

Examination Tips for Students

See the Counselling service website for extensive information on this topic

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling?wssl=1>

Examination anxiety

During the build up to exams, when you are revising, or during the examination period, please do not suffer in silence and let your anxiety inhibit your performance. Get help with problems before they get too big: if talking to your friends/family doesn't help, please contact one of the following • The Dean for Welfare, Tutors and/or Senior Tutor • College Nurse and/or College Doctor • Welfare Officers • Oxford University Counselling Service, Chaplain or College Office.

Coping with revision and examinations

Please contact College Office if you are unable to sit an exam on a particular date due to religious obligations or you have a medical condition which impacts your ability to take exams. You may be entitled to special exam arrangements.

The phase leading up to examinations, when you are revising, as well as the period of examinations themselves, can be stressful which sometimes leads to anxiety. Often talking to friends, getting into a good sleep pattern, making sure you have an exercise routine and healthy diet (remember your five-a-day) can help considerably. Maintaining a reasonable social life is also important as it can help keep a sense of proportion. For most students, exams will bring some degree of stress, which is perfectly normal.

The following presents some brief guidance on actions you can take which may keep your stress levels under control and help prevent anxiety spiralling:

When you are revising -

Please try to:

- Plan a revision timetable so that the bulk of your revision is completed before the exams start
- Get an overview of each course and then select areas for more detailed revision
- Decide how much work you personally need to do – you want to enter your exam feeling as confident as possible
- Find out the best time of day for you to revise and plan to do your work then
- Take a 10-minute break after every fifty minutes
- Include a couple of free evenings each week in your timetable for relaxation
- Take a day completely away from revision from time to time and go outside, away from the working atmosphere
- Fix times to discuss revision topics with friends
- Work in a quiet space, at an uncluttered, organised desk, with a comfortable chair
- Tidy up after each revision session and put your books away
- Eat a nutritious diet with regularly and sensibly meals
- Establish a regular sleeping pattern

- Concentrate on your own priorities
- Get some help & advice if you need it, there is a lot College can do to support you
- Speak to the College Nurse if you require a letter to take items into your exam
- <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance?wssl=1>
- Have a look through the University exam website:
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams?wssl=1>

Please try not to:

- Leave it all to the last minute
- Revise each course in too greater detail at the expense of other subject areas
- Compare the amount of work you are doing with that of your friends
- Push yourself to revise at a biological 'low' time for you
- Work for more than an hour without a break
- Work every evening
- Get distracted by social media
- Work all day, every day, without any recuperation & relaxation
- Do all your work on your own
- Work surrounded with distractions and unread papers and books
- Leave books and notes open as a distraction
- Live on snack meals, chocolate, biscuits, etc
- Exhaust yourself by missing out on sleep or staying up working late into the night
- Compare your revision with your friends
- Get so anxious, without getting support, resulting in you not doing yourself justice in the exam

Exam Preparations:

Be organised

Know the start time and location of your examination

Make sure you don't have to rush on the day and plan to arrive at your exam a little early

Prepare everything you need for your exam in advance

Think positively – don't scare yourself thinking about what you don't know - boost your confidence by focussing on what you do know

In the examination -

Please try to:

- Read the whole paper including all instructions, carefully before you start
- Remain as calm and focussed as possible
- Underline key words in the questions you select (describe, evaluate, compare, account for, etc)
- Plan your answers
- Answer the right number of questions and allocate your time evenly
- Leave a little time at the end to go through your answers
- Expect some tricky questions

But try not to:

- Start at the first question you see without reading the directions fully and carefully
- Waste time by including irrelevant information
- Spend too much time on one question at the expense of another
- Write before thinking things through

Experiencing Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety is usually experienced in three ways:

Emotionally: feelings of fear and nervousness;

Physically: dry mouth, feeling sick or churning stomach, racing heart, sweating, shaking or breathing difficulties;

Cognitively: disturbing thoughts such as: •‘I’m going to fail’ •‘I’ll make a fool of myself’ •‘I can’t remember anything’

Many people experience anxiety when they feel stressed and overwhelmed. Feeling anxious is a normal part of our lives, but sometimes this feeling becomes so intense that it becomes difficult to manage. The experience of anxiety can range from mild uneasiness and worry to severe panic. At a reasonable level, anxiety can motivate us and enhance our performance, but if it becomes too severe or chronic, it can become debilitating. A panic attack is a severe experience of anxiety. People may experience intense dread, various physical symptoms, or having thoughts of losing control.

Self-help Anxiety / Stress management

Eat a healthy diet

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals, plus healthy snacks throughout the day.

Exercise regularly

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.

Get enough sleep

Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Reduce caffeine and sugar. The temporary ‘highs’ caffeine and sugars provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, will make you feel more relaxed and you will have better sleep.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs

Drinking alcohol and/or taking drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Do not avoid or mask issues; deal with them with a clear mind.

Set aside relaxation time

Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don’t allow other obligations to encroach.

Connect with others and spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress

Helpful Resources

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams?wssl=1>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/Facing%20Finals%20script.pdf>

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html>

<http://exampanic.itchallenge.ox.ac.uk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyBdA61GmJ0>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/timetables?wssl=1>