



BRADFORD
UNIVERSITY
School *of* Management

**Effective
Learning Service**

Pass Your Exams



PASS YOUR EXAMS

This booklet offers advice on how to succeed at examinations. It complements the advice and information that is given to students by module tutors in the period leading to exams.

The main focus of the booklet is on helping you succeed in exams. However, before it deals with **how** you can do this, it is important that you are aware of why some students fail or do badly in exams.

An important point, therefore, about succeeding in exams is to avoid falling into one of the traps summarised below.

These are the main reasons why students do badly at exams at the School of Management, and anywhere else in higher education in Britain. It is usually for one or more of the following reasons:

- Not addressing the **specific set question**;
- Poor time management; running out of time, or not allocating sufficient time to questions proportionate to the weight of marks allocated;
- Missing out key points in answers;
- Over-descriptive or superficial answers; not enough analysis of main issues and practices;
- Over-reliance on finding information from books in open book exams;
- Presentational issues, particularly illegible handwriting and not writing in proper sentences.

The remainder of this booklet concerns:

1. types of exam you will encounter at the School of Management;
2. tutor comments and advice on how to succeed in exams;
3. revision strategies;
4. coping with anxiety and exam nerves;
5. behaviour in exam rooms;
6. answering the questions.

1. Types of Exam at the School of Management

There are two types of exam at the School of Management:

| Open Book | Closed Book |
|--|---|
| <p>You are allowed to take printed texts into the exam room – but you don't have to.</p> <p>You can, if you wish, take your own or other printed lecture notes, course text books, numerical calculators into the exam room (but not English or foreign language dictionaries, and not laptop computers).</p> | <p>In a closed book exam, no text books, lecture notes, dictionaries, or calculators with alphabetical characters are allowed in the exam room.</p> <p>Closed book exams are the more common of the two types of exam at the School of Management.</p> |

As stated above, closed book exams are the more common but you will still encounter open book exams, particularly for the more statistical, quantitative and numerical subject areas.

You might think that the open book style of exam is more advantageous to you, and they can be, providing you are selective in what you take into the exam hall. Students can waste valuable time flicking through books to confirm what they really already know, or should know by the day of the exam.

Open book exams are not an invitation to cut down on revision time prior to the exams; quite the contrary. This type of exam requires you to really **organise** your pre-exam revision and produce good notes that you can take into the exam hall, with perhaps one or two supporting text books. The supporting texts can supply you with relevant detail, e.g. names of principal theorists; examples of good practice; detail of specific models, **but your notes are the most important resource to take with you into the exam hall for an open book exam.**

The reason for this is that it is important you summarise in your own words, and not simply copy extracts from books – which can be plagiarism. This is where your own notes become a valuable resource for you, as they should already contain summaries of the main points from a topic.

I invigilated our first open book exam and remember how noisy it was. Many students spent ages leafing backwards and forwards through their files and on one of my patrols of the desks of sitting students I noted that about half the students had not even bothered to put in file dividers and tabs so that they could find (and organise) their notes. The results were frankly disappointing...

Next year we briefed the students about preparation:

- *get your notes well organised and indexed;*
- *think about concepts and theories in your revision and preparation and use the notes in the file to corroborate facts;*
- *revise as hard for an open book exam as for an unseen exam;*
- *watch your timing on each answer.*

Dr. John Bradbeer

Principal Lecturer in Higher Education
University of Portsmouth

If you know a particular open book exam is pending, you can design and produce revision notes in advance to show connections between the topics that you anticipate will come up in the exams.

Try to demonstrate to an examiner that you can synthesize ideas and make connections between models, theories, and business practices.

EXAM QUESTION STRUCTURES

Here are some examples of exam question structures from past exams at the School of Management:

- Answer 2 questions from a choice of 6 (50% weighting on each)
- Answer 3 questions from a choice of 5 (equal percentage weighting to each)
- Answer Section A question (compulsory) (50%) and answer 2 questions from section B (choice from 7) (25% each)
- Answer Section A question (compulsory) (50 %) and one question only from Section B (choice from six) (50 %)
- Answer all parts of Section A (multi-choice) (20 %), plus 2 questions from Section B, choice from 6 (40 % each)

The important point in all of this is to follow the instructions. If the paper says 'Answer **all** parts of Section A', that is what you must do.

You also need to take careful note of the weighting attached to the parts of the question and allocate your time accordingly.

Measure your time

You may be able to write enthusiastically and at length on a topic, but if it only represents 25% of the total marks, you must manage and measure your time according to the weighting of marks given to the question.

This might seem like common sense advice in the cool of the pre-exam period. However, you can easily get carried away in the fervour of the moment. In the relief of finding a subject you know well, you may keep writing well beyond the time allocation the question merits.

When you open the exam paper, select the questions you are going to answer. Look at the weighting of marks, and allocate a time allowance to it. Write this down and **stick to it**.

Keeping to time is more important than aiming for perfection in an answer.

2. What are tutors looking for in your exam answers?

What are tutors looking for in your exam answers? This is what some tutors at the School of Management had to say in answer to this question.

Before answering, read the questions carefully...make a few notes at the top of the page, put a single line through them when you have finished.

If it is suggested that diagrams are used - then use them. In Operations Management diagrams can save you 200 words and the equivalent time. They don't have to be of draughtsman-like quality, a sketch will do.

*Mostly I look for a **demonstration of understanding**. If I ask a question on the use of process analysis as a tool for improvement; I would like to see a discussion on the meaning of process analysis, the reasons why improvements are important and then a discussion on the issues that are involved. That tells me that the person responding has a grasp of the subject and can discuss the implications and issues.*

*A more numerical question, Line Balancing or Pareto or Statistical Process Control is usually easier to respond to. Invariably I ask for an interpretation (the demonstration of understanding) of the results. The data could be valued at up to 40% of the question; **but discussing the issues that arise from the data is as important and shows an all round understanding.***

Malcolm Afferson

First, plan use of time according to the allocation of marks on the paper.

Second, read the whole examination paper carefully and choose (where there is a choice) their questions carefully.

Having selected preferred question(s), then:

- *read the question(s) VERY carefully - read every word;*
- *unpack it/them by doing a 'mind map' or list of points;*
- *follow the instructions in the question, i.e. to describe where it asks for description, to critically evaluate where it calls for critical evaluation etc;*

- *Students must answer the question SET - otherwise they could lose marks. I warn students against the old problem of panicking and seeing a topic in a question and then writing EVERYTHING that they can remember about the topic - rather than answering the question actually asked.*

I also tell students that I am looking for (successful) demonstration of 4 main skills:

- Description:** Content; knowledge of models, tools and theory.*
- Analysis:** Why? Why not? Cause and effect. Reasons.*
- Evaluation:** Pros/cons. Advantages and disadvantages. Ranking. Strengths and weaknesses.*
- Synthesis:** Structure, flow, logic. Making arguments. Use of data/evidence to arrive at conclusions.*

*I also warn them that an answer that only contains description will not get many marks - **they must devote most of their efforts in analysis, evaluation and synthesis.***

Dr. Jenny Fairbrass

***The most important thing is that students read the question(s) before starting to write and to make sure that they answer the question.** Many students seem to just write down whatever comes to their mind with regard to a specific issue without answering the question...If what they write doesn't contribute to answering the specific question they won't get any marks for that. It also may cause the reader to think that they don't understand the question/subject.*

Dr. Alex Mohr

*A good exam answer (to an essay based question) will provide a well structured and well argued answer (i.e. with strong arguments). **That means the essay will use evidence** - either based on research, examples in the text or personal experience - to reach some appropriate conclusions. It is not good to write "I think" without saying why you have that view, and without evaluating the evidence being used to make such a conclusion.*

The essay will also clearly define any technical words used in the question - especially words such as "good" or "effective" (what do these words really mean?) which can occur frequently in essay questions - and will refer to material covered in the lectures. Of course, items such as assignment structure are assumed: students giving poorly structured answers tend to give the impression that the argument is not well thought through.

*Better answers will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of (i.e. will critique) **the research done on a particular subject, will show reading beyond the basic textbook and will raise further questions which are relevant and need answering.***

Dr. Peter Morgan

The most important thing I would hope to find in a student's exam answer would be an answer! That means discussion that is addressed meaningfully to the question that is set, rather than generally around the topic of the question, or even worse just reporting material directly from the module and slides with little or no attempt to assess its relevance.

*Within HRM and OB questions typically look for application and/or analysis. **Learn to recognise what is being asked for.** Students often let themselves down by being overly and simply descriptive rather than getting into and exploring ideas.*

It is also important answers are substantiated - by that I mean that they draw on, and in their arguments are supported by, evidence from the wider literature and the student's reading and understanding of the module and the concepts it contains.

*It's **generally much better to look at a few ideas in depth than to try a scatter gun approach.** For example I would rather an answer drills down into a few ideas to explain them and their implications properly than starts from the position of "In answering this question there are a lot of things we could consider..." and then goes on to list and describe these but not then offer any meaningful discussion. There are always lots of things to consider - the whole point of the examination question is for you to show your consideration - i.e. identify which might be particularly relevant and/or important in the context of the question and why.*

Dr. David Spicer

Structurally the answer must be clear, including an introduction, analysis section and conclusion.

This means that there should be a clear introduction to clarify the purpose of the answer, the relevant definitions, and the structure of the answer.

The Analysis Section should have full coverage of information relevant to the question, analytical, i.e. students should not regurgitate the lecture notes or provide descriptions of textbook contents, instead, they should demonstrate their critical understanding on a particular issue and present their own arguments on the basis of theory and empirical evidence.

The Conclusion should summarise the main points and express the general views derived from the analysis.

Bad examples of examination answers:

- 1. No structure answer: one answer one paragraph; everything is squeezed together with no space*
- 2. Bullet point answer with no analysis*
- 3. A not-on-the-point answer, due to poor understanding of the question*
- 4. An answer that regurgitates lecture notes or by copying from the textbook*
- 5. Answers with too many spelling or grammar errors to an extent that the markers cannot understand the point being made*
- 6. Answers that do not follow instructions: e.g. answer both questions on one answer book when asked to answer two questions (one question one answer book).*

Dr. Deli Yang

What are the recurring points from these comments?

Summary of main points from tutor comments

Revision

- Before the exam you should read 'outside the box'. That is, go beyond the recommended reading lists for relevant evidence that you can include in exam answers. Ensure you demonstrate this additional reading to the examiner in your answers.

Choosing questions

- At the start of the exam, read the questions carefully; be clear about what is expected of you.
- Plan your answer; make notes at the start of the paper and cross these out before you start the main answer.

Time management

- Take careful note of the weighting of marks allocated to questions, and set yourself a strict time limit for answering each chosen question.

Tackling the questions

- Focus on and address the set question or topic; don't just tell all you know on a topic.
- Support ideas with reliable evidence.
- Quality, in-depth answers that focus on selected issues are preferable to answers that cover a broader, but often more superficial, canvas.
- You need to demonstrate your clear understanding of a topic. This is done by both accurate **description** and **analysis** of elements in the set topic, but the latter is often more important for good marks.
- Write extended answers, in proper sentences, and avoid superficial 'bullet-point' answers.

3. Revision Strategies

- A four week revision plan is shown on the next page. Plan your revision; decide what subjects to study, and when you will study.
- Spread your revision evenly over the month, but build in some time each week (perhaps a full day) when you **don't** revise, so you can look forward to this break from study.
- Reading is often best done in short, concentrated bursts of around 45-60 minutes. Decide in advance what topics to revise, then read for the set period. At the end of this, stop and have a short break – even if you want to carry on. You can become easily distracted if you feel that an endless, monotonous period of reading awaits you.

Use past exam papers as the purpose for your reading

Looking at past exam papers also gives you an idea what topics recur and 'tunes you in' to the language in which questions are set. You can also use past exam questions to set yourself a 'mock exam' under timed conditions. This will also get you back into practice of writing by hand again and within strictly timed conditions.

- Using the **'5W & 1H' approach** (see page 20) can be a useful aid for revision on the main theories, models, ideas and practices connected with a particular subject.
- Revise with others. This can be an excellent way of learning, providing you are all committed to the task. You can form a revision group and take past exam questions as a stimulus to group discussion. There can be, for many students, an unspoken element of competition in any study or revision group that can encourage them to think more deeply about topics.

Writing with a pen

Get back into the habit of writing by hand with a pen. This is what you will have to do in an exam. Your writing must be legible, otherwise the tutor will not understand the points you are making. Practise handwriting skills under timed conditions in the weeks leading up to the exam.

REVISION PLANNER

This will help you work out a revision plan for the final weeks leading up to your exams. List what you are going to revise, and when.

Week 1

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| morning | | | | | | | |
| afternoon | | | | | | | |
| evening | | | | | | | |

Week 2

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| morning | | | | | | | |
| afternoon | | | | | | | |
| evening | | | | | | | |

Week 3

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| morning | | | | | | | |
| afternoon | | | | | | | |
| evening | | | | | | | |

Week 4

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| morning | | | | | | | |
| afternoon | | | | | | | |
| evening | | | | | | | |

4. Coping with Anxiety and Exam Nerves

Some students enjoy exams. They like the buzz and adrenalin rush, and they find they work well under pressure.

However, they are in a fortunate minority. Most students find exams provoke feelings and symptoms of anxiety that range from mild to acute worry.

If anxiety is a big issue for you, the University Counselling Service has a range of services to offer. These include self-help leaflets, such as '*Surviving Exams*' and '*Anxiety and Panic Attacks*', and audio relaxation techniques that you can listen to on-line via the Counselling Service web site.

You can also make an appointment to talk to a qualified counsellor about your feelings. This can be a big help to many students, as it can help you to understand, cope with anxiety, and even learn how to turn stress to your advantage. This can be useful for other future anxiety-provoking situations too, such as presentations.

However, here is some general advice about handling anxiety before an exam:

Revision period

One of the best antidotes to exam anxiety is revision. This sounds trite and boring, but if you start revision early, at least a month before an exam, you will at least feel reassured you are doing all you can to prepare for it.

If you don't do any or much revision beforehand, perhaps you deserve to feel anxious.

But if you genuinely have put in regular efforts to revise, you can feel, at least, at peace and ease with yourself for putting the work in beforehand.

The week before the exam:

Think positive all the time: 'reframe' your thoughts and don't allow negative images to get a grip inside your head.

Think of how **well** you are going to do and how **good** you are going to feel when you pass those exams.

Don't embark on any major new reading. It is best to go over the **main points** of topics and fix these in your mind.

Get some daily exercise so you can work off any tension that may be building.

Avoid other students who are either ultra-confident or are all 'doom and gloom' about the exams.

Get a good night's sleep before the day of the exam.

On the day of the exam:

Make sure you have everything you need for the exam – pens that work, ruler, water etc.

Eat well before the exam – have a good breakfast. This will boost your energy levels.

Don't attempt any last minute revision – this is likely to make you feel anxious.

Keep the positive thoughts you have been developing in your mind all week: *"I **will** do well; the answers **will** flow; I **will** pass".*

Allow for travel delays and make sure you arrive in good time and without having to rush to the exam room.

If you have to wait a while to enter the exam hall, keep moving around outside and keep focused on being positive.

5. Behaviour in the Exam Rooms

It is important that you are aware of what is expected of you in the exam rooms.

Some important rules and regulations about exams

If you can't get to an exam because you're ill, get a message to the undergraduate or postgraduate office as soon as possible, and see a doctor – you will need a doctor's note to back up any claim of 'absence with good cause' from the exam. You need to take your UB card (and a photograph of yourself) in to the exam room.

You may take into an exam:

- Any materials or articles which your department asks you to take.
- Your own electronic calculator, **unless** it allows the full range of alphabetical characters to be input, or your Department has forbidden it.
- A small bag, provided that it is left on the floor by your desk. Anything else (large bag, coat, etc.) must not be left near your desk.
- It's better not to take a mobile phone into an exam room, but if you do so, please make sure it's turned off. However, no MP3 players or Ipods are allowed in the exam rooms.
- A **small** amount of food and (non-alcoholic) drink.
- A pencil/pen case.
- In specific exams, and only if permitted, a dual language dictionary may be allowed.

| |
|--------------------------------------|
| You may NOT take into an exam |
|--------------------------------------|

- ✘ Dictionaries are not permitted unless you are permitted to use a printed dual-language dictionary for a specific exam (e.g. foreign language). If you are permitted to take a dual-language dictionary, it must not have any notes written in it, or other material added to it.
- ✘ An electronic calculator (or any device that has a calculator function) that allows the full range of alphabetical characters to be input; or any calculator of a type which your Department has forbidden.
- ✘ No MP3 or Ipod players.
- ✘ Any unauthorised book, manuscript, notes, electronic devices or other things you could use improperly to obtain assistance in your work.
- ✘ Any bag or receptacle in which such unauthorised articles can be carried.
- ✘ An English language dictionary (for example, Chambers or the Concise Oxford).
- ✘ You must not talk, signal or use ***any means whatever*** to communicate with or make contact with anyone, other than the invigilator, during an exam.
- ✘ You must not talk, signal or use ***any means whatever*** to obtain, directly or indirectly, assistance in an exam from anyone, other than the invigilator.
- ✘ *You must not give or try to give, directly or indirectly, assistance to any other student in an examination.*
- ✘ You must not do anything that may disturb other students or in any way disrupt the smooth progress of an exam - if you do, the invigilators may require you to leave.
- ✘ You must not smoke.
- ✘ You must not look at the exam paper before the permission to start the exam is given by the invigilator.

Late arrival

You will not be admitted to an exam later than one hour after it starts, if it is a 2 hour exam, and no more than 15 minutes after it has started for exams for exams of any other length. No extra time will be allowed if you arrive after an exam has begun.

Leaving

If you are taken ill, or need to visit the toilet, put up your hand and ask the invigilator for help. The invigilator will arrange for you to be escorted from the examination room, **otherwise:**

You may not leave an exam that lasts 90 minutes or less at any time.

You may not leave an exam that lasts more than 90 minutes until one hour after the start or during the last fifteen minutes.

If you leave early, hand your work to the invigilator, do not leave it on the desk. You may only take out of the exam room those things which you took in, plus any question paper printed wholly on white paper, which you are not required to hand in.

At the end of an exam

You must *remain seated and silent* at the end of the exam until dismissed by the invigilator.

Check that your UB number is on every item of stationery you use. Make sure that you have put your name on every answer book you've used, and seal down the flap.

You must hand to the invigilator all your work and any question paper printed wholly or partly on coloured paper.

You may only take out of the exam room those things that you took in, plus any question paper printed wholly on white paper.

You can find full information on expected conduct in exams on:

www.brad.ac.uk/admin/acsec/examreg/student.html

6. Answering the Questions

STAGE 1: analyse the question

- When the exam begins scan through the paper to find questions you have prepared for; select these.
- Look for the question you are most confident about and tackle this one first.
- Look carefully at each of your chosen questions – examine the wording carefully. Pick out key words.

For example:

Evaluate the impact of internet on practices for recruitment and selection employed by firms.

The key words here are: *evaluate, impact, recruitment and selection*

Evaluate: meaning, to assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something. It **doesn't** mean tell us all you know about how firms use the internet for selection and recruitment. But it does mean weighing up the impact (another key word) of it on both recruitment and selection.

Although recruitment and selection are terms that are often used interchangeably, they are separate processes and your answer needs to reflect this.

Make notes.

'Unfreeze' your mind by immediately making notes for a few minutes. Jot down the main points that occur to you. This could be in linear or bullet note form, or you could use some form of visual diagram or mind-map to show the connections between ideas or elements.

Put a line through your notes when you are ready to start writing your main answer.

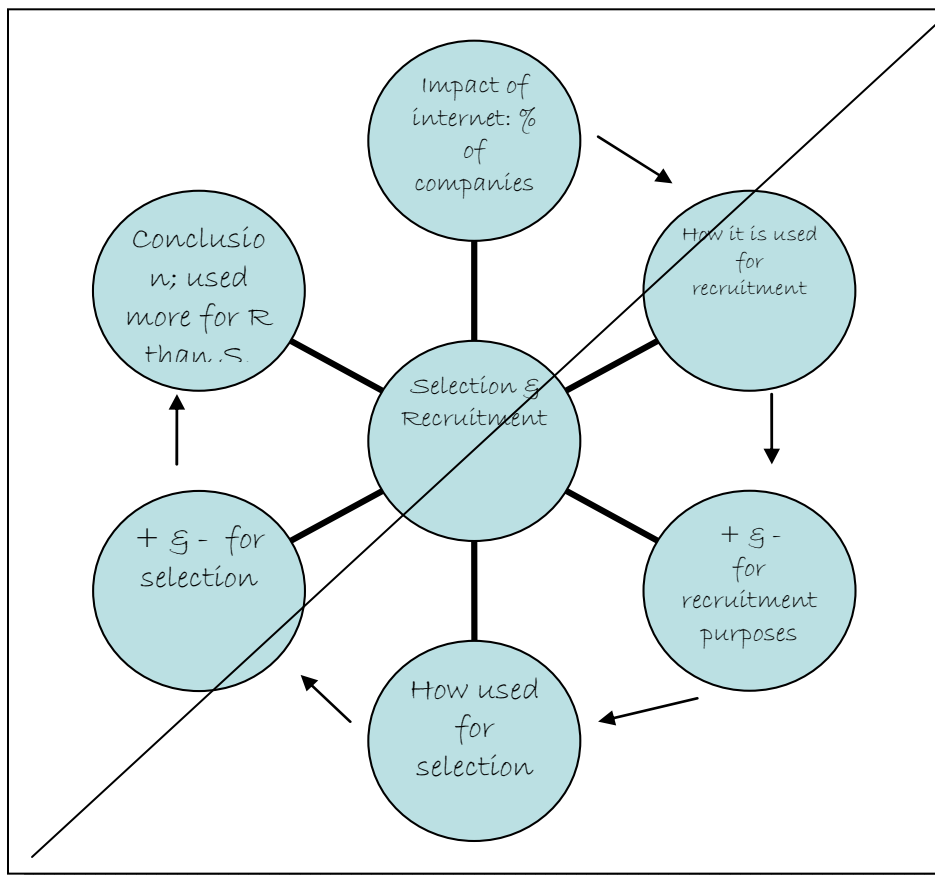
Examples:

Question: Evaluate the impact of internet on practices for recruitment and selection employed by firms.

NOTES:

'evaluate' = weigh up the impact - on both R. and S - look at + & - impact. Firms - large & small - look at impact = size of firm/nature of business

Recruitment = trends over recent years/what % of cos. use internet/the type of jobs/types of candidates; does it exclude groups of workers? Selection = IT skills needed by job applicants, e.g. core skills/selection tests using IT; psychom. tests



STAGE 2: Structure your answer - this is **very** important**Aim to write a mini-essay****Short introduction**

Present the Examiner with a positive impression of you. Introduce the topic, and you could also mention the particular models or theories you will be describing and analysing in your answer.

Main part of your answer

- This can include: describing and illustrating the main points that underpin the subject – give examples – mention main theorists or commentators associated with the topic; take a position, reach a conclusion if necessary.
- Show the tutor you understand the main issues, the main points, the main arguments for and against. Show you understand the exceptions to the rule, if applicable.
- Demonstrate your knowledge and range of reading. For example, include ideas that you have learned from texts that don't feature in recommended reading lists.
- Above all – answer **the** question – don't just tell us all you know on a subject.

Conclusion

Have one or two concluding points ready to make; finish your answer well; leave the examiner with a good impression of you.

- Write in proper and extended sentences
- Avoid using bullet points
- Watch your handwriting – keep it legible
- Give yourself time to read quickly through each answer before you move on to the next question.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION:

"Am I expected to cite and fully reference the sources I mention in my exam answers".

No. Full referencing of sources, as expected in a course assignment, is not expected in exams.

However, we DO expect students to remember the names of main commentators/theorists, to demonstrate knowledge of these theories, and to demonstrate the applicability of theories/models/ideas/practices (TMIP) to particular situations, particularly those that feature in any exam question.

You can adopt the '**5W and 1H approach**' to dealing with the key writers and commentators in your exam answers; not all apply to any TMIP, but it can be helpful to run through all the following questions:

Who: remember the names of the key writers and commentators connected to the subject areas;

What: were their main arguments, points or hypotheses;

When: remember when they published their ideas. This can be useful, as it places the origin of an idea in a particular period of time. This can then raise the question " is the TMIP still valid today?"

Why: it can be helpful to say, if relevant, why they published their ideas, e.g. response to a particular problem, issue or scenario;

Where: Is the TMIP only applicable in certain social, economic, cultural or geographical situations or contexts? If so, state where, and, if relevant, why and when;

How: How can the TMIP be applied? Or how might it be applied?

Example of approach and structure to a particular question

Question: *"Why do people resist change at work and what can organisations do to overcome this resistance?"*

Analysis of the question:

- The question is in two parts: (a) Why do people resist change at work **and** what can organisations do to overcome this resistance?
- The first part has an assumption built into it. Is it true that all people resist change at work?
- You would need to address the assumption before you moved to the second part of the question.
- **Some key words:** You might want to think about the word 'overcome'. Does this have connotations of power and undertones of oppression?

Planning the structure:

Part a: *"Why do people resist change at work...*

- Discuss if it is true that **all** people resist change at work. If some don't, why not?
- Describe why people do resist change at work: the main reasons; mention key writers/commentators.
- Is it just about individual employees? Can the culture of an organisation contribute to this resistance?
- How do people not happy about change show their resistance?

Part b: *... and what can organisations do to overcome this resistance?"*

- 'Overcome'? To what extent is the 'carrot' as relevant and appropriate as the 'stick' in encouraging people to change?

- Describe the range of things that organisations can do to help employees prepare for and cope with change. Mention key writers/commentators.
- Give real-life examples to illustrate how particular organisations have gone about helping their employees manage change.

The introduction

A good introduction will give the reader a clear sense of direction- where you are going- and some of the main points in your answer

Example:

The question appears to make the assumption that all people at work resist change and that 'resistance' arises just from individual reluctance to accept it. This answer will look at the issue of organisational change, but will make the point that the culture of an organisation can be an important element in the process of minimising employee hostility toward change in the first place. The words 'overcome... resistance' in the title, for example, may not be appropriate words for organisations to use, because of the connotations of power and force associated with them.

Conclusion

How to succeed in exams?

Put yourself into the shoes of an Examiner. The Examiner is faced with many scripts to mark, limited time in which to do this, and is working under considerable pressure. At the same time, the Examiner wants to be fair, and will be fair, providing you can demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of ideas, and the application of ideas to the set topic.

When the Examiner opens your paper, he or she will want to be able to read it. Your handwriting must be legible, the sentences plainly written, and your points clearly presented in an organised and logical way.

A good introduction will make the Examiner cautiously optimistic about you. A 'good introduction' is when you reassure the Examiner that you are going to address the set topic, and not just unleash a flood of 'facts' that may wash in the general direction of the exam question.

The optimism of the Examiner turns to positive happiness if there is then a sound middle section to your answer. A 'sound middle' is when you are able to clearly demonstrate to the Examiner your knowledge, understanding and application of theories, ideas, models and practices that underpin the exam topic.

This usually means presenting accurate definitions, descriptions, and showing you know who the key commentators are, what they said, when they said it, how and why they arrived at their conclusions, and so on.

It also means understanding arguments for and against a particular idea or practice, flaws in arguments, exceptions to the rule, when and how ideas can be applied, and about the application of ideas to the business world. A 'sound middle' will also offer the Examiner, when it is relevant to do so, a clear statement of **your** position on the set topic.

And if you include a conclusion that pulls key ideas together, and perhaps reminds the Examiner of a central point you made in your answer, the Examiner will be contented indeed. A contented Examiner can result in good marks for you.

Colin Neville
November 2006.

Additional reading

Cottrell, S. (2006). *The Exam Skills Handbook*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Tracey, E. (2006). *The Student's Guide to Exam Success*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.

Some useful internet sites

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/lss/learnerdevelopment/>

Learner Development Unit (University of Bradford): *this is the central student support unit for the University. They organise workshops, offer individual help to students, and offer learner support software to help students develop skills for successful learning. They have a website*

www.support4learning.org.uk/education/key_skills.htm

(a good all-round site for study skills advice & information)

www.bized.ac.uk/

(a study support site for business studies students)

Effective learning booklets

These are all the titles in booklets in the 'Effective Learning' series:

1. *Return to Part-time Study*
2. *Return to Full-time Study*
3. *The First Semester*
4. *Time Management*
5. *Accelerated Learning*
6. *20 Tips for Effective Learning*
7. *Six Steps to Effective Reading*
8. *Effective Note Making*
9. *Effective Writing*
10. *Essay Writing (1) stages of essay writing*
11. *Essay Writing (2) planning and structuring your essays*
12. *Essay Writing (3) finding your own voice in essays*
13. *Essay writing (4) ten ways to liven your essays*
14. *References and Bibliographies*
15. *Report Writing*
16. *Pass Your Exams*
17. *Your Assignment Results – and how to improve them*
18. *Presentations*
19. *Group Work*
20. *Introduction to Research and Research Methods*
21. *Foundations of Good Research*
22. *Writing Your Management Project Report or Dissertation*

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