

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Form \_\_\_\_\_

# Beaumont School

Year 11

Examination Preparation Pack



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

## Revision Advice – Top Ten Tips for Revision Success

1. **Start early:** It is true that it is never too late to start revising. You should already be well underway with your revision timetable, but if you aren't then start now and whatever you do don't leave revision to the night before. After Leavers Day, aim for revising for at least 6 hours on days when you do not have an exam.
2. **Revision timetable:** This is very important and will help you manage your time in a way that leads to effective revision and exam success without getting stressed.
3. **Revision environment:** Find a good place to work where you won't be easily distracted. Revising in front of the T.V. or in the garden will not help you concentrate, so work somewhere which is quiet and uncluttered. The best place is sitting at a well lit desk or table, certainly not lying on your bed with the curtains shut and your books propped up by a pillow! Turn your mobile off during revision sessions to avoid the distraction of texting.
4. **Break your revision up into small sessions:** Most people revise best by working for about 30 minutes and then taking a short 5 minute break. Be strict with the length of your breaks – perhaps just make a drink and grab a snack, have a stretch or send a quick text. Aim to work like this for about two hours (four 30 minute sessions) before taking a longer break. You may find it helpful to change from one subject to another at 'break' time, for example doing one or two sessions of Maths and then changing to Geography, or alternating a favourite subject with a more difficult one. It helps to build in some variety.
5. **Be clear what you need to revise:** Make sure you are absolutely clear what you need to revise for each exam and if you don't know then ask your teacher. Many subjects have published revision checklists or provided a copy of the exam syllabus. Use these to ensure you revise the right topics.
6. **Revision materials:** Be careful with revision guides that are published to buy in book shops. They try to cover all bits of a GCSE in that subject. Some subjects have given or sold revision guides to you so make sure you use these.
7. **Revision technique:** Make your revision **ACTIVE** or **INTERACTIVE** rather than passive. Passive revision is just simply reading your notes or copying them. While this is better than nothing research shows that you will remember more if revision is active or interactive. **Get help:** If you don't understand something even after you have looked it up in your notes and read the textbook, then ask a friend or contact your teacher to explain things to you.
8. **Keep healthy:** Make sure you stay energised during your revision timetable by drinking lots of water and eating well. The best start you can give yourself on a long day of revision and/or exams is a good breakfast, so don't skip it! One of the most effective ways to release stress and boost energy levels is to do some exercise – why not go for a run, take a swim or go for a ride on your bike? Lastly, make sure you get to bed early throughout the exam period.
9. **Stay calm and focussed:** If you panic you won't revise well or perform to your best in the exams. There will be times when you think that you're never going to be able to remember all your revision notes but you will if you work hard and stay calm. The exams are going to happen so you might as well give yourself the best chance of doing well by starting to revise early and keeping calm.

## Revision Planners and Timetables

You should complete and use two types of revision timetables. Stick both your revision planners somewhere 'public' in the house such as on the fridge or on the kitchen door. This way your parents can help you follow the timetable and perhaps reward your hard work! Tick off each part of the short and long term planners as you go to give you a sense of achievement and to mark your progress towards that 10 week holiday!

### (i) long term monthly planner (PDF)

- The best starting point is to mark the dates and times of all of your exams on the long term monthly planning timetables so you can see the timing and pattern of your exams.
- Then fill in any regular commitments or events you have coming up e.g. birthdays, sports events, youth club.
- Next, write in what subjects you will revise on each day bearing in mind the timing of your exams. It is recommended to revise two or three different subjects each day to stop you getting bored!
- Make sure you cover all topics and think carefully about the amount of time you need to devote to each subject depending on how easy you find the work and how much the exam is worth towards your final grade.

### (ii) short term weekly planner (PDF)

- After completing the long term planner, think in more detail about the next week. Write the specific topics/units from the subjects you will revise on each day.
- Aim to revise for at least 6 hours a day on days when you don't have any exams.
- Remember it is best to structure your revision into 2 hour blocks and then revise for 20-30 minutes sessions split up by short 5 minute breaks. In your breaks have a drink or send a quick text. For most people this helps your memory recall information. At the start of each 20-30 session quickly review or 'go over' what you learnt in the last session as this also helps to increase recall.
- Try to plan most of your revision for the morning and early afternoon when you are fresh and alert and then do something relaxing in the evening.
- Write onto the weekly planner the fun things you are going to do like meeting up with friends. This will give you something to look forward to when you're hard at work

## Active Revision Techniques

Active revision involves you actually doing something with the information you are trying to learn and not just sitting there staring at a revision guide or textbook.

Remember, people revise best in different ways. In other words, the most effective revision technique is a **personal thing** so choose what works well for you so long as it is an active technique. Here are some ideas of active revision techniques:

- Make **bullet point notes** in your own words from your exercise book, textbook and/or revision guide.
- Condense your revision notes onto **small index cards** or blank postcards with just the key facts and key words.
- Draw **spider diagrams and memory maps** with small pictures, symbols and key words. This is particularly effective for visual learners and helps to show how concepts are linked together.
- Use **colours and highlighters** to emphasise important parts of your notes.
- Write **keywords or concepts on post it notes** and stick them all over the house so you can challenge yourself as you walk around (the back of the toilet door is an old favourite so you can revise on the loo!).
- Use **mnemonics, rhymes** or even **songs** to help you remember things.
- **Practice** doing past **exam papers** which your teacher has given you. Then use the mark scheme or your textbook/notes to mark your answers.
- Ask a friend or parent to **test you** by asking you questions using a revision guide, textbook or your own notes.
- Record your revision notes onto your **iPod** and then play them walking down the street or during your paper round!
- Use one of the **websites** recommended to you by your teacher but don't just surf the web looking for revision websites because you will get distracted and the site might not be suitable for the GCSE course you did.

## Tips from Examiners

For no-nonsense, practical revision help, read these Top 10 Tips from some of Edexcel's 15,000 examiners:

1. If you find that reading over revision notes just before an exam relaxes you, feel free to do so, but be aware that in most cases it could make you more nervous; any new information is not normally absorbed at this stage.
2. On the day of the exam, when you are told to turn the paper over, don't start writing until you have read the exam paper from cover to cover.
3. Mark the topics you wish to answer and concentrate on them. You should have an idea of how much time you are going to spend on each question, with the ones carrying the most marks being allocated the most time.
4. Remember that the exams are not set to trip you up, but are designed to allow you to show your knowledge of the syllabus. Be positive and have confidence in your ability.
5. Take time to consider the question. Look at where the marks are to be gained and allocate time appropriately (and stick to it). Many candidates spend too much time earning and re-earning small numbers of marks, thereby losing time for the heavier-tariff tasks. Remember, answering three questions fairly well is better than answering one very well and leaving two badly done. Underlining key words in the question may help to focus your mind and jog your memory.
6. Structure your answers by making an answer plan; writing this down will help.
7. Don't forget to refer back to the question to help ensure that you answer the question asked. The examiner can't give you marks for your knowledge and understanding of a topic if you don't answer the specific question properly. Make sure you don't answer the question you wish you'd been asked rather than the question in front of you! Try to read your answer through before moving on to the next question.
8. Concentrate on your punctuation, spelling and grammar. Remember that, while you will not be marked down for bad handwriting, if the examiner cannot read what you have written, then they can't give you the marks you deserve.
9. Try to relax, and keep an eye on the clock without checking it every five minutes. You need to leave time to complete each question and to read through your answers before the end of the exam.
10. Once you have finished the exam, don't worry about it and try to avoid comparing your answers with other students. Now the examiners' hard work begins

## The Top 10 Tips from one group of concerned parents to the next:

1. A dedicated quiet space with good natural light or lighting is best for studying, with no distractions. If you have other children who are not studying for exams, make sure that they know the importance of revision time.
2. Ensure that your son or daughter has one evening a week away from their studies. It's also important that they take regular breaks during the study periods.
3. Be around as a 'feeding station' – feed your child lots of healthy food and proper meals - not too many sugary snacks and junk food.
4. Offer to help with testing or ask if there is something that you can do for them. Reassure them you are concerned about their welfare more than the results.
5. Know your son or daughter's revision timetable. Encourage them to tell you about what they are studying. If you know that they are not at their best first thing in the morning, encourage them to rest then and work when they are more lively. They should choose their weakest/sleepiest time of day to be sociable and go out, or watch TV at those times.
6. Know exactly the date, time and location for each exam and incorporate this into the revision plan. Make sure that they have the correct equipment they need for the exam (calculators, rulers etc). Know what they are not allowed to take in to the exam (mobile phones, pagers etc).
7. If your son or daughter has a medical condition, for example diabetes or hayfever, make sure that the school knows about it. There are special considerations for some conditions.
8. If there is a family crisis, for example divorce or bereavement, again ensure that your son or daughter's teacher knows about it, since the additional stress can affect your child's exam performance.
9. Make sure that your child is using the internet to study and not as a resource to give the appearance of study!
10. Tell them that they can only try their best and even if they don't do as well as you'd hoped, you still love them just as much.



## Tips from students

For down-to-earth, hands-on revision help, read these Top 10 Tips from students who have been through what you're going through now:

1. Create a revision timetable with sensible work slots and breaks and then show it to your parents to get their agreement. Keep to this timetable! Then when your parent finds you 'not working', provided you are following your agreed timetable, no-one is going to hassle you. Parents only hassle and worry when they are not sure what you are doing, or if you do not seem to have a plan. Organise yourself well and it will help you to fulfil your potential. If you have not prepared a revision planner yet, it is not too late to start.
2. Know where your exams are and when they start, how long they are, what equipment you are allowed to take in (for example calculators) and what you are not allowed to take in (mobiles, notes, etc).
3. Make sure you have one weekend day when you don't do revision or think about exams - you'll come back to it refreshed.
4. Tell your family about your revision time - and ask them for help if you need it - it may help make them feel useful to you!
5. Keep bullet points on crib cards highlighting main subject theories. Use these for quick revision and for reading during 'dead' times - eg when you're waiting for a bus. Use mnemonics - using initials of a word helps your memory.
6. Some people revise well by listening, so you could try 'talking' your revision and recording it onto your iPod or onto tapes. Listen to these while lying in bed, while travelling in a car, or walking to the shops.
7. Ensure you eat and sleep properly. Now is not the time to diet or stay up all night. Have an early night before each exam.
8. Prepare items needed for the exam the evening before. Make sure you have the correct equipment needed for your exam (calculators, rulers, etc). Your exam invigilator should remind you of what you are and aren't allowed before the exam starts. Taking unauthorised equipment in can get you disqualified from the exam.
9. Look after yourself during the exam period (a good routine and healthy eating!). Be sure to cut down on your weekend/evening job; most employers know that you need to commit time to the exams and revision, but often try to get you to do extra hours anyway!
10. On the morning of the exam, have a good breakfast, stay calm and allow plenty of time to get to the exam. Remember that you can only do your best and even if you don't do as well as you'd hoped, your parents still love you just as much!

## Exam Technique – Top Ten Tips for Exam Success

1. Organise yourself the night before and get plenty of sleep.
2. Eat a good breakfast to energise yourself for the exam. A good breakfast would be some non-sugary cereal, toast and some fruit juice.
3. Check you have the correct equipment with you before you leave the house e.g. black or blue pens, pencils, rubber, ruler, scientific calculator etc. Your equipment should be in a clear pencil case or small clear plastic bag.
4. Take a watch or clock so that you can time your answers and don't have to rely on looking up at the clock in the exam hall.
5. Leave for the exam in plenty of time so that you are not flustered when you arrive.
6. Remember - do not bring your mobile phone to school. If you do bring it with you, you must hand it in to the exam invigilators before the exam starts. Failure to follow this instruction could mean all of your exam marks are canceled.
7. Read the question carefully and focus on the command words (e.g. describe, explain, calculate, compare).
8. Use the number of marks available for the question as a guide to the length of time to spend on the question and the detail needed in your answer.
9. Manage your time effectively so that you finish the exam with just enough time to check your answers. If you have time to spare, double check what you've put and add extra detail to your answers. Picking up just one extra mark could make the difference between two grades.
10. Stay positive! If you get really stuck with a question then leave it and come back to it later. You will often find that once you've got some other easier questions under your belt and built up your confidence then the answer to the difficult question will come to you! Remember – never panic and stay calm



"It's time we face reality, my friends. ...  
We're not exactly rocket scientists."

## Long Term Revision Planning

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Form \_\_\_\_\_

### January / February 2009

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday               |
|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|----------------------|
|        |         |           | 15       | 16     | 17       | 18                   |
| 19     | 20      | 21        | 22       | 23     | 24       | 25                   |
| 26     | 27      | 28        | 29       | 30     | 31       | <b>February</b><br>1 |
| 2      | 3       | 4         | 5        | 6      | 7        | 8                    |
| 9      | 10      | 11        | 12       | 13     | 14       | 15                   |
| 16     | 17      | 18        | 19       | 20     | 21       | 22                   |
| 23     | 24      | 25        | 26       | 27     | 28       | <b>March</b><br>1    |

### March / April 2009

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday         | Thursday | Friday                                    | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|---------|-------------------|----------|---|----------|--------|
| 2      | 3       | 4                 | 5        | 6   | 7        | 8      |
| 9      | 10      | 11                | 12       | 13  | 14       | 15     |
| 16     | 17      | 18                | 19       | 20  | 21       | 22     |
| 23     | 24      | 25                | 26       | 27  | 28       | 29     |
| 30     | 31      | <b>April</b><br>1 | 2        | 3<br><b>Break up</b><br><b>for Easter</b> | 4        | 5      |

### April/May

| Monday            | Tuesday                              | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday          | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------|
| <b>April</b><br>6 | 7                                    | 8         | 9        | 10              | 11       | 12     |
| 13                | 14                                   | 15        | 16       | 17              | 18       | 19     |
| 20                | 21                                   | 22        | 23       | 24              | 25       | 26     |
| 27                | 28                                   | 29        | 30       | <b>May</b><br>1 | 2        | 3      |
| 4                 | 15                                   | 6         | 7        | 8               | 9        | 10     |
| 11                | 12<br><b>Written<br/>GCSEs start</b> | 13        | 14       | 15              | 16       | 17     |
| 18                | 19                                   | 20        | 21       | 22              | 23       | 24     |
| 25                | 26                                   | 27        | 28       | 29              | 30       | 31     |

### June / July

| Monday           | Tuesday | Wednesday        | Thursday | Friday    | Saturday | Sunday |
|------------------|---------|------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------|
| <b>June</b><br>1 | 2       | 3                | 4        | 5         | 6        | 7      |
| 8                | 9       | 10               | 11       | 12        | 13       | 14     |
| 15               | 16      | 17               | 18       | 19        | 20       | 21     |
| 22               | 23      | 24               | 25       | <b>26</b> | 27       | 28     |
| 29               | 30      | <b>July</b><br>1 | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5      |
| 6                | 7       | 8                | 9        | 10        | 11       | 12     |
| 13               | 14      | 15               | 16       | 17        | 18       |        |
|                  |         |                  |          |           |          |        |

Beaumont School Short Term Revision Plan

| Time  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|-------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 8.00  |        |         |           |
| 8.30  |        |         |           |
| 9.00  |        |         |           |
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| 21.00 |        |         |           |

Beaumont School Short Term Revision Plan

| Time  | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 8.00  |          |        |          |        |
| 8.30  |          |        |          |        |
| 9.00  |          |        |          |        |
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| 19.30 |          |        |          |        |
| 20.00 |          |        |          |        |
| 20.30 |          |        |          |        |
| 21.00 |          |        |          |        |

# Understanding Examination Terms

## **Instructions**

Instruction terms are often used in exam questions.

They tell you what to do with the subject of the question.

The exact meaning of these terms depends on the subject.

The list below shows you what they normally mean.

## **Take care**

Try to understand what an instruction is asking you to do - but be reasonable.

Don't look for problems where they might not exist.

If in doubt, ask your teacher. Print these pages for reference.

## **account for**

Explain the *reasons* for something. This is not the same as 'Give an account of' - which asks for a detailed description.

## **analyse**

Study something in depth - identifying, describing, and criticising in detail its main features.

## **argue**

Put forward an idea, then give an example, discuss what it means, and defend it against possible counter-arguments.

## **assess**

Examine something closely. Consider in a balanced way its strengths and weaknesses. Discuss the points for and against something. Finally, give your clear opinion.

## **calculate**

Reckon or compute something using maths.

## **clarify**

Simplify something and make it clear.

## **comment**

State clearly your opinions on something. Support your views with evidence or explanations.

## **compare**

Look for similarities **and** differences between two or more things.

## **consider**

Express your thoughts and observations about something.

**contrast**

Single out and emphasise the **differences** between two or more things.

**criticise**

Give your judgement about something. Explore what it means, discussing all the evidence which is available.

**define**

Write down the precise meaning of something.

**demonstrate**

Show how something works or operates, and prove it by giving examples.

**describe**

Give a detailed and full account of something.

**develop**

Expand on something, taking it further.

**diagram:**

For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

**distinguish**

Explain the differences between two or more things.

**discuss**

Examine something by careful argument. Explore the advantages or disadvantages. Debate something and possibly consider any other ways of seeing it. This is probably the most common instruction term. It is inviting you to say something interesting in response to the subject. You can choose your own approach.

**elaborate**

Add further details to something.

**enumerate**

Make an ordered list, giving the main features of something - and omitting details.

**evaluate:**

In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations.

**examine**

Enquire into something, investigate, or look closely into it.

**expand**

Go into more detail.

**explain**

Make something clear. Account for it. Clarify, interpret, and spell out a subject, giving reasons for its features.

**explore**

Approach something in a questioning manner, and consider it from a number of viewpoints.

**give an account of**

Describe something in detail, and explain it fully.

**how**

In what way, by what means or method, or to what extent does something happen, exist, or work.

**how far ...**

Similar to questions which begin ' *To what extent...*'. You should discuss the subject, and show any of its strengths or weaknesses.

**identify**

Pick out the main features or the important points of something.

**illustrate**

Make something clear by discussing examples of it, by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

**interpret**

Explain the meaning of something. Make it clear - using your own judgement, experience, or opinion.

**justify**

Show the reasons or the best arguments for something. Answer any objections likely to be made against it.

**list**

Make a list or catalogue of things.

**outline**

Give the main features or the general principles of a subject. You can leave out minor details. Emphasise the structure or arrangement of its parts.

**prove**

Show the truth or falsity of something, by presenting evidence.

**relate**

Show how things are connected. Show how they possibly affect, cause, or resemble each other.

**review**

Make a survey of something. Examine the subject critically.

**show**

Reveal something - in some form of logical sequence.

**state**

Present the main points of a subject - in a brief, clear form.

**summarise**

Give an account of the main points of a subject, leaving out any details and examples.

**to what extent**

Similar to questions which begin '*How far...*'. You are expected to discuss something, and show any of its strengths and weaknesses.

**trace**

Follow the development or history of a subject from some point of origin. Explain stage by stage.

**translate**

Express something in a different way, or convert from one language to another.

**verify**

Show something to be true, or confirm it.

## PEEL your way to exam success



You may very well have been introduced to the idea of PEEL or PEE during your English lessons as a way of ensuring that you give good accurate examination answers.

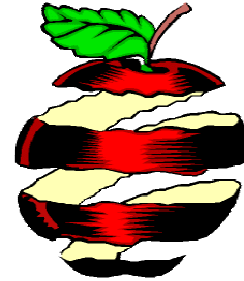
**PEEL** stands for:

P=Point made relating to the question.

E=Evidence that backs up the point made.

E= Explain the evidence that you have given.

L= Link the point, evidence and explanation to the question.



An example from a Geography question may be:

Q. What factors have influenced the location of a manufacturing company you have studied. (6mks)

Read through this answer and indicate which parts of the students answer indicate Point. Evidence .Explanation. Link.

The Toyota Car Company have located their factory at Burnaston near Derby in the East Midlands. The financial assistance of £100 million from the British Government was a big incentive as this helped to reduce the companies training costs, and meant the local area would have reduced unemployment figures. A second factor was the proximity of the site close to the A50 dual carriageway which in turns links with the M1 and M6 enabling components to be brought in and finished products to be shipped to markets in major British cities or abroad. Thirdly Toyota were attracted to build their factory on a level 'greenfield' site i.e. one that was being used for farming and had no clearance or decontamination costs; this provided an straightforward opportunity for construction. The workers at Burnaston also agreed to have just one Union representing them in discussions with the management which Toyota felt would mean fewer cases of industrial action and lost production through strikes. Clearly there was not one but a combination of factors that made Burnaston an attractive place for Toyota to locate their factory.

Now in fours try writing an answer to the following FOUR questions. In your group take it in turns to write P.E.E.L.

Q1. To what extent do you agree that the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympics was fantastic?

Q2. Explain why many adults think Amy Winehouse is a bad example to young people in Britain today.

Q3. Give reasons why Britain has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Europe.

Q4. Do you think that Premiership footballers are overpaid?

Use this template as a guide:

Q1P

E

E

L

Q2P

E

E

L

---

Q3P

E

E

L

Q4P

E

E

L



# General exam questions

**My daughter found her first A level examination difficult and thinks she has done badly. She is worrying about this and can't get on with preparation for her next exam. What can she do?**



Not a lot on the examination she has just taken, but a great deal on the ones she still has to sit. I faced a similar situation myself many years ago and perhaps your daughter can learn from my mistake. I passed the exam that I had just taken, thought I had failed, and failed the next one because of worrying about the one I had just taken. Not a very bright thing to do. I never made that mistake again and thereafter forgot about exams I had taken, concentrating on the ones I still had to take, where I could make a difference and influence the results.

**I ran out of time and didn't finish the paper. Does this matter, if I have done well on the questions I have tackled?**



Well yes it does, depending on how many questions you did do well, and how well you did them. The best general advice is that you should do all the questions required. If you get full marks for half the questions on the paper and that is all you have done, then the maximum marks you can get is 50 per cent. But if you do all the questions then the possible number of marks you could achieve now becomes 100 per cent. You should use the marks beside the questions as a guide to how long you should spend on each one. And move on to the next question when that time is up. You can always go back to a question if you find you have time at the end. But if you do run out of time on your last question on a paper, you could get more marks for doing the question in outline only. If it's an essay, write down the important details and outline your argument – without writing it in the form of an essay – or in science, write down the formulae required with an explanation as to how you would use it – without doing the calculations. Tell the examiner what you have done.

**I always get nervous at the start of the examination when people start writing straight away and I'm still reading the questions. What's the best approach to take in these circumstances?**



Not to copy them, that's for sure. Research has shown that there are 'rushers' and 'planners'. The 'rushers' don't read the paper properly and just start doing questions – often at random – and do the wrong ones, in the sense that if they had taken their time to read the paper, then they would have chosen different questions. Be a planner and get better marks. There is time allowed to read the paper; take that time and map out the questions that you intend to do. Jot notes down on the paper as you read the questions to remind you later on. Start with questions you feel comfortable with to build up your confidence before tackling ones which don't seem quite so straightforward. But when you enter the exam room in the first instance, take six deep breaths to help you settle, ignore all others and have a glucose sweet, if your school will allow this, to send energy to your brain. That way you'll be best placed to tackle these exams. But no crunching or noisy paper which would disturb others.

**Can mobile phones be taken into the exam room, as long as they are switched off?**



Only if you want to be disqualified. The only things allowed in the room are the things you need for the exam. All books and personal belongings, such as mp3 players and the like, or pieces of paper with notes on them, must not be taken into the room. Be sure you stick to the rules and don't be tempted to break any of them. If you're unsure what they are, then check with your teacher.

**I recently sat my English literature AS level in three modules. I revised fairly hard but found the wording of the questions difficult. Why do we have to understand 50 chapters of a novel, and only two of these will come up? I find this unfair. Why are AS/A level questions so vague?**



The exam boards spend a great deal of time and effort to ensure that the questions are clear and unambiguous. I therefore wonder if the difficulty you experienced was down to your own lack of preparation. You say that you revised 'fairly hard', but any revision programme would involve doing past papers. Had you done this then the question format would not have come as a shock to you. It's not a matter of understanding 50 chapters at AS/A level, it's a matter of understanding the subject. That's what the examining boards are testing rather than isolated pieces of information.

**My 15 year-old grandson was asked during his mock GCSE exam to give an opinion about certain religious concepts. His opinion was at variance with that which the teaching staff considered the examiners would wish to see, and he was gently advised accordingly. If the examiner wished to read what a student's summaries are concerning the received wisdom and the conventional views on any given religious issue then that is the way the question should be phrased. But to ask for opinions and then to disallow those opinions as being at odds with the received wisdom and conventional views is another matter altogether. Why are questions phrased in such a way as to seek opinions and then disallow them if they do not meet with the accepted norms?**



They are not. Students can only answer the questions they are asked. They have no idea what the examiner meant to say, but only what he or she did say in the question appearing on the examination paper. So, for example, if an examiner does make a mistake in the way the question is asked, and a student is able to give a simple five-minute answer to a complex 30-minute question – which wasn't anticipated by the examiner – then the examiner has no option but to give the student full marks, as that student has answered the question asked, albeit not in the way anticipated. Marking schemes are

always amended to accept valid alternative answers to those initially anticipated. So there is a simple rule here which is applied as a matter of principle: if the question is answered, then the marks are awarded, and if it is not, then the marks are not awarded. And therefore as long as your grandson's answers are given within the context of the question and he substantiates his answers as required – depending on the wording of the question – then he should be marked accordingly on the basis of how well his answers address the question asked. It is as simple as that.

**I'm dyslexic and I'm worried that this will affect my performance in the examinations. Are there any special arrangements I can apply for?**



Yes there are, but I would be surprised if your school has not already done this on your behalf and informed the exam boards involved. Check with your school to ensure that this has been done and ask what provision has been made for you. Special arrangements (now often referred to as 'access arrangements') are usually given in the form of extra time allowed on papers where your condition would put you at a disadvantage, compared to other candidates.

There are many conditions that qualify for special arrangements to be made, for example blind students can have their exam papers in Braille, and sometimes people are appointed to write down a student's answers when, for example, someone has broken their arm before the exams and is unable to write normally. In all cases, arrangements must be made through the school and appropriate documentation authenticating the condition submitted to the examining boards.

It is worth mentioning that any special arrangements agreed should not give that candidate an unfair advantage over others. The intention is, as far as possible, that all students should have an equal opportunity when sitting their exams, and not be placed at a disadvantage over others because of the means used to examine them.

