw circles around four other words and link the four circles together. Do this as quickly as possible. Now spend 90 seconds memorising the words. After this time, shut the book and write down all the words you can remember on a separate piece of paper.



Word list

love	law	ORANGE	book	argues
lounge	little	square	China	journal
LONDON	low	cat	cause	twenty
concludes	thirteen	Egypt	shouts	green
however	purple	examination	WEBSITE	chips
circle	oblong	SMALL	claims	dog
Peru	ten	tiny	red	Sellotape

**1.4 Now compare your word list with your partner's and discuss the following questions.**

- Did you remember the same words?
- Which method of identifying words helped most, e.g., underlining, highlighting, etc.?
- Did you remember the words in capitals?
- Did you tend to remember words which belong in a group, e.g., colours: *orange*, *purple*, *green* and *red*?
- Did you remember words which start with the same sound, e.g., *love*, *law*, *lounge* and *little*?
- Did you remember the words you looked at first or last?
- Did you tend to remember words from one part of the chart, e.g., top left-hand corner?

How people memorise information is affected by their learning styles.

The three main learning styles are:

- visual (eye memory)
- auditory (ear memory)
- kinaesthetic (body movement memory)

People generally use a mixture of these styles. However, one style will probably be dominant.



**1.5 Read the descriptions of the different learning styles and then match them with the most appropriate strategies.**

**Visual learners**

Visual learners prefer information to be written down. They tend to like notes, pictures and diagrams. In a lecture, these learners need to take notes even when the lecturer provides a detailed lecture outline. They make up roughly 60% of the population.



a



b

**Auditory learners**

Auditory learners like information to be spoken. Often, a lecture outline is of little help before a lecture as this type of learner understands through listening. During a lecture, auditory learners often prefer not to take notes. They tend to do this afterwards. These learners represent about 30% of people.



c



d

**Kinaesthetic learners**

Kinaesthetic learners learn best through movement and imitation. They tend to learn by doing. Moving their bodies is a useful way to help them learn and remember. Only about 5% of people fall into this category.



e



f

**Useful memorising strategies**

- a) recite information
- b) sing information to a tune
- c) link information with an image
- d) turn information into diagrams
- e) read information out loud
- f) move around the room while memorising
- g) write down first-letter phrases, e.g., Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge = in music, the notes on the lines of the treble clef
- h) teach the information to someone else
- i) use a highlighter pen to mark important information

**1.6 Work with a partner. Think back to Tasks 1.1 and 1.3 and discuss the following questions.**

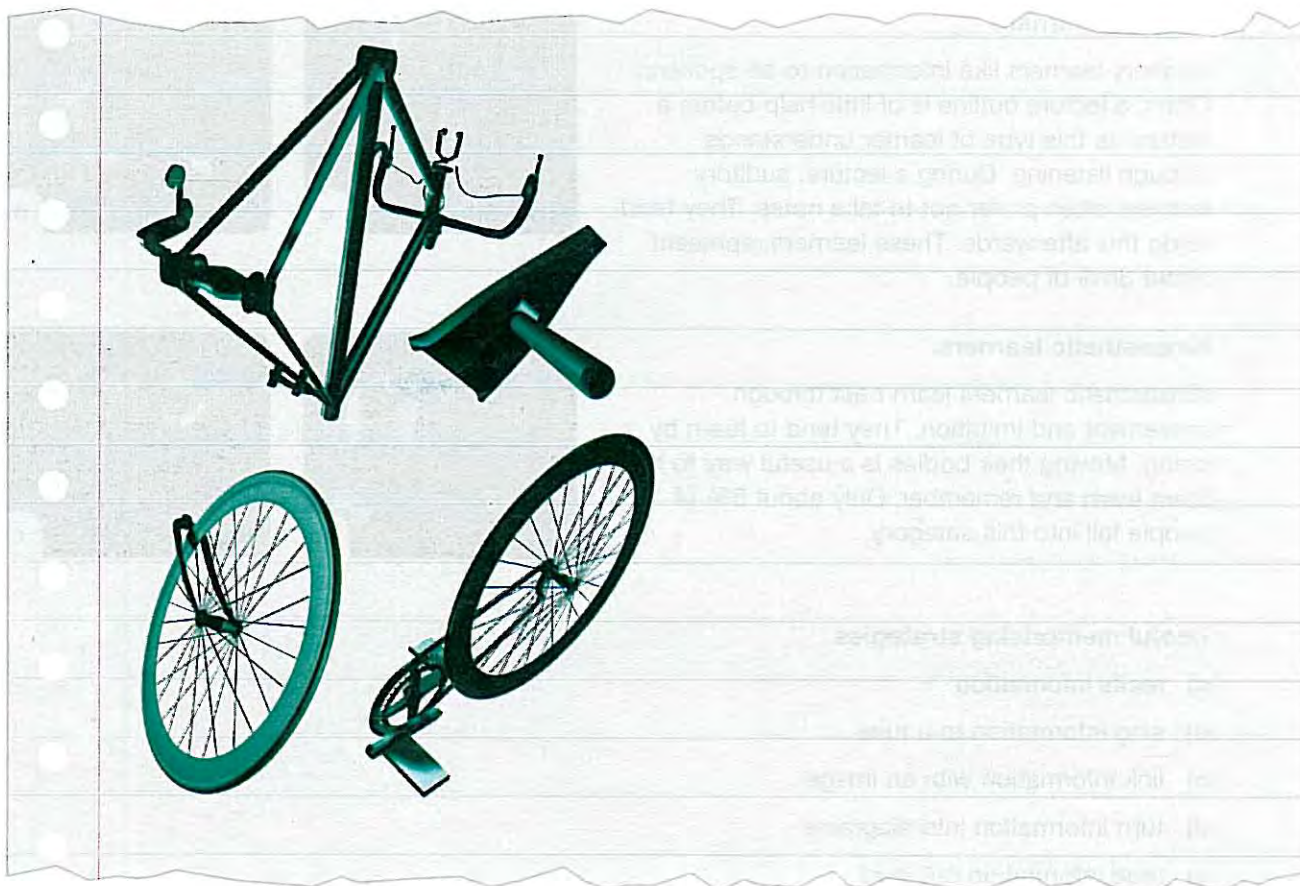
- a) Which learner style do you think is strongest for you?
- b) In the past, have you tended to use the strategies indicated for your style?



## Task 2 A deeper understanding

Understanding information and ideas is important to both learning and remembering. To do this, it is useful to link ideas together into a framework or map. This map of ideas helps us to understand smaller pieces of information. It also helps us to remember them by linking them together into a meaningful whole. For example, it is easier to remember irregular verbs when we group them together. All academic subjects have core concepts. These are what help us make the framework or map.

- 2.1 Look at the following parts of a bicycle. Put them together to make a two-dimensional view of the whole object.**



To make the object, you identified the different parts and organised them to make an understandable whole. This is also true of concepts.

- 2.2 Read the following definition of 'society'. Break it down into its smaller parts by filling in the table.**

Society can be defined as a group of people who live in a particular place and tend to share a distinctive culture and set of institutions.



Concept	Parts
Society	

## Task 3 Organising information into groups

- 3.1 Read through the list of words below once and then close your book and write down as many as possible.

blue water bus green  
march orange juice walk  
train lemonade run car  
red tea skip coach  
jump coffee pink boat

- 3.2 Now try to write the words again. This time, try to remember the words by using four categories: colours, drinks, ways of moving and transport.
- 3.3 Discuss with your partner.
- Did you remember more words the second time?
  - If so, why?

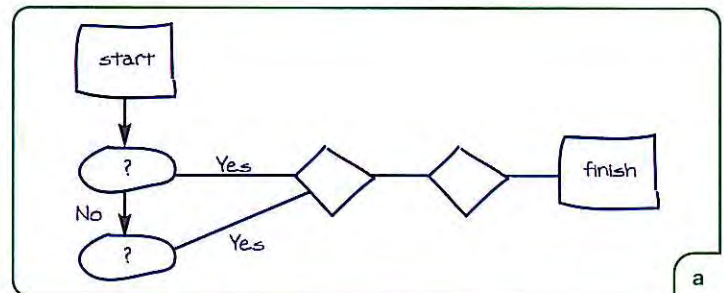


## Task 4 Reorganising information into diagrams

- 4.1 Read the following descriptions of different types of diagram and match each description to a type.

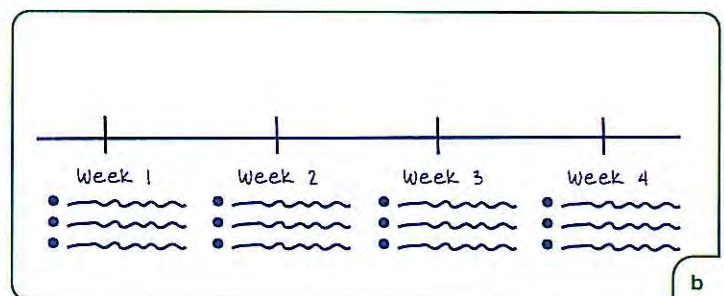
### Mind map

Although this is less structured than a concept map, it also focuses on links between ideas. The key concept is in the centre of the map. Thick lines are connected to this centre and the thinner lines branch off these. Next to each line is a keyword.



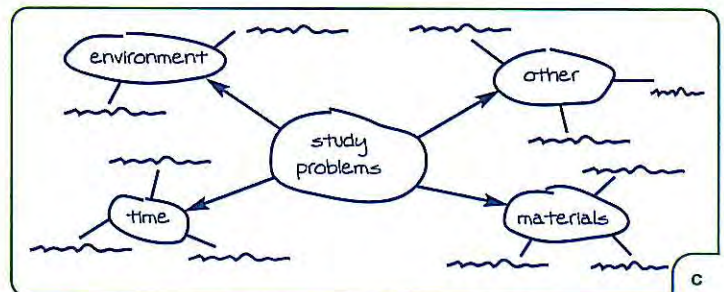
### Flow chart

This is a diagram which is often used to show a process. It usually includes a starting point, an end point and a set of questions which require a decision.



### Time line

This type of diagram is used to put information in time order.



- 4.2 Choose a set of notes that you have taken on your subject area. Working individually, you should choose the most appropriate type of diagram to rewrite part of your notes. When you have finished, explain your diagram to your partner.

## Task 5 Reorganising information into summary notes

- 5.1 Choose a different part of your notes. Read through the section carefully and divide up the information into three levels: thesis statement or most general claim, more specific claims, and supporting points or evidence. Rewrite the notes as a summary, using a different colour pen for each level of information.
- 5.2 Teach the information in your notes to your partner.

on each of the tasks  
appropriate way.  
participating in this course.  
Remember what you have  
to you think you can

Try explaining what you have learnt in this unit to a student who is not participating in this course. Notice that if you try to convey your interest in the topic rather than just remembering what you have studied, you will recall the information much more easily.

on each of the tasks  
appropriate way.  
participating in this course.  
Remember what you have  
to you think you can



# 3

# Revision strategies

At the end of this unit you will:

- be aware of the benefits of active revision;
- have a personal revision strategies toolkit.

## Task 1 Pass or fail

- 1.1 In the space below, make a list of reasons why a student might pass or fail an exam. Which factors do you think could affect performance? Then work in groups of three to five to compare your answers.

	Pass

	Fail

- 1.2 Think about an exam in which you did well. What helped you to do well? Discuss your answers with a partner.



## Task 2 Identifying examination skills

- 2.1 Consider the different types of questions you might need to answer in an exam. What do you need to be able to do in an exam? Make a list in the 'Type of question' column of the table below.
- 2.2 Next, complete the table by identifying which skills you will need to be able to answer each question properly.

Type of question	Skills practice required
Answering questions based on a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• understanding questions fully</li><li>• skimming and scanning</li></ul>
Essay writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• essay planning</li><li>• title analysis</li></ul>



## Task 3 Active and passive revision

The best revision advice is to revise actively. Active revision helps you develop a bigger picture of the subject area. You should aim to develop your understanding and link any new ideas to what you already confidently understand.

- 3.1 Read the comments in the letter below, which were sent to an advice column in a student newspaper. What advice would you give this student to help improve her active revision? Make rough notes individually as you read.**

Dear Study Doc

I really need some help with my revision. In preparation for my end-of-year exams, I went to the library everyday. I just don't know why I didn't get the grades I was expecting.

Nearly every day I arranged to sit with Zahra, one of the really brainy girls from my Economics class. She seemed to follow a really strict study schedule. I watched her studying and she wrote the most detailed notes. She was really focused on what she was doing. I could even see which subject she was studying by the colour of her folder!

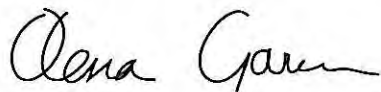
I remember that the view from my desk overlooked the playing fields and I could see a different sport every day, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

That really helped me to relax. On average I was in that library for about seven hours every day. I work better in the mornings, so I tried to make myself study for at least three hours without a break. Then, in the afternoons, I gave myself a short break every 15 minutes.

I really don't know how Zahra managed to study so hard and take such great care of her appearance. She wore a different outfit every day. I used to try and guess what she would be wearing before she arrived.

Although I spent more than ten consecutive days in the library before my exams, I didn't find the exam paper easy at all. The day before Economics Paper 1, I spent a whole day trying to understand our textbook, but even though I read the same passages over and over again, the ideas never really stuck in my head. I read and reread the same pages, but I seemed to get more and more confused.

What do you think I'm doing wrong? I'd appreciate your advice.



Olena Govorovska (Undergraduate: Business and Economics)

- 3.2 Work in groups of three to five. Discuss your advice and make a note of any points that you hadn't thought of.**

It is possible that your tutor will be able to provide you with past examination papers that have been used for assessment in previous years. Alternatively, they may be available in the university library or on the home page for your university department.

- ### Stage 1

## Stage 2

- key points to include
- how the question relates to the syllabus
- how the answer could be structured
- examples and evidence



**Stage 3**

Having decided on the amount of time you need to plan and answer the question, write your answer within the time.

**Stage 4**

After completing your answer, compare it with your notes and check for accuracy. Monitor the time you have used and ensure that your schedule is realistic.

## Task 5 Revision toolkit

- 5.1** Students rely on a range of different revision tools according to their academic discipline and their learning style. Think back to what you learnt in Unit 2. Then look at the list of revision strategies below and select at least five which you feel could realistically assist you in your revision. Tick the boxes for those strategies which you think you could use in your personal toolkit.

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| • Check your understanding by comparing your notes with published material.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Make sure that your notes are complete. Refer to lecture outlines and any recommended reading.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Summarise your notes by identifying key theories and information.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Make summaries of your notes in diagrammatic form.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Produce index cards with key facts and data in an easy-to-remember format.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Think and make a note of connections between different topics to see how subjects interrelate. You can draw mind maps for this. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Adapt a series of data for use in a table or graph.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Familiarise yourself with past papers and question formats.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Practise identifying key elements in the question rubric.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Consider different ways of answering a question and evaluate them.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Meet with other students to discuss and compare your understanding of different topics and to identify gaps in your knowledge.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Schedule meetings with your tutor to monitor your revision progress.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use over-learning: rewrite information from notes and read it often. Do this for a short amount of time, but over several days. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 
- 
- 
-

## 5.2 Add any missing strategies to the list above.

## Reflect

After looking at some past papers, think about the kind of exam questions you would write for each of the key areas in your own area of study. This will help you to develop a deeper understanding of the exam style and a better approach to revision.

## Student notes for Unit 3



# 4 Understanding the exam paper

At the end of this unit you will:

- have a better understanding of how the question paper is organised;
- be able to follow instructions on question papers more accurately.

## Task 1 The question paper cover

Look at the cover of the question paper below and identify the key information and important points to remember.

The image shows the front cover of a question paper for 'English Skills' at The University of Loughbridge, 2007. The cover is white with a green header and footer. The header contains the university logo, name, and year. The main body contains instructions, candidate information, the exam title, duration, and a table of sections. The footer contains a note about section weighting.

**UL The University of Loughbridge 2007**

Do not write anything until the invigilator informs you that you may start the examination.

You will be given time at the end of the examination to complete the front of any answer books used.

Candidate Number:

1 Question Book  
1 Answer Book  
Dictionaries are not permitted

## English Skills

Two hours and thirty minutes

**Write your answers in the answer book provided**

Section	Marks	Section	Marks	Section	Marks	Section	Marks
Section A	20 marks	Section B	20 marks	Section C	40 marks	Section D	20 marks
Listening	30 mins	Reading	30 mins	Writing	1 hour	Grammar	30 mins

Each section will be weighted to contribute 25% towards the total score.

## Task 2 The rubric

2.1 Read the following examples of rubrics from question papers.

- a) What are the most important items of information?
- b) What types of mistakes do you think candidates are likely to make?

Answer a total of three questions: two questions from Section A and one question from Section B.

**Answer any ten of the following questions:**

**Candidates should answer five complete questions only.**

Answer all of Part A, two questions from Part B and one question from Part C.

## Task 3 Following instructions

- 3.1 Complete the tasks given in the following paper as you would under exam conditions – this means you cannot speak. Try to do the tasks as fast as possible. Put up your hand when you have finished.

**Please follow the instructions below carefully.**

**Read through all the instructions before starting the tasks.**

**Use your answer sheet where necessary.**

- 1 Write your name in the top left-hand corner of the answer sheet.
- 2 Underneath write your birthday, favourite colour and favourite food.
- 3 Draw a box around this information and pass the answer sheet to the person on your right.
- 4 On the new answer sheet you have received, write your name in the middle of the sheet and the date of your birthday, eye colour and shoe size underneath. Draw a box around this information and pass the answer sheet to your right.
- 5 At the bottom of the new answer sheet, write a sentence comparing the information about the two people.
- 6 Pass the answer sheet to the right again. Read the sentence and underline the most interesting information.
- 7 Add another sentence, explaining why you believe the part you underlined is the most interesting information.
- 8 Pass the answer paper to the right. Read the sentences on your new answer paper. Decide whether you agree with the opinion or not and write a sentence explaining your opinion.
- 9 Return the answer paper to the person whose name is in the top left-hand corner.
- 10 Ignore instructions 1 to 9. Close your books.



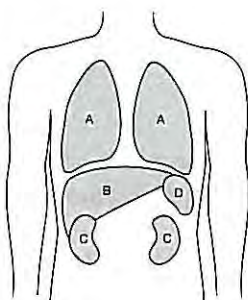
- 3.2 Look at the instructions given in the question paper and the completed answer sheet below. What mistakes has the candidate made? Work individually and then compare answers with your partner.

The candidate should answer one question from Section A and all questions from Sections B and C. Answers should be transferred onto the answer sheet before the end of the exam.

### Section A Questions 1 to 3

Circle the correct answer.

- (1) Which one of the following descriptions best explains the term 'membrane'?
- A the liquid in an animal cell
  - B what gives plant cells their shape
  - C the liquid-filled space in a plant cell
  - D the thin outer layer of an animal cell
- (2) Which organ in the picture is the kidney?



- (3) Which two of the following statements are true?
- A When cells divide, two identical cells are formed.
  - B Cell division is necessary for growth.
  - C A cell must have a nucleus in order to divide.
  - D A cell must have a wall in order to grow.

### Section B Questions 4 to 6

Complete the following description of respiration. Write no more than one word for each answer.

Respiration may be defined as the process of (4) \_\_\_\_\_ energy from food. The analogy of burning fuel is often used to describe the process. Here the fuel is (5) \_\_\_\_\_. For this, (6) \_\_\_\_\_ is the key molecule. In plants, this is produced through photosynthesis.

### Section C Questions 7 to 10

Complete the following equation for respiration, using chemical symbols.

(7) \_\_\_\_\_ + O<sub>2</sub> = (8) \_\_\_\_\_ + (9) \_\_\_\_\_ + energy

- (10) What is the full name of the special energy-rich molecule in which the energy is stored?

### Answer sheet

- 1 the thin outer layer of an animal cell
- 2 B, C
- 3 A
- 4 releasing some
- 5 glucose
- 6 -
- 7 Glucose
- 8 Carbon dioxide
- 9 Water
- 10 ATP

### Reflect

Think about the type of mistakes you have made when taking examinations in the past. How could you avoid these mistakes next time?

Spend time thinking about what you have learnt in this unit and how it can have an effect on your future results.

## Student notes for Unit 4



# 5 Understanding exam tasks

At the end of this unit you will:

- have a better understanding of how to answer essay questions;
- be able to maximise your performance on multiple-choice questions.

## Task 1 Instruction words



1.1 Work individually. Match the instruction words with their explanation.

analyse    comment on    compare    contrast    define

- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify the main issues and give an informed opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Show how two things are different. Explain the consequences of dissimilarities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Examine in detail by dividing up. Identify the main points.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the precise meaning of a term. This may include explaining what is problematic about defining the term.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Show how two things are similar. Explain the consequences of the similarities.

describe    discuss    evaluate    examine    explain

- \_\_\_\_\_ Look at the most important aspects of something in a balanced way, i.e., advantages and disadvantages, for and against.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the main features, characteristics or events.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assess how important or useful something is. It is likely to include both positive and negative points.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide reasons for why something happens, or why something is in a particular state.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take a detailed look at something.

illustrate interpret justify outline make a case

- \_\_\_\_\_ Put forward an argument either for or against a claim.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the meaning or significance of something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the main ideas or information, without any details.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Show what something is like, using examples and/or evidence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support a claim with evidence, but taking into account opposing views.

relate state summarise to what extent trace

- \_\_\_\_\_ Put the steps and stages of a process or event into order.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the main points only, using fewer words than the original.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give the connections between things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Say how much something is or isn't true.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give just the main points, very clearly.

**1.2 Compare your work with a partner and discuss any differences of opinion.**

**1.3 Now look at the following instructions. How does the change in instruction word change the task?**

- a) Trace the events which led to the French Revolution.
- b) Interpret the significance of the French Revolution for contemporary France.
- c) Analyse the impact of the French Revolution on nineteenth-century Europe.

**1.4 Working with a partner, discuss which instruction words are most common in your academic area.**



## Task 2 Question styles

If possible, work with another student who studies the same course as you. Answer the following questions to discover what you already know about the examinations you are going to take.

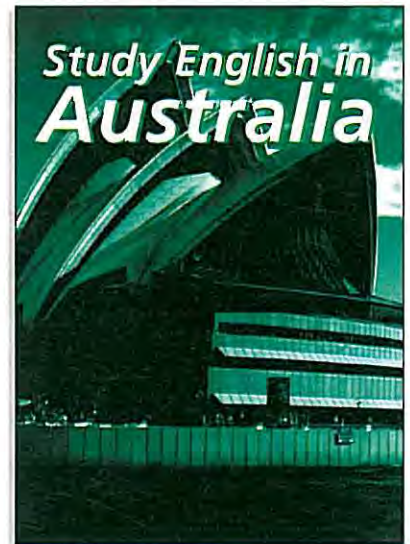
- Will you need to answer essay questions? If so, how many?
- Which different types of essay might you expect to have?
- Will you have multiple-choice questions?
- Which other question types are you likely to have?
- Do any of your subjects require 'calculations' to be shown? Why is it important to show this if it is required?



## Task 3 Exam essay planning and title analysis

- 3.1 Read the essay title below, which was given to a group of students studying on a language and study skills programme.

*'Studying the English language in an English-speaking country is the best way to learn the language. It is not possible to learn the language properly without spending time living in an Anglophone environment.'* Discuss.



- 3.2 When you have read the title, break it down into smaller parts by asking yourself questions relating to the different sections. For example:

- a) How many parts is the essay title made up of?
- b) Which issues need to be discussed in part 1?
- c) Which issues need to be discussed in part 2?
- d) What is the overall task you are expected to do?
  - i Put a process in order.
  - ii Show what an English-speaking country is like, giving examples.
  - iii Look at the question in a balanced way.
  - iv Give a one-word answer.

- 3.3 Now write a short plan for the essay. Make sure that you address every part of the essay title.

On page 37 you will find a model of how Task 3.3 *could* be completed.

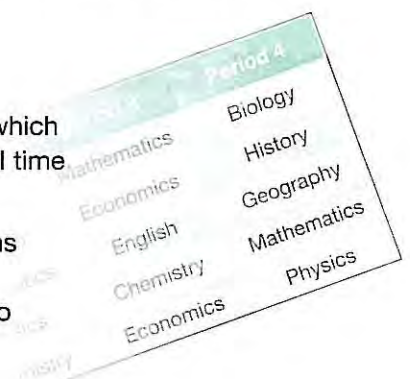
**Do not look at this model until you have completed this activity.**

## Task 4 Planning and analysis in practice

Next, choose one of the essays below and repeat the steps suggested in Task 3 above. Try to spend no more than five to ten minutes on this activity as you won't have a lot of time during the examination.

### Essay titles

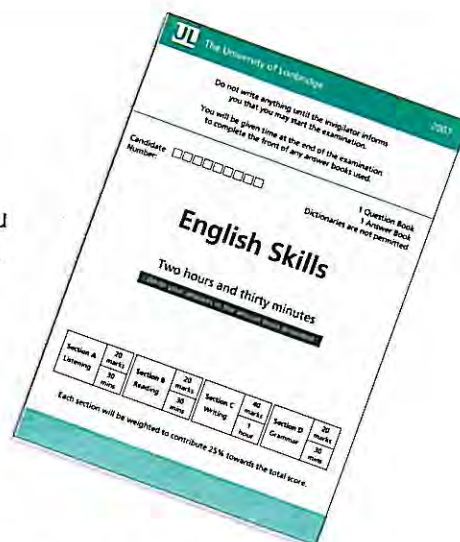
- a) 'Secondary schools should redesign the curriculum in order to concentrate solely on teaching children the academic disciplines which are required for employment. It is a waste of time to devote school time to subjects such as Art and General Studies.' Discuss.
- b) 'Examination is the only way to judge students' abilities. Institutions insist that without examination it is difficult to judge a student's proficiency in any field.' Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons to support your answer.





## Task 5 Timed essay writing

Now practise writing one of the essays above, using the plan which you have already completed. Remember to be strict with the time available. Use the same amount of time as you will have in the real exam. Don't forget to deduct the time you have already spent on your plan. For further guidance on academic writing, consult the *Essay Writing* and *Scientific Writing* modules from the TASK series.



## Task 6 Answering multiple-choice questions

Many students find it difficult to answer multiple-choice questions if they do not know the answer immediately. This situation becomes worse when there are many similar answers to choose from. Nevertheless, there are some techniques to help you choose the correct answer more easily. You will be able to practise one such technique in the task below.

Select a series of multiple-choice questions from a past paper and follow the four steps indicated below.



### Step 1

Read all the questions for the first time and write a \* next to those questions that you think you are able to answer easily. Write ? next to those questions that you are not sure about. Lastly, write ! alongside any questions that you really do not know the answer to.

### Step 2

Answer all the questions that you have marked \*. This should be the quickest section to complete, as you are fairly certain that you know the answers.

### Step 3

Now that you have had some time to think about the questions in front of you and you have completed the most straightforward items, answer the questions which have been marked ?. These are the questions that you need to think more carefully about. This section will probably take a little longer than the questions in Step 2.

### Step 4

The remaining questions, which have been marked !, are the questions that you find the most difficult. In some multiple-choice examinations, you will lose marks if you give a wrong answer. This is called negative marking. If this system of marking is being used in your examination, you should avoid giving an answer that you are not sure of. But if negative marking is not used, you should always attempt to give an answer even if you are not sure that it is correct. However, don't spend a great deal of time on the questions that you don't know the answer to. You can return to these questions at the end of the exam if there is any time remaining.





# Unit 6 Managing exam stress

At the end of this unit you will:

- understand how to manage anxiety while you are revising;
- have a plan for managing your stress on the day of the exam.

## Task 1 Begin to take control

One important aspect of coping with exam stress is staying in control. People often feel stressed if they are unable to manage or control a situation. Obviously you can't control the content of your exams, but you can take control of the examination situation in other ways.

Discuss with another student ways in which you could take control of your revision and the preparation for your exams based on what you have covered so far in this module.

## Task 2 Taking a positive attitude

2.1 Read through the following advice. Then work with another student to add two more pieces of advice.

- Make time in your revision schedule to relax. Find the best time of day and the best way to do this: take an exercise class, sing in the shower, listen to music.
- Try to picture yourself arriving for the exam feeling happy and confident. Imagine this in as much detail as possible. This can help you replace any negative thoughts with more positive ones.
- Avoid last-minute panic. Try not to revise up until the minute before the exam starts.
- 
- 



2.2 Discuss with your partner which ideas would work best for you.



## Task 3 Managing your anxiety

### 3.1 Read through some ways of managing your anxiety in the examination.

Match the headings a)–e) with the techniques 1)–5).

#### Headings:

- a) Paying attention to detail
- b) Ouch!
- c) Think positive
- d) Stop!
- e) A calming presence



#### Techniques:

- 1) Think of a person or a place you have positive associations with. Bring or wear an object to the exam which reminds you of this person or place. Touch it when you need to calm down.
- 2) Replace negative thoughts such as 'I'm totally useless at this' and 'I just can't do this' with more positive ones: 'I am feeling stressed but this exam won't kill me' and 'This isn't as bad as I thought it might be'.
- 3) To stop yourself having negative thoughts, listen to yourself shout 'HALT!' in your head, or imagine a HALT road sign.
- 4) Distract yourself from negative thoughts by listening hard for a few moments. Pay attention to all the sounds you can hear.
- 5) When the body feels pain, the mind pays attention to this pain rather than thoughts. Try pinching yourself. This can help you block out negative thoughts.

### 3.2 Think back to the work you did on learner styles. Which techniques would be most suitable for the different learner styles: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic? Work individually and then compare your ideas with your partner.

## Task 4 Action points

The following recommendations have been identified as key to the management of exam stress. Read the bullet points and consider how you might put each recommendation into action.

#### For example:

- Get in control  
I would make sure that I have allowed enough time for sufficient revision.
- Ensure you are both mentally and physically prepared.  
I would \_\_\_\_\_

- Make sure you have the necessary equipment.

I would \_\_\_\_\_

- Make sure that you know what the format of the examination will be and what the marking system is.

I would \_\_\_\_\_

- Tackle your weak areas of understanding well in advance.

I would \_\_\_\_\_

- Think positively.

I would \_\_\_\_\_

- Discuss your concerns.

I would \_\_\_\_\_

## Reflect

Think about stressful times you have experienced. Has the stress always been negative, or has it sometimes added something to your life? You will probably find on looking back that there has been a positive aspect.

Reflect on the positive aspects of stress and think about how you can harness this for exam preparation.

## Student notes for Unit 6

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## Web work

### Website 1

#### Ten myths about exams

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/menu/admin/dos/learning/Tools/Helpsheets/Examinations/myths.pdf>

#### Review

This online document attempts to dismiss some popular myths about examinations.

#### Task 1

Before you read the truth behind the myths, read each of the different titles, which explain popular misconceptions about exams. Then decide which of the myths you used to agree with. Next read the descriptions and see if you can understand why the statements are in fact false.

### Website 2

#### Learner styles

<http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/>

#### Review

This website provides a free online learning styles quiz. It represents your results graphically.

#### Task 2

Go online and take the test. Read about different learner styles in more detail and then use the information to plan your revision strategies.

### Website 3

#### Identifying exam stress

[http://www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling\\_centre/Test.html](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling_centre/Test.html)

#### Review

This website has a test which you can use to decide if your exam stress is motivating or paralysing.

#### Task 3

Take Alpert and Haber's Achievement Anxiety Test to find out if your stress is likely to have a positive or negative impact on your exam results. If you think your stress will cause you problems, talk to your tutor.

### Website 4

#### Managing exam stress

[http://www.open.ac.uk/study-strategies/revision/pages/managing\\_stress.asp](http://www.open.ac.uk/study-strategies/revision/pages/managing_stress.asp)

#### Review

This website provides a guide for coping with exam stress.

#### Task 4

Print out the guide and use a highlighter pen to mark the advice which you feel you could realistically apply.



## Extension activities

### Activity 1

Prepare a 'To Do' list for each of your exams and summarise the key areas which you will need to revise before the beginning of your exam period. As your revision progresses, you will be able to tick off the subjects that you have already covered and be able to view at a glance the areas which remain.

When you have compiled your 'To Do' list, have it checked by your tutor to make sure you haven't left anything out.

### Activity 2

Complete a mock exam under timed exam conditions. This will give you experience of writing within a limited time frame. Ask a friend or a tutor to time you to make sure that you keep to the time limit. Practise any question types that you find difficult to complete under pressure.

## Glossary

**Analyse (v)** To break an issue down into parts in order to study, identify and discuss their meaning and/or relevance.

**Auditory learner (n)** Learner who responds to sound when learning or recalling information. For example, an auditory learner may find it useful to memorise language through rhythmic repetition, like to receive information aurally, and remember sounds, tunes and rhythms.

**Candidate (n)** Someone who takes an exam, or is involved in another activity where selection and/or testing is involved, such as an application for an award or job.

**Claim (n) (v)** 1 (n) Something that is stated as true by a person or group but is not universally accepted as a fact. 2 (v) To make a statement that you may believe to be true but that is not universally accepted as such.

**Concept (n)** The characteristics or ideas associated with a class or group of objects. For example, the concept 'city' brings to mind traits common to all

places classed as 'cities'. 'Paris' is not a concept as it refers to a single, specific place.

**Concept map (n)** A way of organising ideas that is similar to a *mind map* but is more structured. It links a key general *concept* to more specific ideas with arrows.

**Contrast (v) (n)** 1 (v) To compare two or more things and identify differences between them and any consequences of their dissimilarities. 2 (n) The differences that are evident between two things.

**Data (n)** A collection of raw facts such as statistics and figures. These need to be studied and *interpreted* in order to reach conclusions.

**Define (v)** To give the precise meaning of a term or idea.

**Evaluate (v)** To assess information in terms of quality, relevance, objectivity and accuracy.

**Evidence (n)** Information and *data* that establish whether something is true or not.

**Flow chart (n)** A diagram that shows a process. Steps or ideas are shown in a structured way



(for example, from left to right or from top to bottom) and linked by arrows.

**Format (n) (v)** 1 (n) The material presentation of information. Information to be revised can be put into several different formats, for example, in note form, as keywords and sentences on index cards, or visually, as a *concept map*. 2 (v) To apply a consistent style of presentation to information or data.

**Grade (n) (v)** 1 (n) A mark for an essay, an exam or for overall performance on a course. Grades often correspond to a number, letter or word, such as 70%; 'A', 'C+' or 'F'; or *Pass/Fail*. 2 (v) To assess an essay, exam or overall performance and assign a *grade*.

**Interpret (v)** Give the meaning or explain the significance of something as you understand it.

**Justify (v)** Put forward a case for or against a knowledge *claim* or idea.

**Kinaesthetic learner (n)** A learner who responds to movement and imitation when learning or recalling information. For example, a kinaesthetic learner may find it useful to memorise language by copying it out, and often takes extensive notes, draws pictures (doodles) or moves his/her hands and feet (fidgets) when memorising new information.

**Learning style (n)** A style of thinking about, processing and remembering information that you have to learn. Different styles can be classified in a variety of ways. For example, you may have an *auditory* or *kinaesthetic* learning style.

**Memorisation (n)** The process of learning 'by heart' or committing to memory.

**Mind map (n)** A visual representation of ideas that are connected to each other. A key idea is written in the centre of the page and *related* ideas are written around it and connected by arrows (without too much deliberation). Mind mapping can be done in a group or individually to stimulate memory and/or organise thoughts.

**Multiple-choice (adj)** Describes a question or task where students are given a set of several possible answers, normally only one of which is correct. They are required to choose the correct answer.

**Negative marking (n)** A marking system (usually in an exam) where marks are deducted for incorrect answers.

**Outline (n) (v)** 1 (n) A rough, often point-form, sketch of the main ideas in a text or presentation. 2 (v) To give or make a rough sketch of the main ideas or events in a text or presentation.

**Over-learning (n)** The process of going over information several times, even when you think you have learnt it. It may include rewriting of notes, rereading of texts, etc.

**Past paper (n)** An examination paper from a previous exam. Past papers are often released for students to practise answering exam questions. They may be used in class or obtained for self-study.

**Relate (v)** To show the connections between two or more things.

**Rubric (n)** Written instructions for procedures and tasks on a test or exam paper or in a course book or handout.

**Scan (v)** To look through a text quickly and pick out specific information.

**Schedule (n) (v)** 1 (n) A plan that specifies the steps to take to complete a project and gives a clear time frame and/or deadlines for each part. 2 (v) To make a plan for how and when to complete a project.

**Skim (v)** Read quickly through a text in order to get the gist or main idea.

**Strategy (n)** A plan of action that you follow when you want to achieve a particular goal. For example, it is possible to have a clear strategy for passing an exam.

**Study aid (n)** A device, system or support mechanism that makes study easier or helps you organise your study. For example, electronic organiser, study handbook, highlighter pen, etc.

**Summarise (v)** To write or give a brief account of the main points of a text, lecture or idea.

**Supporting evidence (n)** Information from academic sources that should be included in a piece of academic writing. This *evidence* illustrates and backs up your ideas and adds credibility to your work.



**Syllabus (n)** A statement, *outline* or list of all the topics, skills and/or structures that will be covered in a course of study.

**Technique (n)** A method or way of doing something that involves skill and/or efficiency. For example, it is possible to learn useful techniques for answering exam questions.

**Time allocation (n)** The time permitted or set aside to do something. For example, in an exam, some time may be allocated to read through the exam questions.

**Timeline (n)** A visual representation of a set of events in a specified period that are shown on a line in the order that they happened.

**Title analysis (n)** To break down an essay title into parts so that you can decide what type of essay it is, what to include in it and how to order your ideas.

**Toolkit (n)** In academic life, this is a collection of resources, *techniques* or aids that help you to do something, for example, prepare for an exam.

**Trace (v)** Put the steps and stages of a process or event into the correct order.

**Thesis statement (n)** A statement that explains the controlling idea or main argument in a piece of academic writing. It is stated in the introduction and supported by reasons in the body of the essay.

**Visual learner (n)** A learner who responds to things they can see when learning or recalling information. For example, a visual learner often makes notes that are well laid-out, may highlight information using colour and likes to have handouts, OHTs and clear diagrams in a lecture.

### Unit 5: Task 3.3 Example

*'Studying the English language in an English-speaking country is the best way to learn the language. It is not possible to learn the language properly without spending time living in an Anglophone environment'. Discuss.*

#### Part 1

- Is studying the English language in an English-speaking country the best way to learn the language?
- Are there any other ways of learning a language effectively?

#### Part 2

- Is it true that it is not possible to learn the English language without spending time living in an Anglophone environment?

#### Essay plan

- Introduction, including definition of key terms and a thesis statement. (Use James and Miller quote.)
- Explain the advantages of studying in the home culture in order to learn basic grammar. (Use cautious language, e.g., *One advantage may be ...*)
- (Signposting, e.g., *On the other hand*) Describe the advantages of studying in an Anglophone environment in order to practise listening and speaking. (Use cautious language.)
- (Signposting, e.g., *To conclude*) Conclude that learning the basic grammar may be more effective in the home culture and that developing listening and speaking skills is often more successful in an English-speaking country.





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