

# Self Study Programs: Studying for Exams



This module covers:

- Study strategies
- Developing a four week study program



**The Learning Centre**

UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL

# Studying for Exams

While studying for exams is something that should occur throughout the semester, this workshop consists of strategies to implement during the **last 4 weeks**.

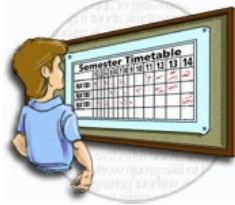
A follow-up workbook called Exam Tactics describes the things you can do just before, as well as during, the exam itself.

The JCU [Exams and Results](#) webpage is also worth visiting to find out more about exam timetables, requirements and rules relating to things such as special consideration and deferred exams. Take some time to check out the section on [Academic Misconduct](#) in exams. You can also check your enrolment details and obtain a copy of your personal exam timetable at [Students Online](#).

View the The Learning Centre page on [Exams](#).

## **During the Study Period (semester)**

Exam preparation begins right at the start of the study period. It involves you participating actively in all learning activities and getting help from lecturers, tutors and support staff whenever you need it.



## **4 Weeks to Go**

Regardless of how well you managed to keep up a study plan so far, now is the crunch time. Everybody will have gaps in their knowledge at this stage but the good thing is that it is definitely not too late. 4 weeks is plenty of time to get it all together.

1. Gather all material;
2. Create a topic list;
3. Refine your study schedule; and,
4. Test yourself.

Try Activity 1

### *1. Gather all material*

Gather all the material you need to review: texts, lecture notes, reading notes, lab books, handouts – everything! Make sure you also have all of the assessment items you have completed. In the process of getting together all of the marked assignments and tests you have completed so far, you are also getting together some very powerful study tools. Questions from these assignments can be used in self-testing as well as a reminder of what may have initially caused you problems.

### *2. Create a topic list*

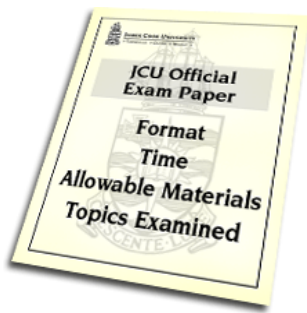
By looking at your subject outline and your own notes from lectures, tutorials and readings you should be able to build up a list of the topics which will be examined. Your lecture notes should remind you of the topics your lecturer may have emphasised. This list will form the basis of your study program in the final weeks before the exam.

### *3. Refine your study schedule*

It is now time to create a new study schedule for the final 4 weeks. You will have to maintain your normal reading, lecture and tutorial activities and preparation but you will now also have to allocate time to the study of the items on your topic list. With a topic list for each subject, you should plan to cover all of the items during the next 4 weeks.

### *4. Test yourself*

You may remember from the modules Note-taking, Study Smarter Not Harder and Learning Styles, that we often learn most effectively when we can incorporate meaningful activities into the learning process. By starting off using questions for which you already have the solutions (eg. previously worked examples and old assessment items) it is a good strategy to study by testing yourself under exam conditions. This gives you valuable exam practice and helps isolate areas of uncertainty in your knowledge. Identifying and addressing these areas of uncertainty is the key to exam preparation.



### **No surprises!**

The last thing you need when you start an exam is a surprise as to its format or content!

If you don't already know it, you should take steps to find out

the following information in relation to each of your exams:

#### *Format*

What sort of questions will there be? For example, will there be short answer, essay, multiple choice or calculations; or will there be a combination of these? You should also find out if there will be a choice of questions. It is important to know in advance if all questions on the paper will have to be answered.

#### *Time*

How long will you have to do the exam? You may have to practice answering questions and writing essays in a limited time. By knowing the types of questions, the topics to be tested and the time available you will be better able to test yourself under similar exam conditions.

#### *Allowable Materials*

It is important to know what you are allowed to bring into the exam. Some mathematics subjects allow you to bring in a page of notes, while others allow you to use a text book or a dictionary. Students with special needs may be permitted extra time or allowed special equipment. It is essential to enquire about these from the *AccessAbility* Support Officer or Counsellor well before the exam. All students may have access to an English language dictionary and students from non-English speaking backgrounds may be permitted to bring in a bilingual English translation dictionary - all information in relation to the

"authorised materials list for exams" will be advised on the final draft of the exam timetable and on the cover of the exam booklet.

#### *Topics Examined*

You should know exactly on which areas you are to be examined. Much of this information will be included in your subject outline but if it isn't, contact your lecturer to clarify what is being tested. The extent of this information will vary from subject to subject and should always be supplemented from the exam clues you have received during the semester and from a study of previous exam papers. All of this information should be incorporated into your topic list.

*Try Activity 2* ✓

#### **Exam Preparation Summary**

During the study period:

- Know what is expected
- Make a plan - use your semester timetable
- Do the reading, tute sheets, examples
- Be there!
- Regularly review
- Get help

In the last four weeks:

- Gather all the material
- Refine your study schedule
- Overview of study material
- **Create a list of what you need to know - the topic list**
- Intense review of topics on list
- Practise OUTPUT
- Test yourself under exam conditions

Find out where you stand:

- Consult your subject outline
- How much is the exam worth?
- What is your progressive mark?
- Obtain all progressive assignments, tests and solutions

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## Your Turn: Activities

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1. In the 4 weeks to go until the exam period, you need to: gather all material, create a topic list, refine your study schedule and test yourself.

a. What sort of material can you gather from your subjects to help you prepare for exams? Brainstorm a list.

b. You will need to think about what is most likely to be in the exam and to create a topic list to use as a guide to your exam revision. How will you make an informed judgement as to the likely content of the exam? How will you put together your topic list? And, what might an effective topic list look like?

*Using all of the information you have so far, **make a prioritised list of the top 10 topics you expect to be examined on in each subject.** Now give your current knowledge of each of these topics a score out of 10 - the higher the score, the greater your knowledge of the topic. These scores will help you to decide how much time you will need to spend on studying each of the topics. Make sure you keep this list and continually recheck your ratings as you progress through your last few weeks of study.*

c. You will need to refine your study schedule. Take a moment to think about your commitments: where can you find the additional time needed for exam revision? You may find the time management tools/planning templates discussed in earlier workshops useful.

d. Testing yourself under exam conditions is a key strategy in exam preparation. How will you test yourself? How will you identify gaps in your knowledge? (*just one suggestion: some students find mind maps particularly useful when revising for exams*).

2. If you do have an exam/s coming up, take some time now to identify key information. Do you know the format of the exam (what type of questions)? Do you know the time allowed? Do you know how much the exam is worth? What will you take into the exam room with you?

### Did you know?

- You can take bottled water into the exam room, but it must be a clear bottle and have the label removed?
- You can usually get permission to review your exam paper if you want, but you have to ask to do so within 3 months of the publication of results.
- You can request an assessment item be re-marked, but you have to make a *very good* case for a re-mark to the Head of School, and – beware – your grade could go up *or* down!

For more detail on the above and other important information you should check out the relevant policy. You may like to check out the JCU Policy Library, click on 'student policies' and click on 'assessment'. [Exams and Results](#) is also full of useful information!