



Exam Information, Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

Tough to believe, but it has been years since a formal exam period occurred in our HCDSB secondary schools. To this point, for many students, exams are completely new....and this brief guide is here to help 😊

Basic Information:

- **The Exam period runs from Thursday Jan 26th to Thursday February 2nd.** The 1st is a potential make-up day for an issue like inclement weather. February 2nd is Exam Review Day. Likewise, Exams occur based on the period that the student has the class. For example, a student who has Math in Period 2 will write on Friday January 27th. This is summarized in the chart below.
- On the Exam Review Day, teachers are available from 8:30 a.m. to 12 and then from 1 - 2 p.m. to discuss student exams, but no formal attendance is taken or required.

Thursday January 26th	Friday January 27th	Monday January 30th	Tuesday January 31st	Wednesday February 1st	Thursday February 2nd
Period 1 Classes write Final Exams	Period 2 Classes write Final Exams	Period 3 Classes write Final Exams	Period 4 Classes write Final Exams	Exam Contingency Day	Exam Review Day

- **Exams begin at 8:30 a.m.** Grade 9 and 10 Exams are 1.5 hours. Grade 11 and 12 Exams are 2 hours. Students must arrive on time, but keep in mind that students must remain in the Exam room for a minimum of one hour.
- Students are required to **wear their uniform** to the final exam.
- **Buses run at regular times**; students who wish to leave earlier will need to make alternate arrangements for pick up.
- Please take the time to review the FAQs at the bottom of this document where other questions you might have are answered.

Exam Preparation Steps-to-Success

- ★ **Plan....Plan....Plan:** Behind every successful Exam period is a thoughtful and well-executed plan on how to approach preparation. The first step to this is outlining the final weeks of the term and how a student will prepare. A calendar or schedule can be a useful tool. Students are encouraged to allot adequate time for each course and be specific with what they plan to cover on each day of their plan.

- ★ **Set Goals:** This is part of planning as well, but a part of what causes exam pressure is fear of the unknown or a potential undesired outcome. Part of removing anxiety and fear is preparation and studying, but a vital first part is to **have a goal**. Students should check with their teachers about their mark going into their exam so that they can set realistic goals both for success and potential challenges.

- ★ **Study Smart:** Most students know they need to study, but that looks very different for each student / course. Every student has their own approach to studying, but a few important basics include:
 - Many courses have some form of review sheet. Completing the review sheet is useful and perhaps even fundamental to exam preparation. That said, students should view the review as a starting point, and once completed, should consider placing particular attention on areas they do not know as well. Spending time studying concepts one already knows is not a good use of time.
 - Many exams will focus on key concepts from the year. To this point, students should review previous tests and assignments and look at the major questions and concepts. These concepts are most likely to be repeated on an exam so previous tests or assignments can become a student's best study tools.
 - Where possible, students should practice writing an exam question. For example, they could create a possible essay question and construct a response to it. They will be surprised how useful this exercise can be when it comes to doing this on the exam. Timing themselves during this process is also a useful exercise.

- ★ **Study Hard...The Right Way:** When students “cram” for an exam and try to prepare in the final moments, it can give the illusion that one is prepared because they feel they worked really hard. Keeping in line with the advice above, one does need to study “hard”, but evidence shows that things like lack of sleep are harmful for retention and recall. The same is true for prolonged uninterrupted studying. To this point, students should take breaks and pace out their studying over several days in advance. Studying “hard” means putting in the time and effort, but also doing so in a way that maximizes success.

- ★ **Students Are a Work in Progress...Even When Writing an Exam:** We tend to view writing an exam as an “end” because it is the final part of a course. However, consider that exam writing is a skill that students are working on and developing with

each exam they take. If a student writes an exam and doesn't achieve the desired result, this is a great moment to reflect on what worked / didn't and improve.

Exam Period FAQ

1. If students don't have an exam on an exam day, do they need to attend school that day? Do students need to attend the Exam Review Day?

No. If students do not have an exam on one of the exam days, they are not required to attend and there is no need to call this absence in via School Messenger. With regard to Exam Review day, attendance is optional; no formal attendance is taken and students are free to visit designated classrooms to review final exams.

2. How much will the final exam affect a student's mark?

This largely depends on the student's current mark in the class, exam value and performance. As noted above, **it is highly recommended that students discuss with their teacher about what their current mark is, and what mark they will need on the exam to attain their goals.** Teachers are happy to do this and it can become a vital strategy for exam preparation.

3. Does my child's course have an Exam, Culminating or both?

While this guide is largely focused on the Exam period running in late January, many courses complete Culminating tasks as well; in some cases (like English courses this year), there is no final Exam, but rather a Culminating which occurs in the final weeks leading up to the exam period. **Information on whether your child has an exam should be on the course outline, but if not, checking with teachers is highly encouraged.**

4. Can students bring cellular phones to an Exam?

Students are encouraged to leave mobile devices at home as they are not permitted to be used during exams. Students who bring phones on an exam day will be required to place their phone **in their locker** for the duration of the exam and pick it up after their exam is completed. This also includes smart watches like an Apple Watch.

5. When do students receive their Exam Mark? Final Mark?

Students can review their exams with teachers on February 2nd. Final marks will be released at the beginning of Term 2 and separate information regarding their release will be communicated at a later date.