

Friday@2

Preparing for Part A and Part B exams

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Oxford
Mathematics

Plan of today's session



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- How the exams work
- Revision
- Wellbeing
- Exam technique

A copy of these slides will be emailed to all Part A and Part B students.

Caution!



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- Don't read more into today's remarks than is intended.
 - We are **not** hinting at what may or may not be on the papers. We are not Part A or B examiners this year.
 - Your tutors know you and can give you personalised advice – listen to them!



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How the exams work

Exam timetable



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Check when your exams are!

- Part A: Weeks 8/9
- Part B: Weeks 6/7/8

Exam paper structure



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Check the details carefully for each paper.

- How long is the exam? (Including extra time if relevant.)
- How many questions should you do?
- How many questions to choose from?

Examination Papers – Part A

This is all in the Handbook + Exam Conventions



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For Maths:

- There are four obligatory papers:
 - A0 – 3 qus on LA – best 2 count
 - A1 – 3 qus on DEs I – best 2 count
 - A2 – 6 qus – best 4 count
 - ASO – 9 qus, 1 on each SO – best 2 count
 - A2 is 3 hours. Other papers are 1.5 hours
 - 5 (or 6) out of 9 long option papers A3-A11 are taken. Best 2/3 qus count on each paper. All questions are worth 25 marks. By way of a guideline these marks are broken down by parts.
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Examination Papers – Part A

This is all in the Handbook + Exam Conventions



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For Maths and Stats:

- There are six obligatory papers:
 - A0 – 3 qus on LA – best 2 count
 - A1 – 3 qus on DEs I – best 2 count
 - A2 – 6 qus – best 4 count
 - A8 and A9 – 3 qus – best 2 count
 - ASO – 8 qus, 1 on each SO – best 2 count
 - A2 is 3 hours. All others are 1.5 hours
- 3 (or 4) out of 9 long option papers A3-A12 are taken. Best 2/3 qus count on each paper. All questions are worth 25 marks. By way of a guideline these marks are broken down by parts.

Examination Papers – Part A

This is all in the Handbook + Exam Conventions



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For Maths and Phil, Maths and Comp:

- There are two obligatory papers:
 - A0 – 3 qus on LA – best 2 count – 1.5 hours
 - A2 – 6 qus – best 4 count – 3 hours
 - 2 papers out of the option papers A3-A11 and ASO.
 - Best 2 qus count on each paper. Each paper is 1.5 hours.
 - All questions are worth 25 marks. By way of a guideline these marks are broken down by parts.
 - There are no separate exams in Philosophy but are in **Computer Science**
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Exam paper structure



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- Formulae books, dictionaries and calculators are not allowed
 - You are not allowed to write in pencil
 - Mobile phones cannot be taken into the exam and should be handed to an invigilator

From the checklist for setters...



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- Does each question have an easy start, worth at least 10 marks, which examines material explicitly in the course?
 - Is each question, together with its markscheme, such that a $2i/2ii$ borderline candidate should be able to clock up $\sim 13/25$ marks (where relevant)?

University Standardised Marks (USMs)



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- Your script is given raw marks.
 - The raw mark on each paper is converted into a USM.
 - This process is done to make papers comparable (they might have been of different difficulties).
 - Full details of scaling are in Examiners' Reports (on the department website).

Allocation of class – Part A



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- There is no overall classification for Part A.
- Students are classified at the end of Part B, on the basis of both Parts A and B. (Part C is classified separately for those students who do it.)
- Each Part A paper has a USM, and a weighted average gives the overall USM for Part A.
- It is impossible to fail Part A.

Allocation of class – Part B



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This uses a weighted average of USMs from Parts A and B, together with the *Strong Paper Rule*.

This states

A candidate will have satisfied the Class X Strong Paper Rule if at least 6 units from Parts A and B lie in that class or better with at least 2 units in Part B.

e.g. 2.1: Weighted average USM 70+ and 1st SPR **not** met or weighted average USM 60+ and 2.1 SPR met

Progression to Part C



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Third years will need a 2i or better in order to continue to Part C (fourth year) if they wish.

Percentages in each class

Overall Parts A and B classification



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Year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
First	38.2	39.4	39.7	32.9	31.1	34.4
2.1	44.1	48.5	41.1	47.3	49.4	49.7
2.2	16.5	8.3	17.0	17.1	13.3	13.4
Third	1.3	2.3	2.1	2.1	5.7	1.3
Pass	0	1.5	0	0.7	0.6	1.3
Fail	0	0	0	0	0	0
Students	152	132	141	146	158	157

Revision

How do you revise?



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- Now you know how the exams work, you can plan your revision.
 - You are already experts at taking exams.
 - What strategies have you found effective in the past? What strategies have you heard friends find effective?

How to revise



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“Memory is the residue of thought” (Willingham)

You need to find ways to actively think about the material.

Understanding helps...



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- Examiners are looking for understanding.
 - Examiners are not trying to catch you out.
 - Understanding the material helps you to learn it, to adapt it to unfamiliar exam questions.
 - Understanding the material also helps you with future courses.

...but practise questions too



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- Get used to the style (and length) of the papers
 - Find a balance between working on notes and trying past questions
 - Later on, try timed questions/papers
 - Practise choosing questions too

Bookwork tips



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- Learning by rote is generally inefficient
 - What are the key points in a proof or method?
Practise filling in the details
 - Diagrams are great

Wellbeing

Look after yourself



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- Set a realistic schedule – don't overdo it
 - Find ways to separate work space and living space
 - Have quality breaks in between quality revision
 - Mix up courses, don't only focus on ones you like/dislike
 - Keep it in proportion and be realistic

Look after yourself



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- Don't revise up to the last minute
 - Relax before bed to improve sleep quality
 - Remember to eat (healthily)
 - Exercise helps
 - Find what works for you

Exam technique

Quick tips



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- Get your subfusc and equipment ready the day before
 - Have a snack or light meal before the exam, to feed your brain
 - Take your university card and candidate number
 - Arrive in plenty of time (to the correct place)

Quick tips



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- Take your time: read the questions carefully, choose wisely, read the questions carefully again
 - Answer the question that's been set. Don't leave out bits by mistake.
 - Write legibly. Cross out neatly: make it clear what's to be marked
 - Show your reasoning, quote theorems and check hypotheses carefully

Quick tips



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- Check your work as you go along:
 - Is that mass you just calculated positive?
 - Does that function really solve that differential equation?
 - Are the units of your answer correct for it to be energy?
 - Does your answer vary reasonably with its parameters?

If it's not going to plan...



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- Breathe, stay grounded
 - Is there another question you can try? (But don't hop around)
 - Make notes when you read the question – you can refer to these later
 - Keep it in proportion
 - Ask an invigilator if you need (non-maths) help

And finally...

Follow-up resources



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On the department website:

- Past and specimen papers (Parts A/B/C)
- Notices to candidates
- Examiners' reports
- Exam conventions
- Some solutions for Parts B/C questions

University's Online Resources



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- The University's *Study Skills and Training* webpage can be found at
 - <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills>
 - And specific revision guidance is at
 - <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/revision>

Quick reminder...



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The options fair is on Friday afternoon in Week 4.

It's an excellent chance to find out about options in Parts B and C.

Be proud



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Think back to how much maths you have learned since October.

You should be proud of that.

The exams are your opportunity to show that to the examiner.

Try to keep the exams in proportion.

Good luck!