

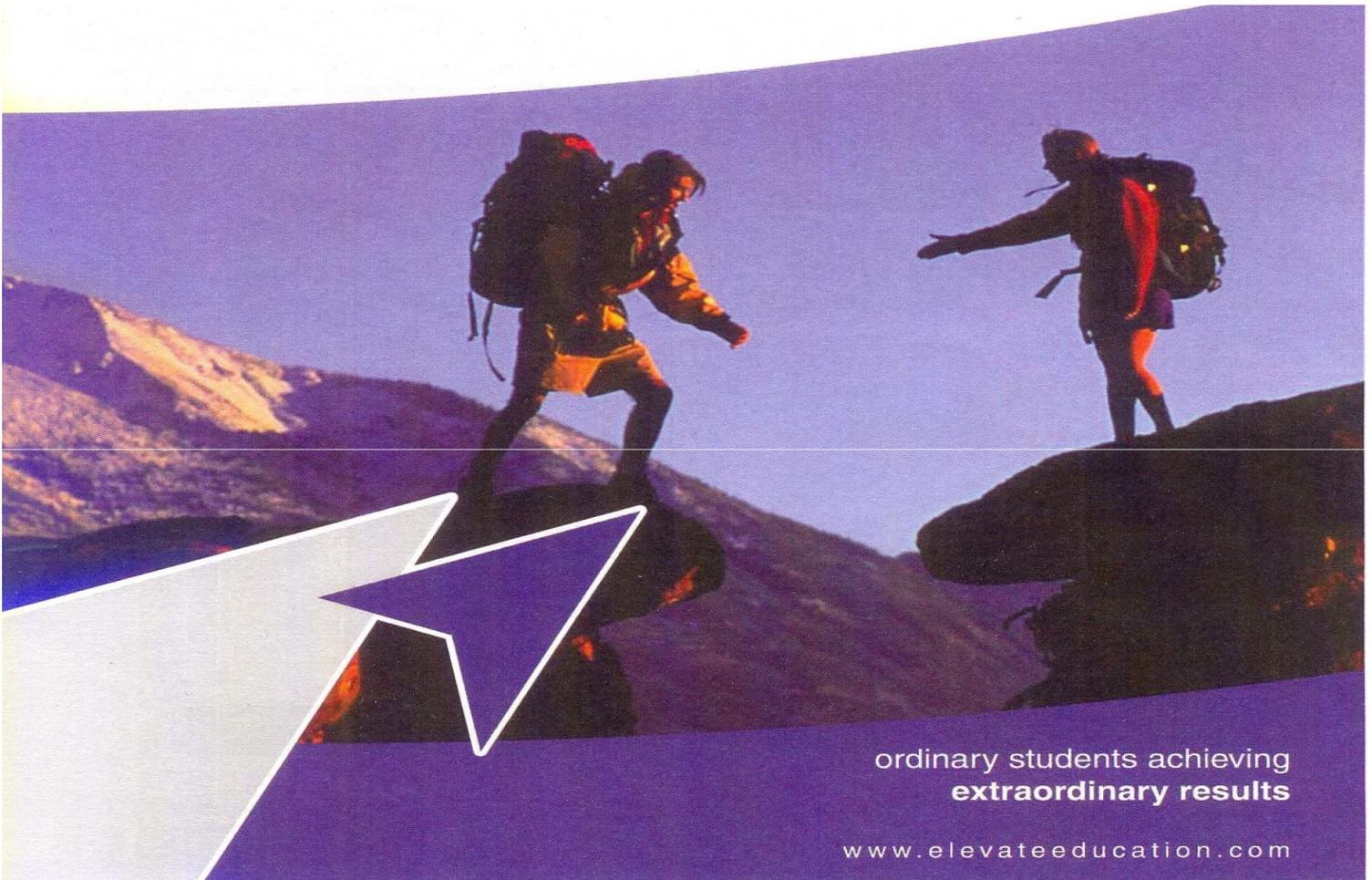


Student exercises based on Elevate Education's Senior School Seminar Programme.

For more information contact Elevate Education on 01865 366 219 or www.elevateeducation.com

Ace Your Exams Student Implementation Guide

Student Workbook



ordinary students achieving
extraordinary results

www.elevateeducation.com

Ace Your Exams Student Implementation Guide

This booklet has been designed to help you implement the techniques from the **Ace Your Exams** seminar and make some minor changes to the way you are working in the lead up to exams. As you will remember, none of what was covered was rocket science, and although changing one or two things may not seem like much, the tiniest changes can make all the difference.

Ace Your Exams will hopefully have convinced you that exams are neither memory, nor intelligence tests. In reality, most of your marks are actually earned **before** you step into the exam room and AYE introduced you to eight strategies employed by top students:

- Go through past papers and identify mistakes
- Get teacher's advice
- Learn from people around you
- Fixing mistakes
- Practice papers
- Using an exam timeline
- Developing a routine to stay calm
- Managing time and handling questions in the exam room

Over the following pages we will provide you with activities which will help you to actually put the skills which you learnt in the seminar into place.

We guarantee that if you start using these techniques as a roadmap for the next few weeks, months, or years you will see a considerable improvement in your grades.

Best of luck implementing the skills.

The Elevate Team

Part 1: Preparation

Step 1: Go through past papers and correct mistakes

What do most students do when they get a bad exam paper back? The answer is generally throw it in the bin and hide it from their parents, cry, or rip it into a thousand pieces. However previous papers are one of the most valuable resources you can use at school. They let you work out where you lost marks previously, and each paper gives you an opportunity to prevent that from happening again.

How do I do this? Keep all of your assessments and identify where you lost your marks, breaking these marks down by topic area. You will soon see the areas where you need to improve.

Activity:

- 1) Go through a marked assessment and circle any mistakes you made.
- 2) Use your textbook, your notes and/or your specification/syllabus to identify which topic areas these mistakes come from.
- 3) Do some focused work on these topics to fill the gaps in your knowledge. (This might involve learning your notes more thoroughly, going back to your textbook and making more detailed notes or asking your teacher for some help.)
- 4) Once you feel you have understood the subject matter, re-do the questions you got wrong.
- 5) Get these questions re-marked.
- 6) If you are still making mistakes, speak to your teacher: they will be able to spot any small mistakes that you have not picked up on.
- 7) Pay attention to what type of questions you are struggling with: do you see any trends? For example, do you have particular problems with essay questions/extended responses, or multiple choice questions or simply remembering key facts? If there is a particular *type* of question which you are not getting right, speak to a teacher who can give you support and recommend further action.

Elevate Exam Post-Mortem

Another way of improving your performance is to undertake an exam or test 'post mortem' after you receive your results:

Subject: _____

Did I achieve my goal?

Was there anything I would have changed / improved in my preparation? (E.g. were you cramming the night before, did you do enough practice papers?)

-
-
-

Was there anything you could have improved in the exam room? (Did you spend enough time planning, did you read the question properly, did you go over time?)

-
-

Where did I lose the majority of my marks? What was the focus of these questions? (For example, for Maths it might be Trigonometry, for History it might be Stalinist Russia)

-
-

What did my teacher say I could have improved?

-
-

Which 3 things am I going to immediately do / change?

Change / Action	Deadline	Done

Step 2: Hunt feedback from your teachers

The easy part is working out where you lost marks and where you made mistakes: the most crucial step in this process however, is fixing them so you don't make them again. The best way to ensure this happens is by asking your teacher to give you specific feedback on what you can improve on. You should see your teachers as coaches who are there to help you improve. The structure we recommend for seeking feedback is:

- 1) Where exactly did I lose marks and what did I do incorrectly?
- 2) Why was this incorrect?
- 3) How should I have done it and how should I do it next time?
- 4) Is there an example of the right way to do this?

If you are courteous with their time, teachers are generally very happy to give you this feedback if you ask for it.



And Check...

- Have you organised a time to speak to your teachers?
- Do you have your paper to go through with your teacher?
- Are you clear about what you need to do next time?
- Have you written down specific areas where you can improve for next time?
- Do you have an example of the correct way to do it?

Step 3: Fix the Mistake

Albert Einstein's definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. Now that you have worked out why you lost marks and how to improve, you need to put it into action. Using the feedback from your teacher, re-do sections of your previous papers and get them re-marked.



And Check...

- Have you re-done sections of your papers where you lost marks?
- Have you given them to your teacher to get them re-marked?

Step 4: Use an exam planner

It is really easy to underestimate how much work we need to do before an exam and how long it will take to do. Imagine you have your first exam in 21 days. How do you want to be feeling before that exam? How prepared do you want to be? How many practice papers would you like to have done? An exam planner lets you break down the work into chunks so you can focus on **small, specific tasks** spread out over a number of weeks.

Activity:

1) First establish your timeline by working out how long you have until your exam. If your exam is in 28 days, write down a list of every day from 1-28.
2) Next, write out all of the tasks that you would like to have finished by the time of the exam; i.e.

- Finish notes on all of the specification bullet points
- Create a mindmap per chapter of the textbook
- Practise redrawing the mindmap on a whiteboard
- Finish 5 past exams
- Finish every practice question in the textbook at the end of each chapter

3) Start breaking these tasks down into small chunks and fill them into specific days on your exam timeline, working backwards from the date of your exam (bearing in mind you will have more than one subject to revise for). Even if you only manage to stick to this 65% of the time, you are still doing much better than if you did no planning and did not start revising until a couple of days beforehand!

Day 1: Finish notes on chapters 1-3

Day 2: Turn chapter 1-3 notes into summaries

Day 3: Turn chapter 1-3 notes into mindmaps

Day 4: Q 1, 2 & 3 from 2011 past exam with book open.

Day 5: Discuss past exam with study group.

Day 6: Finish notes on chapters 4-6

Day 7: Record notes on phone and download them onto iPod

Day 8: Sunday = lie in and play Fifa

Day 9: Get parents to quiz you on notes

Day 10: Submit 2011 & 2009 past papers to teacher to be marked.

Day 20: Re-do questions from past papers where you lost marks and get re-marked.

Day 27: Exam

An alternative is to use the exam planner outlined in the seminar (There is a blank exam planner at the end of this guide for you to use):

Subject	Goal	To do	Deadline	Complete
Geography	A	Finish notes on specification bullet points.	10 May	✓
		Create mindmap per topic.	20 May	✓
		Practice drawing mindmap on whiteboard.	28 May	✓
		Finish five past exams.	8 June	
		Get feedback from teacher	12 June	
		Finish practice questions from textbook.	15 June	
		Exam	20 June	

Step 5: Practice Papers

The single biggest difference between top students and middle and lower performing students is that top students do more practice papers, practice questions and past exam papers. What practice questions force you to do is use the information in different ways, not just regurgitate what you've memorised word for word.

How do I do this? Start doing practice papers with your notes open next to you. Have your book, your mindmaps and your notes next to you so you know you are getting the answers correct. As you get closer to the exam and complete more and more questions, start weaning yourself off your notes. The more practice you do the more familiar you will get with both the style of questions and the best way of answering them. As a result, you will find you no longer need your notes next to you.

Tip: If you sit down before an exam and try to do an entire past exam under exam conditions you will never get it done!! Not only does no one want to sit there for 3 hours doing an exam when you don't have to, you also won't know the content yet. Get your hands on as many past exams and practice questions as possible and split them up like homework. You might do a past paper over 4 nights and it becomes far more realistic to think 'tonight I have to do Q1 & 2 from the 2011 Physics Exam. Tomorrow night I will do Q3 & 4'.

Where do I find them? Use exam board websites, ask your teachers, do the practice questions at the end of the chapter in the book or write your own.



And Check...

- Have you downloaded all available past exams from exam board websites?
- Have you asked each of your teachers for extra practice papers?
- Have you broken the exams into chunks and put these tasks into your exam planner?

Tip: Before you go and download the 1984 Geography exam check your specification and ask your teacher if all the topics in the paper are still relevant.

Part 2: Exam Room Techniques

Step 1: Ration Your Time

One of the best ways to work out how long to spend on each question in an exam is to use a simple formula:

Each mark = **minutes** in the exam \div how many **marks** the exam is worth.

Activity: Go through the problem below and work out how long to spend on each question.

Exam: 2 hours. Marks: 40

120 \div 40 =

4 mark question = minutes

8 mark question = minutes

10 mark question = minutes

18 mark question = minutes

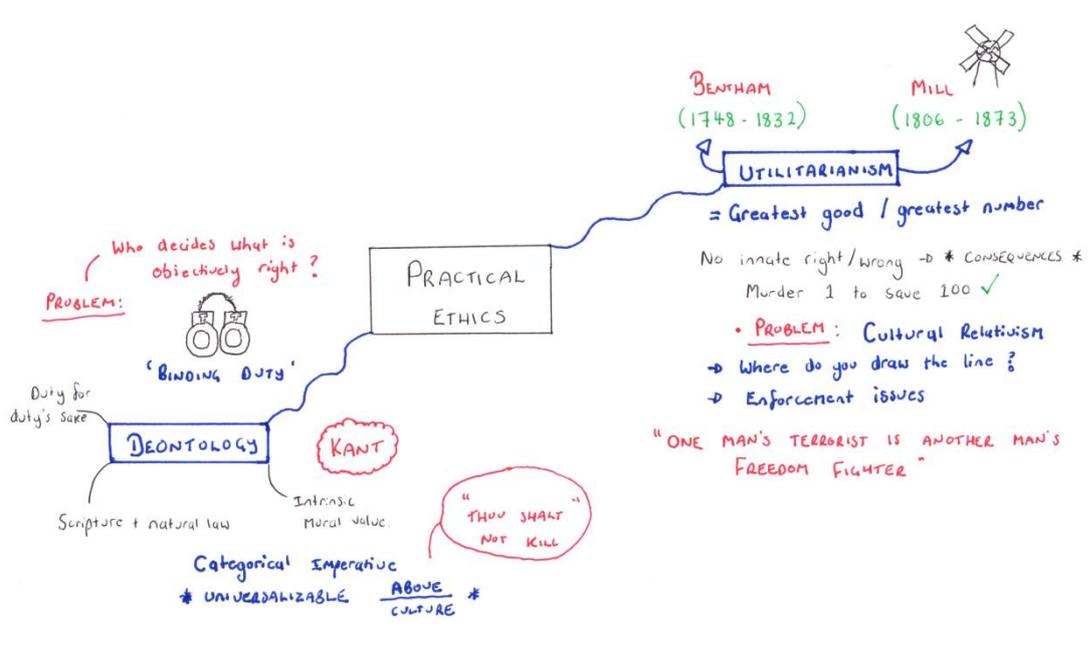
Implementation: Before every exam/test, find out how many minutes it will last for. Next, check how many marks it is worth and work out how much time you should be dedicating to each mark. If you realise you have spent too long on a particular question, leave that question and move on. You are likely to pick up marks in other parts of the paper and can always come back to questions you did not finish at the end of the exam.

Step 2: Consider all answers

The first thing you should be doing in an exam is spending a few minutes writing down the key content and trigger words for that subject. The most effective way to do that is through mindmapping. You are more likely to remember content if you jot it down immediately.

Activity: Challenge yourself to turn an entire chapter of notes into 1 A4 mindmap. Only use key words, little pictures, just the main ideas. Get a blank piece of paper and time how long it takes you to write down that information. Try it again, but this time try to write down even less. If you keep practising this, you will find you can write down a lot of key information in a short amount of time which triggers more information during the exam.

Implementation: When you get into an exam, as soon as the examiner tells you to start writing, turn to the inside front cover of the exam or on a spare sheet of paper and spend a couple of minutes drawing mindmaps for certain topics you find more challenging.



Overview and checklist

Your goal should be to implement each of the actions over the 1-3 weeks after your seminar and in the run up to exams. As you implement each step, tick it off the list below.

- Go through past papers and correct mistakes** – you have worked out where you lost marks and identified topic areas. You now need to do this every time.
- Get teacher's advice** – you have asked for specific feedback from your teachers on how to improve and an example of what to do next time.
- Use an exam planner** – you have worked out how long you have until exams and set deadlines for specific tasks to accomplish.
- Do practice papers** – you have downloaded past exams from exam board websites and asked your teacher for practice questions.
- Ration your time** – you understand the formula minutes/marks and know how to work out how long to spend on each question.
- Consider all answers** – you have practiced re-writing the key ideas on a blank page in preparation for the start of an exam.

If you have ticked everything off – congratulations – you have implemented all the tips from Elevate's "Ace Your Exams" seminar!

Follow us on twitter @ukelevate for exam tips from our presenters.

Go to our student website <http://uk.elevateeducation.com/students> for free resources such as A2, AS & GCSE practice questions, presenter tips and video interviews. The username to access the website is **elevate** and the password is **pacco**.

