

ST ANNE'S COLLEGE

Guide for students taking University Examinations

A copy of this Guide can also be found at

http://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/about/internal_resources.html

or

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/colleges/stannes/student/page/resources>

This short guide for those taking University Examinations is intended to offer advice for coping with revision and stress and to make clear some of the University Regulations relating to exams. We hope it will be useful whether you are an undergraduate or graduate with examinations as part of a taught course. If there are any questions you have remaining unanswered or suggestions for future editions of the Guide, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with the College Secretary. You will find a list of all the College members (JCR, MCR and SCR) who are ready and able to assist you at the end of this document.

We will be running informal 'support' sessions next term. Look out for the details on the noticeboards (Hartland House, MCR and RSH).

GOOD LUCK!

Revision Advice

- Take the time to discuss and plan your revision with your tutor(s).
- Consider the examinations as a job to be done, rather than ignoring them or being overwhelmed by them.
- Be in control of your work as well as your leisure time. Use a diary to plan revision sessions between now and the examinations. Remember to eat sensibly and to plan for relaxation too.
- A few sessions of quality work per day, with breaks, is much more beneficial than very long hours of unfocused reading.
- Optimum time for concentration is 20 - 40 minutes for reading. Take regular five-minute breaks to stretch, etc.
- Turn revision time from a passive exercise (absorbing information) to an active exercise (making notes and practising answering questions from past papers as well as reading).
- Back up work regularly, especially when working on extended essays etc.

Taking care of yourself

- Make sure you see your **doctor** *in advance* to discuss any *medical/medication needs* which are on-going.
- The **College Nurse** will discuss sleep problems and possible solutions, as well as anxiety and stress problems. She will also assist you with any queries you have about pre-existing conditions (e.g. managing diabetes and the like). Her **Practical Tips** are attached.
- **PLEASE seek out appropriate medical advice EARLY for any concerns you have.**
- Remember too we have an excellent College Counsellor, Mimi Kester.
- Do not study in your room until you are so tired you fall into bed. Always leave at least one hour of doing something entirely different and relaxing between finishing your studying and going to bed.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation as it dehydrates you and disrupts sleep. Do not increase use of caffeine.

Who you can turn to

- As well as the College Nurse and College Counsellor, you know you can contact the Senior Tutor and Assistant Deans, JCR and MCR Welfare Reps, Peer Supporters, Zoe Sparrowhawk for students with a registered disability, College Secretary and all other

College members whose **contact details are at the end of this guide**. You will also find their details on the Welfare Notice board in Hartland House, and on the posters displayed in the MCR and at RSH.

For further advice regarding **Coping with Revision and Exams** see the University's guidelines: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/revision.shtml>. For information about **relaxation techniques**: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/relax.shtml>.

Examinations in Oxford

University Examinations are centrally organised rather than organised by the College. Their conduct is governed by the *Examination Regulations*, published annually, and better known as the *Grey Book*. If you have lost yours see www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/. The Proctors have an important role in ensuring that these regulations are upheld. A wide range of matters need formal Proctoral approval, sought by the College on behalf of the individual student.

Each Divisional Board or other responsible body sets out the definitive syllabus in the *Examination Regulations*. They may also include general statements about the form of the exam papers and whether such aids as calculators and dictionaries may be used in the exam. Please note that these regulations change from time to time and so it's important to make sure you are up to date by checking the department website.

Past Papers

You may find it useful when revising to work through recent past exam papers. Past papers can be downloaded from the following webpage: <http://missun29.offices.ox.ac.uk/pls/oxam/main>. To access the site from home you need to set up a remote access account: <https://register.oucs.ox.ac.uk/self/index/>

Examiners' reports

The Examiners' Reports survey the general standard of candidates' exam scripts in previous years. They are a valuable resource as they highlight common errors made by students and pinpoint approaches which make for particularly strong answers. Examiners reports can often be found on Faculty or Departmental websites.

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if I haven't entered for my exam?

To check when the exam entry date for your subject is please see the following webpage: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/oxinly/entries/dates.pdf. If you realise that you haven't submitted an exam entry form by the due date then please contact the College Secretary as soon as possible. It is possible to submit an exam entry form late, but there is a minimum University fee of £40 for late entry. A couple of weeks after entry check that your options are correct in Student Self Service (on the University website).

What happens if I want to change the options entered on my exam entry form?

Please check the papers for which you have been entered by logging into Student Self Service: http://www.ox.ac.uk/current_students/index.html If there is a mistake please notify the College Secretary.

If you would like to change the options entered on your exam entry form then please contact the College Secretary. It will not always be possible to change options and where it is possible the University charges a minimum fee of £40.

What happens if there are problems with my exam timetable?

Special arrangements for exams, for example because of disability or religious observance, should be arranged during your first term through the College Secretary.

If you identify a problem when the timetable is published (usually 5 weeks before the exams) contact the College Secretary urgently. Timetables are published at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/oxonly/timetables/index.shtml>

Candidate Number

You must know your candidate number to find your desk; names aren't shown on the desks. As well as on your timetable this is shown on your profile in Student Self Service:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/index.html> No one in College has access to it.

What should I do if I've lost my University card?

You are required to display your **University card** on your desk when you take each University exam. If you have lost it then please contact the College Secretary who will order a new one on your behalf.

You will also need to pay for the replacement at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/card/lost/>. It usually takes one working day for a new card to be sent through once you've paid. If you have lost your University card on the day of an exam then please inform the College Secretary and present an alternative form of photo ID at Exam Schools, such as your passport.

What should I do if I require any special arrangements for my exams?

Requests for special arrangements for disability, on-going illness etc should be made during your first term. They should be made to the Proctors' Office through the College Secretary and where appropriate backed up with a medical certificate. If you require any special arrangements such as extra time, use of a PC, to sit exams in College, etc, and you have not already notified the College then please contact the College Secretary urgently.

What happens if I'm sick on the day of an exam or during an exam?

There is a procedure under which the examiners can be informed of any special circumstances (e.g. illness) which may have affected a candidate's performance during an exam. Information is passed to the Proctors through the College Secretary, accompanied by a medical certificate. The Proctors at their discretion may forward it to the relevant Chairman of Examiners. **If you are feeling unwell please contact the Nurse straight away.**

Whom should I see if I'm sick?

It is usually best in the first instance to see or contact the College Nurse, Lynn Cross, who can be found in the College Surgery at 27 Banbury Road. No appointment is required. Her sessions in College are listed on the notice boards but for exam problems please ring her (01865 274855) or phone the Lodge (01865 274800) and ask a porter to contact her. If necessary she will refer you to a College Doctor, at Jericho Health Centre. Appointments to see the College Doctor should be made through the College Nurse or by phoning the Jericho Health Centre on (01865) 311234.

What happens if I am ill for a prolonged period of time in the run up to exams?

Students who have suffered a prolonged period of illness or who have been prevented by another urgent cause from carrying out their studies, instead of applying to enter an exam at the required time can make a request for exams to be deferred. Discuss this with your Personal Tutor or the Senior Tutor. Finals can normally be taken after a delay of one year without affecting eligibility for Honours. Candidates who defer their exams for so long that they become 'over-standing for Honours' need to seek special permission from the University to be considered for an Honours degree.

What happens if I fail to turn up for an exam on time?

If a student fails to turn up for an exam on time Exam Schools will notify the College and the College will then attempt to find the missing student. (If you've changed your mobile number

recently please email the correct number to enquiries@st-annes.ox.ac.uk) As this is very time consuming it would be most helpful if you will notify the College Secretary (01865 274822) as soon as possible if, for whatever reason, you are unable to get to Exam Schools on time. Exam Schools will admit candidates to exams up to half an hour after the exam has started and no later. It is, of course, the most ideal course of action to do your best to arrive on time.

What happens if I need to leave the room during an exam?

Candidates may be permitted to leave an exam room for toilet breaks, but not without the permission of the Examiners or an invigilator. No candidate may hand in their paper within thirty minutes of the beginning of an exam or within thirty minutes of the time at which an exam is due to end.

What happens if I fail to complete an exam?

Contact the College Secretary as soon as possible. If a student does not complete the written part of an exam (e.g. does not turn up for a paper, or fails to submit essays, notebooks etc. required as part of the exam) he or she will be deemed to have failed unless the Proctors are satisfied that there was an urgent cause such as illness (in which case the examiners may be asked to assess the candidate on the work completed, or to set a special examination).

Is it possible to postpone exams for a year?

Occasionally, students feel so badly prepared that postponing for a year can seem attractive. This is rarely a good idea, except in very specific circumstances. Evidence does not suggest that postponement improves grades. Preparing for exams on your own at home is difficult and it is highly likely that you are actually better prepared than you think.

It is technically possible in some circumstances (usually only medical) to withdraw even after exams have started (with College permission) and to re-enter on a later occasion. Such withdrawals must be notified to the University through the College Secretary. Permission to withdraw from exams is not always granted by the Proctors and the College would not support a decision to do so without a strong reason.

What happens if I fail an exam?

If you fail a University Exam it is important to obtain advice from your subject-tutor or supervisor as soon as possible. In general a student who fails the First Public Exam at the first attempt is permitted under college regulations to enter some form of examination again. A student who fails the Second Public Exam (Finals) is permitted under University regulations to re-enter the Exam; but unless this is done within the maximum number of terms specified for the subject concerned (see *Examination Regulations*), he or she will not normally be eligible to obtain Honours. Except for a small number of subjects detailed in the regulations, students who have been classified in the Second Public Exam are not allowed to re-take their Finals in order to try to improve their results.

What do I do if I think I'm going to miss a deadline?

Submission dates for essays can be found in *Examination Regulations*. Candidates who do not submit their work by the required time are technically considered to have failed the whole examination (the same as if they had not turned up to sit a written paper) unless they have been given prior special permission to present the work late. In exceptional circumstances (usually medical), the Proctors, usually after consulting the Chairman of Examiners, may allow extra time for submission after a deadline has passed. Any request has to be made through the College. Where extra time is allowed, a late-presentation fee will usually be charged. If they agree to reinstate a candidate in an exam the Proctors may authorize the examiners to reduce the candidate's mark by up to one class or equivalent as a penalty for unauthorised late submission. The Proctors will not consider requests for late submission in cases where computer data has been stolen and back-up copies either were not made or were not kept

separately. Similarly the Proctors will not accept computer or printer break-down as a legitimate reason for requesting extra time. If you think you may have trouble meeting a deadline please contact the College Secretary as soon as possible.

When is a medical certificate required?

A medical certificate is required for the following three circumstances:

- 1) Special adjustments to normal examination arrangements to take account of illness or disability. Permission for special exam arrangements (e.g. papers taken in college instead of Schools; phased exam papers; use of a special cushion to alleviate back problems, extra time) may be granted by the Proctors.
- 2) Urgent cause preventing attendance at an examination or submission on time of work for assessment. Permission for late submission of work or dispensation from some requirement of a course or examination may be granted by the Proctors.
- 3) Factors potentially affecting performance. The Proctors may decide to forward the certificate to the Chairman of Examiners authorising the Board of Examiners to take non-academic factors into account when reaching a final decision about pass/fail or degree classification.

Will I be able to use a dictionary in my exam?

Candidates who matriculated before 2009 and whose native language is not English may (in most subjects) have requested permission to use a bi-lingual dictionary. Show the letter giving permission when the dictionary is checked at the first exam. If you have lost the letter ask the College Secretary for another copy.

Will I be able to use a calculator in my exam?

The regulations for some subjects allow candidates to use certain types of calculator in exams. Details should be confirmed by the Chairman of Examiners in each case.

Vivas

Some taught courses include provision for students to be examined *viva voce* either as a stated requirement or as an option that can be invoked at the examiners' discretion. This is an integral part of the examination process and failure to attend a viva without permission will result in the candidate being failed in the exam as a whole. The dates when candidates may be called for a viva are announced at the same time as the exam timetable. All candidates who are called for a viva must make sure that they are available on these dates.

Trashing and post-exam conduct

The College recognises that post exam celebrations are important and well earned but would encourage a sensible approach to them. There is a tradition of crowds gathering outside Exam Schools to greet those coming out of their last exam. These celebrations often take the form of what is known as 'trashing' which includes activities such as spraying champagne, squirting silly string and throwing substances such as glitter and flour. If any of this lands on somebody's clothing, the pavement or on any other property, an offence of damage to property has been committed whether or not the victim complains or consents. It is also an offence to cause litter. Where students are found guilty of such offences, the usual punishment is a heavy fine. The Proctors and other persons appointed by them can impose spot-fines. It is fairer to the general public and to fellow-students who may still be working in the examination rooms if celebrations are deferred until students get back to their colleges. All candidates are therefore asked to discourage friends from meeting them outside Exam Schools or other exam venues and to disperse as soon as possible after leaving any exam building. Misbehaviour in this area will result in strong measures being taken by the Proctors and may also attract sanctions by the Thames Valley Police.

Further information

For further information regarding the University rules and regulations regarding exam conduct please see *Essential Information for Students* (Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum.) Or at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/index.shtml>

Results

You get your results by logging into your Student Self Service record at:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/current_students/index.html

See <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/examinations/results.shtml> for a list of results which are available.

For official proof of your degree classification see:

http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/degrees/degree_certificates.shtml

The University will send you a transcript. (See:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/examinations/transcripts.shtml>).

Remember

Please remember to turn up wearing gown, cap and full subfusc (including black tights if wearing a skirt), make sure you have your candidate number with you, and take your University card to all exams. Also remember that if you take a mobile phone you will have to leave it with your bag. From this year you are allowed to take a bottle of water and keep it on your desk. But water only, not fizzy, and it must be in a spill-proof bottle. You're not allowed sweets (unless you've received special permission).

If you are experiencing any problems or anticipate that you may do so please do not hesitate to seek help. The sooner we are alerted to a problem the more we can do to help.

Contacts List

College Lodge – 01865 274800
College Secretary –01865 274822

Welfare – College

Name	Email	Phone
Senior Tutor - Anne Mullen	anne.mullen@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	01865 274858
College Nurse – Lynn Cross	lynn.cross@st-annes.ox.ac.uk Ring the Lodge in emergencies outside the nurse's college hours	01865 274855 Mornings Monday/Wednesday/Friday & afternoons Tuesday/Thursday
Counsellor – Mimi Kester	mimi.kester@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	Voicemail 01865 292883
Assistant Deans – Naomi Walker Miles Jackson Mandy Izadi	naomi.walker@st-annes.ox.ac.uk miles.jackson@st-annes.ox.ac.uk mandy.izadi@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	01865 274800 (via Lodge)
JCR Welfare Reps – Eleanor Hamblen Saras Mane	Eleanor.hamblen@st-annes.ox.ac.uk Saras.mane@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	Peer Supporters also available. Check noticeboards for details.
MCR Welfare Rep – Amy Smith	Amy.smith@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	Peer Supporters also available. Check

Welfare – University

Name	Email	Phone
Oxford University Counselling Service	reception@counserv.ox.ac.uk [Please note that no email system is entirely confidential]	01865 270300
Oxford University – Student Health and Welfare	http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/	
Nightline		01865 270270
OUSU	http://www.ousu.org/welfare	

**Academic – College
Special Exam Arrangements**

Name	Email	Phone
College Secretary – Christine Foard	christine.foard@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	01865 274822
Senior Tutor – Anne Mullen	anne.mullen@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	01865 274858

Medical

Name	Email	Phone
College Nurse – Lynn Cross	lynn.cross@st-annes.ox.ac.uk	01865 274855
John Radcliffe Hospital 24 hr A&E		01865 741166
College Doctors - Jericho Health Centre. SAME number for Out of Hours Service		01865 311234

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR STUDENTS TAKING EXAMINATIONS
From the College Nurse

Practical tips for students taking examinations

Examination anxiety

During the build up to exams when you are trying to revise, or during the examination period, please **do not suffer** in silence and let your anxiety inhibit your performance.

Get help with problems before they get too big: *if talking to your friends doesn't help, then please contact one of:*

Your tutor and/or senior tutor

The college nurse and/or college doctor

The dean and/or junior deans

The college counsellor / Oxford University counselling service

Coping with revision and examinations

The phase leading up to examinations, when you are trying to revise, as well as the period of examinations themselves, can be very stressful which could lead to anxiety and panic.

Often talking to friends, making sure you have a good exercise routine and healthy diet (remember your five-a-day) can help considerably. Maintaining a *reasonable* social life is also important as it can help keep a sense of proportion.

For most students exams will bring some degree of anxiety. The following presents some brief guidance on actions you can take that may help keep the anxiety under control, and help prevent this anxiety spiralling into panic:

When you are revising

<i>If you can please try to:</i>	<i>But try not to:</i>
Plan a revision timetable so that the bulk of your revision is completed before the exams start	Leave it all to the last minute
Get an overview of each course and then select areas for more detailed revision	Revise each course in detail
Decide how much work you personally need to do	Compare the amount of work you are doing with that of your friends
Find out the best time of day for you and plan to do your work then	Push yourself to revise at a biological 'low' time
Take a 10 minute break after every fifty minutes	Work for more than an hour without a break
Include a couple of free evenings each week in your timetable	Work every evening
Take a day completely away from revision from time to time and go outside, away from the working atmosphere	Work all day, every day
Fix times to discuss revision topics with friends	Do all your work on your own
Work at an uncluttered desk, without too many distractions in the way of papers and posters	Work surrounded with distractions and unread papers and books
Tidy up after each revision session and put your books away	Leave books and notes open as a distraction
Eat regularly and sensibly	Live on snack meals, chocolate, biscuits, etc

Establish a regular sleeping pattern	Miss out on sleep
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During the examination period

<i>If you can please try to:</i>	<i>But try <u>not</u> to:</i>
Plan a revision timetable for the whole examination period	Do last minute revision
See the course as a whole, but concentrate on selected detail	Revise the whole course
Work in a calm uncluttered atmosphere	Flit from topic to topic
Concentrate on your own priorities	Compare your revision with your friends
Put each exam behind you as soon as it is completed	Discuss the exam papers with friends after the exam has finished
Eat sensibly and regularly	Put off eating
Sleep regularly	Stay up all night
Put most of your effort into writing the exam papers	Get so tired and panicky that you don't do yourself justice in the exam

In the examination

<i>If you can please try to:</i>	<i>If you can try <u>not</u> to:</i>
Read the whole paper including the directions carefully before you start	Start at the first question you see without reading the directions
Underline key words in the questions you select (describe, evaluate, compare, account for, etc)	Write before thinking
Plan your answers	Waste time by including irrelevant information
Answer the right number of questions and allocate your time evenly	Spend too much time on one question at the expense of another
Get help at once if you need it	Suffer in silence

Experiencing anxiety and panic

Anxiety can be experienced as a range of feelings from uneasiness to severe panic. It is usually experienced in three ways:

Emotionally: feelings of fear and nervousness;

Physically: dry mouth, feeling sick or churning stomach, racing heart, sweating, shaking or breathing difficulties;

Cognitively: disturbing thoughts such as:

- *'I'm going to fail'*
- *'I'll make a fool of myself'*
- *'I can't remember anything'*

We all experience anxiety, when we feel stressed and overwhelmed. Feeling anxious is a normal part of our lives, but sometimes this feeling becomes so intense that it becomes difficult to manage.

The experience of anxiety can range from mild uneasiness and worry to severe panic. At a reasonable level, anxiety can motivate us and enhance our performance, but if it becomes too severe or chronic, it can become debilitating.

A panic attack is a severe experience of anxiety. People may experience intense dread, various physical symptoms, or having thoughts of losing control.

Self-help anxiety / stress management

Eat a healthy diet.

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals, plus healthy snacks throughout the day.

Exercise regularly.

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.

Get enough sleep.

Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Reduce caffeine and sugar.

The temporary 'highs' caffeine and sugars provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, will make you feel more relaxed and you will have better sleep.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.

Drinking alcohol and/or taking drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Do not avoid or mask issues; deal with them with a clear mind.

Set aside relaxation time.

Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach.

Connect with others.

Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.