

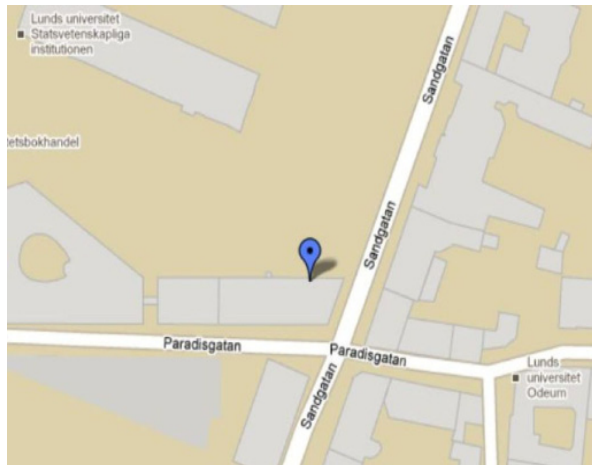
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[www.lunduniversity.lu.se/student-health](http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/student-health)



LUND UNIVERSITY



Student Health Centre

# Frequently asked questions about exam anxiety

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### WHAT IS EXAM ANXIETY?

Strong anxiety before, during and/or after an exam that cannot simply be explained as 'stage fright' or reasonable nerves, which make your senses more alert and help you focus on the task in a constructive manner. Exam anxiety takes many forms and the symptoms vary between individuals. Some students experience a mental block while revising for an exam, while others manage to revise but find that their mind goes blank when they get into the exam hall, so that they are not able to perform their best. Many people feel very unwell and have stomach aches and disturbed sleep.

### WHAT CAUSES EXAM ANXIETY?

The answers to this question could be as numerous as the number of individuals who seek help for the problem, but some themes are recurrent: high demands on oneself, low self-confidence when it comes to studying, a lack of motivation, poor study discipline and study technique, and difficulty concentrating and focusing due to other personal problems. Not feeling that one is seen or not receiving feedback on one's performance may also be factors. Anyone can be affected by exam anxiety.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Review your study habits – where, when and how you study best. Start your exam preparation in time – don't wait until a large part of the course has passed and think you will manage. Get help from friends – revise together, and set reasonable and achievable goals with the aim of strengthening your self-confidence. Don't talk about exams and grades with your coursemates – this often creates even more stress, but have the courage to tell others that you are experiencing exam anxiety; you will discover that you are not the only one who is suffering from the problem. It is important to reduce the drama surrounding exams! Get help from a study advisor or the Study and Language Skills Centre on structuring your studies and study technique, and from the Student Health Centre when you need help with self-esteem, high demands, concentration problems, etc.

### HOW MANY PEOPLE SUFFER FROM EXAM ANXIETY?

A survey in the 1990s showed that around 20 per cent of students at Lund University always or often experienced strong anxiety or dread in connection with exams. There is no reason to believe that the situation is any different today.

### HOW CAN I MANAGE THINKING THAT "I COULD ALWAYS REVISE A BIT MORE", DESPITE TRYING TO RELAX AND DOING SOMETHING ELSE?

This is the student's dilemma, but you can combat it with a sensible study plan where you make sure to separate work and leisure time. It may help to leave home and go and revise in a library or reading room at your department, so that it feels like a working day of independent study. If you can focus and feel efficient when you are revising then it may be easier to allow yourself some time off. If you cannot concentrate for whatever reason or cannot relax despite an efficient 'working day', it could be that you have got into an overly high state of stress and need to seek professional help, for example from the Student Health Service. Taking good care of yourself is also important and this could include yoga, meditation and relaxation training.

### WHAT ARE SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER DURING AN EXAM PERIOD?

Review your lifestyle, i.e. how you eat, sleep and exercise. If these basic aspects of life do not function, it will be difficult to study satisfactorily. So you need enough sleep, regular meals, physical exercise and free time for a few hours before bed to allow the brain to relax from studying. Introduce breaks and simple relaxation exercises, and don't forget to praise/reward yourself when you have done well!

For more information, visit our website:  
[www.lunduniversity.lu.se/student-health](http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/student-health)