

Short study 2022

# EXAM NERVES. THE FACTS.

## WHO GETS NERVOUS BEFORE EXAMS? ACTUALLY ALMOST EVERYBODY!

**iu**

INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY OF  
APPLIED SCIENCES

The most recent study conducted by IU International University of Applied Sciences on exam nerves shows: almost 9 out of 10 have experienced exam nerves.

Most of them when at school or university (64.7%). Almost half experienced nerves during vocational training or when applying for a job. Only 13.2% have never had exam nerves.

**86.8%**

of all respondents have had exam nerves at one time or another.

In which of the following situations have you had exam nerves? In %

At school/  
university  
**64.7**

When applying  
for a job  
**47.1**

During vocational  
training  
**45.9**

In other  
situations  
**7.5**

I have never had  
exam nerves  
**13.2**

Do you feel that  
your exam nerves  
are taken seriously?  
In %\*

**Yes  
54.2**

**No  
45.8**

Almost half feel that their exam nerves are **not** taken seriously.

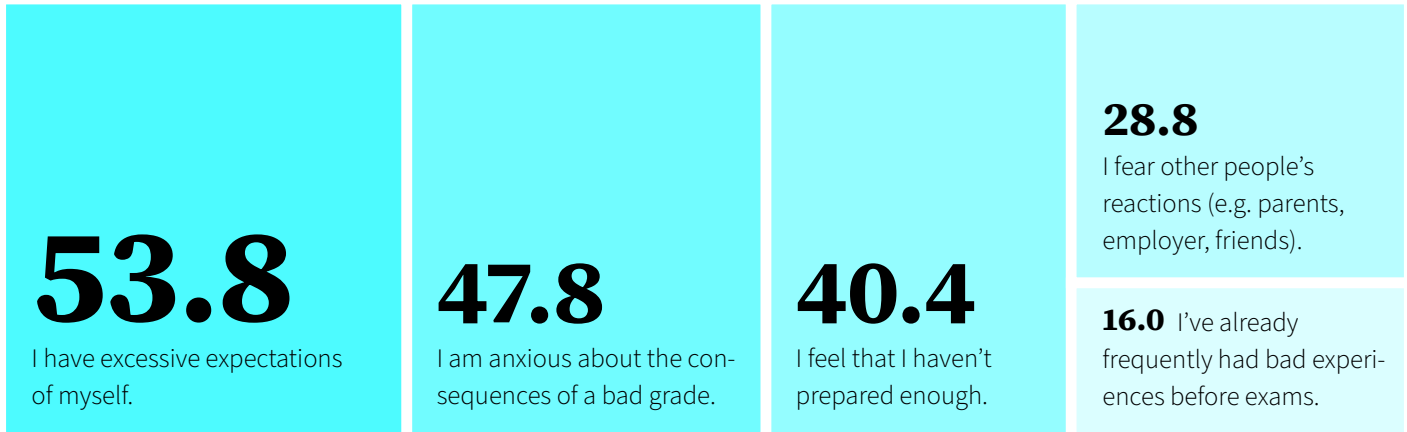
\* Respondents who have experienced exam nerves at school/university and/or during vocational training

# HAVING EXAM NERVES IS AN “OWN GOAL”.

**When it comes to exams, many respondents are their own worst enemy.** For more than half of respondents, a key reason for exam nerves is having excessive expectations. This is followed by anxiety about the consequences of a bad grade.

**What are the key reasons for your nerves before an exam?**

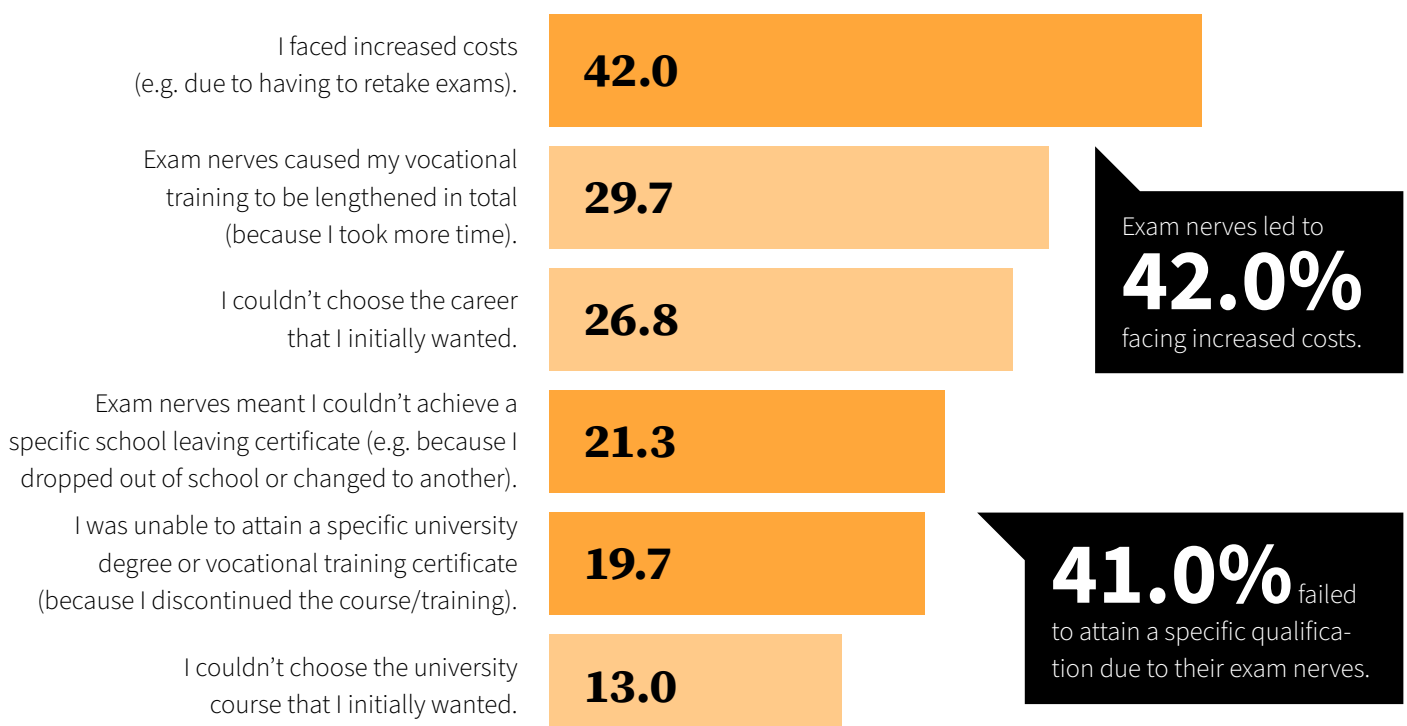
In %: top 5 answers



## THE REPERCUSSIONS OF EXAM NERVES: TIME AND MONEY ARE MAJOR TOPICS!

**What repercussions have your exam nerves had for you until now?**

In %\*: respondents who faced repercussions due to exam nerves



\* Respondents who have experienced exam nerves at school/university and/or during vocational training

# HELP WITH EXAM NERVES? NOTHING DOING.

Only **14.1%** have ever sought help in combatting their exam nerves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Have you ever sought help in order to combat your exam nerves?\*

## Where and how did you seek help?

In %\*: respondents who have sought help; top 6 answers



The expectations we place on ourselves are also high when it comes to help/support! Many wish to conquer exam nerves on their own and have therefore never sought help:

**49.5**

It has not yet been so bad that I've thought I need help.

**38.6**

I want to manage it by myself.

**Why have you not yet sought help?** In %\*: respondents who have not yet sought help; top 4 answers

**22.2**

I feel awkward and embarrassed.

**20.0**

I haven't found a suitable offer and/or I don't know who to turn to.

\* Respondents who have experienced exam nerves at school/university and/or during vocational training

# WHAT CAN ONE DO TO COMBAT EXAM NERVES?

A CONVERSATION WITH PROF. DR PATRICK TROTZKE, PSYCHOLOGIST AND PSYCHOTHERAPIST



**Prof. Dr Patrick Trotzke**

Psychological psychotherapist  
and Professor of Psychology  
at IU International University  
of Applied Sciences

## THE TOP 3 MEASURES FOR COMBATTING EXAM NERVES.

**1** Prepare well and get the relevant information in good time

**2** Ensure efficient time management and a proper learning strategy

**3** Practise mental training and relaxation techniques

### What can one do beforehand when it comes to exam nerves?

Good preparation is of course everything. Therefore: get your information in advance. Those who do not know which topics will come up in the exam, or how the exam is to take place, will not be able to optimally prepare. This information will help one be much more relaxed before the exam.

### Talking of relaxation: is it possible to prepare mentally and physically for exams?

Absolutely! Learning to relax is actually always worth it. There are various relaxation techniques that can help. Progressive muscle relaxation or autogenic training are good ways to unwind. Mental techniques are also super, for example as a way to view the exam scenario not as a threat but as a challenge. To this end, I recommend having mentalisation therapy beforehand. This will help the person go through the anxiety-provoking situation in his/her head, and then master it much better in reality later.

### Many experts say that a learning strategy is also very important.

#### What exactly does that mean?

That's correct, proper learning needs to be learnt. One needs good time management in order to learn stress-free. Not only to learn but also to revise. In order to create a realistic plan, the subject matter should be divided into smaller portions, and a sufficient number of breaks should be planned in.

### What can one do to help combat nerves during the actual exam?

If one is extremely nervous during an oral exam, the secret is to win time. For example, by asking for the question to be repeated, or asking for time to think. Many examiners are very favourably disposed towards those taking the exam and will start off with small-talk. It's good to go along with this before the actual subject matter is approached. This principle also applies to written exams: take a break, breathe deeply and, preferably, start with the easier questions first.

### What can one do if one cannot control one's exam nerves?

Seek help! There are coaches who are specialised in helping with exam nerves. And it's possible to get help from psychological counselling centres at universities. In some cases, it might also be sensible to seek psychotherapeutic help. This is particularly the case when the anxiety leads to exams repeatedly not being taken, which will lead to significant difficulties in the future.

## IMPRINT

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## Contact us

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at: [research@iu.org](mailto:research@iu.org)

You can also find us on:

