Stress-Busting Tips for Exams

- **Believe in yourself:** You wouldn't have been given a place on the course if you didn't have the ability to do it. Therefore, if you prepare for the exams properly you should do fine, meaning that there is no need to worry excessively.

- **Know that you cannot be perfect.** It's great to succeed and reach for the stars. But keep things in balance. If you think that "anything less than A+ means I've failed" then you are creating mountains of unnecessary stress for yourself. Aim to do your best but recognise that none of us can be perfect all of the time.

- **Take steps to overcome problems.** If you find you don't understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing your course tutor or getting help from your class mates.

- **Don't keep things bottled up.** Confiding in someone you trust and who will be supportive is a great way of alleviating stress and worry.

- **Keep things in perspective.** The exams might seem like the most crucial thing right now, but in the grander scheme of your whole life they are only a small part.

Tips for the revision period:

- Leave plenty of time to revise so that you don't get into a situation of having to do last minute cramming. This approach will help to boost your confidence and reduce any pre-exam stress as you know you have prepared well.

- Develop a timetable so that you can track and monitor your progress. Make sure you allow time for fun and relaxation so that you avoid burning out.

- As soon as you notice your mind is losing concentration, take a short break. You will then come back to your revision refreshed.

- Experiment with several alternative revision techniques so that revision is more fun and your motivation to study is high.

- Don't drink too much coffee, tea and fizzy drinks; the caffeine will 'hype' you and make your thinking less clear. Eat healthily and regularly; your brain will benefit from the nutrients.

- Regular moderate exercise will boost your energy, clear your mind and reduce any feelings of stress.
- Try out some yoga, tai chi or relaxation techniques. They will help to keep you feeling calm and balanced, improve your concentration levels and help you to sleep better.

Tips for the exam itself:

- Avoid panic. It's natural to feel some exam nerves prior to starting the exam, but getting excessively nervous is counterproductive as you will not be able to think as clearly.
- The quickest and most effective way of eliminating feelings of stress and panic is to close your eyes and take several long, slow deep breaths. Breathing in this way calms your whole nervous system. Simultaneously you could give yourself some mental pep-talk by mentally repeating "I am calm and relaxed" or "I know I will do fine".
- If your mind goes blank, don't panic! Panicking will just make it harder to recall information. Instead, focus on slow, deep breathing for about one minute. If you still can't remember the information then move on to another question and return to this question later.

After the exam:

- Don't spend time criticising yourself for where you think you went wrong. Often our own self-assessment is far too harsh. Congratulate yourself for the things you did right, learn from the bits where you know you could have done better, and then move on.

Seek help if you feel that your exam anxiety is building up to a point where sleep is difficult; your health is suffering; or your relationships with your friends and family are starting to be affected.
Talk to your personal tutor or doctor or make an appointment with the University counselling service. The counselling service is a free service available to all University students.
http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/counselling/