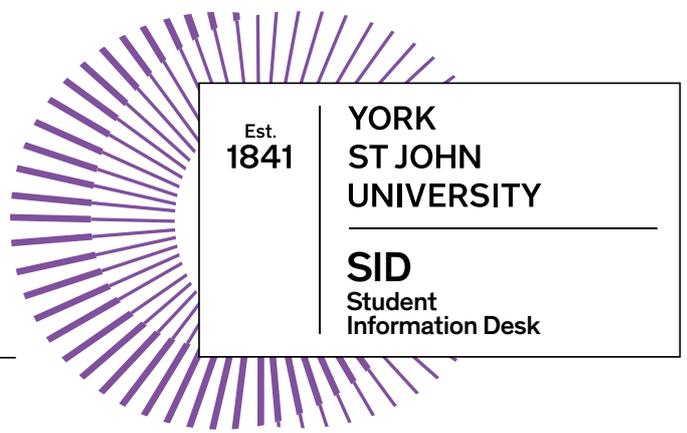


Exam Success



STUDENT SERVICES FACTSHEET

Examinations are primarily designed to assess your understanding and engagement with the material covered on your course, rather than your short-term memory for a collection of facts. Preparing for exams thus requires more than a few memory techniques: it takes further research and active reflection on the topics explored throughout your course, so that you can demonstrate in-depth analysis of the material.

Before the exam

- Check your module handbook and lecture outlines, to focus on the key themes.
- Review and organise your lecture and reading notes.
- Make a revision schedule and try to stick to it, to ensure you cover all topics.
- If you know how many questions you will have, prepare twice as many topics so as to give yourself a choice.
- Look at past exam papers (available through the library catalogue) and practise making a quick plan to answer possible questions. Try drafting a full answer, by hand, under timed conditions. This will give you a sense of how confident you are with the material.
- Answering possible questions as if writing an essay will require thinking in depth about the material covered, making new connections, applying theory covered, and doing further research.
- Practise writing by hand: hand muscles often need building up in order to write legibly and painlessly for 2 or 3 hours.
- To prepare for Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), make sure you pay close attention to the details: answer options often sound similar, and require you to be confident with specific terminology.
- Familiarise yourself with common question words, and the kinds of answers they require:

Critically evaluate	Consider the strengths and weaknesses
Discuss	Present the key points from different perspectives

Tackling stress and anxiety

- The best way to prevent undue anxiety is to be well prepared: having planned and managed your revision well should give you confidence when going into the exam.
- It is normal to feel somewhat nervous: adrenaline can help you feel more focused and alert, so don't worry if you feel a little tense.
- Caffeine and sugary foods can help keep you alert, but they can also make you feel anxious and stop you sleeping, so have them in moderation during revision and exams.
- If you're feeling stressed, bring your attention to all the muscles in your body which are tensed up, and let them relax. Take a few deep breaths as you do so.

Exam Success

During the Exam

- Take the time to read all the instructions: you may only need to select one or two questions out of a list, so don't dive in ready to answer them all.
- Once you know how many questions you have to answer, and how the marking will be weighted, plan your time. If you have 3 questions to answer in 2 hours, with question 1 worth 50% and the other 2 worth 25% each, consider spending 1 hour on question 1, and 30 minutes each on the other 2 questions.
- Read each question very carefully, several times, and make sure you fully understand every part of it. Under pressure, it's easy to miss out a key word, such as 'not'.
- Make a rough essay plan and/or mind map in your answer booklet. This will help you keep track of your reasoning, especially if your mind goes blank under pressure. If you don't have time to finish off your answer, your marker may award marks for your plan.
- Write on every other line, and leave a few blank lines between paragraphs. This will look neater, and allow you to add information later on, when you come to review and proofread your answers.

After the Exam

Talking to your course mates can sometimes be reassuring, but it can be very unsettling if they gave different answers! It may be best not to debrief with others if you want to avoid worrying unnecessarily when it's too late to change your answers.

Your markers will give you marks for all relevant points, but not for extra information which does not answer the question – so there's no point writing down everything you know if it does not strictly answer the question.

Marking is anonymous, and will be checked by second markers and external examiners, so you can feel confident that you are being assessed as fairly and transparently as humanly possible.

Support

For MCQ exams, see nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/documents/mcq-exams-preparation.pdf

Study Development offers workshops, short courses, 1 to 1 and small group tutorials.

To book an appointment, contact the Student Information Desk:

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