

# ...from the Studies Office

## MAKING THE MOST OF EXAMS

### *A Student's Guide to Exams*

Preparing for exams is not usually something that we enjoy doing. Like it or not though, exams are a part of our life-long learning journey. Exam preparation takes time and energy and can cause stress and anxiety if we do not fully prepare ourselves. With some forward planning though you need not see exams as a stressful time but rather an opportunity to demonstrate your learning.

### Managing time

Whether you like it or not the exams will come around. Putting off the preparation for these will only make things more difficult than they need to be. Time management is critical to the success of exam preparation.

Begin by making up a **weekly planner** which sets aside time for you to study. Ensure that this is realistic, which may mean doing less things, such as paid work, during the time leading up to exams.

- **Allocate time** for each subject relative to the amount that each exam is worth.
- Set aside **realistic amounts of time** and schedule breaks for rest, relaxation and exercise.
- Assign **specific** work to each segment of time – this will break the big task into smaller more manageable tasks. For example don't write: "study 6pm – 7.30pm". Rather put "6 – 7.30pm master quadratic equations – do chapter review questions and last exam paper again"
- **Alternate difficult tasks with easier ones** in each session – this will help prevent boredom.

**Don't review your work by cramming immediately before the exam – this is seldom beneficial.**

### Managing space

- Find a study area that works for you, is **comfortable, free from distractions** and where all the **materials you need for study are at hand**. (Distractions include answering emails, SMS and the like as these interrupt your study time and do not keep your mind clear for revision.)
- Try making your space similar to the exam situation – don't have a cluttered desk for example. This can help with recall in the exam.

**Your study space should be just that – not a place that you relax in. Do that somewhere else.**

### Managing motivation

- Think about what your longer term goals might be and see your exams as a stepping stone to achieving those goals.
- Keep an eye out for the parts that you find interesting and use these to help motivate you.

## Managing Revision

It is important to remember that many exams are a test of recall and as such you must focus on preparing for this. Don't simply think that you need to 'know it all' as this is simply recognizing the material not recalling and applying it.

- Begin by **organising your material** – your course outline has already done this as a guide.
- **Read the material** and use this to **condense it to note form** – make connections that work for you.
- **Re-read and condense** the information further with a focus on the main points.
- Begin jotting down all that you can re-call **from memory** without referring to your notes – **then check your notes**.
- Continue this process until you **master each section** – focus on understanding and learning those areas that you did not remember.

## Managing the exam

### 1. *Know what to expect*

Find out from your teachers information such as:

- How long will the exam be?
- How many questions will there be?
- Is there any choice in the exam?
- What types of questions will there be? e.g. multiple choice, short answer, essay, problem-solving etc.
- What is allowed and what is not allowed in the exam?

Is there any revision provided by the teacher?

### 2. *Exam techniques*

- Go into the exam having had a good night's sleep (and breakfast for morning exams.)
- Try and relax in the exam so that you will work at your best.
- When you are given the exam paper and before you start writing, take the following steps:
  - Carefully read the instruction which should tell you how you're expected to answer the paper, how many questions you should answer and the value of each.
  - Read through all the questions.
  - If you have a choice, decide which questions you'll answer or at least which questions you will start with.
  - Decide how much time you'll need to spend on each question because of its value, and according to how thoroughly you can answer it.
  - Decide on the order in which you'll answer the questions. Answer first the questions you know most about and which are easiest. If you run out of time, you do so on a subject which will earn you fewer marks.

- When you're allowed to start writing, jot down any thoughts or ideas you have about each of the questions you'll answer. These jotting can be useful memory triggers when you actually come to answer the question.
- For essay-type questions, analyse the wording of the question and plan your essay. Include your plan in your exam booklet.
- Write as quickly and as clearly as you can.
- If you have a memory lapse in the middle of a question leave some space, go to another question, and later return to the first question.
- Answer as many questions as you are required to. If you only answer the questions you know well, you're unlikely to make up enough marks to pass.
- Check that you have actually answered the question that was asked.
- Try to leave time at the end of the exam to read back over your answers. Correcting poor

expression or spelling or checking your calculations can make an important difference.

- Try not to leave any questions unanswered.
- If you run out of time, jot down the main points you were going to make.

Some of this has been adapted from the following information and has additional hints on preparing for specific question types: <http://www.studentservices.utas.edu.au/factsheets/EffectiveExamPreparation.pdf>

Exam timetables are included in this Newsletter and should be used to assist in planning your weekly study schedule. Remember that you need to set aside time for study and it may be necessary to give up something during the next few weeks as you prepare for your exams.

After your exams are complete then you will have time to relax and re-energise yourself in the July holiday break, and remember that the only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary!



All boys will receive an individual copy of their exam schedule and we trust they are organized and well-prepared for this important period of assessment. The rules relating to student conduct and behaviour during exam sessions are published here so all boys know what is required of them.

### EXAMINATION ETIQUETTE

During the semester exam period Marist students are required to observe the following college expectations:

#### All boys **must**

- allocate sufficient time to study and revision so they are well-prepared for their exams
- behave in a polite and courteous manner towards the supervising teachers and other students during all exam sessions
- make a serious attempt at answering all questions on the examination papers.

#### Students **must not**

- speak to any person other than a supervising teacher during an exam
- behave in any way likely to disturb the work of any other student or upset the conduct of the exam
- take into the exam room any books, notes, paper, or any other equipment other than the materials they have been advised to bring with them
- remove any part of the exam paper from the exam room, unless the supervising teacher advises otherwise.

**\* No student may bring a mobile phone into an exam room.**

**Note: If a boy is found to have a mobile phone or other unauthorized electronic device in his possession during an exam he will be awarded a mark of zero.**