



British International School Riyadh

The art of beating exam nerves

Exam nerves are a healthy sign that you take your degree seriously and want all your hard work of the past three years to be recognised. Or that you realise you spent too much of the past three years in bed. The best way to beat nerves is therefore to feel prepared. Not prepared to fail and shame your family. It means feeling confident that you have the skills and knowledge to tackle whatever the exam is likely to throw your way.

Ideally, you will have been preparing throughout your time at university by attending all your lectures, diligently completing assignments and, possibly, alphabetising your notes. All this is important, but you also need to prepare for the exams more directly.

This means thinking about the kinds of topics that are likely to come up and the different ways in which they could be addressed. Look at the prospectus or module rubric to see what it is supposed to be about and what you are supposed to know by the time you've finished studying it. If it bears no relation to what you actually know, it's worth raising this with your lecturers.

It is a good idea to talk to teachers anyway if you are feeling anxious. They may be able to offer reassurance, as well as techniques for tackling revision. If you are really anxious, speak to a doctor.

Spending too much time alone in the run-up to exams is unwise because you can get things out of perspective, so try studying from time to time with others, and don't cut out socialising completely. Of course, you can also get things out of perspective in a group. Don't get intimidated by other people's revision timetables, or assertions that they know what will be in the exam; they don't.

Working your way through past exam papers will give you a better idea of what you're up against, although make sure that the curriculum hasn't been completely overhauled since the papers were written. The other way you need to be prepared is to know in advance what exam you are taking, and when and where you are supposed to be taking it.

Keep off the coffee and fizzy drinks. Feeling alert is helpful; feeling wired is not. Feeling hungry isn't that great either, so remember to eat breakfast even if you don't really want it. And feeling sleepy is a liability. Get an early night and stop revising at least an hour before bedtime so you can close your eyes without seeing imprints of mathematical equations.

Make the most of support offered by friends and family, and, if you feel in the need of supernatural support, by all means take along a gonk. But don't freak out if your candidate number is 13, or you're lucky underpants are in the wash.

You should realise that while it is nicer to spend three hours filling pieces of paper with scintillating analyses and facts than struggling to dredge up that point thingummy once said somewhere, filling up the rest of your life with interesting insights is far more important.