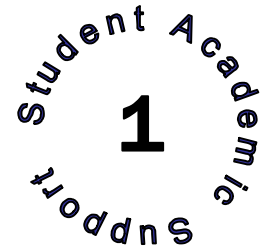




# Reassessments & resits



## Why will this handout be helpful?

If you have to resubmit courseworks, or resit class tests and exams from the modules you took in Semester 1, then this handout is for you. University regulations state that (except in exceptional circumstances) you can only move on to the next stage of your course in September if you have passed all your modules from the current stage. This handout contains useful advice and information to help you to get organised to make best use of the time available; think carefully about what went wrong first time around; and improve your performance this time.

## This handout might be especially helpful if...

- You are not sure exactly what you need to do to improve your grades.
- You found it difficult to get organised and take control of your workload in Semester 1.
- You feel you need a different approach to completing coursework.
- You were unsure how to prepare for an exam or test.
- You did lots of preparation, but found the stress of an exam situation affected your performance.

## Introduction: what comes first?

Your first priority is to make sure you know exactly what you have to do. In most cases reassessments for Semester 1 modules will take place during Semester 2.

- If you have to resubmit a **coursework** such as an assessed essay or report, your deadline for resubmission may be anytime between February and May.
- If you have to resit a **class test**, this will also take place during the semester.
- If you have to resit a formal **exam** this will take place towards the end of May (*after* the Semester 2 exams).

Go through all the information you have been sent by your school. Read it carefully to make sure you do not miss anything important. In particular make sure you know the submission dates for reassessment courseworks, and the dates of your resit exams.

Find us on level 2 of the Library.

 Drop-ins and appointments available daily 10am-4pm, term-time and vacations.

 / **MSN** [StudentAcademicSupport@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:StudentAcademicSupport@abertay.ac.uk).

 <http://www.abertay.ac.uk/studying/support/academic/>.

## Organising yourself

You are going to have to work hard over the next few months, to fit in any reassessment courseworks or revision alongside your Semester 2 modules. Don't panic though! It can be done, and careful planning will help you to improve marks in all your modules.

- **Identify what you need to do.** Using the grid below, complete the top line by filling in a new box for each reassessment you have to take.
- **Make sure you know your deadlines.** Complete the bottom row of the grid by writing in the final date for each of your reassessments.
- **Plan your work carefully.** Using the grid, write today's date in the second line. Now you can work backwards from the date for the final coursework deadline or resit in the bottom line, to fill in the other two target dates.

Think carefully about these target dates. Working steadily on your coursework or revision will reduce the stress of reassessments and allow you time to make the improvements needed.

Write the module title(s) in here:				
Today's date:				
Main points to focus on to improve results:				
Your deadline for a first draft of coursework / first stage of revision:				
Your deadline for a final draft of coursework / complete practice questions:				
Final deadline / resit date:				

- **Now make an integrated study plan.** You will have courseworks and exams for your Semester 2 modules as well. Why not make a larger version of this grid, and include *all* your courseworks for the next few months, with target dates and deadlines for each piece of work? The earlier you can plan your work in this way, the easier it will be to spread the workload across the semester. You could make a similar grid for revision planning, including all Semester 2 exams and any resit exams.

**Not sure where to find information about coursework deadlines?** All the information you need should be available via the 'Re-assessment information' link on the Portal. Otherwise, contact tutors, your School office or Student Academic Support for help.

## Making the most of your time and space:

You will have limited time to complete reassessment courseworks so you must get organised. Use the checklist to assess how organised you are and to think of improving the ways in which you work:

	Yes	No
Are your notes: <div style="margin-left: 40px;">           Filed systematically?            In piles on the floor?            Spread all over the place?         </div>		
Could you quickly find notes that you wrote two months ago?		
Could you find equipment quickly—eg your calculator?		
Have you got a dedicated workspace?		
Is your workspace clean and tidy?		
Do you have a reminder system for what you need to do—eg a 'to do' list?		

### How did you do?

**All “yes”?** Well obviously organisation is not your problem.

**Up to 4 “no’s”?** You’ll survive. But think about which of your “no’s” makes your life the hardest and try to make a positive effort to do something about it.

**5 or 6 “no’s”?** Try hard to put a real effort into improving how you organise yourself. Put the time in now as you get started to sort yourself out - it’ll really pay off as you reach your deadlines. Buy a set of folders and dividers. Get some highlighter pens. Tidy up as you along. None of these things is difficult – you just need to get yourself together to do them.

**Remember:** If you’re finding it hard to get it together, contact Academic Support for help.

### Making time for research

If a problem with your original coursework or the exam was that you just didn’t know enough, it’s time to head back to the books and journals.

Check the library opening times on the Virtual Library website at <http://vlib.abertay.ac.uk/>

Can you find a regular time for working on your reassessment modules?

### Journals and other online resources:

Journals, databases and other online resources will be vital for improving the quality of your research. Most of these resources can be accessed using your Abertay username and password, and many are available off-campus. So if it is difficult to find ‘library time’ they may be a good starting point.

If you are accessing the resources off-campus, go to the Virtual Library. Select the link at the top of the screen that reads ‘Click here for Abertay electronic books, journals and databases’. That will allow you to log on to the resources using your Abertay username and password.

## How can I improve my coursework?

- **Be careful.** Don't lose easy marks because you haven't read through all the instructions and followed them to the letter. Or by not checking your work word for word before you hand it in.
- **Take advice.** Speak with classmates. Track down tutors. See the Academic Support advisors. Talk through with them what might have gone wrong. Pick their brains about how to do things differently this time.  
Make the most of the feedback on your first version of courseworks. Re-read the coursework to understand fully what the tutors' comments mean. What do they like about your work? What do they suggest you could improve? Are there obvious ways of doing this?
- **Be methodical.** The key to successful coursework is to take one step at a time. Make sure you understand what you are being asked to do before you start your research. Plan the order in which you will do your research and your writing. Keep track while you are reading and writing that you are covering all the main points and not missing anything important. Keep time at the end for checking you've done everything, proof-reading and rewriting where necessary. This 3-stage grid will help you to keep track:

### Stage 1 – Understanding what you have been asked to do.

1. Write your assignment question / task here:	
2a. List all the question words here, for example: who, how, why, where, what:	2b. Describe what each question word is asking you to think about:
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
d.	d.
e.	e.
3a. List all the instruction words, for example: discuss, analyse, contrast, define:	3b. Describe what each instruction word is asking you to do:
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
d.	d.
e.	e.

**Stage 2 – Preparing for your research**

<p><b>4a. Write down all the subject keywords and phrases here:</b></p>	<p><b>4b. Do you know what each keyword or phrase means? Put a tick in one of the boxes below.</b></p>	
	<p>Yes, it means:</p>	<p>No, I need to research more:</p>
a.	a.	
b.	b.	
c.	c.	
d.	d.	
e.	e.	
<p><b>5a. Write in here the keywords and phrases you chose in 4b, listed in the order you'll work on them.</b></p>	<p><b>5b. Add here extra notes and queries you have about each topic to guide your research reading.</b></p>	
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		

**Stage 3 – Checking your work before handing it in**

<p><b>6. List here any other instructions and the assessment criteria you were given on the coursework task sheet.</b> Tick off each instruction or criteria as you check your work before handing it in to make sure you have done everything.</p>	
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

## Resit exams: improving how you revise.

### Organise:

- Get your course notes in order.
- Identify gaps in your notes so you know which topics you need to do more reading on. Get some basic text books from the library as quick and easy reference sources.
- Print off past / specimen papers from OASIS.
- Use your notes and past papers to decide how many topics to focus on and then make your selection.

### Prioritise:

- Decide which exams worry you most and which exams you feel more confident about.
- Divide up the time available for revision between the exams, giving your weakest subjects more study time.
- Remember to be realistic and flexible. Allow time for regular short breaks.

### Revise:

- Keep revision active, whether it's taking notes from your notes, trying practice questions, setting yourself quizzes...find out what works for you.
- Prepare yourself for the exam itself.
- Know what type of exam you'll be facing.
- Work out a strategy for how you are going to tackle the exam.
- Note where and when the exam is taking place.

### Different ways to revise:

- **One hour on, ten minutes off.** Revise for sensible periods with short breaks in between.
- **Brainstorming.** Without looking at your notes, write down as much as you can about a topic. Then go back to your notes to check how much you could remember and how much you still need to learn; how much you got right and how much you don't understand properly yet.
- **Mind mapping.** As you brainstorm, try to link together related topics and ideas to form a diagram of the subject you are revising. You can do this with your notes as a way of summarising a lot of information. Or try it without your notes as a way of checking how much you have learnt so far.
- **One side of A4.** Take your notes on each topic and fill just one side of A4 with just the essential information. Each of these A4 sheets can be the basis for your revision.
- **Key words and phrases.** Take each A4 sheet and cut it down even more until you are left with just key words and phrases. If you know what each one means without checking your main notes, your revision is going well.
- **Facts, facts, facts.** For multiple choice and short answer exams where you are being tested on how much you can remember, rote learning of facts is crucial.
- This is also a way of learning the key authors, experiments, etc that you will need in essay answers for referencing.
- **Think, think, think.** For extended answer and essay exams, you need to be able to remember facts and then use them to form arguments. Practise writing essay plans and full essays against the clock using questions from past papers.

## Taking the resit exam (or any other exam!) – reducing stress.

### On the day of the exam:

- Try to avoid stressful situations.
- Try to get a good sleep the night before the exam.
- Arrive 15 minutes early for your exam the next day.
- **Always** avoid the cluster of people outside the exam room asking each other questions about their revision. This will only make you worry about what you don't know.
- Concentrate on what you know.

### It sounds ridiculous, but:

Make sure you know where the exam is taking place and how to get there. There is nothing worse than looking for an unfamiliar room ten minutes before the start of the exam.

Unnecessary stress like this will make it harder for you to do as well as you can.

### Planning your approach:

- Carefully read all instructions on the exam paper, especially options of questions to answer.
- Think about time management in the exam:
- If you have to write two essays in two hours, plan to spend roughly 50 minutes on each.
- Plan to leave at least 10 minutes at the end of the exam to check for mistakes and to add in information you have missed.
- Never leave an exam early!! Keep working right until the end.
- Choose your questions:
- Your first question should be the one you are more confident of answering well. This gets you started working immediately, steadies the nerves and gives you confidence.
- Starting with a harder one first may increase the amount of time spent on the first essay, causing you to panic and rush the second question.

## Multiple choice and short answer resit exams:

This is a 3 wave technique to doing your best in multiple choice and short answer exams:

### Wave 1:

Read through the exam paper.

**Tick** the questions you can definitely answer.

**Circle** the questions you want to think about for a bit longer before you answer them.

Put a **cross** next to questions you don't know the answer to.

Go back and answer all the questions you ticked. Getting the easy ones done first should settle your nerves and boost your confidence.

### Wave 2:

Tackle the questions you circled - the ones that need a bit more thought.

### Wave 3:

Finish with the hardest questions, which you put a cross next to. Hopefully, your revision will have done the trick and there won't be too many of these.

## Check everything you do!

In exam conditions you may be very nervous, tense and working on adrenaline. You are more likely to make silly errors if you are anxious.

Always read again through the different possible answers to the questions very carefully: some answers might seem very similar.

Never leave the exam early or sit waiting and doing nothing at the end: use every second of the exam time to check and recheck your answers.

## Essay exams:

### Getting your ideas together.

- Quickly brainstorm some basic ideas about the question. Brainstorming works well because it can bring up information you have been studying that might be buried in your subconscious.
- Write these down on paper in any order.
- The more ideas you have, the more can select when you start to write. Can you link any of the ideas?
- Add any ideas that occur to you while you are writing to the list.

### Planning your essay:

- Reorganise the ideas you brainstormed into a logical order.
- Delete irrelevant initial ideas that will not help answer the question.
- Write out a rough essay structure using headings and sub-headings:
  - **Introduction** - main points and basic background information.
  - **Development** - deal with each point raised in the question in turn.
- Don't worry yet about a conclusion; you should be able to do this after you have written the rest of the essay.

### Essay style for exams:

Your essay should be:

- Written as legibly as possible.
- Written in clear English.
- Structured simply with a clear development of ideas.
- Checked carefully after you finish writing for grammar, punctuation and spelling.

### Referencing

Referencing in exams is largely relaxed. You do not need to include full formal references in the essay or write a bibliography at the end. If you do remember dates about important theory, however, put them in – it might get you an extra mark or two.

### Want more?

#### Abertay guides:

Please see our other guides at <http://www.abertay.ac.uk/studying/support/academic/guides>

#### At Abertay:

- **English as a foreign language:** Amanda Olivier ([a.olivier@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:a.olivier@abertay.ac.uk)).
- **Advice for disabled students** (including dyslexia): Jonathan Staal ([j.staal@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:j.staal@abertay.ac.uk)).
- **Guidance on finding books and journals in your subject area:** contact the Academic Librarians ([infodesk@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:infodesk@abertay.ac.uk)).

### Good luck!

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