



EXAM SUCCESS GUIDE

Advice

Information

Tips



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Do you need any help with anything this exam season?



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Top Tips From Chloe & Zöe

- Check your exam timetable to confirm the time of your exams.
- Note your exam number for anonymously marked exams.
- Make sure you have several pens, pencils, a calculator, and any other needed stationary.
- **Do not sit your exam if you are not fit to do so.** Contact your college tutor before the exam starts.
- If you get exam nerves, practice relaxation exercises — focus on your breathing or take a short break in the exam.
- A good night's sleep is much better than a night spent cramming.
- Remember the 20-20-20 rule of screens. Every 20 minutes, look at something that is 20 meters away for 20 seconds. This can help prevent eye strain and tension headaches.
- Remember your tutor is there to help with any academic or personal problems – no problem is too big or too small.



1

Study Tips

Student Counselling Service Revision Strategies:

The thought of exams can cause students anxiety. If this is true for you, one of the best ways to cope is to feel in control, which can be achieved through preparation. Think about how you prepare for an exam. Look for areas where you think you can improve and reflect on the possible strategies you might try. Use the same process for how you take an examination. Make use of self-management – especially planning – and support strategies in conjunction with revision and exam-taking strategies. The first thing you need to check is your Course Handbook. Your Handbook may have a section about examinations for your course.

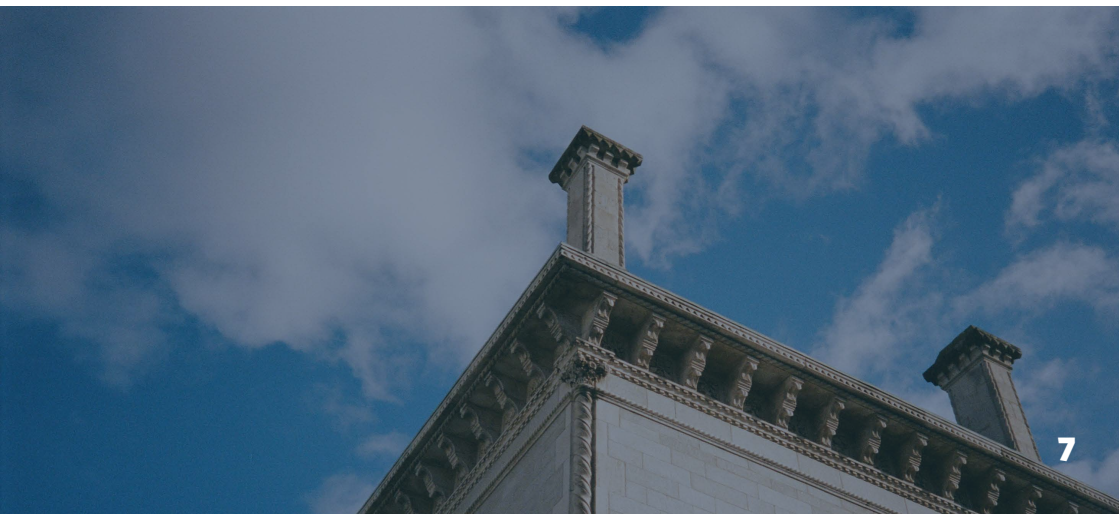
Secondly, locate and become familiar with the past examination papers for your subjects. These can be found on the Examinations & Assessment section of the Academic Registry website!

www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams/

Revision

Revision is the key to exam success. If you study regularly and effectively, you'll find exams much easier. Good revision is ...

- ... **selective**. You can't revise the whole course, so use goal setting and time management skills. Use your notes, rather than trying to re-read entire texts or relive whole lectures. Be critical, condense them - it'll help you remember the key information!
- ... **organised**. Make a revision timetable. Be honest with yourself about what you need to cover, how much time you need and when you work best. This will make your timetable much easier to stick to!
- ... **personal**. What works for someone else might not work for you. Revision is about more than remembering facts, it's about making sure you understand the material. Help your brain organise the information and make connections - use mindmaps, categories or diagrams. Look at past exam papers and try answering questions.
- ... **supportive**. Don't forget to talk to other students. They might think of something you didn't, or might give you a different perspective on a topic. Ask them how they review to find new techniques that might work for you!



Fighting Procrastination

It's easy to get distracted and put things off, beat procrastination with these 5 steps:

- **Make commitments.** You say you work better under pressure? Create that pressure by making your own deadlines and sharing them with others, and they'll ask if you got it done.
- **Take advantage of your mood.** Do difficult tasks when you feel freshest. Take action and do something on your 'to do' list that you feel up to.
- **Five more minutes.** Spend five minutes on a task. Once you've started, you might find you keep going.
- **Don't be your own worst enemy.** Negative thoughts can be hard to deal with. It may seem like everyone else is doing a better job, or that you'll never get done. Remember that everyone else is hiding the same feelings. If you feel that your negative thoughts are persistent and affecting your performance, consider reaching out for support — to a friend, to Chloe (TCDSU Welfare Officer) or to the Student Counselling Service: www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling
- **Be positive and treat yourself!** Reward yourself when you get something done. 20 minutes of revision, THEN that cup of coffee — not the other way around. When you reach big milestones, like finishing a topic, take a few hours break or a night off. You deserve it.

Plagiarism

Exams are stressful, especially if you feel unwell or unprepared. However you should never submit work that is not entirely your own.

Plagiarism, **accidental or otherwise**, is the most serious academic offence a student can commit. College deals with plagiarism very severely.

You must make sure that all of the work you submit is your own. Every student is required to take an online tutorial "Ready, Steady, Write - Plagiarism Tutorial", this is so you can learn about what plagiarism is and make you it doesn't happen in your work.

It is always worthwhile double checking your referencing. Your Course Handbook will have guidelines on your school's recommended reference style and how to do it properly, these are available on your school's website.

Paying someone to do your academic work or take an exam (also known as essay mills and contract cheating), is classed as plagiarism and strictly prohibited.





In The Exam

- **Read all instructions and make sure you fully understand them.**
Highlight what you have to do, if it helps. A common error for students is to answer the wrong number of questions.
- **Start with the question you feel most comfortable with.**
Read all of the questions and pick which ones you want to answer. Starting with your strongest answer will give you a big confidence boost!
- **Use time wisely.**
Be aware of the time limit. Plan your time and work out how long you need for each question - give more time to questions worth more marks. Leave some time to review, and catch any small mistakes that could cost marks!

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- **Don't just write everything you know about a topic.**
College exams are very different to the leaving cert. If your exams are subjective, make sure to select your information and show your analysis. Jotting down a brief outline or plan before you begin to answer is a good way to make sure you stay on track!
 - **Show your workings.**
If your exam is problem-solving, make sure you understand what is being asked. Pay attention to key terms. Draw a sketch if appropriate. Identify a method and stick to it, showing it with neat and careful calculations and any relevant formulae. If it helps, estimate the answer first. Always check through at the end for simple mistakes and to make sure everything makes sense.
 - **Review the exam (after you've had a good break!)**
How effective were your revision strategies? What went well? What do you need to change for next time?

Give yourself time to become good at taking exams!



2

Stress Management

Stress is part of our everyday lives, but it can intensify in exam time. We respond to stress in many ways - physically, mentally, emotionally and in our behaviour.

Luckily, it can be managed and reduced.

How Does Stress Manifest?

There are various symptoms of stress, but each of us responds differently:

Physically - through muscle tension, sweaty palms, chest palpitations, restlessness, increased heart rate, fast or shallow breathing and nausea.

Mentally - through loss of self-confidence, muddled up thinking, tiredness or memory lapses.

Emotionally - through periods of anxiety, crying, feeling hopeless, panic attacks or irritability.

Behaviourally - through changes in our sleeping and eating patterns, increased smoking and alcohol consumption, nail biting or absences from work and college.

How Do I Manage It?

Identify

... the specific events and situations which stress you out. Some people find the night before the exam more stressful. Others might find the exam itself the most stressful time. If you know when stress will strike, you can use coping methods to help!

Challenge and Control

... your thoughts.

Worrying thoughts can creep in without warning. Refocus on what is happening around you - like what you're reading or the sound of other people's conversations or your music. You might also find it helpful to close your eyes and focus on your breathing for a few moments. This is especially helpful when physical symptoms of stress, like increased heart rate and fast breathing, start to manifest.

Distract yourself by engaging in other mental activities - puzzles, simple sums or reciting poetry. Think about a happy memory or a place that makes you feel relaxed.

Replace worrying thoughts with constructive and positive ones. Do you find yourself exaggerating your weaknesses? Anticipating total disaster? Expecting anything to go wrong at any time? Don't ignore the positive. Reframe events and situations in a way that is more kind to yourself. If you're imagining the worst possible outcome, consider what the best possible outcome would be.

Let's Get Physical

Some people find the best stress relief to be exercise.

The Sports Centre on campus has some great classes. During the pandemic, they have launched Trinity Sport+ which offers classes to your personal device. They are all classes that can be done from home!

However, being physical doesn't have to mean going to the gym or exercising for an hour. If you find yourself sitting at your desk for most of the day, set reminders to take five minute breaks to walk to the kitchen or outside. This will help you keep focus and it can alleviate stress!

Fuel Yourself

Make sure you are getting some nutritious food into you during the exam period. Have some healthy snacks like popcorn, fruit or nuts.

This is not the best time to give up coffee, tea or smoking, but also try to avoid increasing your consumption during the exam period.

And remember - can't think straight? Hydrate! Water directly combats dehydration. Sufficient water intake can create feelings of relaxation and help lower anxiety levels.

Quick Stress Management Tips

— **Tidy Space = Tidy Mind**

Tidying your work space each evening makes for an inviting work space.

— **Take a Break**

Research shows that we can work more effectively with regular breaks. Whether it's a bathroom break, a cup of tea or 5 minutes in the fresh air. Take that break! You'll feel refreshed.

— **Rest**

Scheduling down-time is an act of self care. Switch off your phone, read for leisure, take a nap, watch some netflix! Give your brain a well-earned rest.

— **Be Nice to Yourself**

Give yourself recognition for all your hard work, but also forgive yourself if things don't go according to plan. Exam time is stressful, and you are only human!

3

Who to Contact

Your College Tutor

Get in touch with your College Tutor if you have any problems throughout the exam period. They are your main academic representative and can help you with any problems you may be having.

Check the 'My Personal Details' section of your my.tcd.ie to find your tutor's name and contact details.

Senior Tutor

Can't get in touch with your College Tutor? Go straight to the Senior Tutor, Dr Stephen Smith.

The Office of the Senior Tutor is located in House 27. Their email is stosec@tcd.ie and more information can be found at: www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/contact/

Head of Department

Contact your Head of Department for urgent queries, if you can't reach your college tutor. Information on Heads of Department can be found on School websites.

Student Learning Development

Visit the SLD website at student-learning.tcd.ie/ for a range of study and exam strategies. They have past webinars available for use if you sign up on Blackboard.

If you have any questions regarding their services, call (01) 896 1407 or email student.learning@tcd.ie

Student Counselling Service

You can email student-counselling@tcd.ie or call (01) 896 1407 to enquire about booking an appointment (including emergency appointments). More information is available on their website: www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/contact/appointments/

Student Learning Development and the Student Counselling Service are both located in 7-9 South Leinster Street.

Health Centre

The College Health Centre is available to all Trinity Students. You can make appointments by calling (01) 896 1556

TCDSU Education Officer

For more information or any academic issues, email Zöe at education@tcdsu.org. For urgent queries, call 089 488 8919

TCDSU Welfare Officer

For support and guidance you can contact Chloe. Her email address is welfare@tcdsu.org - or you can call 083 117 3983

Other Useful Supports

Crisis Text Line: Freetext TCD to 50808.
Samaritans: 01 671 0071

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Useful Resources

Student Learning & Development

<https://student-learning.tcd.ie/>

Past Papers

<https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams/past-papers/annual/>

If there are no past papers for your exam on the website, contact your school or course office.

Blackboard Module on Study Skills

(including exams!)

https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/student-learning/Blackboard/index.php

