



Dear Student

TIPS AND GUIDELINES ON THE UPCOMING NOVEMBER EXAMS

The initial exam period starts on the 6th of November 2018 and runs until 26 November 2018.

Set out below is guidance on the upcoming exam that has been put together for you to consider, rather than a set of rules that you have to comply with.

If you feel confident that you have all your academic studies and preparation for the exams under control, please **stick to what is working for you**. Nevertheless, we do recommend that you carefully read through the information below to see if there is anything that you can gain from this to improve your current study methods.

However, if you are feeling somewhat unsettled or unsure of how to go about preparing for the exams, **then the following information may be useful**.

1. Context of the exams

The upcoming November Exams cover all the work that you have done thus far in the semester or even year in the case of year modules. Consequently this is **your last chance to master the work** that would, in most instances, form part of the foundation needed in modules that you will be enrolling for in the next (second if a first year student) academic year. It is therefore imperative that you plan carefully, study diligently, understand the work and commit it to long term memory.

2. Where do I start with my exam planning?

2.1 Make sure you **keep up to date with your work** from now until the last day of lectures, so that you know and understand everything covered up to the last day of lectures.

2.2 Plot all your exams on a **monthly planning schedule** and count all the open days between your exams from now, until the date of the last exam that you have to write.

2.3 Taking the total number of days determined in 2.2, **allocate these days to your modules** taking into account how much time you need to spend when studying for each module.

2.4 It is very important to be well-prepared for your exams and take them in your stride as far as this is humanly possible. It is similar to preparing for a marathon – you need to condition yourself to run the full distance. One part of this **preparation is to be able to comfortably concentrate for at least the duration of your longest exam paper**. To do this, we recommend that you add half an hour to the duration of your longest exam paper and then schedule at least one of your study blocks per day, to equate this time period. For example, if the duration of your longest exam paper is 2 hours, then you need to add 30 minutes to the 2 hours to calculate the duration of the ideal study block – in this case this will amount to 2,5 hours. Using this principle, at least one but preferably more, of your study blocks on every day should be equal to 2,5 hours. If you are not used to studying for this long in one go, gradually build yourself up to this point by adding 30 minutes to the length of your current study blocks, and increasing the length of your study blocks gradually until you achieve the newly targeted study block duration. The idea is this: *Adding 30 minutes to the duration of your longest exam paper to determine the time of your study ideal block, prepares you to be so fit, that by the end of your “normal” exam time you are still focusing strongly.*

2.5 **Rank the topics** that will be covered in the exams in each module from those that you know the least (struggle with the most), to those that you have mastered completely.

2.6 Commence by **allocating the topics** identified in 2.5 above to the days available to study as determined in 2.3. Start by allocating the topics that you do not fully grasp FIRST and then proceed towards those topics that you have under control completely. If you run out of study time and have not covered those that you have mastered earlier, there should be no harm done.

1.7 Never walk into an exam hall to write an exam, knowing that you have not mastered any topic at all – you would be looking for trouble. **You need to have at least a 50%-level knowledge of each and every topic** when you attempt an exam. Should you not have mastered a specific topic by the time you write the exam, this will erode your confidence and put you under severe stress and you really do not need this in the exams. Should your nightmare topic be asked, you may be so stressed that you even forget the topics you do know. This is called managing or reducing exam risk.

2.8 Avoid potential disruptions whilst studying, **switch off your cell phone, Facebook, twitter and any other social media**. You can check urgent messages **during your breaks** between study blocks. Put these off again after your breaks.

2.9 Make sure that you are on campus **at least 60 minutes before your exam commences** and bring your student card, extra pens, back-up calculators and extra batteries if you use a calculator and place all this in a clear pencil/plastic bag.



3. Matters to consider before starting to prepare for the exam

3.1 Make sure that you are **familiar with different types of questions** that can be asked and be prepared in terms of how to answer different types of questions (i.e. Multiple choice questions (MCQs), short questions, long questions, case study questions, fill-in-the-missing-word, true or false, calculate, etc.). Not being prepared for different types of questions may cause confusion or panic in the exam.

3.2 Ensure that you understand and **pay attention to direction key words** (e.g. list, identify, illustrate, calculate, etc.) before the exam so that you know how to answer a question. These may appear in your study or learners' guide. Doing this may help you with creating a specific structure on how to answer the questions.

3.3 **Consult** with your tutor or lecturer **on mistakes previously made** during class tests / semester tests to ensure that you do not repeat the same mistakes in the exam.

4. How to manage your time in an exam paper:

4.1. **Calculate how much time is allowed per mark.** For example, if you have a 2 hour paper (120 minutes) and it counts 120 marks, it means that you have 1 minute per mark.

4.2 Calculate exactly **how much time should be spent on every question** using the information in 4.1 and insert the time allocated to each question next to the mark allocation in respect of each question on the paper.

4.3 **Stick to the time limit** calculated for each question!

4.4 **Do not overrun on any question**, as one generally earns most of your marks in the first 50% of the time allocated to each question. If you overrun on one question you may be utilizing the first 50% of the time of the next question, where you could have earned most of the marks. Doing this time and again, makes the time management problem only bigger!

5. Writing the exam:

Exams can be attempted in a number of ways, and set out below are two of the most popular ways:

5.1 **Option 1: Read through the paper and rank the questions** from those containing the topics you are most comfortable with, to those that you are the least comfortable with. Start with the questions you are most comfortable with and do those questions first. For example, Question 3 is the easiest, Question 2 is the most difficult and Question 1 is fairly reasonable. You would then commence with Question 3, proceed to Question 1 and lastly do Question 2. **IMPORTANT: DON'T EVER** hand in a **blank answer sheet or book**, as you will then definitely receive no marks for the question as there is nothing to mark. Remember to number your questions clearly.

5.2 **Option 2: Alternatively (and probably safer), start with Question 1 and answer the questions in the exam paper in chronological order.** Unless you are allowed to choose which questions you would like to answer, you have to answer all the questions anyway. For example, if you have five questions in the paper and you have to do them all, you start with Question 1, then 2, 3, 4, and finally 5. If you really get stuck on a question (say Question 3) and cannot answer it, we advise that you read through the question carefully and then skip it and continue with your other questions (in this instance Question 4) - but still keeping to the original time allocation per question (refer to section 4). Once you have completed all questions other than Question 3, you then return to Question 3 (the question you could not address in the first place) and attempt it now. You will in all probability be able to do something now as your sub-conscious mind has been working on the problem without you even knowing about it. **IMPORTANT: DON'T EVER** hand in a **blank answer sheet or book**, as you will then definitely receive no marks for the question as there is nothing to mark. Remember to number your questions clearly.

We do hope this will assist you in preparing for your November examinations and wish you the best of luck in the exams! Your goal should be to finish your degree in minimum time (3 years) and this exam is your first step in achieving this worthwhile goal and all its associated benefits and rewards.

Regards

Prof. Johan Oberholster: EMS Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning
Mr. Danny Ramollo: EMS Faculty Educational Psychologist and Student Advisor
Ms. Zinhle Sibiyi: EMS Faculty Student Advisor