

# Building your exam strategy

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# In this workshop:

- ▶ Getting prepared: build your exam plan
- ▶ Managing the exam on the day

# Exam prep quick tips

<b>How do I find out...</b>	
the dates of my exams?	
the times they start at?	
when I need to arrive to the exam venue?	
where the exam venue is?	
how to ensure I arrive on time?	
what I need to bring with me?	
what I need to write with?	

# In-person exams: What can I prepare?

## **Among other things:**

- ▶ Timing: how many marks available per section / question, etc.  
Allocate and stick to your allocation!
- ▶ Approach: which questions/topics am I most comfortable with?  
(Start here!)
- ▶ Answer type: what kinds of answers are required for SAQs vs. essay-style questions, e.g.?

# How can I find out more?

Past exam papers:

- ▶ <https://exampapers.cit.ie/>
- ▶ Or under the 'Resources for you' tab on the library homepage

Download a past exam paper from a module in which you will sit an exam in May.

# Start with the instructions

Refer to the exam sample (document 2).

- ▶ How many sections are there in this exam?
- ▶ Which sections / questions do you need to answer?
- ▶ Where do you have choice?

Now, conduct the same analysis of a past paper you have accessed.

# How can we know how to answer?

- ▶ Consider the instruction words you see in the sample exam paper. These are highlighted in blue for your reference.
- ▶ What information can we get from these question instruction words? What do they tell us about the kind of answer that is required?
- ▶ Now, review the instruction words in your sample past exam. Are they all clear to you? Do you need to check the meanings of any of them? If yes, consult [this resource on instruction words](#) from the University of Melbourne.

# Marks vs time: high-level overview

Let's answer these questions together with reference to the exam sample. Then analyse a past exam from one of your modules.

1. How much time is available in total?
2. How much of this time do you need to read instructions and qs?
3. How much for checking and proofreading (realistically)?
4. How many marks are available in total?
5. How many marks are available for each section? What portion of the overall marks does this make up?
6. How much time per section?



How much time is available in total?	2h = 120 mins
How much of this time do you need to read instructions and qs?	10 mins
How much for checking and proofreading (realistically)?	10 mins
How many marks are available in total?	60
How many marks are available for each section? What portion of the overall marks does this make up?	30 = half
How much time per section?	$(120 - 10 - 10 =) 100/2 = 50$ mins

# Section by section

1. Within each section, how many marks are available for each question?
2. What portion of the overall marks for the section does each of these make up?
3. How much of the available time should you allocate to each question and question component?

Let's work it out referring to the sample. You should then take a moment to time two sections from a past paper from one of your modules.



	<b>Section A</b> <b>30 marks</b> <b>50 mins</b>	<b>Section B</b> <b>30 marks</b> <b>50 mins</b>
How many marks / q?	5	15
What portion of overall section marks / q?	$5 / 30 = 1/6$	$15 / 30 = 1/2$
How much time for each q?	$50 \text{ mins} / 6 = 8.3 \text{ mins}$	$50 \text{ mins} / 2 = 25 \text{ mins}$

# Let's take a closer look at section B

We know that we have 25 minutes per question in section B.

Q	Marks	Time
B1a	3 / 15	$(25/15)*3 = 5$ mins
B1b	6 / 15	$(25/15)*6 = 10$ mins
B1c	6 / 15	$(25/15)*6 = 10$ mins
B2a	7/15	$(25/15)*7 = 12$ mins
B2b	8/15	$(25/15)*8 = 13$ mins
B3a	5/15	$(25/15)*5 = 8$ mins
B3b	10/15	$(25/15)*10 = 17$ mins

# Refining your strategy

1. How much time do you need to budget to plan each answer?
2. Which section/question do you feel most confident about?
3. Prioritise the sections/questions working from the question you are most confident about to your less preferred topics.

# Exam strategy

Use the template to clarify and formalise your plan, adding or deleting rows as needed.

- ▶ Go into the exam with a **plan**, and knowing what to expect.
- ▶ Know how long you have to complete each section / question and stick to this allocation. Move on if you're stuck and ensure you spread your attention between questions such that you're getting as many marks as possible.
- ▶ Allocate some time for planning, especially where you have to write longer answers.
- ▶ Know where to start to build your confidence and get 'on a roll'.
- ▶ Practising past exam papers / questions is fundamental.

# Summary

Check past exam papers for:

- ▶ exam duration;
- ▶ number of questions to be answered;
- ▶ mark allocation (use this to work out time/mark and time/q);
- ▶ compulsory questions;
- ▶ question type;
- ▶ required answer type.

Not sure about any of these? Ask for some guidance or feedback!

# Managing the exam



## We now know...

- ▶ how much time we have to complete the exam;
- ▶ how much of that time is available for writing answers;
- ▶ how much of this time needs to be allocated to each section / question.

How can we ensure that we keep track of our planned timings during the exam?

# When you're not sure of the answer...

- ▶ You're following your plan. When you reach the final part of your second question, you get stuck on a calculation.
- ▶ Do you stick with it and run a little over your planned time or move on, hoping to be able to come back to the question before the exam ends?

# Stuck on an essay-style question?

What's the best balance between:

- ▶ getting the answer down; and
- ▶ sticking to your time plan?

# Your exam decisions

- ▶ How to keep track of timings?
- ▶ How to keep track of order in which you'll answer qs?
- ▶ Feel you're done? Leave early?

# Finally...

- ▶ ...to ensure you can fill in the front page of your answer booklet, please make sure you bring your student card with you. You will need to fill in your student number.
- ▶ You may also need to fill in other details of your module, so please check these in advance, and remember that they can also be found on the front cover of your question sheet.

Thank you, and  
good luck!

