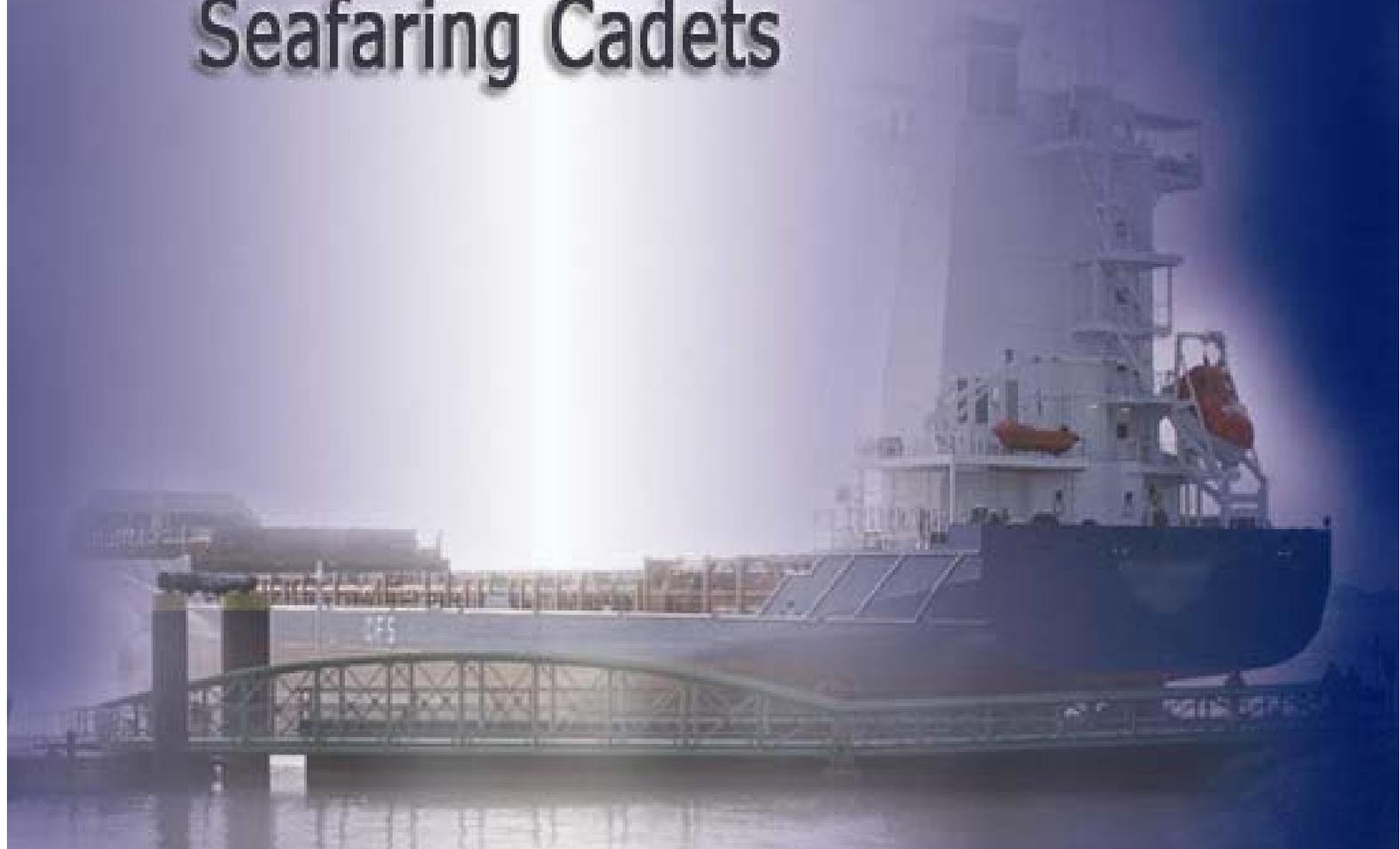




Examination Techniques for Seafaring Cadets



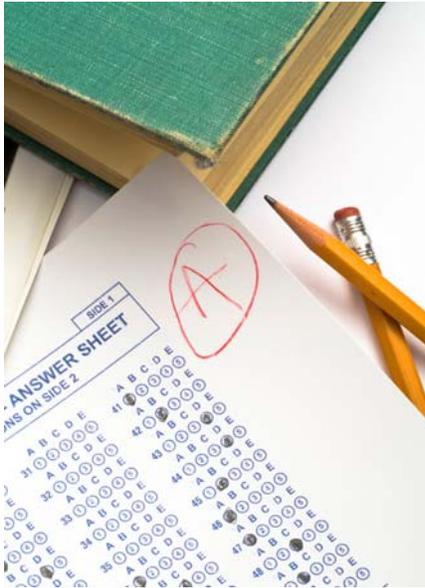
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INTRODUCTION

Examination Techniques for Seafaring Cadets



Your exams are structured to assess competence based on the requirements of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention 1978 as amended.

While many persons are apprehensive at this time, exams must not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge you

have acquired and one step towards self-improvement.

Exams are a regular and normal part of school and are one method used for assessing your knowledge and competence, so rather than fear them you should embrace them. If you begin with this positive attitude then you are one step towards success!



A good way to start is to know yourself. Know what works for you and what does not. How have you approached exams in the past? What have you found to be your best practice in terms of understanding material and doing exams? What methods have proved to give you a high success level and which have not? Identify your strengths and work to improve them. Identify your weaknesses and work to eliminate them.

BEFORE THE EXAM

Preparation

- Attend all your lectures remain awake and alert. Engage the lecturer by active participation in class. Do all your coursework and read widely. Do additional work on your own.
- Make use of lecturers' office hours to clarify issues that you may not have fully grasped in class.
- Make maximum use of technology. Many websites exist that offer answers to the questions you have. However ensure you do not become a slave to these and you must understand the subject area rather than try to memorize model answers!
- Ask your classmates or other lectures for assistance.



The idea is that you try to really understand the material. If you get a good grasp of the ideas and issues involved, then the exam should not cause any problems for you. The idea is to UNDERSTAND the material so you can APPLY the information to answer any question asked.

- Make sure you know the format of the exam before hand. What percentage of your total grade does the particular exam represents. How many questions to answer in what

time. What is the nature of the exam, is it calculations, written or a combination? Is it multiple choice and short answers, or essays, or is it a combination? Are there compulsory questions, how many of these?

When you are clear on the format of your examination, you will be more comfortable as to what to expect. This will be one less source of anxiety. However, MOST IMPORTANTLY you can practice. While you should know the material, you also have to have an approach, a strategy, and knowing how your exam is formatted will assist in formulating your strategy.

- **PRACTISE!** As a regular part of your preparation, long before the exam is due, use past papers from the CMI and/or the MAJ and practice. Go back to past course work and tests and re-work problems, regardless of whether or not you got a good grade. **NOTE however that**

YOU MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THE PARTICULAR QUESTION AND NOT TRY TO FIT AN ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

while model answers may be used as a guide, do not depend on these or you run the risk of limiting your thinking and flexibility. The idea is to remain open-minded and allow your

thinking process to flow. In the event that there is a variation in the question you may apply your knowledge without restrictions.

- **REVISE!** It is important that you begin your revision early. This is separate from what revision your



lecturer may do. Go through all the practice material that you have worked on, all the notes from the lectures and additional notes from your own research and reading.

**THE NIGHT
BEFORE THE
EXAM IS TOO
LATE**

This is the last opportunity to clarify points and come to a full

understanding of what is required. Make notes of what is not clear. Make notes of questions that arise during this process. Seek clarification well ahead of time!



DURING THE EXAM

- Have a relaxing night before the exam. Go to bed ontime, have a healthy breakfast, if possible. However ensure you do not go to the exam hungry!
- **Be ontime!** If at all possible do not discuss material outside the exam door. This is a time to remain calm. Relax! Think of something that makes you happy. Do some deep breathing! Laugh!
- Ensure you have all the materials that you need. Extra pens and pencils are usually advisable. When you hear the word BEGIN! Do not start writing immediately.

Even though you are aware (from your preparations) of how many questions and what is required, STILL READ THE INSTRUCTIONS.

Take at least 10 minutes to go through the paper.

- Note how many questions, note the marks allotted. Use this time to also select the ones you will attempt (if there are choices). While you are going through ideas, will come to you, jot these down.
- **Analyze the questions carefully. What are the requirements (list; evaluate; list 10 and elaborate on 4; calculate; with the aid of a diagram, explain; describe; what is the function of versus define etc.)**
- **How many sections are there in the question?**
- **NOTE WHAT IS REQUIRED OF EACH QUESTION SO YOU CAN ALLOT ADEQUATE TIME (this should be easy as you would have done so in practice).**
- **Leave at least 15 to 20 minutes at the end to look over. Requirements such as numbering pages, putting ID number on all pages, ensuring all answer sheets are put together in the required order and so on should also be done in this time.**
- Show all possible steps when doing calculations.
- If in doubt give full information, better to give too much than too little.
- If more than one scenario exists, and the question does not specify, make reference to them, and elaborate on one or two. HOWEVER:-

Whether it is essay, short answers, calculation or orals, do not leave out critical or what you believe is obvious information. Respond as if the person conducting the exam or the person who will mark the exam does not know the topic.

It is a delicate balancing act that you be concise, yet thorough, comprehensive in your responses, while only using relevant information.

That is why constant revision and practice well before exams are critical!

- You must ensure that you write only what is relevant. Keep referring to the question and ensure your response remain within the parameters requested.
- Ensure you know your key concepts. Definitions of these and how to spell them.

Answering Essay Questions

Read through the questions. Some persons recommend you begin with the easiest questions as this helps to reduce anxiety if you start with something you can handle. Also begin with those that carry most marks so if you run out of time and have to rush your answer it would be best if the question is not worth too much.

As you read through make short notes of important ideas that may come to you. Read instructions carefully and completely. Underline key words that identify exactly what information you are to provide in your answer and the format in which you are required to present your response.

You should make a simple logical outline (a plan) in bullet points. This will ensure that the essay is well organized and you have not inadvertently missed out important information. In writing you make constant reference to the outline. This will ensure you stick to what is required and not leave out the key points.

- Be detailed but concise.
- Don't ignore any part of a question.

You must thoroughly present your responses. Many candidates lose points by giving short and/or incomplete answers.

WHAT THE EXAMINER LOOKS FOR

- The fact that you have done what is required.
- You have not left any questions or parts of questions unanswered.
- Evidence that you have applied what you have learnt (whether in class or on your own).
- You have given well-structured and coherent answers.
- Work is neat and clearly presented.
- Handwriting is legible (if you have problems with handwriting, you should practice to make it as clear as possible. It also helps if you are well prepared so you don't have to write quickly).



AFTER THE EXAM

No post-mortems. What is done is done. It makes no sense getting frantic about what you could have and should have written. Relax, put it behind you and prepare for the next one.



GLOSSARY OF INSTRUCTION WORDS

Below is a list of instruction words that may guide you in how to respond to questions. **The list is not exhaustive. Look up those that are relevant to you, if they are not here and establish what they require.**

Account for - Answer the question "Why?" (you may need to answer where? when? and what? along the way). Show how the situation came about. Summarise how things are and give evidence to explain why they are so.

Analyse - Consider something carefully and in detail in order to understand or explain it.

Argue - Persuade by showing evidence that something is true, or the course of action which should be taken. Give reasons why something should or should not be done.

Comment on - Don't just describe it! Offer your own opinion on the issue. Remember to make it clear what you are offering your opinion on. You could offer other opinions and compare them.

Compare - Identify similarities. Concentrate on the similarities and list as many as you can. It is worth including something on the differences - If the wording is "compare and contrast" you will have to place equal emphasis on the similarities and differences.

Contrast - Identify differences. Deliberately single out and emphasise the differences between two or more things.

Criticise - Make decisions. Analyse and make a judgment. Referring to the opinions of other people (particularly acknowledged experts) is useful when supporting your judgment. When offering criticism, always try to include constructive suggestions as to how any problems could be overcome.

Define - Give a very short answer to the question "What is it?" Give a precise statement (or mathematical equation or model) to provide a short, unambiguous explanation of the meaning or purpose of a term, a concept, an object or a word. A definition should only contain essential information, no details necessary.

Describe - What is it? How does it work? Within the word or time limit available give a detailed account of the subject. Give an overview and make it as clear as possible.

Discuss - Debate advantages and disadvantages. List pros and cons. Argue the merits of different points of view about something. Don't just explain or describe.

Enumerate- Specify items. Mention one by one (list). Establish the number of steps, or items relevant to a particular situation.

Evaluate - How valid is it? How good is it? How well does something work? What are the limitations. Come to a conclusion after analysing the evidence. Give your opinion, quote supporting evidence. Give arguments against your opinion and your view of their validity.

Explain - Answer the question "How?". What is the principle? You may also need to answer the question "why?" and/or "where?" and "when?" as part of your description of "how?".

How far – To what extent? Up to what point? It's usually best not to be 100% in agreement or disagreement, nor to be in the middle: show you're aware of different, opposing opinions, but come down clearly on one side in your argument.

Identify – List and describe.

Illustrate - Show what something is like. Give some clear examples. In many subjects use diagrams and graphs to help.

Interpret - What does it mean? Explain what something means and give your opinion. Make sense of it. Pull the threads together. Come to a conclusion.

Justify - Give solid evidence for. Go on to a conclusion and support it with facts and figures. Maybe also give evidence against opposite interpretations.

Outline - Draw "the big picture". Give an overview of the main factors or the most important ideas.

Prove - Show that..... Support with facts, figures, evidence, or examples. Give references.

Relate - Tell the "story" of OR show how things are connected, how they affect each other.

Review - Make a survey of, examining the subject in a critical way

State - Put it "in a nutshell". Present in a short, clear sentence or two. This could be followed by justification if the question requires support of your statement.

Solve – Come up with a solution based on given facts of your knowledge.

Summarize - Give a short account of the main conclusions or ideas. Don't introduce any new ideas.

To what extent – How far? Up to what point? It's usually best not to be 100% in agreement or disagreement, nor to be in the middle: show you're aware of different, opposing opinions, but come down clearly on one side in your argument.

Trace - "How did it come about?" Give a short description of the order in which events happened. Comment on the causes and effects.

Resources

In addition to your lecturers, friends, library books, text books, the internet etc., you may make use of the following persons:

Mr. Royland Brooks (DECK), MAJ (Tel see inside back cover)
Mr. Marcus Blake (ENGINE), MAJ

YES YOU CAN!!

With discipline comes freedom



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