

## Good advice for teachers regarding students with exam anxiety

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There is a great deal you can do as a teacher to prevent exam anxiety among students, and deal with it in an exam situation. This can be very significant for the individual examinee's completion of studies.

As a teacher, you can set the scene to make the exam situation a good experience. In relation to students with exam anxiety or nervousness, it is important to create a calm and reassuring atmosphere in the exam room. To do this, you can:

- remain calm, attentive and patient. Your composure as an examiner is likely to influence the examinee in a positive direction.
- begin by setting the scene for what is to happen by briefly explaining the exam process – including your role and that of the co-examiner, as well as providing information about the time available (and make sure to keep to time).
- be aware of maintaining open and calm body language that is friendly and accommodating.
- ask if there is anything the examinee needs or would like to enquire about before the exam starts.
- help the examinee to get started if he or she does not manage to make a start him or herself.
- wait (as far as possible) before asking questions until the examinee has said what he or she can, has prepared, or just 'warmed up to the subject'.
- give the examinee time and leave room for a break (to pause for thought).
- rephrase the questions if necessary.

### In severe cases of exam anxiety/anxiety attacks, you can also:

- give the examinees an opportunity to collect their thoughts if they react strongly to the exam situation. You can encourage the examinee to take deep breaths, for example, go to the window for some fresh air, have a drink of water, or sit down and relax for a moment.
- once the exam is completed or interrupted, ask if there is someone the student can spend time with or call immediately afterwards. Contact the Student Counselling Office or others who can take over if you are insecure about sending the student away.
- encourage the student to contact a doctor if he or she is not already being treated for anxiety.

### During the teaching period

You can do the following in the classroom with a view to preventing exam anxiety or nervousness:

- provide the students with information about the exam requirements and expectations.
- ask about how the upcoming exam affects the students, and what expectations or thoughts they have in relation to both the teaching and the exam.
- refer to relevant academic regulations, rules, and executive orders.
- talk to the students about nervousness and anxiety being a normal and innate reaction that all people experience at some time or another in connection with a performance or exam.
- create a learning environment with a focus on learning, guidance and feedback.
- encourage the students to seek help in good time prior to the exam if they are prone to exam anxiety (e.g. student counselling and guidance).

**Relevant literature for teachers**

- Hvass, H. (ed.) 2015. *Eksamensangst. Et problem vi skal løse i fællesskab* (Exam anxiety. A problem we must solve together). Societal literature.  
A number of chapters in the book have been used as inspiration in this text.
- <http://censorerne.dk/god-censorskik/> (in Danish only)

**Relevant for students**

- The Student Counselling Service has an app called Exam Stress, which is available in both Danish and English. You can download it free in the App Store and at Google Play. Read more at [www.srg.dk/en-GB](http://www.srg.dk/en-GB)
- The Student Counselling Service has a leaflet called *Exam. Take control of exam anxiety – learn how to beat exams and expectations in a new way* (available in Danish only). Read more at [www.srg.dk/en-GB](http://www.srg.dk/en-GB)
- The Student Counselling Service offers individual interviews, group sessions, and events for students taking higher education programmes.  
Contact the Aarhus department at [arh@srg.dk](mailto:arh@srg.dk) or call +45 7026 7500

The above good advice for teachers in both teaching and exam contexts is partly inspired by the book *Eksamensangst. Et problem vi skal løse i fællesskab* (Exam anxiety. A problem we must solve together), Hvass, 2015.

## Guidance and study information at Science and Technology

Students acting as student counsellors each cover several subjects and can help if the student:

- has problems completing the degree programme or would like to organise the course of studies another way.
- would like to change to another degree programme, deregister, or apply for leave from studies.
- becomes ill in connection with the exam.
- has questions regarding the academic regulations, Study Progress Reform, etc.

Student and welfare counsellors (full-time counsellors) can help in connection with:

- study technique, structure, planning, and coping with everyday life.
- study doubts, delay, requests to resume studies.
- stress – prevention and management.
- exam anxiety.
- other problems of a personal nature that affect the studies.

<http://studerende.au.dk/en/studies/subject-portals/student-guidance/>