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Introduction

Congratulations and welcome to the University of Notre Dame Australia.

Our goal is to support you during your studies by building on your existing skills and knowledge. This booklet is designed to give you information which will help you to take those first steps along your career pathway. Welcome to the adventure.

Objects of the University

The University’s Objects are defined in Section 5 of its Act of Parliament:

In pursuing these objects, the University seeks to be an outstanding Australian undergraduate university and one of the best Catholic universities in the world.

The Objects of the University are:

a. the provision of university education, within a context of Catholic faith and values; and

b. the provision of an excellent standard of -
   i. teaching, scholarship and research;
   ii. training for the professions; and
   iii. pastoral care for its students.

The Academic Enabling and Support Centre (AESC) will support your academic journey at Notre Dame. We are available to assist with essays, assignments, assessments and your academic progress in general.
Section One:
Welcome

Mature Age Students

By the time you arrive at university you have already established your sense of identity: who you are, what you know, and what you can do. Consequently, you will have the advantage of being able to draw on your life experiences, your accumulated knowledge and your work skills when you undertake your new academic role.

You have accepted the challenge to return to education. And there will be challenging times ahead but you have chosen to return to education; as such you will have an education goal. Make sure you define this goal and keep it at the forefront of your mind. Write it down and place it on the wall above your study area – remember that you are continually working towards this goal, and it will help you through the challenging times.

As a tertiary student you will be expected to be self-directed. Critical thinking, decision-making, and reflection will be integral to your professional role. Coming to university and beginning or returning to academic study, represents a time of transition in your personal life and may challenge some of your ideas and initiate unexpected feelings. You may suddenly be faced with unknown and extensive subject vocabularies and information, deadlines for assignments, and the need for different ways of thinking. Other people in your life may also face adjustments because you may not be able to maintain the roles you had previously done: you may have to change, reorganise or reassign those areas to others. However, it will be worth the effort as university study can bring you to a deeper understanding about yourself and give you an appreciation of others’ perspectives. Therefore, acceptance of these changes and challenges will enhance your personal and professional growth.

As you go through this process it is important that you communicate your progress with the appropriate staff on campus to ensure that you receive support where needed.

Orientation to University

The first focus for you is to find your way around the University – identify the important buildings. You will be given a campus map during your orientation. Once you have located the venues for your lectures, tutorials and attended a few sessions, it will become automatic for you to arrive in the right place at the correct time. You will soon discover that those initial feelings of unfamiliarity will start to fade.

Getting to know the staff and other students will be your next goal. This will start during Orientation Week when you attend the orientation workshops and during semester when you attend your lectures and tutorials.

Discover student recreational and sporting activities with Student Services. The Student Services staff can also discuss your accommodation plans with you, and help you with career advice, such as preparing a resume, job seeking and interview skills. You can contact Student Services on sydney.studentservices@nd.edu.au.

Becoming familiar with the Broadway or Darlinghurst site of the Sydney Campus and meeting your lecturers, tutors and the other students will help you to feel more comfortable in this new environment.
Section Two:

Help

Your Support Network

The University of Notre Dame Australia aims to provide ongoing support for all students for the duration of your course. Your support network includes the Student Administration staff, Student Services staff, Library staff, the Academic Enabling and Support Centre staff including the Academic Support Officers and the Disability Support Officers, the Chaplain, and the Counsellors. Feel free to contact these services as needed.

The Academic Enabling and Support Centre conduct lunchtime study skills workshops during semester on a range of topics including time management, essay writing, approaching assignments, referencing, critical thinking, research skills, note taking skills and memory recall skills. You will be sent details of the workshops to your Notre Dame email address every week during the semester from week three.

Academic Support staff also offer individual meetings to give you the opportunity to discuss your academic progress and any issues related to your studies. Sometimes it can be beneficial to have someone to talk to about your studies and the development of your academic skills. This may include areas such as preparing weekly study timetables and semester plans or timetables. Lecture and tutorial pre-reading material can be discussed and techniques for interpreting, documenting and learning lecture and tutorial content. Understanding approaches to academic study, preparing and writing assignments, preparing and delivering individual and group oral presentations and exam preparation are also areas with which Academic Support staff can assist you.

You will need to book in advance for an appointment with the staff in the Academic Enabling and Support Centre sydney.aso@nd.edu.au or Academic Support Officers Louise.Johnston@nd.edu.au or Kendra.Bosworth@nd.edu.au.

When you become a student at the university you will be keeping in touch with the university staff by using your university email address. Email keeps our lines of communication open. If you do not have a computer at home you will be able to use the computers in the library.

There are also protocols for using university email. Your communication with the university is professional so you are required to use respectful and appropriate language in your emails to staff. The staff contact details will be given to you in your unit outlines.

Studying requires determination and the development of strong coping skills. It is important that you look after your own health and start to build up a repertoire of supportive strategies from the beginning of your studies because your mental, spiritual and physical health provide a solid foundation from which you can focus on your studies. Consider each of the questions below - this will be a good start to your examination of your supports during your studies.
Self-care: How are you looking after your mental, physical, social and spiritual health? Studying requires strength in all these areas and so activities such as: meditation, prayer, exercise, eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, meeting friends and family for social outings, listening to your favourite music are strengthening for your mind and body. Logistics of everyday activities may need some thought. For instance - how are you going to get to the university? Have you found out about the bus or train timetables and how to reach the university from the train or bus stop or station? Have you factored in cooking and cleaning times around your study timetables? Have you planned your food and other shopping? Have you organised your finances? Have you organised child care? Do you have a backup plan for child care if there's an emergency?

The Sydney Campus Counselling Service provides a free, confidential and safe environment for students to discuss any personal or study related difficulties they may be experiencing. The service is staffed by registered psychologists. The counsellors’ aim is to help students develop strategies and skills to resolve or manage any problems they are facing while studying, so that students can achieve their personal and academic goals. Counsellors offer short-term individual counselling, and various workshops as advertised. Appointments can be scheduled by emailing sydney.counselling@nd.edu.au.
Section Three: Communication

Active Listening

One form of listening is called ‘Active Listening’ and is comprised of a cluster of skills that include the ability to be completely focused on the situation at hand, being able to decide on the appropriateness of asking questions, clarifying and restating comments, or reflecting the feelings of people. These skills are very useful and you will rely on them when you are attending lectures, tutorials and laboratories in the university (Turner, Ireland, Krenus & Pointon, 2008).

Writing

Writing skills will provide the basis of your academic studies because you will be writing essays, assignments, reports and constructing projects during your time at the University. Consequently, increasing your writing skills will necessitate concentration on your subjects and a commitment to devoting the time and energy to create your pieces of academic writing. If you are interested in the topics and see the relevance of these topics to your learning, then you will find your new knowledge challenging and meaningful (Hass & Osborn, 2007).

If you would like to improve your academic writing then you have the opportunity to contact the Academic Enabling and Support Centre on campus. The staff can assess your academic needs and offer you support in academic writing skills.

Communication with Staff:

If you don’t understand something, ask! There are probably numerous of other students with the same problems. One of your roles is to communicate with the academic staff. This may include asking your lecturer or tutor a question, either after a lecture or during a tutorial, or emailing your lecturer to clarify a point.

You will need to regularly access your University email account and respond to communication from University staff. Any emails sent to your University email address are assumed to be read. Make a habit of reading notices on Blackboard, and checking for announcements in your email. If you are absent from class due to illness, obtain a medical certificate and forward it to your school department. Let the University know when you change your address or other contact information.

Throughout your communication with University staff, please make sure you apply professional rules of etiquette – be polite, be clear and include your student number.
Section Three:

Communication (continued)

University Policies and Forms:

The University of Notre Dame Australia website is an invaluable resource. Through this site, you can access timetables, forms, policies, the library, as well as staff email addresses. Some of the important links are:

University Regulations

http://www.nd.edu.au/current-students/studentadministration/policiesregulations.shtml

Student Administration (including timetables)

http://www.nd.edu.au/sydney/current-students

University Forms

Section Four:
What to expect

Lectures

What you can do to increase your understanding

Lectures are the main component in your studies. By being punctual and attending your lectures you have the opportunity to develop a clear understanding of the unit content. Good note-taking and listening skills will be important. Punctuality will be critical because you will not miss any vital subject content. Have you ever watched a movie but missed the beginning? If you have then you will know that it takes precious time to catch up with the story line. Lectures can be the same!

There may be readings which you are expected to do before the lecture. These readings will be in the unit outlines that will be given to you in the first week of your course. By completing those readings you will have a clearer understanding of the topics being discussed in the lecture, and you will have the chance to become more familiar with the language of that subject.

Note-taking during lectures is an important skill which may take time to develop. You may find it difficult at first to keep up with the speed of the lecturer’s pace. When powerpoint headings are given to you they may not contain a detailed account of the information. Your notes should contain the necessary detail that will enable you to understand the topic.

Sometimes students prefer to use concept maps or mind maps instead of writing notes. This technique can result in less writing for you and is an interesting way to link ideas about the topic.

Tutorials

Attendance and punctuality will help you to keep up with the unit content and are essential components of your course. Tutorials usually require pre-reading so that you can discuss topics with an informed opinion. These readings will be listed in your unit outlines or provided online. While tutorials are often conducted in formal settings such as specific tutorial rooms in the University, you may find that the atmosphere in some tutorials is less formal than other study environments. Tutorials provide a means for you to enhance your learning, acquire new information, clarify points and be analytical and express your ideas. You will be expected to contribute to discussion in tutorials. You may also ask questions or respond to a question posed by the tutor or other students.

Brainstorming is another activity that will occur in many tutorials. This is where students offer their ideas to the group and introduce new ideas to each other. Students may have different points of view on the topic but this is not perceived as problematic. It can be very stimulating, but sometimes surprising if you are not familiar with this style of learning.

Small group activities may be another part of your tutorial. You will be expected to join with other students and contribute your ideas or experiences to your small group. You may be required to join a small group to prepare a presentation for your tutorial group. This will give you an opportunity to work as part of a team and get to know other students. However, the prospect of speaking in front of a group may make you feel anxious. Learning some techniques to moderate your breathing pattern can help you to remain quite calm. If you have not presented to a group previously then there a number of hints which can make that experience a positive one.
Independent Study Strategies:

University education requires you to study independently. Listed below are some strategies for helping you with this transition.

When is the best time to study? Most people have one time of the day that suits them best, and this time varies between people and their situations. It may be first thing in the morning, after school drop off, or maybe last thing in the evening after everyone else in the house is asleep. Work out what suits you and exploit this time by ensuring you schedule intensive learning activities for this period.

Plan ahead and develop a personal filing system – keep a to-do list and record due dates to ensure you meet all course requirements. Create a filing method for your notes so you can easily find and review information.

Bigger picture – think about the bigger picture, remind yourself of your education goals and think about the underlying principles to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the smallest detail.

Take breaks and work with a buddy – Take breaks while studying. This allows you time to review information with new eyes and refresh your memory. Working with a friend also helps – you can exchange ideas and notes.

Develop a professional dictionary – write any professional terms into a notebook, and take the time to write their definition. This provides you with a quick reference tool as well as helping with your review and revision.

Reinforce your learning – the professional dictionary is a start to reinforcing your learning. However, you can continue this process by reviewing and re-writing your notes. Making sure you are confident with professional terms and formulae. These are the foundation of your future.
Section Five: Stress Management

(Adapted Brecht, 1996)

Starting at University or returning to education after a break, as a mature age student, can be stressful. Stress can be positive and negative. You may need stress to spur you into getting out of the house on time, or stress to make you start your assignments. There will always be some form of stress in your life. The aim is to try and control the stress – uncontrolled stress can cause anxiety and health problems.

We control how stress affects us and we need to take ownership of our own stress rather than becoming the victim. To take ownership, think about specific events in your life and categorise each of them as important or unimportant, controllable or uncontrollable. Become aware of each event and its categorisation. From there, you can control your reactions to these events – you can accept uncontrollable events, you can develop coping mechanisms and you can take action to resolve controllable events. The effects of stress are reduced when you control the stressors through your attitudes, beliefs and stress management mechanisms.

If the stress is caused by conflict with someone talk to them and see if you can determine a positive resolution. Sometimes solving problems, making decisions, setting goals and managing your time can also reduce your stress.

When stressed, some people turn to easy, perceived, unhealthy solutions such as alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, food and even sleep. These are temporary solutions for avoiding the reality. They will not work long-term and could have harmful effects.

Better stress management techniques include;

- Relaxation – active (such as exercise or yoga) and passive (such as meditation)
- Visualisation – visualise a positive resolution, or visualise yourself in a relaxing situation such as at the beach
- Thinking – change your thinking about events to be more flexible and adaptable while being rational and positive and focused on a solution
- Treats – schedule regular personal treats such as laughing, deep breathing, maybe a bath, a massage or even regular breaks
- Talk to someone about it – friends or family members usually provide the best support. Talking to a professional counsellor will also help.
The weekly study timetable:

**Getting organised early**

Once you have received your unit outlines at the end of your first week on campus it is essential that you create a weekly study timetable as soon as possible. Planning your timetable will help you see how you can allocate study time each day to your different units. By doing this you will be able to keep up with the weekly content of your lectures, tutorials and laboratories. These semesters are relatively short and it is very important to become organised early.

Categorise your tasks into essential, important and optional. Make sure you complete the essential tasks first. By categorising them you can evaluate the importance of each task and the relative time you should be spending addressing each task.

While studying at University may be new to you, it may also require some adjustment of those family or friends who share your home. Placing your timetable in a prominent place (such as on the fridge!) helps you and them to become used to the changes in your everyday life.

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Your semester assessment calendar:

**Getting organised for the semester =Sdrawkcab gnikrow (Working backwards)**

This is a way to manage your assignments. You can use your computer calendar or obtain a large, yearly calendar from any news agency. To prepare your assessment timetable you will need to work ‘backwards’, and using colour coding for each unit requirements can make organisation easier. Check your unit outlines and write in the due dates for all your assessments from each unit on your calendar. Then, by working backwards with your calendar, calculate what you need to have completed each week leading up to handing in your assignment and then write those steps in your calendar.

**For Example:** If your assignment was due on the 28th September write the following days/date on your calendar.

- **Submission:** 28th September
- **Complete Final Draft:** 21st September
- **Complete First Draft:** 14th September
- **Start Writing:** 7th September
- **Start Researching/Reading:** 31st August
Section Seven:
Research & Referencing

Throughout your academic life you are going to need to research – for essays, assignments, assessments and exams. This section will provide an overview. Research and referencing workshops are held frequently throughout the semester.

1. Define your topic
   - Identify key words and concepts in your topic. For example, "Does social media encourage teenagers to use illegal drugs?" uses the keywords social media, teenagers, illegal drugs, but you should also consider advertising to adolescents, as a key idea.

2. Obtain background information
   - Use encyclopaedias to find background or overview material on your topic.
   - The Library’s Reference Collection contains many useful general and subject specific dictionaries (e.g. The Macquarie Dictionary, The Penguin English Dictionary) and encyclopaedias (e.g. Britannica Online, The Columbia Encyclopedia). These are also available online through the library portal.

3. Find relevant resources and take notes
   - Use the library to find books, articles on a reading list and articles on a topic.
   - Make notes from these resources and make sure you include the referencing information in your notes.

4. Analyse your resources
   - Evaluate the information you have found in terms of relevance, currency, reliability and accuracy.
   - Check details such as author, publisher and publication year to assist you in your analysis. Make sure these resources are from academic sources.

5. Organise your information
   - Organise your information and resources based on your analysis and your initial ideas of addressing the topic – place them all in a folder or note book. Make sure you keep the reference information with your notes, so you can find the original again if needed.

6. Write your reference list
   - Every time you use information from academic research you must provide referencing information.
   - References are included to acknowledge the work of others, to demonstrate the resources on which you have based your work and assertions and to allow other researchers and lecturers to trace your sources.
   - If you do not cite your references, you may be indirectly claiming authorship of ideas or statements not your own - this is plagiarism which is unacceptable in academic circles.
   - The most important aspect of citing is to use an acceptable format and be consistent. The university website, in the Library section, provides style guides and referencing guides which you are to follow in every piece of academic work. http://library.nd.edu.au/content.php?pid=50125&sid=642790
How to prepare and submit an Assignment:

Frequently asked questions.

Q. When should you start reading?
A. As soon as possible. Remember, you are studying more than one unit and there will be ongoing tutorial preparation and presentations, pre-lecture readings and other assignments for all your units. You also have to study your lecture and tutorial content so time management is important.

Q. How do you analyse the assignment question?
A. This is an essential first step in preparing an assignment. Check the exact meanings of the key directing words (for example, describe, examine, discuss, list, and explain) in a reputable dictionary/online dictionary. Any specialist terminology can be resourced through your texts and references for that particular unit. Then you will have a clear understanding of what is being asked. Analysing the question correctly will lead you to select reading material that addresses the question accurately.

Q. How do you find material for your assignment?
A. If you are not sure, talk to your tutor or lecturer. As well, the library personnel are very helpful. Writing notes when you are reading assists in the process of gathering information and ideas which you will be able to use in the construction of your work. Noting the reference details of your essay material is essential because every section (and paragraph) of an assignment requires academic referencing and you will need to create a reference list at the end of your assignment.

Q. Is the reading material current?
A. Check the dates of the publication. If it is more than a few years old the content may be outdated, unless it is a landmark work or contains key information.

Q. Are the readings relevant to the situation in the assignment question?
A. You will need to check this. For example: is literature on the American health system directly relatable to the Australian health care system (when the systems are different)? Sometimes this information could be relevant if you were looking at some comparisons, similarities, and possible health outcomes. However, to equate one health care system (in a country which has different historical, political, geographical and social systems) completely with the other may not be appropriate. Literature related to specialties is best discovered in books and journals related to that specialty. For example, sociological resources are useful for sociology assignments and psychology books and journals are relevant for psychology.
Q. Don’t you only have to write the assignment once?
A. Not usually. You will probably do several drafts. Most students initially write as they speak but often the spoken word is not the same as academic writing. It takes time and effort to be able to increase your competency in academic writing. Problems in academic writing occur when we convert our particular form of spoken English directly into writing. Then non-academic language and local expressions may be written and grammar and spelling may be incorrect. Some everyday, non-academic, verbal expressions may creep in, such as, “It’s a no brainer”. Or, the words may be in a different order, such as “I very much like you”. Perhaps some sentence requirements may be missing, such as the articles, ‘the’ or ‘a’, before a noun, or the verb use and tenses may be incorrect, such as the use of the present continuing tense as in “I am seeing”, rather than “I saw” (past tense). Consequently, converting spoken language directly into writing can have quite a few pitfalls. There are conventions in academic writing with regard to writing style, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Using an Australian English dictionary and a reputable thesaurus (for example, Roget’s) and grammar reference book are beneficial for all academic writers. These may be available online through your access to the University library, or you could buy your own hard copies from most newsagents and bookshops.

COMPLETING THE FIRST DRAFT:
This is your work in progress. You can now check all components of your essay.

The structure – is there an introduction, a body, a summary and a conclusion? Are the paragraphs well constructed?

The content – check that the grammar and spelling are correct. Does the essay flow well? Does it make sense? Does it answer the assignment question?

References – have all the ideas in the writing of the essay been linked to references (this is called, ‘in text’ referencing)? Have you referenced every paragraph? Are your references in the correct order in the reference list at the end of the essay and do they adhere to the APA requirements? Now is the time to make necessary changes and additions.

COMPLETING THE LAST DRAFT:
Q. Do you submit the last draft?
A. Not usually. If possible, leave your essay for a day or two and then read it. It can give you that mental space to be able to see any errors or gaps. Sometimes we think that we have written something in our work but when we reread it we may discover that we THOUGHT something but did not actually WRITE it as was intended.

Imagine that you are the Unit Coordinator. Imagine that you are the person who is going to mark your assignment. Then read the assignment and, if you have been given a MARKING GUIDE, compare the content with the requirements listed in the marking guide and give ‘that assignment’ a mark. This can help you to recognise any areas which require further attention before you submit your work.

Q. Why should you photocopy your assignment?
A. Photocopying your assignment (with the front page details completed/stamped) is a good safety strategy. Photocopying your work is your insurance for misadventure.
Q. Why is it so important to submit in my assignment on the due date and time?

A. This allows all the assignments in each unit to be collected within the times that are manageable for all the items to be assessed in each unit. The papers are then distributed to the respective markers who can mark the essays and return them to you as soon as possible. You can then review your achievements and note any areas that need more focus. Marks may be deducted each day for late submission of work. You can check the Unit Outlines for this information. An electronic receipting machine is located in the reception areas for students to receipt assignments before placing them in the assignment box.

Q. What details are required on the front page of my work?

A. Check the Unit Outline for the details. There may be different requirements for different units.

Q. Where do I submit the assignment?

A. Check with your tutor and in your Unit Outlines to see whether you are required to hand in your assignment or submit in the assignment box. Working backwards and writing each step in the calendar can ensure that you do not have any unpleasant surprises, such as being suddenly confronted with an assignment that needs to be handed in on the day that you discover it in your calendar!

Using colour coding for different subjects in your assessment calendar can help you easily locate the work required and trace the necessary development of your work in that unit. Taking the time to plan your assessment timetable at the beginning of your studies can save you time, reduce your stress, and help you to become organised in your studies and the submission of your work.
Section Nine:

Examinations

Adapted McMilan & Weyers, 2006

Before examinations

Studying for Examinations

Examinations, or just the thought of them, can send your pulse racing! However, just as you have planned your study and other assignments, preparation for examinations is also about time management. Here are some practical suggestions for you to consider.

Getting Organised

Construct a revision timetable

This includes writing down how many hours of study you intend to do each day, when you will study, for how long, and which units you will revise at which times. While you may not be able to adhere strictly to your timetable, it acts as a framework for you. Without a timetable, study may take a backseat to most of your life’s other activities. That makes it very difficult to review the volume of work that you have covered in the semester.

Time management

Try to ensure that you allow enough time to revise all your units. Sometimes students put too much emphasis on one ‘challenging’ unit (this is a euphemism for the unit that you find hard or dislike!) and much less time on the ‘easy’ ones. This may result in great marks in the first category and not so great results in the second.

Study times

Everybody is different. Some people study more effectively in the early morning while others study productively at night. By organising your study routine around your best times you are setting yourself up for success. Schedule a few rest breaks during your study, ideally with some physical activity. Studying for long hours can be brain numbing and exhausting. A few rest stops which include physical activity can give you those necessary spaces for regeneration that will help you to concentrate on the next study session.

Include ‘vacant spots’ into your timetable to accommodate those unexpected events that interrupt our lives: the car needs refuelling, the shopping has to be done, those little people running around your house need feeding, friends or relatives call in for a visit. Choose a place to study where you feel comfortable and where there will not be too many interruptions. You may have to inform friends and family of your intention to study, and, sometimes you may need to tell them how they can support you by not interrupting. If they are not studying it can be difficult for them to grasp why you are so preoccupied.

You could place your revision timetable on the fridge or some other prominent place as a gentle reminder to them that you have serious work to do.
Ticking or colouring in what you have already revised is a good idea because you can see what you have accomplished. It gives you a sense of achievement and boosts your confidence. Think about creating concept or mind maps on your study topics. They can help you link concepts, organise information and identify what you actually know.

**Explain the concepts or points to someone else.** This can help consolidate what you know and identify areas which you need to revisit. Additionally, your friends or relatives will be suitably impressed by your knowledge!

**Contact your lecturer or tutor to clarify any points** about which you feel uncertain. A simple phone call or email to this person can easily resolve a study issue and help with your understanding of the topic. This may result in extra marks for you.

**You may have to learn definitions,** for example, the definition of:

**Class (or social class)**

“A position in a system of structured inequality based on the unequal distribution of power, wealth, income and status. People who share a class position typically share similar life chances” (Germov, 2009, p.8).

You could create acronyms to help remember names and other information.

You may need to **READ, WRITE, (and perhaps, RECITE)** the study content. Reading alone is not enough to learn or revise a topic as most of the information can be forgotten the next day. Just reading the material can place you in a situation where you may feel as though you know the topic when you see the question in an exam. However, that feeling of recognition may not mean that you actually understand that topic, or that you could write knowledgeable about it.

**Do not rely on your visual memory.** Highlighting information by using coloured pens and just reading will not help with your memory of those points because it relies too heavily on visual memory. Make notes as you read which you can then revise for an exam.

**When you are revising** the material a useful memory aid is to move around. You could walk, or dance, or even rap the content at the same time. Once you have revised a topic test yourself. You will be able to congratulate yourself on what you know and identify areas which need further input.

**Check your dictionary** for the meanings of the following and any other words which may direct the exam questions. Check that you understand the differences.
Section Nine:

Examinations (continued)

Before you arrive for the examination

You will need to have prepared yourself physically, psychologically and spiritually. Examinations make most people nervous and it is easy to forget something important if you do not plan. You could create a checklist of what you need to take to the exam (for example, your student ID, your watch, black and blue pens). Tick the items as you place them into your bag.

Ensure that you know the time, day, and venue for your exam. Rely on your lecturer or written documentation for this rather than other students because other students may have incorrect information.

Plan to leave home in plenty of time so that you will arrive early for the exam. You are not in charge of the bus or train timetables or the volume of traffic on the road at the time when you will be travelling. A problem in those areas could cause you unnecessary stress and late arrival (and possible inability to sit) for your exam.

Brain food and fluid. Before your exam it is advisable to have your usual snacks, meals and adequate fluids so that you will be operating at your best.

Turn off your mobile phone. The only person that you will be able to talk to will be yourself (mentally!) or you may consult an exam supervisor to clarify something.

If you feel stressed, use breathing and other relaxation techniques that have worked for you in the past.

Avoid others who tell you how (over!) confident they feel, or felt, before their exams. This may bear no relationship to their actual ability and can be very frustrating.
Section Nine:
Examinations (continued)

Look after your spiritual side. Do some activity that fits in with your spiritual or religious views. For example, visit the University chapel or your usual place of prayer, or go for a quiet walk somewhere peaceful. It never hurts to appeal to a Higher Authority before an examination!

During examinations

Think positively. Some students have a positive phrase or sentence that they slowly, (mentally) repeat to themselves as they sit down to do their exam. For example, ‘I can do this well and I will do this well’

Read the exam instructions carefully. For example, note whether the examiner wants you to ‘list’, ‘define’, ‘describe or ‘explain’. Each word relates to a different type of answer.

Time management. During the reading time check how many questions there are and break your exam time down into minutes. You will be able to calculate how much time you will need for each question.

Check how many marks are allocated to each question. More marks usually signify that more detail (and often more writing) is required. If a large space is left under a question it indicates that the examiner wants you to fill it in!

Use black or blue pens unless otherwise instructed. Answers in pencil are usually not acceptable.

Answer the questions in whatever order you prefer. There are no rules. You do not have to answer the questions in any sequence. It is often easier to answer the ones which you feel confident about first and then move on to the others. This will probably leave more time to concentrate on those trickier questions.

Use the language or terminology of that subject. For example, a sociology examiner expects that you will use sociological language, such as ‘agency’, ‘norms and values’, ‘ethnocentrism’. The psychology examiner expects that you will use psychological terminology, such as, ‘ego’, ‘behaviour’, ‘developmental’, ‘perceptual’.

If there are multiple choice questions, answer the ones that you know first and then go back and try the others. Sometimes it can help if you read the question, look away, think what the answer could be, and then check the options. This gives you time to think (uninfluenced by the answer options written in front of you).

Keep track of the time. You might like to place your watch on the examination desk so that you can see it easily.

Answer all the questions. This can translate to a higher score. If you are running short of time, write dot points. If the content is correct, this may move your score from a credit to a distinction!
If you feel stressed or your muscles are tired from maintaining a relatively fixed position, try tightening and relaxing your muscles, or breathing exercises to slow your breathing down to a comfortable pace.

If you finish the exam before the allotted time, consider the following before you leave the exam venue (if you are permitted to leave in that time period):

- Have all the questions been answered?
- Do your answers relate to the questions?
- Have you written down all the main points in your answers?
- Can you expand on any of the answers?
- Does the content make sense?
- Check the spelling and grammar by imagining that you are the examiner
- Are all your ID details included?

After examinations

It can feel quite therapeutic to talk to someone who is empathetic about your exam experience. However, try to avoid becoming too involved in intense discussions about the possible answers to exam questions with other students. This has the potential to generate unnecessary stress, and, importantly, just because the other students’ answers were different from yours does not make their answers correct! Each exam brings you closer to your goal of becoming a competent, professional who has the skills and knowledge to make a valuable contribution to our community. **Like many necessary events in life, you could think of exams as time-limited problems which have a definite ‘use-by-date!’**
References


SOME USEFUL INTERNET SITES

www.lboro.ac.uk/library/skills/index.html more study skills.

www.learningcentre.usyd.edu.au/clearer_writing/index.html clearer writing resources


www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk an academic phrasebank

www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/sentence.pdf how to write academic sentences
