

Notes on “Preparing for Exam Booklet” (2007, prepared by the course team)

## INTRODUCTION

Key skills:

- understanding and good exam technique
- being organized
- grasping and communicating key ideas

### 1. THE DSE212 EXAM (for more on this, see DSE212 Specimen Examination Booklet!)

#### 1.1. *Format and structure of the exam*

A three-hour unseen paper

Consisting of 3 parts:

- Part 1 : short answers

45 mins, worth 25% of total mark

Concepts and terms drawn from Book 1. → YOU WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE 5 OUT OF 8

A paragraph of 4-7 sentences to be written

Appendix 1 at the back of the Specimen Examination Booklet contains ALL the concepts that can occur

- Part 2:

45+45 mins, worth 50% of total mark

2 short ESSAYS on chapters PREVIOUSLY NOT COVERED IN TMA

ESSAYS (TMA01, 02, 04) in Book 1. So it can be from Chapters 3, 5, 6, 9.

→ YOU WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE 2 OUT OF 4

- Part 3:

45 mins, worth 25% of total mark

1 ESSAY on a question related to one of the three chapters of Book 2 → YOU WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE 1 OUT OF 3

**1.2. How your answers will be assessed**

- Part 1

MORE than a short definition will be required

The essential part is: *WHY IS THE CONCEPT IMPORTANT IN PSYCHOLOGY?*

- Part 2 and Part 3 (essay questions)

Five areas of interest:

- focus on question as set (consult process words in Appendix 1 of the Workbook)
- clarity and structure of answer: the quality of argument; the COHERENCE of argument; organization and logical development of argument
- use of evidence/examples: references to course material
- accuracy and level of understanding
- CRITICAL ANALYSIS/EVALUATION: offering an original argument, finding significance within psychology

## **2. REVISING FOR THE EXAM**

The general point is to revise *actively*

**2.1. Planning the revision**

2.1.2. Constructing a timetable

Around 3 weeks of revision time

2.1.3. Selecting what to revise

DON'T revise every thing

DO revise:

- a spread of material (not just what you like)
- material you have already read!

- the terms and concepts given in Appendix 1 of the Specimen Examination Booklet
- wider topics and not simply specific issues
- look for the summary points in the chapters + the commentaries following the chapters
- organize your material (for instance, think in terms of the 3 Cs; theory – method –theme; social or cognitive or evolutionary approach; insider or outsider perspective)

#### 2.1.4. anticipating questions + thinking about OVERAL REVISION STRATEGY

For 3 revision strategies see page 13 of the Booklet

### **2.2. *Revising to understanding***

- Creating your revision notes
  - ACTIVE approach, work with your material
  - Condense your notes, first on an A4 paper, then perhaps on even smaller card (again learning outcomes and summary points are helpful here)
  - Clustering and linking ideas is essential (think of the findings of memory research!)
  
- Learning your notes
  - again, try to understand the ideas, rather than simply memorizing them
  - break your time into chunks – it will help staying fresh (i.e. 2x30mins rather than a whole hour)
  - try to LINK the material to existing knowledge + create new links (think of the “level of processing” model in memory research)
  - try use anything you are good at: colours, tables, mnemonics (Erikson, Marcia, Gergen and Tajfel = EMGT = Elephants Make Good Tusks)
  
- Rehearse the answers
  - set up a “mock exam” for yourself with the help of the Specimen Examination Booklet or the past exam papers available online

### **3. PERFORMING WELL IN THE EXAM**

Seven golden rules:

- start by quickly glancing over the whole paper
- read the question carefully
- answer the question set (and not the question you WOULD like to answer)
- show that you STUDIED the course and are familiar with key ideas/debates
- speak like a psychologist (avoid references to or style of common sense)
- aim to allocate your time well (45 + 45 +45 +45 mins)
- plan your answers carefully
  - o start with a brief brainstorm: jot down crucial ideas and names
  - o select the essential points and organize them into a structure
  - o planning your answer in advance will also help you keeping a focus on the question

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q1: What is the best way to cope with the night before and the morning of the exam?

Q2: Does handwriting matter? Mine is terrible...

Q3: How much depth and detail am I expected to go into?

Q4: Do I need to include lots of references and remember names and studies?

Q5: Do spelling and grammar matter?

Q6: What order should I do the questions in?

Q7: If I can only do two essay questions well, should I concentrate on these and ignore the third?

Q8: What if I run out of time?

Q9: Can I take breaks in the middle of an exam?

Q10: What if my mind goes blank in the middle of the exam or I can't remember some details?

Q11: What should I do if something unforeseen and unfortunate happens just before or on the day of the exam?

### **4. COPING WITH EXAM STRESS (see page 23)**

### **5. GOOD LUCK! 😊**

