Examinations

John Aldrich

These slides will be emailed to students afterwards
Exams

- The exam is the most important form of assessment—accounting for 80-90% of the mark for the module.

- There are university procedures for everything connected with exams. You will receive information on these procedures. These slides give a rough overview only.
Topics for today

- Standards—what to aim for
- How to prepare for the exam
- Applying to enter a Master’s course in 2021 (for 2+2s)
Good performance and bad

- The usual requirement for admission to a Master’s course is a **first** (average of 70+) or **upper second** (average of 60+)

- A **fail** is a mark <40. (Visiting students get no credit for modules they fail)

- A **bad fail** is a mark <25. (If you fail a module this badly **you have to re-sit** the exam in August in order to obtain DipHE or to pass the year for 2+2)
Passing the year (2+2 students)/passing the DipHE: some details

- 40% in every module gives a pass overall.

- A mark <40 in one or two modules may be compensated for by good performance elsewhere. More than 2 failures cannot be compensated for and have to be taken again.

- A mark <25 cannot be compensated for by good performance elsewhere.

For the precise rules see Progression, Determination & Classification of Results on http://www.southampton.ac.uk/socscinet/ug/forms.html
One golden rule: do **not** fail badly

- The resits take place in August/September for both Semester 1 and 2 exams

- Resits cost time—**your** summer!

- Resits cost **you** money—the exam fee plus the cost of coming to Southampton or of arranging to take the exam in China.

- My experience is that few students are able to motivate themselves to succeed in the resits: in practice a bad fail is the **end** of study in Soton.
Myths about exams—what students tell me when they have failed

- Low marks can be forgiven or left off the student’s transcript.  
  **NO!**

- Some marks are less important than others.  
  **NO!**

All modules taken in the same academic year count equally.
**Exams—when?**

- The first semester exams are held in a two week period at the end of the semester in January. The second semester exams are held in May-June.

- You should receive your timetable soon.

- You also receive information about exam procedures. Study the rules carefully.
Exams—what can go wrong

- You are ill or something happens that is not your fault to prevent you from taking the exam. You may ask for *special considerations*.

- You are not well prepared. This is your fault.
Illness & Special Considerations

- If you are absent from an examination you must contact the Student Office on the day of the missed examination or at the very first opportunity after the illness to discuss the reasons for missing the examination.

- If you have grounds for believing that your performance in examinations or coursework merits special consideration, you must ensure that this information, with supporting documentation, is submitted to the Student Office.
Preparing

You should go to the exam

- knowing the subject

AND

- knowing what you will be expected to do
What is *expected*

- The lecturer sets the questions
- The lecturer posts the exam rubric on the module’s Blackboard site
- The lecturer should tell you about the structure of the exam and whether the course has changed from previous years
- If (s)he doesn’t say anything, **ASK**
On-line resources relating to previous years

- Past Examination Papers
  - Accessible through SUSSED

- The lecturers’ feedback on past exams
  - Accessible through SUSSED

- These are especially valuable resources if the course has not changed.
What to take: Dictionary

- You are allowed to take a foreign language dictionary to the exam

- Make sure that nothing of yours is written in it because that would be interpreted as cheating.

- For dictionaries, calculators etc. see
  https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/assessment/assessment-overview/exam-regulations.page#_ga=2.114388996.249974957.1544465798-1367158935.1535686005
What to take: calculator

- In some exams you need to take and use a calculator. Check whether this is so for your exams.
- The calculator **must** be a University-approved calculator. See link above.
- **Any other kind** of calculator will be confiscated and you will have to do calculations in your head—losing time & marks.
Behaviour in exams

- Cheating is taken very seriously and a strict code of behaviour is enforced.

- For instance, if you have a question do **not** speak to a fellow-student but to the invigilator of the exam.
Violating the code–examples

- Students must **not look at** the questions until given permission.

- Students who **do** look, whether deliberately or accidentally, are breaking the rules.

- Students must **not** take their own paper to the exam

- Students who **do**, are treated as cheating

Read the instructions very carefully before going to the exam
On the paper—the rubric

- The rubric is the set of instructions printed at the top of the exam paper.

- **Obey** the rubric
  - Thus if you are told to do FOUR questions, then answers to 3 can give no more than 75% and answers to 5 will include one wasted effort.
  - If questions are unequally weighted, then pay attention to the weights when organising your time during the exam.
Your answers

- Read the questions carefully and try to answer the questions *asked* rather than ones you *wish* had been asked.

- If a question should take 40 minutes and you write your answer in 20, then most likely you are not including enough detail.

- Show your reasoning: the examiner is interested in your reasoning and can only give marks for what is *on* the page.
Example: a past Econ 2001

- Question A1 asks whether a particular utility function represents monotonic preferences.

- My tutee answered yes and got 0/5.

- The correct answer was no but most importantly there was no reasoning.

- If the student had supported the (wrong) answer with some valid reasoning she would have got some marks.
The results—in February

- If you have failed any modules you will receive a letter from the Student Office.

- You should consult your tutor about resits.

- You **cannot** resit a paper you have passed. Resit marks are **capped** at 40%. So there is no point in failing deliberately!
Making sense of your results

- Read the Exam feedback for the units you have taken.
- It *may* be worth seeing your script. If you wish to, you should contact your tutor NOT the module lecturer.

**Note that**
- Marks are **not** negotiable.
- Scripts are **not** re-marked.
Looking ahead for 2+2s: applying for Master’s courses

For a Master’s course in 2021/22 you apply in semester 1 of 2020/21.

This year there is nothing to do except

- get the **best** marks you can in your courses
- talk to third years about their experience in applying for Master’s courses.
Any Questions??????