

Starpath

Presentation: Exam Literacy

Tania Linley-Richardson and Morgan Rangi



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**

What is Exam Literacy?

The skills needed to be able to complete external exams, and achieve successful results.

What Skills do Students Need?

- Adequate preparation in their own time, outside of school, for the exams
- Read, understand and follow instructions
- Read and comprehend text under pressure
- Write under pressure
- Good time management
- Knowledge and use of exam techniques

How can you Prepare Your Students?

- Practise, practise, practise and then practise some more
- Opportunities to read under pressure
- Opportunities to write under pressure
- Practise at reading and following exam instructions, under pressure
- Completion of previous exam questions, in timed conditions, in exam conditions
- Analysis of exemplar answers
- Close understanding of marking schedules
- Time management – making and using a study timetable
- Explicit teaching of study techniques
- Explicit teaching of exam techniques – what are these?

The Running Analogy

Sprint = what can be done in a lesson at school (1 hour)

Middle distance = two hours at home, in own study time

Marathon = the three hour external

Revising Content Knowledge

With colleagues in your department, discuss ways you can support your students to revise content in your subject area.

Academic Verbs

Students must know what academic verbs mean, in each of their subjects, to be successful in externals. A random sample of six 2015 Level 2 externals in different subjects (Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, English, History and Physics) showed students were asked to:

- explain
- discuss
- define
- identify
- examine
- use
- describe
- analyse
- state
- justify
- calculate
- draw

Explicitly teach what these mean, in your subject.

Reading, Understanding and Following Exam Instructions

These are from the 2015 Level 2 Art History external for 91180 Examine the effects of formal elements of art works. In your own words, write what you need to do if you were a student sitting this exam.

INSTRUCTIONS

There are six questions in this booklet; two for each of the following areas of study:

- Aspects of Gothic Art 1120 –1420
- Towards Modernism 1780 –1900
- Aotearoa and the Pacific 1800 –1950.

Answer ONE question from ONE area of study. Answer BOTH parts of your chosen question.

Support your answer with evidence from the plates provided. Ensure you use appropriate art terminology in your answer.

The definition below may help you.

Write your answer in the spaces provided in Answer Booklet 91180A.

Using key Words

Students should be encouraged to:

- Focus on key words in exam questions. In some subjects key words are **bolded** e.g., Level 2 Classical Studies 2015 external: “examine an episode(s) where conflict arose because of differences in **beliefs and/or traditions**”, in other subjects students will have to identify the key words themselves
- Use these words in their answers – this shows the marker they are answering the question

Teachers should:

- Model identifying key words
- Give students plenty of practice at identifying key words on their own and using them in their writing

Reading Under Pressure

What types of texts will your students be required to read in the externals?

What skills will they need to help them understand what they read?

Reading Under Pressure

What reading skills will your students need to be successful in the external exams?

- Skimming
- Scanning
- Reading at different speeds
- Close reading (reading for meaning)
- Re-reading
- Reading new and unfamiliar texts

Writing Under Pressure

What types of writing will your students be required to do in the externals?

What skills will they need to help them write successfully?

Writing Under Pressure

What writing skills will your students need to be successful in the external exams?

- summarise
- write in their own words (not paraphrase)
- use subject specific vocabulary
- write bullet points
- write in complete sentences
- structure an argument
- be concise (to the point)
- use evidence in their answers

What Does 'Study' Mean?

We need to **explicitly** teach our students what to do when they 'study' in their own time, away from school.

What do you want students to do in your subject to prepare for externals?

Revision Tutorials

Consider offering a tutorial programme across the three levels in your subject area. These can:

- Be shared by teachers in your dept (share the workload)
- Be delivered once a week in Term 4, at lunchtime or after school
- Cover material for each external exam
- Be advertised in advance to students and families

Exam Techniques

- Time management
- Preparing in the weeks and days before the exam
- On the day of the exam
- In the exam room
- After the exam

Time Management

1. Help your students to prepare a study timetable. This should have all their commitments scheduled in, such as school, family time, sports, church, job...
2. Check their study timetable – have they blocked out enough time for studying all subjects?
3. Subject/s the student finds difficult should be allocated more study time.
4. Students should consider spending more time on subjects they DON'T like than on ones they do like, e.g., rank your 5 subjects according to how you feel about them:

History

Accounting

Biology

Maths

Physics

then

reverse

the

order!

Physics

Maths

Biology

Accounting

History

Leading up to the Exam

- Ask teachers for advice on what and how to study the material for my subjects.
- Stick to a planned study timetable with all commitments scheduled
- Have a quiet place at home where I can work, away from distractions like family, friends, technology...
- Study in chunks of time – 1 hour blocks.
- Take breaks – 10 mins for each 1 hour of study.
- Think about food and drink – if you have these in your breaks or while you work.
- Limit socialising and time on devices – plan to use social media or phone friends in study breaks.
- If you have an after school job you may need to cut down your hours/take time off during the weeks of the exams. It's only for a short period of time – study needs to come first.
- Use studyit.org.nz for study and exam advice and support from tutors in subject areas like English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Science and Earth and Space Science. This is a free service for NCEA students.

On the day of the Exam

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Have a decent breakfast.
- Arrive at school at the correct time for my exam (morning 9am, afternoon 1.30pm).
- Take my examination entry slip – with my name and NSN details on.
- Have my equipment ready – including spare pens, calculator if needed, ruler etc, in a clear plastic bag.
- Go to the bathroom before entering the exam room.

In the Exam Room

- Ask the supervisor for help if I need it.
- Ask for extra paper if I need it.
- Use my watch to time my answers. Stop when my allocated time for each answer is finished.
- Stay for the whole three hours.
- Write in blue pen only in the exam booklets (do not use twink or pencil).
- Make sure I am comfortable – not cold, not hot, my desk isn't wobbly, go to the bathroom if I need to.
- Don't worry about what other people are doing – concentrate on my own answers.
- Read all instructions on the front cover and inside the booklets before answering each question.
- Use the exam papers to help me – pay attention to the words in **bold** in each question – these are **key** words the examiner wants me to answer
- If I feel unwell, tell the supervisor.

After the Exam

- Don't worry about your answers or spend a lot of time with friends analysing what you did or didn't do.
- Relax!
- Forget about this exam and concentrate on the next one.

Where Your Students can get More Help

For previous external exam questions, exemplar answers and assessment schedules:

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/>

For help with maths, science and English:

<http://www.studyit.org.nz/>

For maths and science subjects:

<https://studypass.com/> and <http://learncoach.co.nz/>

For a range of subjects, content revision:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/levels/z98jmp3>

Contacts

Morgan Rangi

Facilitator

Tel: 09 623 8899 Ext 46419

Mob: 027 807 7956

Email: m.rangi@auckland.ac.nz

Tania Linley-Richardson

Facilitator

Tel: 09 623 8899 Ext 89848

Mob: 021 538848

Email: t.linley-richardson@auckland.ac.nz

Starpath Project: Partnership for Excellence

Faculty of Education

The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142