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Some Exam Prep tips

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Key tips- summary

- Be organised
- Use your time wisely
- Plan your exam strategy
- Practice, practice, practice
- Ask for help if needed
- Know when to cut your losses...

Be organised

- When are your exams?
 - How much time do you have to study for each one?
 - What sort of exams are they? (multi-choice, short answer, long answer, programming, design, essay...)
 - How much preparation time do you need for each exam; each part of the exam; each topic in the unit
 - Track your exam study progress
- => Prepare a “study diary” for your exam preparation including dates, times, to-dos, what done, how did on practice exam, etc

Use your time wisely

- You have assignments/projects due, 3-4 exams, maybe other commitments (part-time work, family, ...)
- How much time do you have?
- How much does each unit need (for exam study)?
- When are you going to do it (Mondays? At night? Weekend? On train? ...)
- Make sure all units, unit topics get enough – don't get “stuck” on “hard” one(s) only
- Priority #1: pass the exam (and the unit)
- Priority #2: do well in the exam (and the unit)

Plan your exam strategy

- Depends on the type of questions/exam; how prepared you are:
 - What is the marks breakdown e.g. 50% MCQ, 25% short answer, 25% long answer
 - Which bits can you do e.g. basic designs, programming
 - Which bits can't you do e.g. OO design, advanced programming
 - How long is each bit likely to take to do?
 - I suggest tackle the bits that (i) will get you good number of marks and (ii) you can do reasonably quickly and (iii) you are familiar with/confident with
 - Then tackle stuff worth good numbers marks/some confidence
 - Leave hard stuff, stuff not worth many marks to last, takes long

Strategy Example

- 40% MCQ, 30% short answer, 30% long answer
- Basic programming questions, advanced programming, design, testing
- I'm confident with basic programming & design
- I tackle:
 - (i) $\frac{3}{4}$ of the **MCQ on basic prog/design** – quick, I'm confident, lots of marks, then 2 out of 4 short answer (quick-ish)
 - (ii) **2 out of 4 of long answer** programming/design
 - Do (iii) **MCQ** on testing, advanced – hard but quicker/good marks
 - (iv) **Short answer** on design/testing
 - Lastly if time left, (v) **check earlier answers** *then* (vi) **rest of long answer** questions (hard, not many marks, takes long)

Key Exam Dos

- Put your name & ID on the exam
- Write CLEARLY (as best you can; do what I say, not what I do!!)
- Carefully read the question - and answer the question 😊
- If in doubt about question meaning, not assumptions on script
- Clearly mark MCQ answers
- Syntax is *usually* marked too hard in programming (though check with your convenors' comments on this!)

Practice, practice, practice

- Previous exam papers:
 - Do a practice to gauge what good at/what need to study more
 - Do another practice (timed) to see how long takes (to help you to use your time in the best way in the exam)
- Review assignments and projects done:
 - Tasks you were asked to do; what you did
 - Feedback – what did well? Not so well? Can you answer practice exam in these areas??
- Review Lectures/labs/tutorials:
 - Summarise key points, key tasks done e.g. bullet point notes - can use these notes to help “quick” revise; making the notes themselves is great revision!!
 - Try and redo example tasks and compare to lecturer answers
 - Focus on (i) improving areas in exam worth a lot of marks and (ii) areas weaker at but a good chance of improving

Ask for help if needed

- Tutor:
 - Feedback on assignments, test
 - Specific difficulties with material
- Convenor:
 - Topics in exam, format of the exam
 - Practice exam questions (and maybe answers)
- Student administration:
 - Exam timetable problem
 - Apply for special consideration e.g. ill on day of exam, issue impacting study leading up to exam
- Student services:
 - If extra time needed e.g. a disability challenge

Know when to cut your losses...

- Material you are confident with:
 - Review lectures, tutorials, assignment, practice exam
 - If most of the unit material, focus most time on this (so can do well on it in the exam)
- Some material you are not very confident with
 - Review lectures, tutorials, assignment, practice exam
 - If large amount of unit material/exam questions on this, spend most time on this (as need to be able to do well to pass)
- Some material just don't understand/can't get:
 - Only when done the above two, focus some time on
 - May need to ask for help
 - If this is MOST of the material in your unit, see your convenor!!!
- IF failed unit already (e.g. failed coursework, failed hurdle tasks)
 - Don't spend any more time on

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