



St Joseph's College
TOOWOOMBA

Study Strategies Examination Preparation and Managing Exam Stress

St Joseph's College



St Joseph's College Toowoomba



St Joseph's College students require many skills for future success.

Young people in the 21st century need to be:

- innovators
- entrepreneurs
- lifelong learners
- responsible global citizens

QCAA General syllabuses focus on the skills students need in the 21st century:

- critical thinking
- creative thinking
- communication
- collaboration and teamwork
- personal and social skills
- ICT skills

These skills are taught and assessed through **internal (school based) assessment** and **external (QCAA) assessment during Years 11 and 12**. To be successful students need to achieve well in a variety of assessment formats; practical demonstrations of skills, public spoken tasks and performances, assignments including essays, in- class tests and formal unseen (or external) exams.

External Examinations

An external exam for each General senior subject will begin in 2020. These assessments are developed and marked by the QCAA. Students in each subject will sit external examinations at the same time in schools across Queensland. Most students will complete external assessments when they are in Year 12.

These external exams will contribute 25% to a student's final subject result in most subjects.

In Mathematics and Science subjects it will generally contribute 50%.

External assessments will run for three weeks in Term 4 each year.

Achieving Student Success

St Joseph's College will thoroughly prepare its students for external assessment by teaching the subject content and skills in the syllabus, and by preparing students to perform with confidence in unseen exams.

To achieve success in the senior years, students need to know both the skills and content involved in each subject they study, in addition to understanding how to study and organise themselves effectively.

Study skills and techniques can be general in nature and then quite specific to each curriculum area eg: understanding new vocabulary in French and knowing the formula for solving a complex trigonometry question in Mathematics.

Cornell Notetaking



The section below offers general tips on *Cornell Notetaking*, studying and responding in test situations. More specific tips are then provided for the different curriculum areas; including *General Subjects* and *Applied Subjects*.

General Study and Exam Tips

Preparing Study Notes:

Why make study notes?

- Summarising and condensing information makes it easier to learn and remember for tests and exams.
- It is a great way to start your study as you are thinking about the information as you try to understand it and put it into your own words.

Advantages of making study notes:

- you are checking your understanding of the material in a timely manner;
- it will highlight any problems in understanding;
- you are revising as you go when making study notes;
- it gives you a great time advantage if you have blocks of exams;
- it is a great way to study for tests so you remember the information;
- you are condensing and organizing the material to learn for tests and exams.

When should I use my study notes?

- If you are having a topic test, the study notes summarise information for studying for the test.
- If you are going to have an exam on a number of topics, study notes from the end of each topic or end of a section make the task simpler. Don't wait until just before exams to create your notes – it is more effective to be able to revise notes created earlier when the new content was being taught. As exams approach, it is helpful for reinforcement to begin revising early.

What format should study notes be?

You can keep study notes in any of the following:

- Have a separate exercise book or lecture pad for your **Cornell Note template**.
- Use loose leaf paper and store the notes in the back of a folder or use your laptop and electronic template.

The actual format of the pages can include:

- Mind maps or other forms of graphical notetaking.
- Linear note-making where the information is presented in a structured point format.

Where do mind maps fit it?

Mind maps can be used for sections of a topic to create visual or diagrammatic notes on that section.

Mind maps are also great for doing a one-page overview of the topic so you can see how the topic fits together and how all the information is linked. It gives the brain the big picture about the topic and allows you to see how everything is connected together. You then can clearly see what the different sections are and then take each section one by one and do point form notes on that section.

Steps to making a mind map:



- Take a blank piece of scrap paper and write the topic in the centre or at the top of the page. Put a box around this heading.
 - Now on a separate piece of scrap paper, write down a list of the main headings by looking through all the textbook, class notes and handouts.
 - For each heading, jot down any subheadings that are related to this heading.
 - See if there are any links between any of these headings.
 - See if the headings should be in any particular order.
- On your mind map page, draw lines or arrows out from the topic showing the main headings for this topic. Put circles around each of these headings. Don't make your diagram too cluttered.

Study notes with the *Cornell* Note Taking System

- As a student you have large quantities of information which you need to summarise and make sense of before you can learn the facts involved: notes and handouts from class supplement your textbook information as do other resources; including electronic resources. *Cornell Notes* enable you to condense all of this information into your own words and organise ideas so it is easier to understand, learn and remember. It is important to complete all notes during class, check on work when away and ask questions when confused.
- Do not wait until the end of the entire course or term to make notes, create them every day of every week throughout the term and semester.

What do I do with my *Cornell Study Notes* after I have created them?

- Read a section, put them aside, then see what you can write out without looking at them (you don't even have to be able to read what you write - it is just seeing if you can recall it without the notes in front of you). Redraw any mindmaps and diagrams for understanding.
- Read a section out loud, put them aside, then see what you can say out loud without looking at the notes. Check what you got right and wrong and what you remembered against your notes then test yourself again on the bits you got wrong.
- Read a section while you pace around your room, put them aside, then see what you can type/write onto a blank word document/notepaper without looking at the notes. Check what you got right and wrong and what you remembered against your notes then test yourself again on the bits you got wrong.

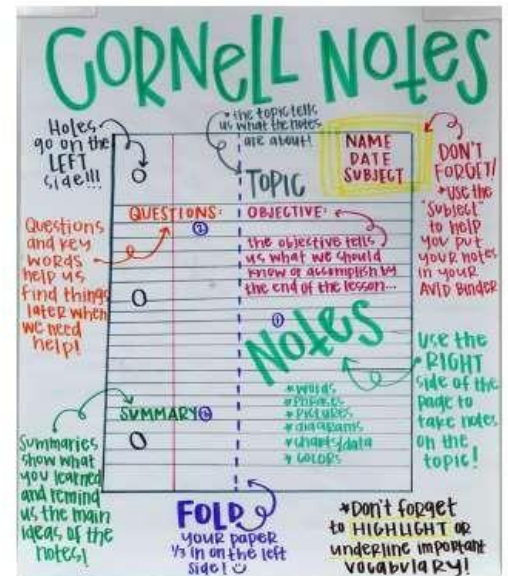
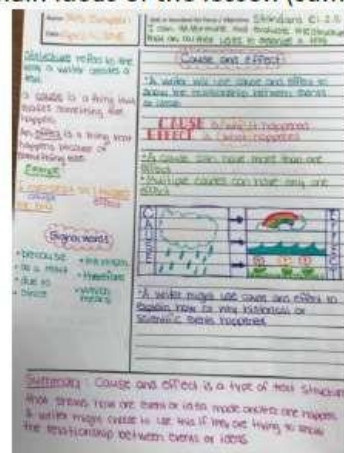
How to create Cornell Notes



What is Cornell Note taking?

Created by Dr. Walter Pauk from Cornell University, the Cornell note-taking system is both an efficient way to record information and an effective way to absorb it.

The Cornell Note-Taking System organises ideas spatially, so it's great for visual learners. The idea is that students have space for copying down new information (class notes), for identifying key points (study cues), and for summing up the main ideas of the lesson (summary).



Effective note taking is interactive and involves using the original notes many times over to build memory of the content, rather than seeing note taking as just a one-off copying activity.

Visible Learning^{plus} 250+ Influences on Student Achievement

The Visible Learning research synthesises findings from **1,400** meta-analyses of **80,000** studies involving **300** million students, into what works best in education.

Key for rating

- Potential to considerably accelerate student achievement
- Potential to accelerate student achievement
- Likely to have positive impact on student achievement
- Likely to have small positive impact on student achievement
- Likely to have a negative impact on student achievement

ES Effect size calculated using Cohen's *d*

Learning strategies		
Deliberate practice	●	0.79
Effort	●	0.77
Imagery	●	0.45
Interleaved practice	●	0.21
Mnemonics	●	0.76
Note taking	●	0.50
Outlining and transforming	●	0.66
Practice testing	●	0.54
Record keeping	●	0.52
Rehearsal and memorization	●	0.73
Spaced vs. mass practice	●	0.60
Strategy to integrate with prior knowledge	●	0.93
Study skills	●	0.46
Summarization	●	0.79
Teaching test taking and coaching	●	0.30
Time on task	●	0.49
Underlining and highlighting	●	0.50

The Research of John Hattie

In 2009 Professor John Hattie published *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. This groundbreaking book synthesized the findings from 800 meta-analysis of 50,000 research studies involving more than 150 million students and it built a story about the power of teachers and of feedback, and constructed a model of learning and understanding by pointing out what works best in improving student learning outcomes.

Since then, John Hattie has continued to collect and aggregate meta-analyses to the Visible Learning database. His latest dataset synthesizes 1,500 meta-analyses of 90,000 studies involving more than 300 million students. This is the world's largest evidence base into what works best in schools to improve learning.

<p>Essential Question</p>	<p>How Can I be Successful in Class?</p>	<p>Name Course name Period Date</p>								
<p>Questions</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="470 414 694 571"> <p>Why should I ask questions?</p> </td> <td data-bbox="694 414 1189 571"> <p><u>Ask Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Teacher views you as good student </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="470 571 694 683"> <p>Where should I sit?</p> </td> <td data-bbox="694 571 1189 683"> <p><u>Sit up Front</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you focused </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="470 683 694 817"> <p>Why should I take notes?</p> </td> <td data-bbox="694 683 1189 817"> <p><u>Take Notes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Have something to study </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="470 817 694 1153"> <p>What kind of help can I get?</p> </td> <td data-bbox="694 817 1189 1153"> <p><u>Get Help When Needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask teacher - After school tutoring - Tutorials </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Why should I ask questions?</p>	<p><u>Ask Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Teacher views you as good student 	<p>Where should I sit?</p>	<p><u>Sit up Front</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you focused 	<p>Why should I take notes?</p>	<p><u>Take Notes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Have something to study 	<p>What kind of help can I get?</p>	<p><u>Get Help When Needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask teacher - After school tutoring - Tutorials 	<p>Heading</p> <p>Notes</p>
<p>Why should I ask questions?</p>	<p><u>Ask Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Teacher views you as good student 									
<p>Where should I sit?</p>	<p><u>Sit up Front</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you focused 									
<p>Why should I take notes?</p>	<p><u>Take Notes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeps you engaged in lesson - Have something to study 									
<p>What kind of help can I get?</p>	<p><u>Get Help When Needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask teacher - After school tutoring - Tutorials 									
<p>Summary</p>	<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>There are several ways to be successful in class. First, you should ask questions. Second, you should sit in the front of the class. You should also take notes and get help when you need it.</p>									

Cornell Notes



Learning Goal/Intent:

Students will improve their understanding and skills for taking effective notes, using the Cornell Notetaking method.

→How to Use Cornell Notes

Essential Question: How can Cornell Notes be used to organise new content knowledge?

What can Cornell notes be used for?

Questions/Comments:	Notes:
	→For learning new content
When can you use Cornell Notes?	→Learning experiences or intake sessions—times when you are absorbing content or skills through some sort of medium, as opposed to purely applying that content or synthesising it into some kind of product
	Notes Keywords, Comments Summary
What can you use Cornell Notes to take notes from / for?	→lecture-based lessons
	→watching documentaries / videos in a flipped or blended environment
	→reading assigned textbook chapters or handouts
	→doing research
Why should you use Cornell Notes?	→Whether it's taking notes from lectures (Kiewra, 2002) or from reading (Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2011; Chang & Ku, 2014), note-taking has been shown to improve student learning.
	Study tool for exams
	→The more notes students take, the more information they tend to remember later.
How do you take Cornell Notes?	→Summarise and paraphrase (restate in your own words) the facts and ideas presented.
	Record definitions as stated or written
	→Number, indent, highlight, or bullet key ideas presented with each topic.
Notes Box:	→Use list and concise sentences. Use abbreviations, whenever possible.
	→Add drawings to notes to represent concepts, terms, and relationships. This has a significant effect on memory and learning (Wammes, Meade, & Fernandes, 2016).
Question/Comments box:	→Place headings, questions that connect points, main ideas, key points, dates, and people, or key vocabulary in the left hand column.

Summary: →Write a summary of the main ideas in the bottom section. This is the best test of how well you understand the information. This should be done at the bottom of every page. → How do the main ideas fit together into a "bigger picture" and answer the essential question. Include only the most important information. Can you narrow it down to a single statement? When reviewing the material, cover up the note-taking (right) column to answer the questions/keywords in the key word or cue (left) column. Re on the material and review the notes regularly.

[illegible]

Studying Tips and Techniques



In a test or examination you have to be able to do three things:

- Understand the topic.
- Remember the content of the topic.
- Apply the skills and techniques of the topic to different types of questions.

There are three aspects to doing this:

1. Making study notes or summaries using *Cornell Notes*.

helps you discover if you really understand the topic.

- think about the information and put it into your own words in point form.
- this helps you start to move the information into long-term memory.
- also makes it easier to learn from a structured, condensed, organised set of notes.

2. Learning the information means.

ensuring you understand and asking questions if you don't.

- studying the information in an active way.
- testing yourself to see whether you can remember it.

3. Practising the skills of the subject.

do lots and lots of questions to practise the skills of the subject.

- helps you find out if you really understand it.



Techniques for Learning and Remembering:

- Read through information and highlight key points.
- Use your *Cornell* Notes. They are easier to study from.
- Read your notes then see what you can write down without looking and check what you knew or didn't know.
- Read your notes out loud to yourself then see what you can recite or repeat out loud without looking and check and see what you knew and what you still need to review.
- After you have read a section see if you can sum up the three most important points in that section.
- Make flashcards of rules, formulas or things you need to learn with questions on the front and answers on the back and test yourself on them.
- Explain what you just studied to someone else - this is a great way to see if you really understand it.
- Try and teach it to someone else. It could be just the right time for your mum to learn algebra!
- Test yourself by reading your notes and writing a list of questions as you go then at the end seeing if you can answer these questions.
- Write out lists of key definitions, vocab etc, cover up one side and see if you can fill in the other side.
- Before you sit down to study, write down everything you know about the topic then compare that to what you need to know.
- Try and write out what you just read in your own words.
- Study with a group of friends and discuss the content and test each other on the content.
- If you can, act out the information in some way.
- Put notes up all round the house of the things you need to remember.
- Make a big poster or get a whiteboard in your room of the things you are trying to learn.
- Read your notes onto a tape or download as MP3s onto your iPod and listen to the info over and over.
- Make a question and answer tape where the tape asks a question then gives you time to think of the answer then tells you the answer and you can see if you were right.
- Record your notes and listen through your headset while you go for a walk or run.
- Make up a rhyme or song to help you remember.
- Make a mind map or brainstorm the information.
- Turn it into a story to help you remember.
- 3Rs: read, recite, recheck (other version of this is look, cover, check).
- Break the information up into new categories.

- Use mnemonics: take the first letter of each word to make a nonsense word to help you remember everything on a list.
- Try and think what else this information is associated with as the more links you make in your mind the better chance you have of remembering it.
- Pace around your room while you are reading the info or saying it out loud or testing yourself on it.
- Memory likes repetition. Do the above techniques over and over and over again.

Practicing should be done under examination conditions. This means:

- Set things up so you won't be interrupted while you are working under the time limits.
- Take all your notes away so you are not tempted to peek.
- Set up a clock and sit and start the exam fully under examination conditions.
- Find out the time limit for the paper or set what would be a reasonable amount of time for the piece of work and only allow yourself this amount of time to complete the task.
- Work without breaks or interruptions for this time so you become more used to writing and concentrating for the length of the examination.
- Don't refer to any notes or materials at any time during the period of completing the past paper or piece of work.
- Have your watch in front of you and try to stick to allocated times for each section of the paper.
- Experiment with different approaches to find what suits you best: you could do easy questions first then go back to the harder ones, or do the questions with the most marks first.

You can find questions to practise in the following sources:

- Go back and re-do any questions in the topic that you found difficult or select a random sample of questions to try.
- Do any chapter reviews in your textbook.
- Do any revision sheets from your teacher.
- Practise essay writing/planning by doing typical exam questions (you might ask your teacher if they have time to look briefly at these and give you some feedback).
- Do as many past papers (or old tests) as you can under exam conditions.
- Make up some questions for yourself or ask someone to make up some questions for you.
- Practise writing outlines for essays or actual essays: focus on being relevant and answering the question.
- Ask your teacher for extra revision sheets.
- Buy or borrow extra revision guides and do their questions.
- Use websites with review questions (but only if you know of specific sites, don't go aimlessly looking for them).
- Attend **Academic Support** or **Academic tutorials** provided at St Joseph's College and take advantage of any *Homework Club* support and opportunities for clarifying content with your teacher.



If you get stuck on a question:

Spend a reasonable amount of time trying to decipher and understand the information.

You could:

- look through any examples or worked examples
- re-read sections of the textbook
- give a friend a quick call and see if they can explain it to you
- see if you have any other books where the explanation is clearer
- find similar questions
- try and work backwards if it is a numerical problem with an answer
- take a short break then come back fresh
- see if there is anyone in your family who could help
- read through your class notes again
- do a quick search on the Net eg: *Youtube* or *Khan Academy*.
- post a question on a student chat site
- look at earlier or later sections of work and see if they help bring it into perspective
- add reminders to your study notes
- use answers, worked solutions or sample essays to help you understand
- take a break and return to the problem with a fresh perspective
- work with another student to learn from their point of view
- see your teacher in class or after class for some extra help
- keep a list of questions that you need to ask about and cross off once resolved
- form a study group as two heads are better than one
- find someone in your family or a tutor who can give you some one-on-one help
- go over and over the material until eventually it clicks
- find other books or study guides to help you understand it



Exam Preparation

Step 1: Fact Finding

Ask your teachers the following questions about the exams. Ideally this should happen around 6 weeks prior to the exam but some questions may not be able to be answered until closer to the actual exam.

- What topics are being tested?
- Are we being tested on the whole year's work or part of the year?
- What is the structure of the exam ie. what types of questions and how much are they worth?
- What sort of studying should I be doing for this exam?

Step 2: Getting Organised

Ideally this should have been an on-going process throughout the whole year so that when you get to the exams you are ready to start studying straight away! But, if you haven't been doing this, it is not too late! (But remember for next time.)

To get yourself organised for the exams:

1. For each subject, get together all the material you need to study for that subject.
2. Check that you do not have anything missing.
3. Sort through your *Cornell Notes* from each subject's topic into 'things to learn' ie content and 'things to practise' for example: revision sheets, past tests, question sheets that you could do as revision.
4. File all relevant study notes for each subject.
5. Brainstorm everything you could do to study for the exam for each subject
 - Are there chapter reviews you should redo?
 - Are there past tests or essays you could redo and resubmit?
 - Can you get a list of sample essay topics that you can do draft essay plans for?
 - Do your textbooks have sample examination papers?
 - Are there particular topics you need to focus on?
 - What is the most worthwhile revision you could do for this subject?
6. Decide if you have enough resources to study from and if not borrow or purchase some extra books you can use to study from.
7. Find out if you can get past examination papers (and answers) to use as revision sources.
8. Decide if you are going to allocate equal time to each subject. Do some subjects need more preparation time than others? Do you need to spend more time on your weaker subjects? It is advisable to commence with your weakest subjects and do not procrastinate.



Step 3: Planning Your Time

Try this approach to planning your time for exams:

Draw up a table that shows each week and how much time you have left until the exams. Write in each of your exams. Write in all your commitments like sport etc - any time where you won't be able to study so you can see how much time is left.

When planning time for exams, remember the following guidelines:

- Do you need more time for some subjects than for others?
- Try and study each subject at least once a week but preferably twice a week.
- Leave some 'spare' time in the week in case things take longer than expected.
- Spread your study for the subject out as much as possible.
- Take a short break every half hour.
- Study contrasting subjects together.
- Do the hardest subjects when you are most alert.

Make a decision as to how many hours you will study each night

You can either plan out what you will do in each timeslot at the start of the week or each afternoon decide what you will do for that subject that night.

The weekend before focus on the subjects you have on Monday in particular and perhaps Tuesday and Wednesday. It depends how spread out your examinations are over the examination period. Look over the examination timetable and see if you will have time during the week to prepare for some of the exams.

Step 4: Consolidating Your Study

Main things to remember:

If you didn't do thorough *Cornell Notes* at the end of each topic, make further summaries or study notes as the first stage of your revision.

- You need to spend time learning, understanding and remembering the information and then TESTING yourself to see if you are able to recall this information in a test situation.
- Spend time practising as many different types of questions as possible under exam conditions. Then check and see what you got right and what you need to ask about.
- Do past exam papers to work out what else you still need to revise.
- Keep a list of things you need to ask your teacher – teachers are always willing to assist students who are actively studying and preparing for assignments and exams in a timely manner.
- In each study period spend some of that time learning and memorising and some of the time practising the skills of the subject.



Exam Techniques

- Before the Exam - approach exam blocks, organise a revision timetable that allows adequate time to revise for each of your exam papers.
- At least a few days before the exam, make sure you do the following:
 - Plan how much time you should spend on each section of the test.
 - By looking at any past papers or sample assessments, get a feel for the types of instructions that will be on your paper. Focus on the skills that will be required, and the nature of the desired responses.
 - Do some exercise so you can burn off the pent-up stress that can come before exams.
 - Look after your body – lots of water to prepare your brain, healthy food and appropriate levels of sleep. Remember to have frequent breaks when you study and **DO NOT CHANGE your sleeping patterns**. It is important to be well rested.
 - To calm nerves, make mental pictures of yourself sitting down and doing well in the test. Positive psychology works!
 - Purchase any equipment you may need, extra calculator batteries, pens, rulers etc.
 - Ensure you know what equipment is allowed in the test or exam.
 - Focus on reviewing the key points, perhaps a condensed version of your summaries.
 - Practise past test papers or similar problems or topics.
 - Cover a wide range of topics and possible questions. Do NOT gamble that 2 or 3 questions will be in the exam. This is a BIG gamble and likely to lead to a poor result. Be well prepared.
 - Check the timetable to ensure you have a clear picture of when each exam is being held.
 - On the day of the exam, try to arrive at least 30 minutes early to read over your notes.
 - In the exam room, use your perusal time wisely
 - At the end of each test, you can look back and say I did my best.
 - You WILL be rewarded with the effort you put into your preparation and the final exam.



The night before the test or exam:

- Pack your bag with everything you will need for the next day, ensuring you have all necessary equipment.
 - Plan what time you need to leave to ensure you have plenty of time for unexpected delays.
 - Don't go to bed too late – you need to make sure your brain is fresh and alert.
 - Don't ring friends and discuss your preparation or the examination.
-
- Just before you go to sleep, look through your notes briefly.
 - If you have a number of exams, check the timetable to doubly confirm the date, time and location of the exam.

The morning of the test or exam:

- Visualise success.
- Review your notes.
- Eat breakfast.
- Be on time.
- Avoid negativity.

At the start of the test or exam:

- Questions may require you to integrate knowledge, understanding and skills developed through studying the entire course, rather than focusing on a particular topic area.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Look through the whole paper.
- Quickly jot down anything you are worried you might forget.

During the test or exam:

- Have a plan of attack as to which questions you will do first.
- Take note of how many marks each question is worth.
- Read the questions carefully before answering.
- Brainstorm ideas before writing essays.
- Cross mistakes out neatly instead of scribbling or using liquid paper.
- If you have a mental blank leave the question and come back to it later.
- Set your work out clearly, write as neatly as possible and do nice large diagrams.
- Show all working and space your work out.
- When you finish go back and check all of your answers – don't leave anything out.



Making a time plan before you are in the exam:

Once you are clear on the format of the examination and the marks awarded for each section of the paper, divide the number of minutes you have for the exam by the total possible marks. Now multiply this number by the marks in each section to work out approximately how long you should spend on each section. You may want to reduce each of these times slightly in order to ensure you have time at the end of the examination for checking.

Managing your time during the exam:

- Take your watch off and prop it up on your desk in front of you to help you stick to your plan.
- Use perusal time wisely to plan and prepare for the questions and your responses to come - don't waste it.
- Use time effectively throughout the exam – don't steal time from later sections.
- Take a few minutes to quickly look through the whole paper before you start.
- If you feel yourself getting bogged down, leave that question, put a mark next to it and return later.
- If you have struggled to complete an examination in the time required in the past, assess how well you knew the material. One of the best strategies for managing your time begins well before the examination commences – making sure you know the material really well.

Short Answer Response Exam

Use your reading time to identify the questions you feel confident with and start with these. It is always better to warm up on some easy calculations than to jump straight into a difficult one which will shake your confidence.

Allocating the number of minutes per mark will enable you to complete the paper and have revision time to check the whole paper.

Multiple choice questions:

Generally, the early multiple-choice questions are fairly easy and are a good place to start as they build your confidence. The later ones are often more difficult and require a disproportionate amount of time for 1 mark. Do not get bogged down on these questions.

- Read the instructions carefully to find out if there can be more than one answer.
- Read the question carefully, highlighting the verb and subject of the question.
- Reread if unsure of subject.
- Do all the questions you are sure of first as quickly as possible.
- First instinct is usually right, but only if you read the question properly.
- Another good approach is to cover the alternatives and read the question carefully (underline key phrases) and try and work out the answer first - if your answer is amongst them, it's probably the correct answer.
- Be very careful if you decide to change an answer you were initially confident was correct
- Watch out for the 'common mistake' alternative.

- Watch out for the trick 'I've seen this before' question.
- Read for understanding and not just recognition.
- Look for the best answer not just a correct one. If unsure or you don't know, eliminate the wrong answers first and then make an "educated guess".
- Look for words like all, every, none, not, many, always, sometimes, never, least, most.
- If a computer marks the paper, fill in the spaces completely and completely erase any errors. Otherwise, the computer will mark your answer to that question as incorrect.
- If you run out of time, guess! (Provided that you will not be penalised for guessing.) Always put an answer – there's a 25% chance you'll be right.

Planning essays in exams:

- Read the question through carefully before starting and **underline/highlight keywords**.
- Examine the key words and think clearly about what the question really means.
- Brainstorm / mindmap your thoughts and ideas before you start.
- Then take your ideas and create a plan or outline for your answer.
- Write your essay: introduction, body, conclusion.
- Review your essay asking yourself if you have answered the question.

To deal with exam nerves:

- Use visualisation regularly picturing everything going smoothly in the exam.
- Simulate exam conditions as much as possible at home when studying.
- Avoid standing around in a group discussing what people have and haven't done.
- Instead find a quiet space and review your notes quietly one last time before you go into the examination.
- Keep yourself calm by:
 - sipping water;
 - breathing deeply to bring the oxygen into your lungs;
 - reminding yourself of all the things you DO know;
 - thinking positive thoughts about your own abilities.



MANAGING EXAM STRESS



St Joseph's
College
TODOWOONHA

Do you find yourself thinking 'I'm going to fail' or 'I can't do this' when it comes to exams?
Do you feel like your mind 'goes blank' when you are in the exam hall?
Does your heart race, your palms get sweaty or your chest feel tight?

It is normal to experience some symptoms of stress both in preparation for and during exams and, in fact, a moderate level of stress can motivate us to get things done and help us perform optimally. Experiencing little or no stress can leave us feeling unfocused and unmotivated, while too much stress can impact on our focus and concentration and interfere with our performance.



WHAT IS EXAM STRESS?

Exam stress is a response to the pressures experienced in the lead up to and during exam situations. Having higher than usual stress levels around exam time is a commonly reported experience by students.

There are a range of physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that students can experience when they are stressed about their exams.

Here are some common examples:

Physical sensations can include racing heart, sweaty hands, muscle tension, shortness of breath, nausea. These sensations are part of our fight-flight-freeze response, which can be helpful in times where we are facing a physical threat (e.g. jumping out of the way of a car) but not so useful when the threat we are faced with is psychological (e.g. exam performance).

Thoughts typically include negative predictions about performance ('I'm going to fail', 'I can't do this') or the physical sensations being experienced ('my heart is pounding so fast I can't concentrate').

Feelings can be that of overwhelm, anxiousness, panic or fear.

Behaviours might include the urge to or actual escape and avoidance of the situation.



WHY DO PEOPLE EXPERIENCE EXAM STRESS?

There are several factors that contribute to exam stress.

Here are a few common reasons:

- Worrying about how well you will do in the exam
- Finding it hard to understand what you're studying
- Being unprepared or haven't had time to study
- Unhelpful thinking patterns
- Unreasonable expectations of yourself
- Pressure from others
- You're experiencing stress in another part of your life
- Poor self-care

IDEAS FOR MANAGING EXAM STRESS

There are many things you can do to manage exam stress. These include:

- Being adequately prepared
- Identify and replace unhelpful thoughts with more encouraging self-talk
- Recognise and accept physical symptoms for what they are
- Implement techniques to reduce physical symptoms of stress
- Practice focusing your attention on a task rather than anxious or unhelpful thoughts
- Practice good self-care

BE ADEQUATELY PREPARED

There are many tips and ideas on how to prepare yourself in the **SJC Study Strategies and Exam Preparation Guide**.



CHALLENGE YOUR UNHELPFUL THINKING

The way we think about something can influence how we feel and behave. As our thoughts are often automatic and we are not necessarily aware of them. We are more likely to notice changes in our feelings, behaviours and physical sensations when we become stressed.

Our unhelpful thoughts are not typically based on evidence and can include catastrophising, jumping to conclusions, overgeneralising and selective interpretations of a situation. It is important to try and challenge unhelpful thoughts and treat them as ideas rather than facts. To do this, you need to become aware of your automatic thoughts by asking 'what just went through my mind?' when you experience symptoms of stress. Sometimes with exams you might have automatic thoughts about your physical symptoms and thoughts about performance. For example, imagine you're waiting for an exam to start and notice your heart beating hard and fast and your hands sweating. You think to yourself, 'oh no, here it goes again, I'm going blank, I'll fail, it will be a disaster...'. Thinking this way likely to increase your stress level and physical symptoms further. Instead, try to identify and accept these thoughts for what they are (they are just thoughts) and remind yourself that your physical symptoms are signs of arousal which can be managed.

Here are some questions that you could ask yourself to challenge unhelpful thoughts:

- What evidence do I have that my thought is true? Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?
- Is there another way I can look at this situation?
- What is the effect of telling myself this? Would be the effect of changing my thinking?
- How is this thought helping me in this situation?
- What would I tell a friend who was in the same situation and had this thought? How might that apply to you?

MANAGING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

The physical symptoms associated with stress can be unpleasant and might make it more difficult to focus on your studies, but they are not dangerous. Physical symptoms of stress can be reduced by using techniques such as calming your breathing or progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).

It is helpful to initially practice these techniques when you are not stressed and once you've got the hang of it, try them out in situations where you are experiencing stressed.

Here are some exercises to help you manage your physical symptoms of stress:

[The 5-count breath](#)

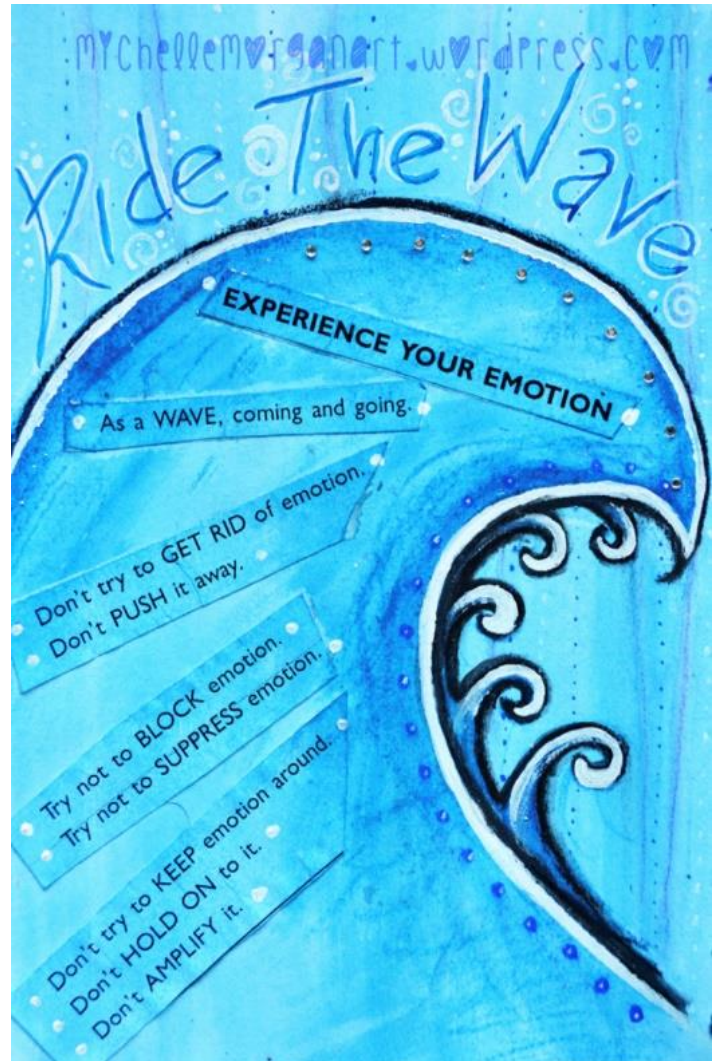
[Progressive muscle relaxation](#)

FOCUSING ON THE TASK

Because our attention focuses on how we're feeling when we are stressed, it can be difficult to concentrate on the task at hand. Becoming aware of when your attention has wandered and refocusing it on the present moment can be useful in managing stress. Instead of trying to change how we are feeling, it can be more helpful to change how we relate to how we are feeling. It might be more helpful to accept that you feel anxious and direct your attention back to the task of the exam, rather than try to fight it. Mindfulness practice can assist you with developing your attentional focus and relating to your thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance.

You will find further information on mindfulness in the

SJC Well-being Hub.



PRACTICE SELF-CARE

To perform to your best, your mind and body needs fuel and rest. An important aspect of managing your stress around exam time is ensuring that you are taking good care of yourself. Make sure you take regular breaks from your screen and your books, get a good night sleep, eat a balanced diet, stay socially connected, do something enjoyable each day and exercising regularly. It might seem a challenge to prioritise self-care when you are experiencing a heightened level of stress, but this will place you in a better position to moderate your stress and enable optimal performance.

You will find more information and tips on self-care, sleep, fuelling your body and moving your body in the SJC Well-being Hub – be sure to check it out!
















































































Appendix




















































































Glossary of key words used in senior assessments

Account	Account for: state reasons for, report on. Give an account of: narrate a series of events or transactions
Analyse	Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications
Apply	Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation
Appreciate	Make a judgement about the value of
Assess	Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size
Calculate	Ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information
Clarify	Make clear or plain
Classify	Arrange or include in classes/categories
Compare	Show how things are similar or different
Construct	Make; build; put together items or arguments
Contrast	Show how things are different or opposite
Critically (analyse/evaluate)	Add a degree or level of accuracy depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analyse/evaluate)
Deduce	Draw conclusions
Define	State meaning and identify essential qualities
Demonstrate	Show by example
Describe	Provide characteristics and features
Discuss	Identify issues and provide points for and/or against
Distinguish	Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between
Evaluate	Make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of
Examine	Inquire into
Explain	Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how
Extract	Choose relevant and/or appropriate details
Extrapolate	Infer from what is known
Identify	Recognise and name
Interpret	Draw meaning from
Investigate	Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about
Justify	Support an argument or conclusion
Outline	Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of

Predict	Suggest what may happen based on available information
Propose	Put forward (for example a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action
Recall	Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences
Recommend	Provide reasons in favour
Recount	Retell a series of events
Summarise	Express, concisely, the relevant details
Synthesise	Putting together various elements to make a whole

Overview of cognitive verbs in syllabus objectives

Cognitive verb	Explicit use of cognitive verb within a syllabus objective							
	ENG	HPE	HASS	LANG	MATHS	SCI	TECH	ARTS
analyse*								
apply*								
appraise								
argue								
assess								
compare								
comprehend*								
conduct								
consider								
critique*								
construct (retrieval comprehension)								
construct (knowledge utilisation)								
create								
define								
demonstrate								
derive								
describe*								
determine								
develop								
devise								
differentiate								
distinguish								
evaluate*								
examine*								
experiment								
explain*								
explore								

Cognitive verb	Explicit use of cognitive verb within a syllabus objective							
	ENG	HPE	HASS	LANG	MATHS	SCI	TECH	ARTS
express								
generate								
identify*								
implement								
infer*								
interpret*								
investigate								
justify*								
make decisions*								
manipulate								
modify								
organise								
predict								
propose								
realise								
recall								
recognise								
reflect								
resolve								
select*								
sequence								
solve								
structure								
symbolise*								
synthesise*								
understand								
use								

Important Links to Further Information

- Link to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) A-Z Guide to Senior Subjects:
[https:// www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/az-list](https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/az-list)
- [QCAA External Assessments](#) – Sample Papers. The introduction of external assessment in General subjects is a key feature of the new QCE system. Sample papers have been provided by the QCAA to give school communities a sense of what the external assessments will be like. They are located in the Assessment tab on each General syllabus webpage within the QCAA website.
- <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects>

Glossary of Cognitive Verbs used in Queensland Senior Syllabuses and Assessments

https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-gce/common/snr_glossary_cognitive_verbs.pdf

- The following written resources are provided by the QCAA to strengthen understanding about the Skills students require in the 21st Century:
 - 21st century skills for senior curriculum: A position paper (PDF, 82.2 KB)
 - 21st century skills: Explanations of associated skills (PDF, 89.7 KB)
 - 21st century skills: Preparing students for a changing world (PDF, 186.9 KB)
- The following QCAA video explores the idea of the Skills students require in the 21st century: Introduction to the 21st century skills
- A transcript of the QCAA video can be found on this link:
https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_syll_redev_21st_century_skills_intro_tscript.pdf

Reference was made to Benowa State High School resources at <https://benowashs.eq.edu.au/>
