

Science of Exam

by Adil Farooq Qureshi

This is an anecdote of the exam techniques I experienced during my academic (teaching and study) and professional careers. The addressees are students and teachers assisting their students in preparations. For these experiences, I am indebted to my parents (who happen to be my teachers as well), teachers, friends, companions and most importantly, examiners who relentlessly teach the principles required to pass examinations.

I. Bear in mind, there are two parts to passing the exam, **preparing** for the paper and your **answer** sheet. You get months to prepare, whereas only three hours to attempt the question paper.

These two parts should **mirror** each other i.e., what you have prepared reflects in your answer. **Therefore, always prepare in the manner you want your answer sheet to appear.** Your workings and practice at home should be neat and clean, referenced properly and denoted with currency signs, etc. These may look small things, but their overall impact on presentation and quality of answers is paramount.

As you are under pressure to attempt all questions in time, you would be able to incorporate only those things in your workings to which you are habituated. You might ignore these while preparing, thinking that you'd definitely apply them in the paper. But since you have not practiced them, you wouldn't be able to put them on paper and the resulting presentation would put you at a disadvantage.

Plan your study well ahead of schedule and then stick to your time table no matter what. This will give you the inner satisfaction and confidence that adherence to the schedule would get you on the other side.

II. Attempt your answers **neatly** and **complete** the question paper at all costs. Read the questions carefully, understand the requirement, do rough work for complete answer and then attempt it.



Single cross any word if you want to correct it.

More than 90% of the candidates have prepared the course in such a manner that they may pass the paper, however, the majority cannot even completely attempt all questions because of time mismanagement, which remains an area of concern even at the final level. Therefore, if you just attempt the paper completely, and I am not saying correctly, you would gain an advantage over other candidates missing this mark. To achieve this, practice time management at home under strict conditions. Allocate 1.5 times the minutes of the total marks of the question, plan it properly and attempt quickly. When the allocated time is over, move to the next question immediately. It may be tempting to complete the answer which you know, but if you go over the allocated time slot for that question, that means you are consuming time for other questions, which may earn you higher marks. In the end, if time is saved, go back to the incomplete answers and try to finish them.

III. Try **focusing on the question in hand** only. Practicing one topic at a time is helpful but also attempt whole three hour exam mode mock paper at home or otherwise covering all topics in a time constrained scenario.

One other common pitfall while practicing questions both in arithmetic and theoretical subjects is to write an outline of the answer, compare it with suggested solution and think that you would also have written the same.

**KEEP CALM
AND STUDY
FOR EXAM**

IV. Separate your **answer from workings** and **reference them** properly. Take a simple example, if the question asks: "Calculate profit or loss for the period." The profit or loss for the period figure is the answer whereas profit and loss account makes part of the workings. However, if the requirement is "Prepare profit and loss account for the period," then the whole profit and loss account is your main answer. Rough work must not form part of the answer and complete answer with workings, whether required by the examiner or not, should be neatly written and logically referenced. Do NOT get the referencing wrong.

V. Focus on the **requirement**. Time and again examiners' comment that candidates do not address the requirement of the question properly, including professional levels. This again has to be practiced while preparing for the exams at two levels;

- a. **Question level:** for a scenario based question, before reading the whole narration, read the requirement first of all. This will allow you to focus on relevant paras and sentences while reading it for the first time and save you valuable time.
- b. **Paper level:** before start of preparation, read past papers and examiner comments. This will assist you to focus on what ultimately the examiner requires of you to pass the paper and what type of questions are put forth.

VI. Get rid of the fear and assess the **reason of failure**. After you have not been able to pass a paper, if you cannot assess its specific reason, it would be very difficult to overcome the hurdle and gain confidence in the next attempt. When you have assessed the reason of failure, start your preparation taking into account previous mistakes. Attempt past papers, read examiner comments and compare your practice answers with suggested solutions.

VII. **No selective study/reliance on strengths**. Please note that while studying for the first time, you have the most time

available for each and every detail. If you omit something now thinking that you know this topic already, then the same thought would force you to leave that topic out on first and subsequent revisions leading up to the paper. Net result is that you would not have revised a topic which you may actually be considering your strength or 'favourite' topic. And if that area is tested in the paper, you would not be able to attempt it to your fullest satisfaction which would make you desperate under pressure. Therefore, never leave something out of study on the premise that you know this already or the examiner is not going to test it. When you have covered the course in and out, there will be no 'out of course' question before you. What you need to do in the paper is to logically approach the requirement and tabulate/equate the narrative data where possible.

VIII. Keep **one** and only one book as your **base study text** for the preparation and revision. Refer to other books as needed, identify those topics/concepts/formulae which are not available in your base book and cross reference them. When you are studying/revising the topic from your base book and you reach a point where some other book reference is inserted, refer the other material and then continue onto your study text. This will help you keep your notes concise.

IX. **Revision notes:** Keep in mind the time available for revision during exam days and prepare revision material accordingly. This is important because what you have not revised today you would not be able to attempt the next day. Therefore, prepare revision notes, preferably yourself and practice revising the whole course in the time span which would be available before the actual examination.

X. Suit yourself as far as extent of practicing answers by hand is concerned, according to your skill and capability. However, there is no alternative to **attempting full papers** especially for **theoretical subjects** like law, business management, IT, etc.

EXAMS
SEASON
DO NOT DISTURB

exam.
Please, be nice.

PASS