Study skills (for science)

When to complete: November-June
Recommended time for completion: 10 hours
Date completed:

Contents

1. Introduction

This section focuses on study skills. It has been written to provide you with some knowledge of the academic work that is expected of university students and contains some information and exercises to help you to do this. There is also a section which includes Top 10 tips on various areas of academic challenges; this was devised by previous university students for new students. It would be useful if you could keep this document and use it as a guide during your first year at university. For now though, it would be useful for you to work through the exercises and to try using the writing guides to help you with your coursework towards the end of your access programme.

You will be given help to develop these skills from your tutors at college and you may also be able to participate in one of the events run by the universities to help you develop the skills you'll need at university. Make the most of all these opportunities; you'll always pick up something useful. Like other skills, study skills can always be developed and refined.

2. How do you study?

Exercise 1

The first step in becoming better at using the time available for studying is to recognise how and when you study best. Many students delay written assignments in the hope that nearer to the deadline they will suddenly be inspired. This only happens to a lucky few! Fill in the chart below.

		Yes	No
1	I like to get up early and get started on my academic work.		
2	I have too much to do before I leave the house in the morning.		
3	I plan my work carefully to fit in with the other things I have to do.		
4	I sometimes give up on a task when I find it difficult.		
5	I am good at making a list and sticking to it.		

6	I try to do so many things that I don't get many of them done.
7	If I find a task difficult, I try to find an easy place to start.
8	I often find reasons to put off tasks.
9	If I have a number of tasks I cannot decide which I should start with.
10	I get satisfaction from getting a task done in good time.

Questions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10: give yourself 2 points for each yes.
Questions 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9: deduct 1 point for each yes.

The maximum score is 10. If you scored, you are already a very well organised person; if you scored less than 6, you have some work to do.

Some ideas about your answers to the previous exercise

It is natural to put off unpleasant tasks. Everyone does this occasionally, even the most diligent student. The problem is that if you make a habit of putting things off until the last minute, you are likely to eventually suffer from stress. And this can cause problems with your ability to cope with your University course. The secret is understanding why you put off doing tasks until the last minute, and then taking steps to improve the situation.

Are you a perfectionist?

Sometimes students are so overwhelmed by achieving their immediate goal of reaching university that they cannot believe they will ever meet the standard required.

Are you afraid of failure?

This lack of confidence often comes from being poorly prepared both in time management skills and study skills. You can work on both these skills, with help from university staff and with your own practice.

Are you confused about the task?

If you have any questions about anything, an assignment, for example, ask! It is far better to do this at the beginning than to spend time fruitlessly on a task.

Do you lack motivation?

There may be a serious reason for this, such as having chosen a course for which you are not suited. If this is the case, seek help as soon as possible – there are ways of helping you change direction. Or it may be that you are suffering from illness or you just don't like what you are doing. Identify the cause, then take action.

Do you have difficulty in prioritising?

Perhaps you do make a list of what you have to do, but can't decide which is most important. Practice is the key. Spend some time developing time management skills. You can learn to do this effectively.

For all the above difficulties, there is a solution. There are short courses available at your University or you can seek the help of your tutor or work with other students in a small group. The worst option is to do nothing.

3. Developing reading skills

Exercise 2

Read the passage below. Do not write anything, read it only once and then move on page 4.

China

As it emerges on to the world stage there is increasing interest in China and the Chinese. No longer seen as an impossible destination for foreign travellers, China is becoming more and more accessible to the general public.

Yet it is often difficult to grasp the scale and the variety of this great country.

China is a country of some estimated 1.3 billion people which is about 22% of the total population of the world.

It is regarded as one of the oldest of all civilizations. Many people believe the Chinese invented paper-making, the compass, gunpowder and printing. Among its most important ancient projects are the Great Wall of China, the Grand Canal and the Karez irrigation system.

The ruling party in China is the Communist party and the President is Hu Jintao.

The Chinese celebrated the Lunar New Year on the 26th January this year and 2009 is the Year of the Ox.

The official language is Putonghua or Mandarin: China has had a written language for over 6000 years.

China is a multi-national country of 56 different nationalities. 91% are Han and the rest are made up of the other 55 minorities including Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Korean, Russian and Gelo.

China's currency is the Renminbi (RMB): the popular unit of currency is the Yuan. One US dollar is worth about 8.30 Yuan.

Write down everything you can remember about the text you have just read. Don't take too long, and don't worry about the order. This can be in note form; it is the facts you want to remember.

China

Now look back at the original text and compare what you have remembered.

How did you do?

If you managed to remember at least ten points then you are doing very well; you may even be one of the lucky people with a photographic memory. But for most of us, it is important to make notes as we go along. For academic work you must develop the habit of making notes.

Exercise 3

Read the original text about China again. This time, pick out five important points.

1

2

3

4

5

Notice that you are asked to pick out the important points. One of the skills of learning to study effectively is learning to separate the important from the non-important. The passage contains a lot of information and what you select depends on the question you are asked. For example, if you are asked to provide information for travellers to China what four points would you pick out?

1

2

3

4

And if you were asked about the importance of modern China, which four points would you pick out?

1

2

3

4

Your note-taking and understanding must be focussed, not just a random series of notes.

4. Developing your listening skills

Exercise 4

This exercise should be done in pairs.

At the back of this booklet you will find two passages of text. Each of you should select one, and then read it to the other. If you are the listener, you should be taking notes as you listen. Before you begin, make sure you have some kind of shorthand system to help you identify, for example, words or ideas you are not sure of. You could use a question mark or a cross, but try to be consistent.

Notes

How did you do?

Look at your notes and then compare them with the original text.

There are three points you should be looking for:

- Where you picked up correct information.
- Where you picked up important information.
- Where you misheard something.

You can, if you wish, award yourself points for this exercise:

Add 1 point where you picked up correct information.
Add 2 points where you picked up important information.
Deduct 1 point where you misheard something.

Then add up your score. Of course there is nothing scientific about this, but it illustrates the importance of developing the skill of listening. For example, if you look back at the information on China, how much easier would it have been to remember if you had managed to do some preliminary work on the country? And if that is true for written work, it is even more so for the spoken word. Most lecturers provide handouts or use PowerPoint presentations. However, the same point applies as in the previous section – you are seeking to focus on what is relevant to the question you will be asked.

5. Listening skills

Getting the most out of lectures

There is some preliminary work you can do to make sure you get the most out of lectures.

Are you prepared?
If you are asked to do any reading beforehand, make sure you do it. These tasks are set because they will help you get the most out of your University course. Try not to switch off during the lecture. Keep your concentration levels up. It helps to choose your seat carefully. Don't skulk at the back. In some subjects this means you have to arrive in good time, so be warned.

Do you know what you want to get out of this lecture?
Think beforehand how this lecture will fit into your overall subject. This means dong some prior reading as suggested above.

Are you ready to participate?
Write down what you think is important. For some people this means writing down almost everything, but with practice you should be able to develop a personal shorthand. Whatever method you choose, make sure you remember what it is.

Can you ignore the environment?
The lecture room may be noisy or too hot or too cold. Try to ignore any of these inconveniences and concentrate on what is being said.

Do you have everything you need?
This means more than one pen or pencil – just in case.

Have you switched off your mobile phone?
Make sure you are not the guilty party!

Taking Lecture Notes

Lectures are an important part of your university course. Below are some suggestions for getting the most out of your lectures.

Before the lecture
Look back over your notes from the previous lecture to remind yourself of the main themes. If you have been given a task to do prior to this lecture, make sure you have completed it. The lecturer will assume that you have. Decide what materials you need for taking notes. Using scraps of paper is unlikely to be of use. Arrive in good time.

During the lecture
Most lecturers now make use of technology when giving a lecture. This does not mean you should just sit back. If you are given a handout, for example, make sure you annotate it with additional information that will help you understand the topic better. Practice writing quickly and, as previously advised, develop your own shorthand. Underline anything of major importance and put a question mark or cross next to anything you are unsure of.

After the lecture
Although it takes time, you may find it useful to re-write your lecture notes afterwards. If you have used a lot of shorthand you can fill it out again to make sure you understand it. Find out the answers to any queries you may have had. If you do this immediately it will take no time at all – if you leave it you will have a major task to do.

Later
Once you have completed a series of lectures, take some time to look over them all and make one summary note. This will help you remember the major points.

6. Research for assignments

With the availability of information on the internet, research has actually become more difficult for students. With so much information there is a real danger of becoming totally swamped and not getting the piece of work completed on time.

Added to this is the problem of plagiarism. If you have not had practice over a period of time in reading, making notes and then using these to answer the question set, you may stray into 'cutting and pasting' which is not only illegal (unless you have copyright permission or the piece is copyright free) but makes for a poor quality assignment. Remember also that your tutor will have read hundreds of essays and is well able to spot anything which has been put together in this way!

A university education isn't about rehashing facts; it's about challenging assumptions and putting forward your point of view, supported by appropriate evidence.

Question
Make sure you understand the question. Break it down into key words and concentrate on those.

Instructions

Read through all the instructions carefully, including those relating to submission dates, number of words and submission format. It is much easier to write a long piece but the word limit is there to make sure you can condense and select. If there is anything in the instructions you don't understand, ask before you begin your research.

Keep focused
Write the key words of the assignment in large letters and put them in a prominent place on your desk or table. Every time you come across what you think is an important point, 'test' it against the keywords. If it isn't relevant, don't waste time on it.

Keep to the point
It is far better to argue a few points well (and support them with proper evidence) than write a long series of unstructured ideas. Remember to check all facts (some internet sources are notoriously unreliable!) and acknowledge where you have made use of other peoples' ideas or work.

Plan ahead
Assignments are often given out early in the term. This allows you to schedule in adequate time to complete the work to the best of your ability. Organise your time so that you allow time to finish the assignment, leave it for a few days and then return to it to finalise it.

7. Academic writing

Academic writing starts with understanding the question that you have been asked to answer. Even if you think you know the answer to a question, never rush in – you may be missing something!! First deconstruct the question. Deconstructing the question should be done before starting on detailed background reading and note-taking.

Lecturers, when posing assignments/examinations generally adhere to a set formula containing these three key elements:

1. Subject.
2. Focus.
3. Command Words.

Deconstructing a question means identifying the subject, focus and command words.

1. Subject/Topic
This relates to the general topic or theme of the course. Start off by asking yourself 'What's the question about?' and 'From which topic in the course does it come?' Often the subject is not explicit in the wording of the question.

2. Focus/Angle
This is the crucial part. The focus must be identified or you could be in danger of not answering the question. Ask yourself 'In what part of the topic/subject are they particularly interested?' Often the focus is not explicit either! It may be implicit and therefore you need to look more deeply before you feel confident you have understood what the question is really asking.

3. Command Words
It is important that you understand exactly what the command words mean.

These are some of the typical command words you will encounter:

- Compare.
- Contrast.
- Describe.
- Examine.

The meaning of command words

Account (for)	**see "explain"**
Analyse	**is the ability to break a problem down into manageable parts and select relevant/valid information**
Appraise	**See "evaluate"**
Assess	**To weigh-up or judge to what extent conditions are fulfilled**
Categorise	**Group phenomena together using some standard**
Comment	**Brief expression of opinion**
Compare	**Examine the similarities and differences between two of more objects, ideas or processes**
Consider	**Think over; ponder on; reflect on, perhaps by drawing upon theory to help the process**
Contrast	**Point out differences between**
Criticise/Critically Analyse	**Point out defects; pass judgements; show errors**
Define	**Show clearly the outlines of; give the precise meaning of (in many places the word 'list' could be used in place of 'define')**
Describe	**A detailed account**
Differentiate	**Recognise differences between**
Discuss	**Argue the case for and against. Detailed writing required**
Distinguish (between)	**Make clear the differences between one 'thing' and another**
Evaluate	**Make a judgement based on evidence and criteria**
Examine	**Scrutinise; investigate; or inspect carefully**
Explain	**Make clear or intelligible; illustrate the meaning of; account for**
Illustrate	**Make clear; explain by means of examples**
Indicate	**Show; point out; make known; reveal**
Interpret	**Using your own expertise, explain the meaning of; or assign significance to**
Judge	**Give an opinion or decision based on evidence**
Justify	**Show to be true, right or reasonable; give reason to**
Outline	**Brief general description or summary without detail**
Present	**Declare plainly or in detail**
Prove	**To confirm or verify; establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experimental evidence**
Reflect	**Think over; ponder on; consider; perhaps by drawing upon theory to help the process;**
Relate	**Tell a story, describe**

Show	**Reveal; disclose; reveal by logical sequence**
State	**Declare plainly or in detail**
Suggest	**Propose ideas, or solutions, or reasons**
Summarise	**Make a brief statement of the main points**
Trace	**Explain stage by stage**
Verify	**Show to be true**

Essay writing

An essay contains three main parts: the introduction; main body (which is divided into a number of paragraphs); and conclusion.

The introduction to an essay is very important. An introduction acts as a guide to your reader. It is like a map. After having read your introduction, the reader should have a fair idea of what is coming up.

Important guidelines for an introduction

The introduction to an essay is very important. An introduction acts as a guide to your reader. It is like a map. After having read your introduction, the reader should have a fair idea of what is coming up. In your own words tell the reader what the question requires. This helps the reader adjust to the topic being discussed. Try to avoid posing a number of questions related to the essay question. Whereas it is important to identify these underlying questions in the planning phase of your essay, it can be frustrating to the reader to be posed questions without any obvious point to it.

- Never promise in the introduction to cover an issue, then fail to fulfil your promise. Too many essays start with grand introductions claiming to address a whole range of issues, but often fail to deliver!
- Write the introduction after you have written the essay. In this way you will have some idea of what you are introducing! Some students start with a 'working' introduction that gets ditched once the essay has been written and a better introduction can be substituted.
- Don't be timid. Introductions which state, 'This essay will attempt to explain', give the impression you don't know what you are writing about. Immediately the reader is sceptical of your work.
- Two tips to get you started writing an introduction: i) summarise each paragraph of your essay into one sentence. String the sentences together and you have a start. Or, ii) take your essay plan and string it together with words. However, beware: introductions which read 'This essay will first. . . Then it will . . . Finally it will show that . . .' may lack subtlety and flair.
- Look at introductions to research papers in your subject area to gain an impression of the style used.

Paragraphs

A simple paragraph is made up of three parts:

- Idea or concept is presented.
- Idea or concept is developed with evidence presented to support idea.
- Summing up and link to next paragraph or section.

Paragraphs should not be stand-alone bits of information. To check whether your paragraphs are working, ask yourself at the end of the paragraph:

- So what?
- How does this information help me answer the question?
- Have I made it clear how this information relates to the question?

Conclusions

The conclusion is a summing up of the essay. Never be tempted to add a new idea in the conclusion. It is more than a one-sentence summing up. It may well be a quarter or third of your essay. Exactly what is in your conclusion depends on the nature of the question.

Writing a Scientific Report

This section will help you with science writing at university, particularly science reports, which are an important element of science degrees. It is important for you to develop your skills in written and oral communication throughout your academic study. If you progress to the Honours year of a degree, then you will be required to complete a laboratory project or literature dissertation. Learning how to write academically will help you in learning how to produce a good dissertation as well as equipping you with valuable written communication skills for use in the workplace.

It's worth also noting that these are general guidelines and your university or lecturer may have a procedure that they prefer. Always consult your course handbook, look online or speak to your lecturer to find out how written work should be presented. Additionally, make sure that you attend course inductions as you may learn this type of information here.

Also contained in this section is information on referencing and plagiarism; how to avoid it and adhere to standards of academic honesty. It is important that your work is as accurate as possible and that other people's work is properly acknowledged. This will all come with practice!

In the lab

In your science degree, you will have quite a bit of time to spend carrying out experiments in the lab. You may have a lab partner and a lab book with instructions on how to carry out your experiments. Your lecturer will be in the lab so you can ask questions and there may also be some postgraduate student "laboratory demonstrators" for further assistance. You will take measurements and make observations on what happens during your experiment and have to collate these results in the format of a report, which is graded and counts towards your degree.

Here are some tips on how to get the most out of your lab sessions:

- Plan ahead – most lecturers ask that you read up on your experiment before your lab session. This will ensure that you understand why you are doing the experiment and what you need to do during your practical.
- Prepare well – make sure that you are well organised and have everything organised and set up before you commence.
- Safe and tidy scientists - try to be as tidy as possible by keeping your bench in order and observe health and safety protocol.
- Record results- have a lab results book for each subject and record all results here. Make them clear enough for you to understand when you come to writing your report.
- Write your report as soon as possible after your lab session when what you carried out is fresh in your mind.

Structure and Content of the Science report

Scientific reports have the same basic structure. These are:

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods and Materials
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

It is worth bearing in mind that different lecturers may have a specific structure that they prefer, for example, a shorter report structure: (title), aims, methods, results, and discussion. This is often referred to as AMRAD.

The sections of a science report, which do not necessarily need to be arranged in order, are as follows:

Title

This should accurately reflect the contents of the report and be as concise as possible. The titles of science reports are purely descriptive. For example: "The effects of pulsed ultraviolet light on pathogenic water-related microorganisms".

Abstract

This should be a summary of the whole report. It should be brief, but contain all pertinent information. It should say what you did, why you did it and what the outcome was. As a rule of thumb, a passing reader should be able to find out what the research was and what the important results were just from the abstract. Often the abstract takes longer than expected to write and is the hardest bit to get right. Some people leave it until last to write.

Introduction

This is to introduce the reader to the background and theory behind your experiment; put your work in context here. What is the history of your work? What was the point of doing the experiment? What were you hoping to measure/find out? How does this piece of work fit into what is already known. This section is often replaced with an Aims section if your lecturer prefers a shorter report.

Methods and materials

This is what you did, step by step. What exactly were you measuring and how did you do it? Did you vary some parameters? Describe the experimental set-up as appropriate and remember the value of a diagram. Give enough detail so that someone else would be able to reproduce it accurately. This is usually the easiest section to write and can be a good place to start.

Results

What are your results? Again, the exact format will depend on the type of measurements you were making. In general don't give screeds of raw data unless they are particularly meaningful. Sometimes one of the hardest aspects of doing research is deciding what to do with huge amounts of data. Use tables and/or graphs, properly labelled, as appropriate and remember to refer to them in the body of the report and sum up in words too. Do not be tempted to try to go into what your results mean. This happens in the discussion.

Discussion

This is where you describe what your results mean, for example, "The results show that the microorganisms were inactivated by the ultraviolet light". If there is more than one interpretation, then give both/all. You may reason that one is more likely than the other, but you must say why you think that.

How does this fit in with what is already known, does it agree/disagree with other research? Can you think of why (if you can't say so)? Could you do anything to improve your future research and what are your recommendations for future research? What would you want to find out next?

Conclusion

Sum up your conclusions. You shouldn't be introducing any new thoughts or background at this point. Just sum up the results and how well this agreed with or contradicted what you were expecting.

References

You must cite all and any references that you use. This is vital to permit the work to be academically verified.

Graphs, charts and tables

To best present the data gathered during your experiment, you may need to construct graphs, charts and tables. This will enable a reader to understand and view your results easily. Graphs and charts can be drawn by hand but most students choose to do this on a computer. All graphs and tables should be labelled accordingly and referred to in the text of your report.

How to construct a simple table:

- Click on "Table" on the Microsoft Word menu at the top of the page
- Then click on Insert table, then select the number of columns and rows
- You can customise your table by clicking on AutoFormat
- Click OK to insert table (adjust column with by clicking and dragging)

Table 1: Sample number and concentration of glucose

Sample	Glucose concentration (g/ml)
0	0
1	4.6
2	10.4
3	15.3
4	18.6
5	25.2

How to construct a graph or chart:

- Open Microsoft Excel
- Enter the data on the grid (as in the table above, but with no headings)

- Highlight all numbers with the mouse, then click on Chart Wizard
- Follow steps 1 to 4 then copy and paste graph into word document

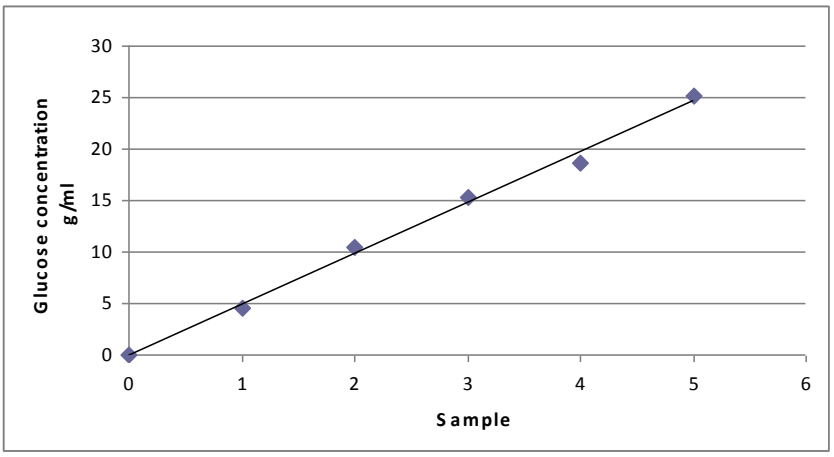

Figure 1: Graph of glucose concentration for samples 1 to 5

After completing your graph, whilst still in the Excel programme, you can edit and alter your graph by double clicking on the different areas of the graph. You can also edit the graph once you have pasted it into a word document if you have pasted it as an Excel object. Use the paste special function to select what you would like to paste your object in as.

Here are some further tips on presenting tables/graphs in your work:

- Tables and figures should be numbered sequentially
- The title of a table or figure should usually be placed above it and should be brief, but fully describe the information contained in it
- Pay attention to the font type and size within the table of graph
- Headings and subheadings should be concise with columns and rows of data centred below them
- Generally, the data presented in tables should not be repeated in figures
- If your graph has a legend, it is often most practical to place this at the bottom of the figure if possible
- Check with the style of plotting your lecturer prefers. Some prefer best fit, XY scatter or line through every point etc. For a best fit line graph, double click on the line and select “Type”, the select “Linear”.

As you use Excel more, you will learn to use the package more extensively and confidently. If you have any problems; you can use the help function, ask a fellow classmate or search Google for tutorials. Furthermore, your university should run courses on using Excel for students.

Referencing

When writing your science essay, report or dissertation, you will refer to books, various types of articles and journal papers for the information used within your work. In Science, this is usually carried out by summarising and rewording (paraphrasing). Quoting in inverted commas is rarely used in Science.

When you cite information from external sources, you should refer to the source in your text and provide a references section (bibliography) at the end of your work.

Learning to use referencing in your academic writing is important for a number of reasons:

- To support your arguments and add credibility to them.
- To acknowledge the source of the ideas or information.
- To allow the reader to trace your sources.
- To avoid accusations of plagiarism.
- To gain better marks in essays, reports and exams.

There are two main systems used for the citation of references, so check with your department for their preference. The two main systems are Harvard (alphabetical author and date system) and Vancouver (a numerical system).

Harvard

Sources are listed alphabetically by author and date in the references section and in the body of the text when using the Harvard section. All sources should be listed alphabetically in your references section at the end of your essay or report.

Within text

Smith (2007) performed experiments to assess the effects of pulsed electric fields on different types of bacteria.

Gram positive bacteria have thicker cell walls than Gram negative bacteria (Thomson 2006).

Reference section

Journal:

Smith, M. (2007). "Effect of pulsed electric fields on bacteria" in *Journal of Bacteriology* **55**, pp1-10.

Book:

Thomson, W. (2006.) *Microbiology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vancouver

In the Vancouver system, a number is given to each reference as it is used (even if the author is named in your text). The number of the reference is used each time the reference is cited in the text. The first reference you cite will be numbered [1] and the second reference you cite will be [2] and so on. If you refer to 1 again, you will cite it [1] throughout the text. List all sources in numerical order in your references section.

Within text

Pulsed electric fields were shown to be lethal to all bacteria [1] but more so to Gram negative bacteria. This may be because Gram positive bacteria have thicker cell walls than Gram negative bacteria [2].

Reference section

Journal:

1. Smith M, Effect of Pulsed Electric Fields on Bacteria, Journal of Bacteriology, 2007, Volume 55, pp1-10.

Book:

2. Thomson W, Microbiology, Chapter 2, Oxford Press, ISBN 122890998, 2008.

Using the internet

Other than books and paper copies of journals, you may also use the internet as a resource for finding the information you might need for your university work. However, you must bear in mid the reliability of these sources. For example, references using Wikipedia are discouraged, although you may use this type of website as a starting point for your research. You should use websites of reputable agencies, government organisations or publications online instead.

Journals online

If you use a journal paper online as a source, you should site the reference like this:

J. R. Beveridge, S. J. MacGregor, L. Marsili, J. G. Anderson, N. J. Rowan, and O. Farish. (2003). Comparison of Biphase and Monophase Pulses for the Inactivation of Microorganisms Using Pulsed Electric Fields. IEEE Transactions in Plasma Science 30, 1525-1531. ieeexplore.ieee.org/iel5/27/26334/x0622141.pdf

Articles on websites

If you use an article on a (reliable) website you should cite the reference like this:

Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2008. Radioactivity in the Environment, 2006. Available at http://www.sepa.org.uk/pdf/publications/rife/rife12.pdf. [Accessed 1st November 2008].

More information on referencing can be found on your University website and you can also contact your Effective Learning Service or Centre for Academic Practice for more information and workshops.

Plagiarism

The work submitted by yourself towards your degree is taken to be of your own work. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at university and carries harsh penalties (before and after you graduate). Some universities even use software to check for plagiarism (e.g. Turnitin) when assessing your work, so it is worth familiarising yourself with your chosen university's plagiarism statement.

Plagiarism is the submission of work, which is not your own, without acknowledging the sources of the material. Plagiarism can also mean one student copying another student's work or improper collaboration.

Plagiarism could be:

- Copying or exact transcription.
- Unacknowledged quotations.
- Too similar paraphrasing.
- Summary of a source with no reference.

When you are writing an essay, report or dissertation, always remember to make reference to your sources in the text and in your references section. In exams, if you have learned a passage word for word, you should also acknowledge the source.

Other tips

Here are some additional tips to help you produce well written work:

- You should remind yourself that practice makes perfect and that if you understand something in your head; it can take a few attempts before you communicate this in writing effectively in the appropriate academic style.
- Make good use of a thesaurus or scientific dictionary. You do not have to buy them; you can use the thesaurus on Word or find one online. Your library will also have some that you can borrow.
- Sometimes, it may be useful to write your work in the way that you might say it and then go over each passage you write replacing informal language with academic words. For example, you can replace "I noticed that" with "it was observed that".
- You should avoid the use of "I" in your academic work. Instead of writing, "In this report I will discuss" try "this report discusses" and so on.
- Conceptual categories are useful for organising the content of your work. Conceptual categories are found in many places where things have to be organised; e.g. in a music shop music is arranged into genres and in your video shop, films are arranged into drama, horror sci-fi etc so that you can find what you're looking for quickly. Your written work can also be arranged into categories, paragraph by paragraph, and presented in a logical order so that a reader can understand your work easily.
- Always consider the reader! Think of how you would understand your writing if you were reading it for the first time, or even if you knew nothing about the subject. One way communication can be more difficult than you think: just think about a favourite food recipe that you make without thinking about it, and then try to describe it to someone who has never cooked it before. If you make your work clear, concise and easy to understand, this may also help towards better grades!

With perseverance, you will become a confident academic communicator and will take these skills with you from university to the workplace. Remember, help is always at hand, and your university has learning support for academic skills.

Effective Learning Advisers are in place at your university to help you develop your skills. You can attend workshops, one to one sessions and lectures on a range of areas, for example, note taking, essay and report writing, presentations and effective reading.

Effective Learning Websites

Have a look at the following university student learning service web pages for more information:

- University of Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Napier University
- Heriot-Watt University
- Queen Margaret University
- University of Dundee
- Abertay University
- University of St Andrews
- University of Stirling

It's also worth remembering that there are many study skills resources on the internet and alternatively you can buy or borrow books on study skills.

Dissertations

It seems a long way off, but your fourth year at university will be here before you know it! In fourth year, you will have to complete a dissertation that can make up to a third of your honours grade, having a considerable effect on what class of degree you achieve. You may also have to complete a poster of your work and/or a presentation of your project (see presentations section for advice on this!).

This final section will not go into great detail on dissertations, but will summarise each of them, so that when you find yourself in fourth year, faced with a dissertation, you'll have been introduced to what you have to do.

Your honours year should be a very busy, but satisfying and enjoyable year, where you will still attend lectures and sit exams (exams are usually all at the end of your final term) but you will also complete a dissertation. You will find that your timetable is less busy than in previous years; this is to provide you with time to complete your dissertation.

There are usually three types of dissertation that you can undertake, which are:

- Lab-based project.
- Literature review.
- Enterprise project.

For any of the above, you will have to choose from a range of different projects devised by your lecturers (if you come up with any ideas by yourself, you may be able to devise your own project). You must not delay in choosing your dissertation as there is often competition for the best projects, furthermore, the students who obtained the best marks in third year often have first choice! It is worth bearing this in mind!

Take note of who is supervising your project. Do you relate to this lecturer; are they student-focussed; do you enjoy their subject area? Do not be put off by doing a lab project if you are not sure of some of the lab techniques used, as when you go to work in the lab, the technicians and postgraduate students who work there will provide you with training. If you are thinking about doing a postgraduate degree, then choose wisely, because it is likely that you will focus in this area in the future.

Lab-based project

Lab projects are especially good to undertake if you would like to work practically after you graduate. If you choose to do a lab-based project, then you will spend quite a bit of time in the lab performing experiments. You will have guidance from your supervisor and help will be at hand in the lab from technicians (who usually know vast amounts about the work) and other postgraduate students (who can be extremely helpful). So it's a good idea to get to know these people!

Make sure you record your results as you go and it's probably best to write up as you go too! Think of it as a larger scientific report. It will have the same categories as explained previously, but the introduction is called "literature review". You will have to read about other work done in the same area and write about the background of your subject area here. Besides books, reading material is usually in the form of scientific journal papers that have been published in journal articles. Your supervisor may give you some articles to get you started and you can search online, in the library, and in Athens and BIDS (and other journal resources) for relevant papers. Your library should provide courses on how to do this if you are unsure.

The rest of your project will be, as said before, a large scientific report, which you should be well acquainted with by this time. It is best to work on your dissertation continuously in small sections. Always speak to your supervisor of Effective Learning Adviser if you have any concerns.

Literature Project

If you would like to work in science communication when you graduate, then a literature review might be good experience. If you choose to do a literature project then this will entail much reading about your subject area, organising this knowledge and information and writing about it chapter by chapter. As with the literature section in the lab project, you will have to read and write about the work of your subject area here. You will mostly use journal papers and books for this so make good use of online searches, the library, and Athens and BIDS journal resources for relevant papers. Remember to enrol on a course at the library or speak to your Effective Learning Adviser if you need some advice on how to do this.

Enterprise project

Some universities offer enterprise projects to students who are interested in business and enterprise in science. These are mostly done in collaboration with a small group of students and a scientific company. At the beginning of the academic year, you will have to attend an introductory course (possibly at another university) on these projects and have to do some group work with other students. You will then be split up into groups and be given a project. It is up to you to meet with your group and complete the necessary work. Again, you will have to do some background reading and write a detailed enterprise dissertation as specified by your department. You would write up your project independently and possibly complete a group presentation. Help will be at hand from your supervisor and from someone from the business department of your university.

Need help?

With all of the project types, if you need further help, then always speak to your supervisor, who you should be meeting with throughout your study or alternatively, make an appointment with an Effective Learning Adviser at your student learning service.

8. Feedback and evaluation

Sometimes students pay little heed to the critical comments the tutor makes on a piece of work. Yet in many ways this is even more important than the mark or grade you receive. If there are a lot of very negative comments, coupled with a poor mark or grade, you must take some action and make an appointment to see your tutor immediately unless there is a good reason for your poor performance. Remember that your tutor makes these comments as a way of helping you. Read them over carefully, make a note of any you do not understand and action those you do understand.

9. Exams

Are you terrified of examinations? This is a common worry, especially among mature students, so you are not alone. The secret of success is to confront any fears you have and to devise ways of overcoming them.

Exercise 5

Take the test below, but don't rely too much on the answers!

		Yes	No
1	When I start to study for an exam, I find lots of things to distract me.		

2	No matter how much work I do, I am sure to do badly in an exam.
3	I do much better in essays and assignments than in examinations.
4	I find it difficult to sleep the night before an exam.
5	When I start an exam I find my mind goes blank
6	When I am in the exam room I experience symptoms such as an upset stomach, a fast heart rate, a headache or other bad feelings
7	Although I know the information, I find it difficult to organise the material once I am in the exam room.
8	I find it difficult to get all the questions finished within the time allocated for the exam.
9	When the exam is over, I suddenly realise all the things I should have written.

Give yourself 2 points for each no and deduct 1 for each yes.

If you have a low score in this exercise, don't worry. Many people lack confidence in their ability to cope with examinations, especially if their school experience of examinations has left them unhappy. Have a look at the suggestions on the next page.

Points to consider from the previous exercise

Think of examinations in three stages: before, during and after. You can rid yourself of some of your fears but remember that, as with acting a part on stage, some adrenaline is needed for a good performance.

Before you start:

- Have you a suitable place for study? While not every home can offer a separate study, try to find a quiet corner that is yours for the duration of your course. If that is impossible, schedule in time at the local library. University facilities can often be oversubscribed, especially at exam time.
- Think about what you know, not about what you don't know. The trick in examinations is to maximise the information you have.
- Get a good night's sleep if you can or at least a good rest. Eat well. Don't depend on coffee to keep you alert.

The exam:

- Arrive in good time, but not too early. If you arrive too early you will be involved in the mass hysteria that seems to prevail when students gather before an exam.
- Before you enter the exam room and as soon as you sit down, take a few deep breaths.
- If you feel yourself panicking during the exam, sit back for a moment or two, close your eyes and breathe deeply.
- Don't worry about what others around you are doing. Just concentrate on doing your best.

After the exam:

- As soon as you leave the exam hall, try to forget all about it. Though this is easier said than done, realise that almost everyone feels there is additional information they could have offered.

- When you get your results, congratulate yourself on any successes and learn from any failures.

Keywords in exam questions

It is important to understand the keywords in any examination. These point you directly to the way in which you should structure your answer to the question.

Exercise 6

Look at the examples below and try to say what each one means. Then look at the suggestions on the next page.

1. If you are asked to **analyse**.

2. If you are asked to **compare**.

3. If you are asked to **contrast**.

4. If you are asked to **describe**.

5. If you are asked to **evaluate**.

If you are asked to **explain**.

Some suggestions for the keywords exercise.

Analyse

To answer a question asking you to analyse, you must break the topic down into parts and show how all the parts relate to each other (e.g. *Analyse the components which make a healthy meal*).

Compare

To answer a question asking you to compare, you must show how two (minimum) parts/items/themes have both similarities and differences (e.g. *Compare the climates of North and South America*).

Contrast

To answer a question asking you to contrast, you must demonstrate how two or more items/themes are different (e.g. *Contrast methods of farming in France and Britain*).

Describe

To answer a question asking you to describe, you must give very detailed information on the topic/theme (e.g. *Describe the features of an Egyptian tomb*).

Evaluate

To answer the question asking you to evaluate, you must present arguments both for and against the topic/theme (e.g. *Evaluate the impact of climate change on Africa*).

Explain

To answer a question asking you to explain, you must give all the necessary facts to make the topic/theme easy to understand (e.g. *Explain the reasons for the First World War*).

Trace

To answer the question asking you to trace, you must present the facts of the topic/theme in the sequence in which they happened (e.g. *Trace the development of aeroplane design 1920-1960*).

10. Remembering things

Using mnemonics and acronyms

It is important that you devise ways to help you remember information easily and effectively. Here is an example of a mnemonic rhyme:

> Columbus sailed the ocean blue
> in fourteen hundred and ninety two.

Mnemonics or acronyms are ways in which you can help your memory to perform more effectively. While you may not be able to aspire to remembering everything in rhyme form, you should be able to devise some memory tricks of your own.

Exercise 7

Healthy Food

We are all encouraged to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Among the healthiest fruits are the following: apples, raspberries, pears, grapefruit, apricots, plums.

My acronym is: _____

There is a suggested answer on page 19.

Exercise 7

Suggested acronym: **GRAPPA** (**G**rapefruit, **r**aspberries, **a**pples, **p**ears, **p**lums, **a**pricots).

It's also a very strong, and very good, Italian spirit.

11. Top tips

Lectures

1. Be prepared

- Before the lecture – be prepared. These points will help you to familiarise yourself with the topic, terminology, and language of the lecture enabling easier note-making.
- Read the lecture synopsis.
- Read the appropriate reading materials, making notes.
- At a suitable time before the lecture, read your notes.
- Read the notes from the previous lecture.

2. Listen

- During the lecture – listen. Listening is an important activity for making notes; having done step 1 above; you will be more in tune with the lecture, therefore listening and note-making are easier.
- Make sure that you have a seat where you can see and hear the lecturer.
- Avoid distractions: sitting at the front of the room often helps with this.
- Pay attention – you only have this opportunity to hear/see this lecture.
- Listen and look for signals e.g. "This may be useful for your assignment", "There are 4 main points in this . . ."
- If a point is repeated it usually means that it is very important.
- Make sure that you copy anything that is put on the board/overhead projector – this may not be in handouts.
- Make sure that any points you are confused with, or didn't understand, are clarified. Ask questions.

3. Do not doodle

This is a distracter and breaks concentration.

4. Organise

- Organise your notes.
- Separate folders for each course.
- Label, number and date all pages.

5. Highlight

Highlight important information

6. Use abbreviations

Use abbreviations – be consistent.

7. Use symbols

- To indicate if you don't understand something: ?

- To indicate something you want to find out more about: !!!
- To indicate something that you want to incorporate into an assignment, or something that you agree with: √

8. Review your notes

- After the lecture, review your notes.
- Combine the notes from the previous reading materials with the notes you have made during the lecture.
- Keep one set of good notes.
- File other notes away.

Combining your notes is not copying your notes; by having a set of complete notes, you will have notes that make sense when you retrieve them later. Reviewing your notes also helps to move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. You are also starting to revise for assignments, essays and exams.

9. Share notes

Share notes with others in your class. You may have something important in your notes that others may not have and vice versa.

10. Listening and note-making are skills

The more you practise, the more skilled you will become.

Tutorials

1. Be prepared

You will find the topics for tutorials usually listed in the course handbook while example sheets may be given out in lectures or may be found on your course area on your university's virtual learning environment. This means that you are expected to do preparatory reading or complete some example sheets before the tutorial.

2. Make links

The tutorial system relates to the content of the lecture programme but sometimes they do not necessarily tie in sequentially with each other. This means that it is important that you identify the links between tutorials, additional reading and assignments.

3. Think ahead

What issues might arise on the chosen topic and what is your view on these? If you have examples to do, don't just do the easy ones, but aim to do the more difficult ones so that you can discuss any difficulties with your tutor or demonstrator.

4. Participate

Some people are not hesitant about voicing their views or about asking questions. Others are often reluctant to do so. If you are one of the former, remember that participating in a tutorial can often mean listening as well as speaking. If you are more reluctant to speak, recognise that your ideas are just as valid as the next person's and that you are just as entitled to voice them as anyone else. The more diffident student may often be the one with the best ideas, so speak out!

5. Stick to the tutorial topic

Sometimes students have queries about the lecture programme and want to discuss these in the tutorial. If you have such a query, then make an appointment to discuss it with the appropriate lecturer or send your query as an email. Most lecturers welcome this demonstration of interest in the course and will give you some guidance or refer you to a printed source in the course.

6. Involve others
Sometimes you may feel that you're doing all the work – or talking – and others may be more than willing to let you take on that burden. Involve peers by asking someone else for their opinion or asking a question of the tutorial leader. Think about how you might phrase this – "Maybe someone else has a different/similar view?" or "What do you think about this, so and so?"

7. Take notes
The tutorial is an opportunity to explore topics in greater detail than covered in the lecture. Therefore, your tutorial notes can feed into your assignments or later exam revision. If you ensure that you title and date them, you will have a ready resource to file alongside the lecture notes.

8. Contributing to the discussion
Tutorial discussion can become heated. However, it is important to remember that you are learning how to discuss issues objectively and should not take contradiction from either a college or the tutorial leader as a personal slight. The purpose of debate is to train students to present their viewpoints with a sound argument supported by evidence – and someone who is critical of your viewpoint may simply be exploring the issue from other directions as a kind of devil's advocate.

9. Assessment
If you are asked a direct question on the topic, would you be able to answer it? Your participation in tutorials, or the worked examples you need to complete in them – may contribute to your assessment. This means that it is important to contribute to the discussion as this will be monitored – just being there is not enough.

10. Developing skills
Recognise that the skills you need for tutorials translate into employment skills. For example, participating in case conferences, meetings with clients and planning meetings within an organisation. This is your chance to hone your skills for the future.

Research

1. Ask questions all the time
What do you know? What do you need to know more about? What do you not know? Never stop asking questions. Treat your research like explorers treat their journeys – always looking around them, picking up new information, thinking about where next to head. So you can use your questions to ask yourself how much you are understanding and what you need to research next to help you complete your coursework tasks.

2. Is what you're reading relevant? Will it help you answer your questions?
There might be times when you can read about the subjects you are studying for personal pleasure and take your time over it – enjoy those moments. More familiar might be the times when you have a deadline pressing and you can't afford to read anything that won't be directly useful. Think as you research whether or not what you are reading is helping you. Have you answered your questions about that aspect of the topic? Do you know enough about it for now to move on? What new questions do you have as a result of what you have read?

3. Who is the author? Can you trust him/her?
Another question to ask about your research sources is whether or not you can trust them. You need to be sure that the author is trustworthy. Information on sites such as Wikipedia, for example, is not to be relied upon as it may not be objective. One way of testing this is to check the other things you are reading to find out whether or not other authors you have been reading reference them.

4. Why was it written? Who was the intended audience? What's the author's agenda?
Another test for whether you can trust an author is to ask whether they had hidden motives for what they were writing. That's less likely with academic sources that have been reviewed by other academics before publication, but still not impossible.

5. When was it written? And is it still up to date?
Some of the subjects you will study develop fast so how recently the source was published is important to know. Is it still relevant? Are there new angles on the subject that you should also be finding out about?

6. Is every argument backed up by facts or are they just assertions?
It can be easy to trust every author you read simply because they write convincingly. Don't let yourself take that easy route. Be bold and challenge what you are reading. Why do you agree/disagree with it? What reasons do you have? How can you defend those reasons?

7. Have you understood everything?
If not, what can you do to fill in the gaps?

8. Has it answered all your questions?
What were you hoping to achieve when you started your research? How much of that have you managed? For the questions you started out with, how many are still to be answered? Are they worth continuing with?

9. What new questions do you have?
The questions you started with were just that – starting points. Now your research has told you much more about the subject you are exploring, what new questions do you have? How can you try to answer them?

10. Think for yourself. Don't just repeat other people's ideas.
Having the chance to think for yourself and present your own ideas can be one of the great things about higher education. Enjoy that opportunity and make the most of it. Sadly that can also be one of the hardest things. It takes a lot of hard work before you can know enough to come up with some good ideas that require more time and effort through research to test. Work hard.

Presentations

1. Be prepared
Think about what you have been asked to do in terms of time. Research the topic and then brainstorm the points that you feel apply to the focus of your presentation. Construct a running order for these and then begin to flesh out what you would like to say on each point.

2. Make links
You need to think about how you will map the presentation for your listeners. You need to think about how you will frame the introduction and create links throughout your talk so that it flows

naturally and logically from point to point. Work on a strong ending that summarises your points to ensure that you don't end with a weak "That's all I have to say!"

3. Stick to the topic
It is tempting to provide background information and sometimes this can be at the expense of the time you can devote to the key points you wish to make. It is better to make a conscious decision to assume some foundation knowledge on the part of your listeners and concentrate on the key points of your argument or appraisal of the topic.

4. Write/print out script
Speaking without notes is an approach that is loaded with risk. It is better to have put your ideas on paper and then practised how you might deliver this text, thinking about pauses, phrasing, intonation and expression.

5. Practise
It is important that you are aware of how long your presentation takes to deliver and so you should practise this against the clock. Bearing in mind that most people speak faster when under stress, edit or expand your written notes.

6. Create cue cards or short notes
Simply reading out a script does not make for an interesting or enlivened delivery. Try condensing what you say to notes on cue cards that allow you to sound more natural in your delivery.

7. Practise again
With a friend, practise again using the cue cards and timing yourself as you do so.
It is not generally a good idea to try to memorise your written script because it is too easy to lose the place if you are nervous, but if you practise thoroughly you should become so familiar with your material that the cue cards will be enough to act as prompts for your presentation.

8. Read your audience
If you smile at the audience as you introduce yourself and your topic, they will warm to you and you to them. Establishing this rapport at the outset is a critical element of successful presentations. You can do this also by asking the audience a question, by relating your topic to an earlier presentation or by narrating a personal experience.

9. Speak clearly
Not everyone in your audience may have perfect hearing; some may be speakers of other languages. Sometimes external noise or poor acoustics can inhibit people's ability to hear the speaker, so it is particularly important that you speak clearly and precisely in standard English so that your message is received by all.

10. Assessment and developing skills
Making presentations is a skill that develops with practice and experience. Take every opportunity to gain that experience and you will find that, as your confidence grows, your competence will increase and this will be reflected in your assessment marks.

Revision

1. Get yourself organised

The key to successful revision is to be fully aware of what your course is about – this means that you need to have a full set of lecture notes, handouts and notes from your own supplementary reading. Once you have all that in place, then you are ready to begin.

2. Make links
Go to the past exam papers (possibly available in your library or online) and identify the style of questions, the topics that frequently come up and match these against the learning objectives (or outcomes) of your course and the time devoted to these topics in the lecture programme. Make a list of these topics and identify which you have covered in tutorials or assignments. From this list select the topics that you intend to revise, making sure that you have some topics 'in reserve' so that, should your favourite topics not come up, you still have options open to you.

3. Think ahead
Create a blank timetable of the time you have before your exam. Working backwards from the date of your exam, plot in other commitments and then block in the time that you have available to cover your chosen topics. Be sure to leave some time for daily things such as eating, shopping and relaxing.

4. Revising
For some people, revision is a chore that quickly becomes boring and unproductive. To ensure that you are engaged with what you are trying to learn, you might think about reducing your lecture notes, handouts and other materials to short notes. Alternatively, you might think of taping your notes and listening to these as you travel or do other things when you are not studying. Much of this will depend on your favoured natural learning style.

5. Think about 'double' questions
Sometimes exam questions draw on more than one topic from the lecture course, so it is important to think about logical connections, comparisons or contrasts that just might ask you to cover two topics in a single question. For example a question such as "Consider whether Napoleon's contribution to the French legal system outweighed his contribution to France's international power" requires an understanding of both the legal code and international policies.

6. Involve others
Some people find that discussing the topics with friends doing the same course by quizzing each other can be a useful way of imprinting the ideas in their minds. Family members act as oral examiners. Voicing your answers can provide a rehearsal for the exam and this kind of activity also makes those around you feel less distanced from your activities.

7. Practise planning answers
Working out plans for potential questions is a good revision tactic. It not only helps you to work out logical connections between the points of an argument or the sequence of operations you might need to perform in the exam, but it also helps you to do this quickly and efficiently in the exam. Sometimes you will receive a mark or two for the plan if you have been unable to finish an answer but seem to have been writing on the right lines.

8. Work out the timings
Before the exam, work out exactly how much time that you will have to answer each question, ensuring that you take into account time needed for reading the question, doing a brief plan, writing your answer and checking it afterwards.

9. Practise writing answers

Many students find that they have difficulty writing to a time limit so it is worthwhile trying to write your answer against the clock. You need to discipline yourself not to write beyond the allotted span of time as you won't be able to overrun beyond the end of the allocated time on the day.

10. Specialist terms
While marks may not be deducted for misspelling of general vocabulary, you may find that penalties are imposed if you misspell subject-specific words. For example, a politics student would be expected to know how to spell "government" or a biology student would be expected to know how to spell "mitochondrion."

Exams

1. Be prepared
Check out the date, time and location of the exam. Make sure that you know how long it will take to travel to the exam hall, where you can park (if necessary) and that you have all the necessary equipment such as pens, calculators, highlighters and watch.

2. Think ahead
Rehearse the time that you can allocate to each question on the paper and have prepared plans for potential questions (See Tips for Revision). Be sure that you know what format the exam takes – essay answers, worked examples, multiple choice questions, short answer questions or open book.

3. Think positively
If you have worked at your revision and have practised well, then you should be confident in your ability to handle whatever the exam paper contains. If you have not prepared as well as you might, then this is the time to put your brain in gear and attempt to answer as fully as you can. Blank paper gains no marks and if you apply yourself, you may well be able to squeeze some marks even out of the most unlikely questions.

4. Confront your nerves
Even the best prepared student can be overcome by nerves. But nerves can also be a good thing; they can sharpen your senses and provide you with a focused frame of mind. Often the nerves diminish once the paper is turned over and you can see what you have to work on. If your favourite topics have not turned up, then take a deep breath and focus on the strongest alternatives on the paper. You may surprise yourself about what you know.

5. Making choices
Sometimes students are 'spoilt for choice' in that they are faced with many 'good' questions, all of which they feel they could answer well. A good way to make that choice is to give each question a score out of 5 (high) as a reflection of how strong they feel their answer would be on that question. Clearly, those that score highest are the ones to tackle.

6. Stick to the time plan
There is evidence that suggests that the marks you gain from spending extra time on one question are less than the marks you could gain from stopping that one on time and moving on to a new question.

7. Checking over your work
In the rush to get your thoughts on paper and to keep to the time limit, it is all too easy to make slips. Make an allowance of time in your time-plan for the exam to go over your answers and to

check for spelling and grammar mistakes, as well as factual and logical errors. Be sure that you have included all work and that you remember basics such as entering the units in your answer.

8. Being methodical

Do not be put off by others around you who have ripped straight into an answer. Take time to consider the question and to plan your answer so that it responds to that question and not the one you would have liked to have been asked.

9. Developing skills

Taking exams at university will eventually become routine and you may even begin to enjoy that feeling of being on top of your subject – that is, engaging in deep learning. However, it takes time to develop exam skills and you should welcome the chance to develop these skills as you work through your courses. While exemptions from exams are often welcome (and some students specifically adopt this as a strategy to avoid exams) in the long term, this means a missed opportunity at becoming a good examinee and this may have an impact on your performance in final year exams.

10. Assessment

Examination assessment should reflect the stated aims and objectives of the course. In some subjects, it may be possible to gain “full marks” that reflect the classification of degrees. You should be informed of how your exams will be marked and what the repercussions are if you do not perform satisfactorily and this may involve undertaking a re-sit examination.