

MYSTERIES FOR SUCCEEDING IN LAW SCHOOL EXAMS: A GUIDE TO LAW SCHOOL OF TANZANIA STUDENTS

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Did you heard how hard to graduate within one year in a First Seating Exams from the Law School of Tanzania once you are admitted? At the Law School, Vision without Executions is just hallucination. Here we Learn not only to answer questions but also to question the-answers.



"Once writing has become your major vice and greatest pleasure only death can stop it.

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After graduating my LL.B, I was informed that the Law School of Tanzania is the most difficult place, so I came up with a **Winning Plan** which indeed helped me to pass all exams. Today, I would like to share with you **Key Academic Winning Rules (KAWR).**

1. **Go to Class on time without failure:** No regular attending classes on time, No miracles of passing in the first seating exams. For those who expect miracles in everything, the law school uses its Legal Scientific Formula Miracles (LSFM) which is **Constant (Discipline + Learning Efforts + prayers) equals to Success Miracles.** *Thus;* **SM = Co (D + LE +P).** Most Instructors cover some materials in class which are not discussed in the readings but based on practice, so failure to attend classes regularly will put you at a big disadvantage when you take your Law School exams, be it ICA, WPE, FE or OPE. As a smart student you should know from your first day that the Law School does not equip students here with deadly legal theories which can be excavated in old law text books. It prepares you to practice in the global legal industries. The School does not make a repetition of the Bachelor Degree of Laws (LL.B) study or Master Degree (LL.M).

2. **Pay attention in class:** Don't sit in the class just only to hear, sit to listen. Hearing is a passive activity that requires only partial awareness of noise with no intent to respond while listening requires more than that; it requires focus. Pay attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body.

   There is nothing so disobedient, as an undisciplined mind, and there is nothing so obedient, as a disciplined mind. Many Law School students, who are misguided use class time to shop on the Internet, chart in Whatsapp, play computer games or catch up on their e-mail. Once you are in the class avoid doing things for fun, the instructors and other experts who teaches you are not here for fun. There is no reference to fun in any of your exams, likewise in any Act of Parliament. Doing this misconduct is to waste your own valuable time and money at the Law School.

3. **Participate effectively in Class:** This is a responding stage where we expect an active Law School student is ready to respond to the speaker. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process. Ask questions for the sake of understanding if you think you did not understand well a particular point. Try as much as you can, for the interest of learning, to attempt all questions when given by the lecturer/instructor during class sessions. Keeping silence while you don't know is the way towards the failure. A smart lawyer always does ask for the sake clarifications, interpretations or proper guidance on a particular point in issue. Think before you ask a question or provide any answer to the asked question (s) and formulate your answer(s) or question(s) before you speak them out. If it is a group work, share effectively your knowledge, skills and experience with other group members.

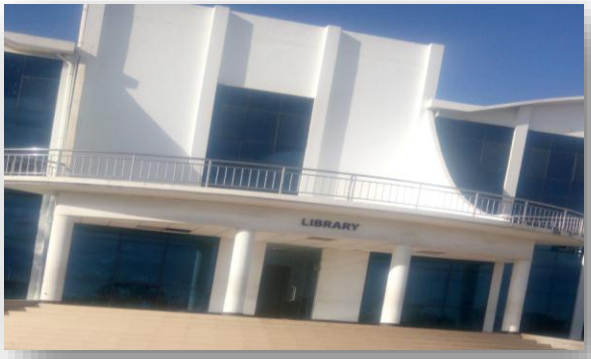
4. **Take class Notes:** Do not sit in the class hopelessly lest you become like a primate wandering aimlessly in the Congo forest. Either do not sleep in the class like a warthog after a night long wallow in the mad. Make note-taking. Use the five R's of note taking which are:- (i) Record only meaningful facts and ideas as you can and write legibly. (ii) Reduce the recorded class facts by making summarization in concisely to reinforce continuity and strengthens your memory. (iii) Recite/Recall, now cover the notes, and say over facts and ideas of the lecture as you can, not mechanically, but in your own words and with much appreciation of the meaning as you can. (iv)Reflect your opinions from their notes. (V) Review, have time in every weak to make a quick review of your notes to make your knowledge more comprehensive.



If you Never write Right Lawyers do write in the class, you Never be Right in Exams. *and draft legally.*

Never record electronically
any voice sound spoken by your instructors during the class sessions at the law school without his express consent.

5. **Do the Reading and Research:** Use your time effectively in reading all the assigned work by your instructor. Make sure you visit all provisions of the law mentioned in the class and read them to understand its interpretation and applicability in the practice. Read books, journal articles and case laws which have been mentioned in the class by your instructor. Visit the law school Library, it is a home full of various materials. In this library, you can have access to reported and unreported cases, books written by International recognized Jurists, Judges and experts on various legal matters. If you are reading a case, read it in full noting stimulating arguments from both sides, do not claim the holdings of the court. Lawyers learn to understand. Don't be a spoon-fed lawyer, because the legal practice will never tolerate you. Also, do your reading in a location where you will not be distracted or tempted to do something else. Otherwise, you will find it takes you far longer than necessary to prepare for the exams.



6. **Create a Study Plan:** Many law school students do complain that they do not have enough time to make case briefs, prepare outlines and make intensive research legal research. Those who say these statements are very wrong! A serious student must plan for his or her studying. By planning your time in advance, you will have enough time to meet all of the demands of law school and have time to enjoy some outside activities.



The law school has already planned for your study and stay as a student here which is 1year. God's also planned for your healthily working life span which is 70 years, though He can reduce or extend as He thinks so fit to do. There is no justification to extent your professional career here at the Law School for infinitive number of years. You are highly awaited to serve the public. So, work hard my dear friend **to win.** *Life without plan is like planning to die before living*. Plan your time well to accommodate your extra school activities. Plan when to study alone and when to participate in the evening discussion. Do not enjoy studying while studies are enjoying you.

7. **Minimize Your Stress:** Life at Law school can be stressful, but there are steps you can take to keep the stress to a minimum. Don't complicate your life here. Do not wait to be taught stress management in LS 109 by your instructors. Humor is a great stress reliever. Eat fruit, vegetables, and whole grain foods on a regular basis. Talk to your closest friend, family members, Dean of Students, class or firm leaders. Remember, drinking Konyagi or '*Machozi ya Simba*' early morning does not minimize your stress.



Refresh your mind by having fresh air and just get a little drink with your friends. Have time to sleep for at least seven hours of per night. Don't continue studying when you real feel your brain and mind is tired. Go out and watch football, or listen to music. Make sure you drink enough water also.

8. **Consider forming a study group:** Study groups can be a valuable learning tool. Talking through material with classmates can increase your understanding.

If you decide to form a study group, seek out other students who are well-prepared for class and have similar academic goals. I advise that, students who desire to form private group discussion should be not less than three (3) and not more than seven (7). A serious law school student can not join a group discussion with 10 students and above. Here at the law school forming a large group discussion is as good as



formulating and planting failures in your exams.

Do not go in the discussion without knowing what you are going to discuss. Do not discuss from the vacuum. Choose what to discuss and allocate specific time which you are going to spend. Do not let your study group meetings become social or gossip sessions. Do not use study groups as a way of sharing the workload. Lastly, if you find that you are not benefiting from your study group, resign from the group.

9. **Review, Review, Review:** Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts, unguarded. But once mastered, no one can help you much. Don't be satisfied by only group discussion that you had made. Don't relax just because you

don't have an exam, having no exams at that moment does not mean that you should wait until the reading period to begin your review. The Law School is not undergraduate school. You cannot cram right before finals and get good results. Therefore, make time for frequent review over the course of the semester. In reviewing concentrate on the key areas that are likely to be tested in your examinations. Do not read everything at this moment, just pick an issue which you think still need more attention. Make a perusal on the provision of the law that you think are important. Also, redraft your documents such as criminal charges, contracts, partnership deeds, applications, written statements of defenses and many other legal documents you covered in the class or in your group discussion. When starting reviewing, you are advised to discipline your mind and your behaviors; like talking with phones, or charting with friends. Schedule your time and where appropriate inform your close friends that you will be out of reach for that particular time.

10. **Practice, practice, practice:** The Law School exam is a tightly timed task. Just like a standardized test, you need to be able to do a lot in a short time and the only way to master that is to impose it on yourself. Find a nice desk in the law library, set a timer, and go. See how you do under time pressure, then do it again. You will soon realize how to pace yourself during an exam, and the practice of analyzing issues very quickly will pay off when you get to the actual exam. After you are finished, review your answers with a friend or a Law School tutor or better yet, a model answer, these are like gold and figure out what you can do better the next time around.

Most law students fail to answer all questions in the exams not because they don't know the answers but mostly due to low speed in attempting the exams. No one can become a winner of a football tournament without taking vigorous exercises. To a lawyer, the same principle can apply, you can not expect to win all Law School exams in the first seating if you don't have a speed of answering all the required questions within the scheduled time. Once you are a Law School student, you are a student regardless of your marital, social, economic or political status. You should prepare psychologically that there is no fear of your status and no favor in the



examinations. Be prepared to practice and not to be favored.

11. **Prepare before you arrive:** The Law School programme is rigorous. It requires a level of diligence and organization that was not necessary in college. A reliable routine for classroom preparation and a consistent method of outlining are very important to navigate the massive workload you will encounter.

12. **Attend review sessions conducted by Instructor(s):** Some Instructors and/or Academic Fellows hold review sessions prior to exams. This is a great way to clarify the issues about which you are confused without having to stand in line outside your Instructor's office. Moreover, helpful tips regarding how to write your exam answers in a way that will earn you the most points are often shared during review sessions.

13. **Take Past Exams:** Become familiar with the general nature of Law School exams through examples and detailed analyses of sample answers. Use the language of the law in the writing of issues, statements of the rule, and analysis of the facts. Exams previously administered by your lecturers are preferable. This will help you determine how your Instructor may draft his or her exam. Do not solve the past exams everyday instead study every demand of the question. Whenever possible, select a prior exam for which there is a sample answer on file. This will allow you to check your answer against the sample and evaluate your performance. If there is no sample answer on file, ask your Instructor if he/she will review and comment on your answer. Do not, however, wait until right before finals to ask your Instructor to review your answer. The earlier you ask, the more likely for the Instructor to have time to review your answer.

14. **Don't wait until the last minute to prepare for your exams:** Again, this is not undergraduate school. You cannot throw a paper together the night before it is due and expect to receive a good grade (or for that matter, a passing grade). Good legal writing takes time and lots of editing. Therefore, start working on your assignments as soon as possible.

15. **Identify the basic skills tested in exams:** Understand the skill that the exam seeks to test and the precise manner in which they are tested. A Law School exam does require knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the law. All the debates and discussions you've had in the classroom and your study sessions do matter when you're sitting before your exam.

16. **Show off your knowledge:** My first semester at Mzumbe University, my Law of Contract professor told our class that he wasn't looking for the most reasonable answers out there. In fact, he was looking for the opposite! He was looking for an exam bursting with ideas, both conventional and unconventional, that showcase a student's ability to be creative with the law of course, you need to evaluate which arguments are most reasonable and most far-fetched but that's one of the key skills of a lawyer to begin with! The more ideas you can raise, and evaluate, the better your law professor will know you know the law.
17. **Be concise and organized:** Use headers, give each issue a separate paragraph, and make your sentences short and easy to read. The examiners will be reading hundreds of pages of hastily written analysis of complex legal issues**: make your writing stand out for its clarity and simplicity.** It's a great habit for all legal writing as well.

18. **Know how the law school exams are graded:** You can't beat an enemy you don't understand. If the pass mark is 50% then in each exams you should struggle to score not less than that.

19. **During the exam week come up with your exam study schedule:** You should focus on one or two a day. Do not plan on focusing on all of your class materials every day. Your study schedule should focus on: (1) memorizing your outlines and (2) taking practice exams. (We discuss this below!) Do not reread cases, engage in study groups if they do not focus on one of those two things, or otherwise waste your valuable study time.

20. **Focus on what the Instructor says:** A lot of Instructors say "everything is a fair game." And yes, it's true, technically anything in your thousand-page casebook could appear on the exam. But it doesn't. Remember: Your Instructor writes the exam. You will be tested on the skill *they want you to master during the class*. Focus on your class notes when you study. Stop focusing on the nuances of cases that your professor probably doesn't care about and instead, study in the most efficient

way possible by focusing on your class notes. You have limited time so you may as well spend it wisely.

21. **Work non-stop during finals weeks and take breaks:** A lot of people roll their eyes at this tip, but it is very important. To make the most of your studying, take short breaks



every hour or so (it may vary). Then take longer breaks every three or four hours. Your brain cannot work productively for eight hours in a row. Be realistic, the key to studying efficiently and retaining information is to incorporate breaks into your schedule.

22. **Be healthy:** Sleep, make exercise, and eat healthy meals. If you try to study with little sleep, little exercise, and meals of poor nutrition, you will not only feel bad

but you will not be able to focus, retain information, or think analytically. To put yourself in the best position to pass the exam, take care of yourself.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this guidance makes you feel a little better about how to study effectively for law school exams. As a matter of academic, the twenty two (22) outlined guidance can be helpful not only to the Law School of Tanzania Students but also to the Institution itself. The guidance can further be helpful in guiding different Law Schools, Universities and University-Colleges for preparations of law students who expects to join the Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice prior for the admission as practicing Advocates. I believe, universally, law school students will enjoy in reading this paper particularly students in African Law Schools aspiring for the legal practice.

Dear students, the exam date is coming and there is only a finite amount of time between now and then, and you can't get it back! You need to make efficient use of your time and concentrate on what will ultimately bring you success. You don't want to walk out of that exam room with regrets. Concentrate on your outlines and practice exams and make sure to take care of your body. Don't give up now, you're almost done.

My special thanks to the Law School of Tanzania (LST), it is the best home for legal training.

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