

# How to Cope with Exam Stress

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# Causes of Stress

Some people can find that revision and exams can cause considerable stress. The key to dealing with stress is to identify that you are suffering and work out why and finally decide how you will deal with it.

You may be anxious about the exams or assessments themselves. Perhaps you are dealing with other issues and the additional pressure of exams just feels too much.

Remember, a certain amount of stress is natural and helps motivate you to do things that are necessary.

Stress is usually self-inflicted in one way or another:

- ⇒ Pressure on us to perform.
- ⇒ Expectations of ours and from others.
- ⇒ Feeling that a lot of other things will depend on this one exam  
i.e. career, postgraduate study etc
- ⇒ Bad organising and setting ourselves unrealistic standards that is doing you more harm than good.

If you feel things are getting too much there is a variety of support available:

- The Student Advisers in the Advice Centre of the Students' Association can offer help and advice.
- Contact your Personal Tutor as early as you can.
- The Learning and Development Centre within your school can provide useful help and support with revision and exam techniques, including 1-2-1 appointments as well as online resources and workshops.
- Speak to the GCU Wellbeing Counselling Team who can help you to cope with anxiety issues.

# How Can I Tell if I'm stressed?

As stated before a little bit of stress can be good for you – it keeps your body alert and makes you work even harder. However when exams get too much the stress can show in your body.

Exam stress can make you:

- Feel tired.
- Ache all over.
- Cry and feel upset.
- Have panic attacks.
- Have broken sleep.
- Suffer from stomach upsets.
- Have itchy skin rashes.
- More likely to catch colds and flu.
- Have headaches and eye strain.



## Top Tips for Minimising Exam Stress

👍 It's never too late to make a revision plan or timetable. Be realistic and don't overdo it. Work back from your exam dates so that you can fit everything in.

👍 Vary the revision subjects each day so you get a bit of variety and don't get overwhelmed. Think about when you work best and focus on those times.

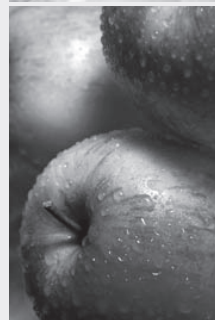
👍 Be sure to schedule regular breaks with whole mornings/afternoons or evenings off. Remember most people can only concentrate fully for about 45 minutes at a time.

👍 Don't try to revise for too long in one day, especially as exams draw nearer. Try to avoid revising late at night and work on your most difficult subjects during your 'peak' periods. For some this is usually between 10am and 12 noon and 3pm and 4.30 pm.

👍 Make sure you get a good night's sleep so you feel rested as tiredness promotes anxiety. Try and spend some time unwinding before you go to bed.



👍 Eat regularly and eat a sensible diet. A well-balanced diet will help to improve your energy levels. Also try and take regular exercise but only if you enjoy it. Check out the facilities in The Arc.



👍 Avoid caffeine and other stimulants which in large doses can cause tension and anxiety. Remember caffeine occurs in tea, cola drinks and chocolate as well as coffee. They will only provide a quick fix and actually reduce your ability to learn and concentrate.



👍 Drink plenty water and try and stay refreshed, dehydration hampers our ability to remember information.

👍 Consider revising with friends, sharing responsibilities for obtaining photocopies and revision notes can save a lot of time.



👍 Try some relaxation exercise. They can reduce your overall anxiety level and help you cope with any panicky feelings.

👍 The [NHS Inform Website](https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxation-exercises-for-stress) has some suggestions on relaxation exercises (https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxation-exercises-for-stress)

👍 Student Minds have a dedicated webpage with tips on [how to cope with exams during Coronavirus](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html): [www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html)

**Don't forget to spend some time relaxing and having fun.**

**Don't push yourself beyond your own limits.**

# Time Management



One way to study better is to plan good use of time. Students usually have deadlines for assignments. They also have to attend lectures, prepare for exams and find time for family and friends and some have jobs. Fortunately there are a number of ways to manage your time better.

## Putting things off because...

- 👉 You don't know where to begin because you are overwhelmed with the amount.
- 👉 You find it difficult to priorities.
- 👉 You put off studying until you have more time.

## Take control...

- 👉 Make a plan or study schedule.
- 👉 Set yourself goals.

## Plan or Study Schedule

Your plan should divide your time into small blocks. You should aim to stick to it as far as possible and allow some flexibility.

- ⇒ Prioritise tasks.
- ⇒ Feel you have achieved something by getting started on any difficult or major tasks right away.
- ⇒ Spend small amounts of time on your studies every day.
- ⇒ Break tasks down into areas of work and set time for each.
- ⇒ Feel good about getting started and recognise when you are working and count the planning as part of the larger task.
- ⇒ Be realistic about how much time you have and be sure to leave enough for writing up assignments.



# Being organised can save time

## Study Schedule:

It is fairly easy to keep track of your studies on a day to day basis, however you should aim to have a picture of both short and long range goals. Keep a note in your schedule of exam dates and due dates for assignments. Also keep a note of important personal events. Try and develop a system which you can identify areas of high priority.

- ✓ Organise your work appropriately. Create folders and keep all relevant material together.
- ✓ Keep referring back to your study schedule and tick off what you have done. Check you are on track to meet the appropriate deadlines and if necessary re-priorities.

## To Do List:

Look at your list at least weekly ticking off completed tasks and adding new ones.

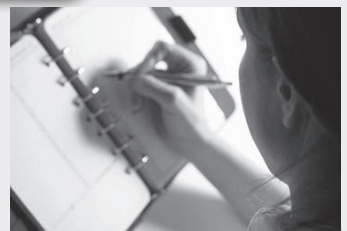
## Estimating Time:

It is a good idea to over-estimate time rather than under-estimate it.

## Study Techniques:

Some study techniques are useful in organising your time i.e. the SQ3R: Reading and Study System.

You can get more value from time spent studying when you identify your own learning style. Try out different techniques until you identify your preferred style.





# Getting Your Revision Started

- ✓ Attend all lectures and seminars.
- ✓ Organise your notes into topics.
- ✓ Learn how to take effective notes.
- ✓ Attend an Effective Learning Service workshop.

## Top Tip

Try and start  
revising as early as  
possible.

Listen carefully to tutors teaching you as they are setting the exam so it will be shaped by their lectures/seminars/labs. Note the topics, points, theories, arguments emphasised.

Read your lecture notes through each week and fill in any missing information.

Do any necessary reading. Read selectively to help you cover all important topics and better understand complex areas. Add any essential information to your notes.



Aim to read quickly and effectively, making the best use of your time.

All this early work will make your revision so much easier. It will be the basis for the first stage; organising the information you are going to learn by topic.

# What To Revise

You should listen carefully to your tutors as they focus on key points and topics. Each module's learning outcomes and syllabus and most importantly how your tutors interpret these. Do not revise everything.

Use past exam papers as a guide to what to expect in the exam and help you organise your revision.

When revising always note important theories, writers, Ideas and arguments. Examiners like to see evidence of wider reading so reference to writers/theories will boost your marks.

## How to Revise:

- ✓ Select your list of topics.
- ✓ Make your notes readable, colourful and attractive to help you remember them.
- ✓ Draw up a realistic study schedule with a timetable that includes adequate breaks.
- ✓ Find a suitable place to study.
- ✓ Work in short spells.
- ✓ Build in times for checking what you have learned.
- ✓ Think of studying with friends to provide a routine and share queries.

## Tips:

- 👍 Keep fresh and motivated and aim for variety.
- 👍 Try out different ways of reading and note taking.
- 👍 Use spare moments to recall/note facts.
- 👍 Practise and quiz yourself.

# Good Luck!

# Useful Contacts

## **GCU Students' Association Advice Centre**

0141 273 1650

Email: [advice@GCUstudents.co.uk](mailto:advice@GCUstudents.co.uk)

## **GCU Student Wellbeing Team:**

[www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/wellbeing/](http://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/wellbeing/)

*To book a first appointment with the counselling team go to [www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/counselling/appointments/](http://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/counselling/appointments/) and complete the online form.*

## **Learning Development Centre (LDC)**

[www.gcu.ac.uk/learningdevelopmentcentres](http://www.gcu.ac.uk/learningdevelopmentcentres)

*Each academic school has its own LDC which provides academic support to students.*

## **Nightline**

*Confidential listening and information service run by students for students.*

*At present the service is only until Midnight and via online listening/chat only.*

Talk online at [www.glasgowstudentsnightline.com](http://www.glasgowstudentsnightline.com)

Mon-Fri, 7pm–12 Midnight

## **NHS Inform—Struggling with Stress**

*(self-help information, online resources and service details)*

[www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/struggling-with-stress](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/struggling-with-stress)

## **Breathing Space Scotland**

0800 83 85 87

[www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

*Confidential out of office hours telephone line for people experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression.*

## **NHS 24 Helpline**

Call 111 calls are free of charge from landlines and mobiles.

Call NHS 24 if you're ill and it can't wait until your GP surgery opens. The NHS 24 phone line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

## **Samaritans**

116 123

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

*24-hour telephone helpline.*

Photo by Luis Villasmil on Unsplash



0141 273 1650   [advice@GCUstudents.co.uk](mailto:advice@GCUstudents.co.uk)