



GUIDE TO EXAM TECHNIQUE

for students sitting exams at West London College

This document is intended as a guide for students on how best to approach exam questions. It does not cover exam preparation such as revision or study skills.

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October 2009

PREPARATION

A few weeks before the actual examination, practise with past papers, so that you already have a good idea how to set out your plan when you sit the real examination.

1. Read through the paper before writing anything (some exams have a ten minute reading time in addition to the scheduled exam period).
2. Make sure you understand any instructions fully e.g. "Answer all questions in Section A, answer three from five questions in Section B"
3. Note the questions you intend to answer (if there is a choice)
4. Plan how much time to spend on each question, taking into account the length of exam, number of questions, and weighting. This will give you a framework and allow you to gauge the depth of detail that is required for each question.
5. Write down the order you will answer the questions in, with the ones you feel most confident about at the top. Examiners will not mind which order you answer them in as long as you indicate quite clearly each one that you have attempted.
6. Make a few key notes against each question. Rough notes can be written in the answer book and crossed through afterwards; don't completely obscure this, just strike through the passage with a single line.
7. Stick to your plan. Answer all questions; do not be tempted to spend more time than you've allocated to each question, as that will leave less time for the remainder. If some questions are left unanswered because you have run out of time your overall grade will be affected even if you have scored good marks for the ones you have answered.
8. The invigilator will announce the time you have left at regular intervals, which should help you to pace yourself.
9. If you finish early, use that remaining time to check over your answers and make sure that you have filled in your name and any other details on the front of the answer book as required.

PRESENTATION

Presentation, or the look and layout of your finished script, is important if you want to make a good impression with the examiner. It makes it easier to understand what you've written and therefore more straightforward to mark. However, a beautifully presented piece of work won't have any value if you haven't expressed your answers clearly or if you haven't actually understood the question.

1. Your answers should always be written in black or blue pen, never pencil.
2. Handwriting should be legible: if an examiner can't read your writing you could lose unnecessary marks
3. Don't write out the question, but do write the number clearly in the lefthand column e.g. Section A Q3(a)
4. Don't worry about crossing out mistakes (never use an ink eradicator), you will not be penalised for that, in fact it is very useful to an examiner to see how you worked things through. Marks will not be deducted for any rough notes written in the answer book as long as they are clearly crossed through. If you put all your notes on the question paper, the examiner will never see them and a flawless script is no good if the question hasn't been answered correctly.

HOW YOUR SCRIPT IS MARKED

Exams are marked by the examiner and then moderated by a second marker (and sometimes a third) following a marking scheme laid down when the exam paper was first set. The marking scheme is a guide setting out the points an examinee is expected to address when answering the question and the number of marks awarded for each point included. Having a marking scheme means that each script will receive a fair and consistent grading however many examiners are doing the marking.

HOW TO AVOID STRESS ON THE DAY

It is easy to become anxious when entering an exam hall, but if you can make sure you are prepared in a practical way this will allow you to focus on actually achieving a good written paper. Here are a few essential tips on how to minimise the stress:

1. Once you know where the exam will take place, make a couple of trial journeys from your home to the venue, ideally at the same time of day as the actual date of the exam. This way you will be able to judge how long it will take to get there and also familiarise yourself with the route. Allow enough time to arrive at the venue at least half an hour before the exam is due to start. Getting lost or claiming not to know where the exam is being held is not a valid reason for being late or missing an exam.
2. The night before the exam, check that you have all the stationery you need for the next day: pens, pencils, rubber, pencil sharpener, ruler (you will not be able to borrow any of these items during the exam). You must have your student IDs, both WLC student card and the exam board's membership card. For some external exams you are required to bring your exam notification letter. Without these you may not be admitted to the exam.
3. Don't stay up late revising the night before; get a good night's sleep. It has been known for students to miss an exam because they have overslept. If you arrive more than half an hour after the exam has started you will not be admitted.
4. At the start of the exam an invigilator will make an announcement about the rules and any instructions about the specific exam. Don't be afraid to ask the invigilator if you are not sure about anything. If the exam has already started, you should raise your hand and wait for them to come to you.