Student Success Coaching:
Midterm & Final Exam Tips

Preparation for Exams

Start Early- Preparation should begin at least a week, but preferably two or more weeks before your exams to allow for adequate study time. Attending all classes, reviewing notes, and staying on top of your readings up until the exam is important.

Plan Ahead- Eliminate other responsibilities if possible and schedule study times into your calendar when you know you’ll have several exams, papers, or projects. Do your best to stick to the plan!

Prioritize- Determine which exams need your attention the most. Consider your current grades, whether or not your exams are cumulative, and what percentage of your final grade will be from your exams. Don’t forget to pace yourself.

Study Actively- Find what works best for you, but consider the following tips:

1) Use study guides if available and attend all review sessions.

2) Form effective study groups of 3-6 people. Share ideas, learn from one another, and set a time limit to help the group stay focused.

3) Ask your professors for help by visiting office hours, emailing questions, and speaking to them before, during, or after class. Consider on-campus tutoring as well if you still have questions.

4) Do not completely re-read the textbook and other class materials. Instead review your notes in the margin and the material you highlighted previously for key points.

5) Focus on your notes from class. Make sure you are not missing any key information. If you are, consult with a classmate.

6) Review previous exams if they are available.

Test Yourself- Before taking the exam, create questions from the material that you think could be on the exam, do practice problems, or “retake” past exams if available. Try to complete the study guide again without referencing your notes or the textbook, and practice writing essays to determine what you still need to study.
The Day Before and the Day Of the Exam

Combat Stress- Be sure to eat healthy and avoid food with high sugars, sleep at least four hours each night, exercise (even if it is just a short walk), take a 10-15 minute break every hour or so while studying, and avoid caffeine binges.

Visualize Success- If you are starting to feel anxious, pause, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine yourself taking the exam and feeling confident that you know all of the information. Picture an “A” on your exam.

Don’t Cram- Confirm the time, location, and anything you need to bring to the exam the day before. Use the time immediately before the exam to relax, take a deep breath, and take a minute to get focused.

Taking the Exam- Arrive to class on time, review the entire exam before beginning, plan your time accordingly, and answer all of the questions you know first.