TIPS FOR ONLINE EXAMS

We Are In This Together

As we work together to finish the Winter term away from campus, here are some tips to help you with preparing for and writing your online exams.

1 Know and Understand the Material

- Online, in-person, multiple choice, essay – it's still an exam! Your best defense is to learn the material well and study as you normally would, without worrying too much about the format at first.

- As with studying for all exams, start by reviewing the syllabus, with special focus on course objectives. This is where your instructor tells you what they wanted you to learn in the course. Do you understand all course objectives by now? Are you able to meet them?

- Focus on understanding, connecting and applying course concepts, not memorizing. Online exam questions will emphasize application, connection and analysis even more than in-person exams.

- Even with open book exams, your best strategy is always to know and understand course materials well before exam time. Don't expect to have time during the exam to look up answers or rely too much on the books, notes and resources you have at hand to help you through.

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TIPS FOR ONLINE EXAMS

2 Be Prepared

- Read the online exam instructions ahead of time. Then read them again! Knowing what to expect and being confident that you can handle the exam format really helps lower exam stress.

- Make note of the date and time parameters, and set reminders for yourself. These are unusual times, where it can be challenging to stick to a schedule. You don't want to miss an exam because you got mixed up on the date or weren't paying attention to the time at home.

- Know ahead of time if your exam is open book and follow the instructions. If you know there are course materials you'll need to refer to, prepare these well ahead of time, to allow quick and easy access to the exact locations you'll need. As always, the best approach is to know the course material thoroughly.

- Find a quiet, secluded space near a power outlet to do the exam, where you won't be distracted or interrupted. Check that the area has a strong, reliable WiFi signal.

- If you live with other people and/or pets, find a spot where you can close the door, if possible. You don't want people talking loudly in the background, or your beloved kitty jumping up on the keyboard in mid-exam!

- Get organized. Well ahead of time, get everything ready that you'll need at exam time – laptop cable, paper, pencils and eraser, if your exam requires calculations; a full water bottle; any prepared course materials you think you might need, etc.

3 Get Tech-Ready

- Make sure you understand all technical requirements for the exam, and check well ahead of time that your computer is up to the task. Test the link with lots of time to spare, and if there's a chance to do a practice run-through, do so.

- If you've decided to use a space you don't normally spend screen time at, spend a good amount of time there online well before the exam to be confident the WiFi is strong and reliable in that location.

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3 Get Tech-Ready, continued...

- Has your instructor provided guidance on what to do in case of technical problems? Get familiar with these protocols and with your instructor's contact information. Odds are, everything will go smoothly, but it never hurts to be prepared. If it's been a while since you've taken a screenshot on your computer, refresh your memory about how to do this quickly, so you can screenshot any error messages in case of technical glitches.

- If possible, find out all technical and procedural details ahead of time, such as whether you will be able to go back and revise earlier answers later, or whether your responses will be submitted as soon as you type them.

4 At Exam Time

- Be in place, ready to go, with your computer on and everything at hand, at least 15-30 minutes before start time. Online environments can be unforgiving, and if you are even a few minutes late, some systems may lock you out of taking the exam altogether.

- Turn off your phone and put it where you can't see or reach it. You don't want distractions during exam time.

- Keep something nearby that shows the time, other than your computer. If your phone is the only time-keeping device you have, devote some time before the exam to changing its notification settings to avoid getting distracting pop-ups or noises throughout the exam.

- Close all browser tabs and notifications, and once you sign in, keep only the exam browser open at all times. The only exception, for exams with essay questions, might be to open a Word file, if you find it easiest to compose there. It's usually okay to copy and paste from a Word file into the answer field. If you want to do this, check the exam instructions first and remember to save the Word file frequently so you don't lose content by mistake.

- As in any exam, note the overall format and value of the sections and questions, and do some time-planning about how long to spend on each. If your instructor has given you this information ahead of time, include in-exam time-planning as part of your final studying, so you won't have to use exam time on it. Don't forget to save time at the end for review, if possible.

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4   At Exam Time, continued...

- Hopefully by now all students understand the importance of academic honesty in all situations, including online formats. Many online exam systems have built-in safeguards to protect academic integrity. For example, each student may get a different, randomized order of questions, so no 2 exams are exactly the same.

- Read each question carefully, as with any exam, and make sure you understand what you are being asked to do. Make sure, with essay questions, that you answer/address all components of the question.

- Once you have answered all questions to the best of your ability, don't forget to hit the "submit" button, and take a screenshot of the confirmation you've done this, if you get one.

5   After the Exam

- Give yourself a high five and take time to celebrate completing your exam!

- Reflect on how the exam went for you. What went well? Which study/preparation strategies worked best for you? Is there anything you'd like to do differently next time?

GOOD LUCK ON YOUR ONLINE EXAMS! YU GOT THIS!

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