



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
STUDENTS' UNION

# EXAM SUCCESS

ADVICE

INFORMATION

TIPS

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# TOP TIPS

- Check your exam timetable right now! When and where are your exams?
- Note your exam number (for anonymously marked exams) and remember your student card.
- Arrive at the venue 15 minutes early - just in case.
- **Make sure** you have a pen (and a spare). Do you need a pencil? Do you need a calculator? But...
- **Don't** bring in notes or papers unless instructed by your lecturer. You'll be provided with paper to write answers on and formula books if you need them.
- **Do not sit your exam if you are not fit to do so.** Contact your college tutor and let them know.
- If you get exam nerves, practice relaxation exercises - focus on your breathing or take a short break in the exam.
- A good night's sleep is much better than a night spent cramming.
- Remember your tutor is there to help with any academic or personal problems.

NO PROBLEM IS TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL.

- Finally: you got this. Own that exam!

# EXAM REGULATIONS

Regulations in exam venues can be quite strict. Make sure you listen to the invigilators and cooperate with what they say.

## **THE BASICS:**

- No mobile phones
- No unpermitted materials
- No leaving your seat without permission

## **IF YOU ARE CAUGHT CHEATING, YOU RISK BEING EXPELLED FROM COLLEGE.**

The full text of the exam regulations from the College Calendar is below:

41 Students are required to complete all assessment components for each module as prescribed by the programme regulations.

42 Students are not permitted to repeat successfully completed assessments or examinations in order to improve their performance.

43 Students who are unable to complete such assessment components necessary to complete a module or modules at the end of the appropriate semester due to certified illness, disability, or other grave cause beyond their control may seek, through their tutor, permission from the Senior Lecturer to present at the reassessment session. Where certified illness, disability, or other grave cause beyond their control prevents a student from completing at the reassessment session they may seek, through their tutor, permission from the Senior Lecturer to repeat the year.

44 Students who may be prevented from sitting an examination or examinations (or any part thereof) due to illness should seek, through their tutor, permission from the Senior Lecturer in advance of the examination session to defer the examination/s to the reassessment session. Students who have commenced the examination session, and are prevented from completing the session due to illness should seek, through their tutor, permission from the Senior Lecturer to defer the outstanding examination/s to the reassessment session.

45 Where such permission is sought, it must be appropriately evidenced: (a) For illness: medical certificates must state that the student is unfit to sit examinations/complete assessment and specify the date(s) of the illness and the dates on which the student is not fit to sit examinations/complete assessment. Medical certificates must be submitted to the student's tutor within three days of the beginning of the period of absence from the assessment/examination. (b) For other grave cause: appropriate evidence must be submitted to the student's tutor within three days of the beginning of the period of absence from the assessment/examination.

46 Where illness occurs during the writing of an examination paper, it should be reported immediately to the chief invigilator. The student will then be escorted to the College Health Centre. Every effort will be made to assist the student to complete the writing of the examination paper.

47 Where an examination/assessment has been completed, retrospective withdrawal will not be granted by the Senior Lecturer nor will medical certificates be accepted in explanation for poor performance.

48 If protracted illness prevents students from taking the prescribed assessment components, so that they cannot rise into the next class, they may withdraw from College for a period of convalescence, provided that appropriate medical certificates are submitted to the Senior Lecturer. If they return to College in the succeeding academic year they must normally register for the year in full in order to fulfil the requirements of their class. Where appropriate please see the regulations governing fitness to practise.

49 Where the effects of a disability prevent a student from taking the prescribed assessment components, so that they cannot rise into the next class, the Senior Lecturer may permit the student to withdraw from College for a period of time provided that appropriate evidence has been submitted to the Disability Service. If they return to College in the succeeding academic year they must normally register for the year in full in order to fulfil the requirements of their class.

50 The nature of non-standard examination accommodations, and their appropriateness for individual students, will be approved by the Senior Lecturer in line with the Council-approved policy on reasonable accommodations. Any reports provided by the College's Disability Service, Health Service or Student Counselling Service will be strictly confidential.

## Conduct of examinations

53 Except as provided for below, candidates for examination are forbidden during an examination to do or to attempt to do, any of the following: to have in their possession or consult or use any books, papers, notes, memoranda, mobile phones, electronic devices, or written or electronic material of any nature, or to copy from or exchange information with other persons, or in any way to make use of any information improperly obtained.

54 Where the examination is of such a nature that materials are provided to the candidates, or where the candidates are allowed by the rules of that examination to have materials in their possession, then candidates may of course make use of such materials, but only of such materials, and the general prohibition above continues to apply in respect of any and all other materials.

55 Where candidates have the prior written permission of the examiner(s), of the Senior Lecturer, or of the Disability Officer, to have materials in their possession during an examination, then candidates may of course make use of such materials, but only of such materials, and the general prohibition above continues to apply in respect of any and all other materials.

56 Where candidates are allowed to bring personal belongings into the examination venues upon condition that such belongings are stored in an area – such as the back of the venue – away from the area in which the candidates are sitting their examinations, then candidates may bring personal belongings into the venue, provided that they are placed in the indicated area and are not returned to by the candidates until they have finished their examinations and are leaving the venue.

57 Any breach of this regulation is regarded as a major offence for which a student may be expelled from the University (see §4 under CONDUCT AND COLLEGE REGULATIONS).

58 Students must not leave the venue before the time specified for the examination has elapsed, except by leave of the invigilator.

59 Examinations or other exercises which are part of continuous assessment are subject to the same rules as other College examinations. Where submitted work is

part of a procedure of assessment, plagiarism is similarly regarded as a major offence and is liable to similar penalties (see §§96-105).

# STUDY TECHNIQUES

## REVISION

*Revision is the key to exam success. If you study regularly and effectively, you'll find exams much easier.*

Good revision is **selective**. You can't revise the whole course, so use goal setting and time management skills. Use your notes, rather than trying to re-read entire texts or relive whole lectures. Be critical, condense them - it'll help you remember the key information!

Good revision is **organised**. Make a revision timetable. Be honest with yourself about what you need to cover, how much time you need and when you work best. This will make your timetable much easier to stick to!

Good revision is **personal**. What works for someone else might not work for you. Revision is about more than remembering facts, it's about making sure you understand the material. Help your brain organise the information and make connections - use mindmaps, categories or diagrams. Look at past exam papers and try answering questions. But...

Good revision is **supportive**. Don't forget to talk to other students. They might think of something you didn't, or might give you a different perspective on a topic. Ask them how they review to find new techniques that might work for you!

## FIGHTING PROCRASTINATION

*It's easy to get distracted and put things off, especially at the end of term!  
Beat procrastination with these 5 steps:*

1. **Make commitments.** You say you work better under pressure? Create that pressure by making your own deadlines and sharing them with others, and they'll ask if you got it done.



- 2. Take advantage of your mood.** Do difficult tasks when you feel freshest. Take action and do something on your 'to do' list that you feel up to.
- 3. Five more minutes.** Spend five minutes on a task. Once you've started, you might find you keep going.
- 4. Don't be your own worst enemy.** Negative thoughts can be hard to deal with. It may seem like everyone else is doing a better job, or that you'll never get done. Remember that everyone else is hiding the same feelings. If you feel that your negative thoughts are persistent and affecting your performance, consider reaching out for support - to a friend, to your TCDSU Welfare Officer or to the Student Counselling Service.
- 5. Be positive and treat yourself!** Reward yourself when you get something done. 20 minutes of revision, THEN that cup of coffee - not the other way around. When you reach big milestones, like finishing a topic, take a few hours break or a night off. You deserve it.

# IN THE EXAM

*This is it. The crucial moment. Maximise your performance with these strategies:*

- **Read all instructions and make sure you fully understand them.**

Underline what you have to do, if it helps. A common error for students is to answer the wrong number of questions. Put your name and number on all sheets.

- **Start with the question you feel most comfortable with.**

Read all of the questions and pick which ones you want to answer. Starting with your strongest answer will give you a big confidence boost!

- **Use time wisely.**

Be aware of the time limit. Plan your time and work out how long you need for each question - give more time to questions worth more marks. Leave some time to review, and catch any small mistakes that could cost marks!

- **Don't just write everything you know about a topic.**

College exams are very different to the leaving cert. If your exams are subjective, make sure to select your information and show your analysis.

Jotting down a brief outline or plan before you begin to answer is a good way to make sure you stay on track!

- **Show your workings.**

If your exam is problem-solving, make sure you understand what is being asked.

Pay attention to key terms. Draw a sketch if appropriate. Identify a method and stick to it, showing it with neat and careful calculations and any relevant formulae.

If it helps, estimate the answer first. Always check through at the end for simple mistakes and to make sure everything makes sense.

- **Review the exam (after you've had a good break!)**

How effective were your revision strategies? What went well? What do you need to change for next time?

Give yourself time to become good at taking exams!

- **Stick to the tidy desk rule**

No unnecessary materials are allowed on your desk. Put your water bottle and pencil case under your chair.

# STRESS MANAGEMENT

*Stress is part of our everyday lives, but it can intensify in exam time. We respond to stress in many ways - physically, mentally, emotionally and in our behaviour.*

*Luckily, it can be managed and reduced.*

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M SUFFERING FROM STRESS?

There are various symptoms of stress, but each of us responds differently:

- Physically - through muscle tension, sweaty palms, chest palpitations, restlessness and nausea
- Mentally - through loss of self-confidence, muddled up thinking, tiredness or memory lapses
- Emotionally - through periods of anxiety, crying, feeling hopeless, panic attacks or irritability
- Behaviourally - through changes in our sleeping and eating patterns, increased smoking and alcohol consumption, nail biting or absences from work and college

## HOW DO I MANAGE IT?

**IDENTIFY** the specific events and situations which stress you out.

Some people find the night before the exam more stressful. Others might find the exam itself the most stressful time. If you know when stress will strike, you can use coping methods to help!

## **CHALLENGE AND CONTROL** your thoughts

Worrying thoughts can creep in without warning. Refocus on what is happening around you - like what you're reading or the sound of other people's conversations or your music.

Distract yourself by engaging in other mental activities - puzzles, simple sums or reciting poetry are some favourites.

Replace worrying thoughts with constructive and positive ones. Do you find yourself exaggerating your weaknesses? Anticipating total disaster? Expecting anything to go wrong at any time? Don't ignore the positive. Reframe events and situations in a way that is more kind to yourself. It takes practice - but it'll help you get through difficult situations.

## **GET PHYSICAL**

Use relaxation and breathing exercises. They can give you a sense of calmness.

One of the simplest breathing exercises is to inhale for a count of five, hold for five, then exhale for five. Keep doing this, focusing on counting and breathing, until your feelings of stress ebb away.

Some of the best stress relief can be exercise. Go for a walk or a run. Take your dog or text a friend. Dark nights can be oppressive and make us want to avoid outside activity. Why not hit the gym or do a few exercises at home?

The Sports Centre on campus has some great classes. Just check out their website: <https://www.tcd.ie/Sport/classes/courses/fitness-classes/>

Being physically tired can help you sleep!

# WHAT TO DO IF...

## ***I'm late for my exam***

Contact your tutor or the Senior Tutor's office immediately. If nobody has left the examination room, you may still be allowed to sit the exam.

## ***I'm too sick to take my exam***

Contact your tutor immediately. Then get a medical certificate to your tutor within 72 hours.

Your medical certificate must include the date, the length of incapacitation and a clear statement that you are unable to sit exams.

Medical certificates are NOT accepted as an explanation or an excuse for poor performance. If you're not fit, don't sit!

## ***I feel ill during my exam***

Tell an invigilator. They'll take you to the College Health service, where your illness will be assessed.

## ***I've missed an exam***

Contact your tutor, Senior Tutor or Head of School immediately.

If you don't attend an examination and don't have a valid reason, you're unlikely to be accommodated.

## ***I failed my exam***

If you fail, you might be able to pass by compensation depending on the rules of your department. Check your course handbook for the specifics.

If you fail, get in touch with your tutor. You can also get in touch with the TCDSU Education Officer to provide support.

# WHO TO CONTACT

## Your College Tutor

Get in touch with your college tutor if you have any problems throughout the exam period. They are your main academic representative and can help you with any problems you may be having.

Check the 'My Personal Details' section of your [my.tcd.ie](http://my.tcd.ie) to find your tutor's name and contact details.

## Senior Tutor

Can't get in touch with your College Tutor? Go straight to the Senior Tutor, Dr Aidan Seery.

The Office of the Senior Tutor is located in House 27. All contact details can be found at the following link: [http://www.tcd.ie/Senior\\_Tutor/contact/](http://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/contact/)

## Head of Department

Contact your Head of Department for urgent queries, if you can't reach your college tutor. Information on Heads of Department can be found on School websites.

## Student Learning Development

Visit the SLD website at [www.student-learning.tcd.ie](http://www.student-learning.tcd.ie) for a range of study and exam strategies and details of upcoming workshops.

To book an individual consultation, call (01) 896 1407 or email [student.learning@tcd.ie](mailto:student.learning@tcd.ie). A number of these are available over the next few weeks.

Drop in sessions run on a Monday afternoon, where students can get a 15 minute appointment without booking in advance. This is on a first-come, first-served basis.

## **Student Counselling Service**

Contacts for the Student Counselling Service can be found at the following link:

[https://www.tcd.ie/Student\\_Counselling/contact/appointments/](https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/contact/appointments/)

Student Learning Development and the Student Counselling Service are both located in 7-9 South Leinster Street.

## **Health Centre**

The College Health Centre is available to all Trinity Students. You can make appointments by calling (01) 896 1556.

Emergency clinics run everyday at 9am and 2pm. If you urgently need to see a doctor or nurse, it is advised that you arrive early to ensure you'll be seen.

## **TCDSU Education Officer**

For more information or any academic issues, drop Aimee an email at [education@tcdsu.org](mailto:education@tcdsu.org). For urgent queries, call her on (01) 646 8439 or 087 924 5258.

## **TCDSU Welfare Officer**

For support, including physical and mental health issues, get in touch with James. His email address is [welfare@tcdsu.org](mailto:welfare@tcdsu.org) - or you can call him on (01) 646 8437 or 086 775 6486.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

## **Student Learning and Development**

[https://www.tcd.ie/Student\\_Counselling/student-learning/undergraduate/topics/exams/](https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/student-learning/undergraduate/topics/exams/)

## **Past papers**

<https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/exams/past-papers/annual/>

If there are no past papers for your exam on the website, contact your school or course office.

## **Blackboard module on study skills (including exams!)**

[https://www.tcd.ie/Student\\_Counselling/student-learning/Blackboard/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/student-learning/Blackboard/index.php)