



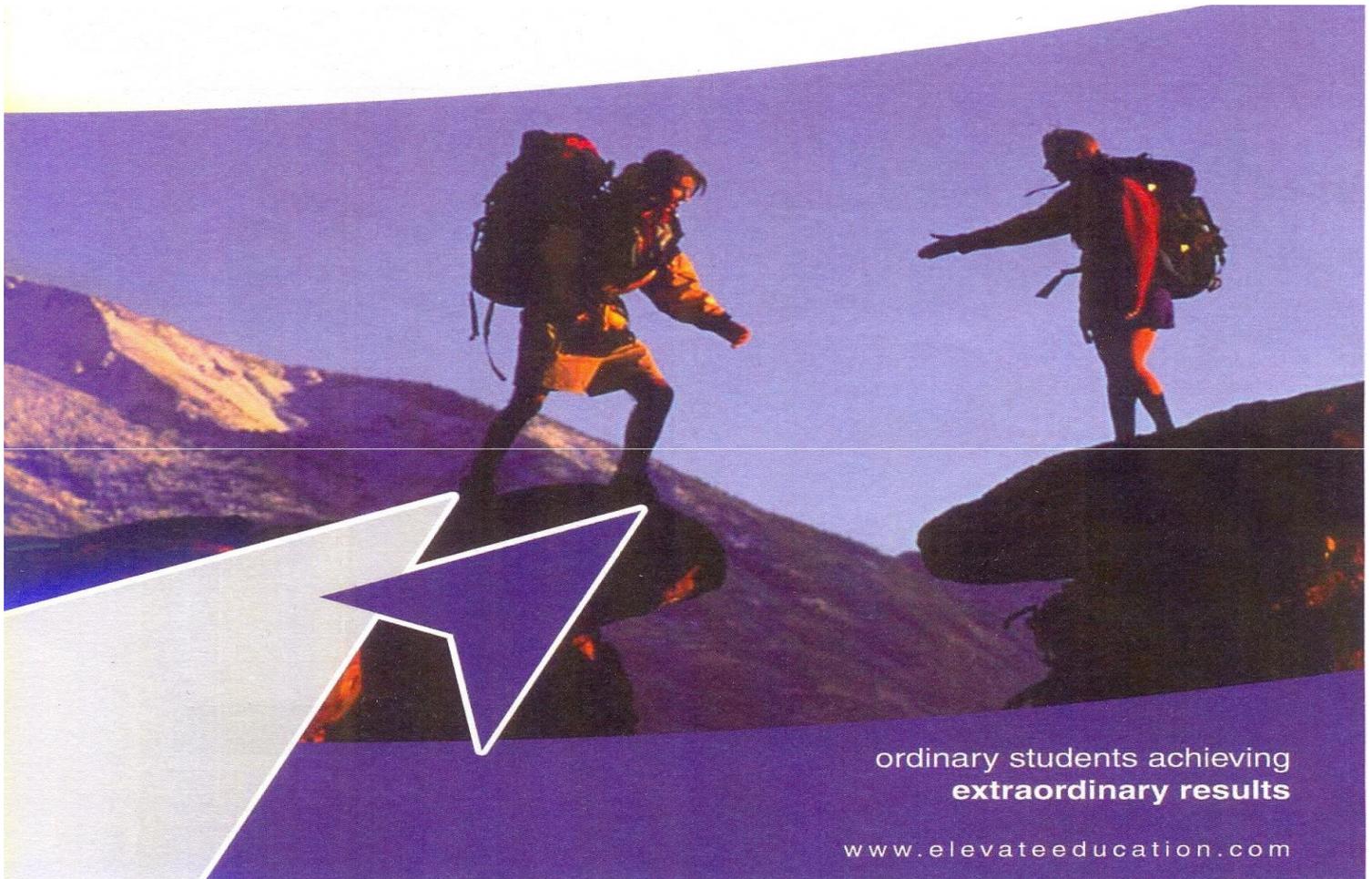
Student exercises based on Elevate Education's Senior School Seminar Programme.

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# Ace Your Exams Implementation Guide

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## Student Workbook



ordinary students achieving  
**extraordinary results**

[www.elevateeducation.com](http://www.elevateeducation.com)

## **Ace Your Exams Student Implementation Guide**

In the recent Elevate seminar ***Ace Your Exams***, we discussed the process and techniques used by the top students in the country to get the top marks. As you probably noticed, none of what we discussed was particularly difficult. Give yourself time to prepare, hunt feedback, do practice papers! None of this is rocket science or requires you to be a genius. There is only one catch - **you need to actually use these techniques!**

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. Changing one or two things may not seem like much, but remember, the tiniest changes can make all the difference.

As you will remember from the seminar, ***Ace Your Exams*** introduced you to 8 techniques of the 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

The key thing to remember is that exams are not just memory tests; what they really test you on is how well you can **use** the information and how well you have prepared. You will get the bulk of your marks before you even walk into the exam room.

All of the skills and techniques in the coming pages were covered in greater detail in the seminar, but they are all set out in the same way.

1) What is the specific skill and why is it so important?

2) What are the benefits of doing it?

3) How do you actually do it?

4) An example of what it might look like and tips for getting it done.

We guarantee that if you start using these techniques as a roadmap for the next few weeks, months, or years you will see a massive 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. Break these marks down by topic area. For example, if you lost 17% in an exam, work out which topics those 17% came from. You might have lost 1% on topic 1, 3% on topic 2 and 13% on topic 3 which will then let you see where you need to spend most of your time revising before your next exam for that subject.

**Activity:** Go through your past papers and circle the questions where you made mistakes. Identify the topics that those questions related to, and then re-do the questions before your next exam.

| <u>Topic</u>                          | <u>Marks lost</u> | <u>Content Area</u>           | <u>Type of question</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Unit 3.1 Foundation Chemistry</u>  | 2                 | Electron arrangement          | Multiple Choice         |
| <u>Unit 3.4 Equilibria</u>            | 4.5               | Temperature and concentration | Short Answer            |
| <u>Unit 3.2 Analytical techniques</u> | 7                 | Spectrometry                  | Extended response       |

## Elevate Exam Post-Mortem

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I achieve my goal?

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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?)*

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Was there something 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?)*

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Where did I lose the majority of my marks? What was the focus of these questions? *(For example, for Maths it might be Discrete Probability, for English it might be creative writing)*

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What did my teacher say I could have improved?

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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 it doesn't happen 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 for seeking feedback we recommend is:

- 1) Where exactly did I lose marks and what did I do incorrectly?
- 2) Why was this not correct?
- 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**

The 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. We've also all been standing outside the exam room in the 5 minutes before we walk in cramming and reading over our notes. Using an exam timeline allows you to work in chunks and manage your time so you are focusing on small, achievable tasks.

An exam planner lets you map out the work you will do in the weeks leading up to your exams. A lot of students think to themselves 'I have 4 weeks before my exams, that is ages!' So they relax for a few days and then 2 weeks later say 'I still have 2 weeks before exams. That is more than enough time'. All of a sudden you start getting stressed and running out of time to get all of the work done.

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.

How do I do this? 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.

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

Start breaking these tasks down into small chunks and fill them into specific days on your exam timeline. There is an exam planner template on Page 10.

**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 past papers without notes

**Day 27:** Finish final past paper.

## **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. While a lot of students are sitting up the night before an exam reading and writing notes, the top performing students have finished their notes much earlier (often during the term) and have dedicated the majority of their revision time to doing practice questions and getting feedback. 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 the more questions you do start weaning yourself off your notes. You might do the first few with your book open and un-timed, the next few you might do to time but with your notes still open and the last few you should complete under exam conditions. The more practice you do the more familiar you will get with the style of questions and you will find you no longer need your notes next to you to answer them.

**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

The first challenge is preparing and learning the content for an exam. The next step is putting that information onto a page in the exam in a way that will get you marks. If you have ever run out of time in an exam it is either because you didn't plan out your time effectively or you tried to write down too much information! One of the best ways to work out how long to spend on each question in an exam is to use a simple formula in your reading time:

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

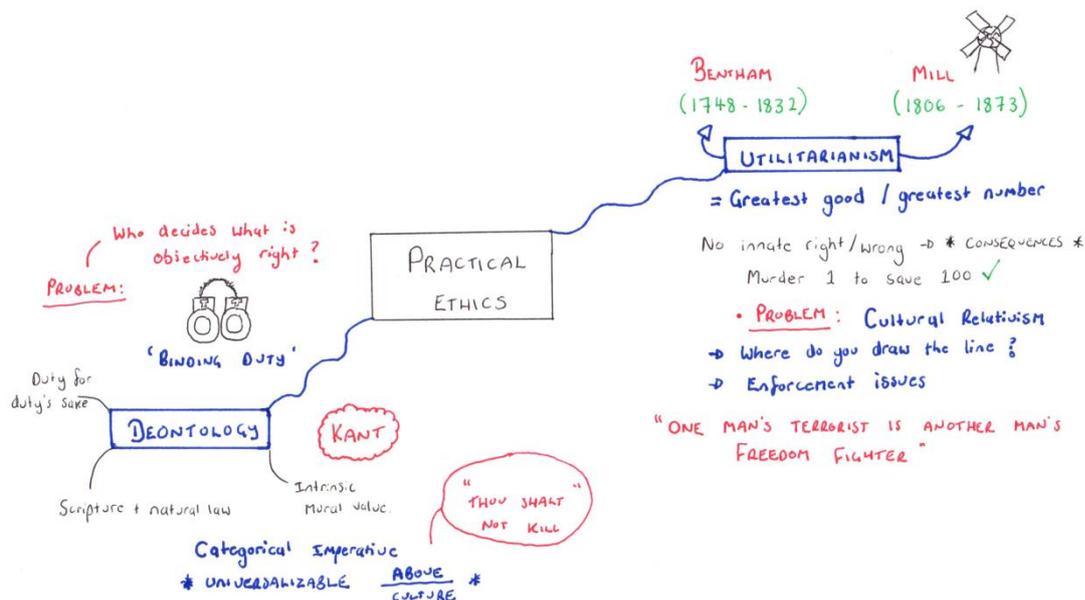
8 mark question = minutes

10 mark question = minutes

18 mark question = minutes

### Step 2: Consider all answers

Every student sits there at the start of an exam and thinks 'I should plan my answer out'. As soon as you are allowed to start writing you realise that everyone is writing as quickly as they can so you start writing too. Don't worry about them! Instead, 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.



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 write down your key definitions, quotes, formulas and vocabulary for languages. As you are doing the exam keep flicking back to this first page and use it like a contents page crossing things off when you have used them.

This way you are more likely to remember the content because you are writing it down straight away. It separates the process of 'remembering information' (the plan) and 'using information' (the answer) which lets you spend the next 1 hour and 55 minutes using that information to gain marks. It also means you are not simultaneously trying to remember everything and construct an answer. Finally it allows you to see linkage and structure your response.

**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 (and do practice papers with these notes next to you) 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.



### **Overview and checklist**

Your goal should be to implement each of the actions over the 1-3 weeks after your seminar. 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 [www.elevateeducation.com](http://www.elevateeducation.com) for free resources such as practice questions, presenter tips and video interviews.

