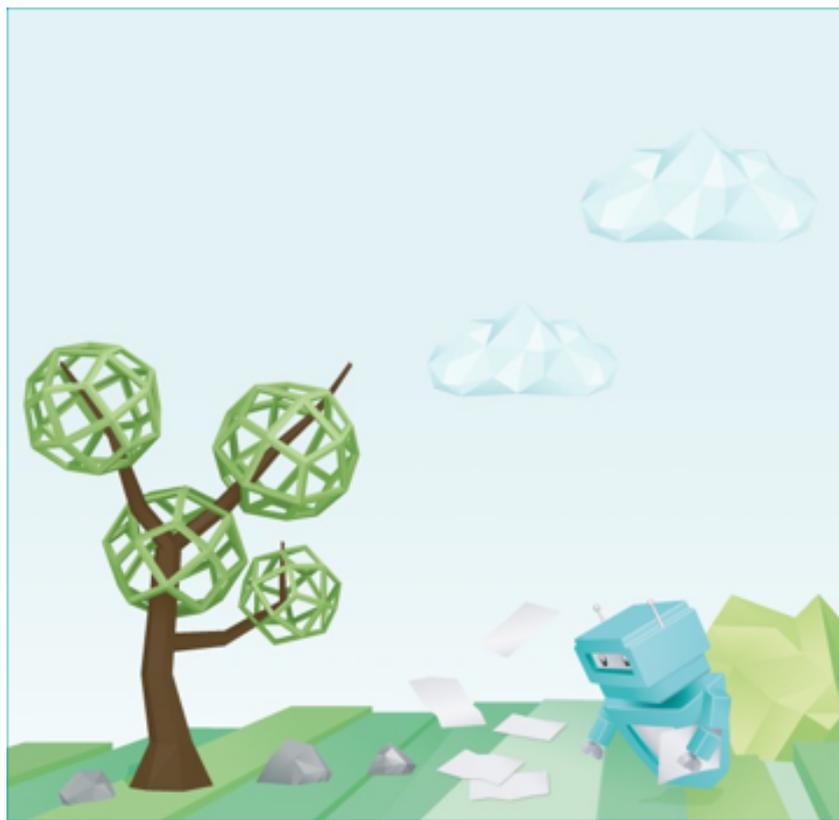


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# Construction

How to get a H1 in the Leaving Cert  
Construction Exam



by **Brian**

Brian was awarded the national 1st place in Construction Studies Higher Level 2018 by the Techno Teachers Association. Now he studies Civil Engineering in UL.  
Here, he shares what he learned.

## Preparing for the Construction Studies exam?

To achieve high marks in the Construction Studies exam your answers must be both practical and visual . Long-winded fancy paragraphs will grant you no marks if they don't include labelled sketches, a practical approach and factual points. Many students may have the knowledge to answer every question correctly, but they lose marks because they don't present this knowledge in an effective manner. Studying all the information needed for the exam is not the difficult part of getting an H1 in this subject, it is understanding the exam paper, answering the questions with sketches and brief points, timing and knowing which questions to answer and which ones not to.

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## Understanding the questions asked in the exam

There are 10 questions in total on the exam paper, you must answer Question 1 and four other questions. You only have a choice in Question 10. It is crucial you are confident in being able to achieve as many marks as possible in at least eight of the ten questions before walking into the exam.

### **Questions 1, 5 & 7:**

There are three questions that typically have the same structure each year; Questions 1 and 7 are practical drawing questions and Question 5 is a U-value calculation question. I strongly recommend focusing on these three questions in detail and be confident enough to achieve full marks in them before the final exam.

### **Questions 10**

Question 10 is another question that generally has similar topics each year (Passive House/ Sustainability), but I personally found these questions too broad and never felt confident that my answers would grant enough marks. This is because the answers involve much more writing and less factual, straight to the point answers that are needed for the drawing questions and the U-value question.



## Air-Tightness and Thermal Bridges Questions

- Usually asked in Question 9 but can appear in questions throughout the paper
- It's important to have detailed, labelled sketches and explanations for every opening/joint in a house eg. windows, eaves chimneys etc.
- Accurate sketches are vital as 80% of the marks on questions goes for sketches and brief explanations.
- 20% is going for Part (b) which has a much broader answer

Examples of H1 quality answers can be found on the [Studyclix.ie](http://Studyclix.ie), all that is needed is an accurately labelled sketch with 5 to 6 bullet points explaining it. The sketch doesn't need to be a masterpiece, just good enough for the examiner to understand and see what you are trying to say. Remember not to write a short essay for each question, this is not an English exam. Short, straight to the point answers with lots of sketches are all that is needed.

## Services Questions

- Services include: Electricity, Heating, Plumbing and Sewage.
- It may seem daunting initially as there is a lot of detailed theory to learn. But once you have a good understanding of them it won't be too difficult.
- Similar to answering questions on air-tightness, use more bullet points and sketches than long paragraphs.
- Services questions are very common so it's important to be prepared by practicing past papers.



## Question 6

- These questions are similar every year so practicing past papers is important.
- Questions on house planning show you plans of a house and ask what you would add to make it eco-friendlier or why it's already eco-friendly.
- Answering this question involves a lot of sketches but it's better to write a brief paragraph for each sketch rather than bullet points.
- Question 6 is a great question to be confident in answering but I would advise only answering if you are not happy with other questions on the paper.

## Question 3/Renovation

- Questions on renovation can be very broad and require lots of thinking outside the box.
- It can be difficult and time-consuming depending on the question.
- You will be asked to design a renovation with specifications and discuss the reasons for your proposed design. This requires creativity and good sketching ability.
- Like an English essay, there is no definitive correct answer.
- I recommend leaving this question as a last resort, however if you are planning on doing it, it's important to keep practicing past questions until you are comfortable answering it.

## Question 1 & 7/ Drawing Questions:

I strongly recommend doing both Question 1 and 7 in the exam. Question 1 is compulsory, but all the study needed for Question 1 is relevant for Question 7 as well. Achieving close to maximum marks in both the practical drawing questions is not difficult if they are practiced enough.



#### **4 Fundamental Drawings:**

- Once you have a basic understanding of the structure topics (Foundations, Walls, Floors, Roofs etc;), you should start answering the drawing questions related to those topics.
- I recommend incorporating as many topics as possible into one drawing as a lot of topics cross over each other in exam questions.

#### **Detailed Drawings:**

- Now you have four drawings that cover most topics that can come up in the exam, other smaller and more specific drawings must not be forgotten about (e.g. the fireplace, the chimney, stairs).
- I advise you to draw these using your notes or textbook, making sure every detail is perfect and labelled properly. Accuracy is everything.

#### **Perfection is Vital:**

- After doing all your drawings in every

topic, ask your teacher to correct your work. If you don't get 100%, ask where you went wrong.

- Keep amending the corrections and doing out the drawings again and again until you get 100%.
- If you lose marks for untidiness or poor drawing skills don't worry because you'll keep improving with practice!

#### **Timing:**

- In the beginning I found it difficult to get the drawings done accurately in the time given (35 - 40 minutes) but with enough practice it became easy.
- The best way to practice is to do past exam questions (Q. 1 & 7) and stop working after 40 minutes regardless of whether you're finished or not. If you keep practicing within this time frame you'll gradually train yourself to get the drawings done properly in time.



## Pre-Exam Revision

- Give the first few drawings you got corrected by your teacher a quick look over before the exam and memorise the most important parts.
- In the exam try not to get bogged down on any specific detail, just try draw as much as you know as accurately as possible - do not rush!
- You will be rewarded for accurate work filled with information, even if the full question is not drawn. Remember to label everything and that practice makes perfect.

## General Timing

**Total marks: 300**

**Marks per question: 60**

**Total time: 3 hours**

**Time per question: 35 minutes**

Good timing comes with practice but here are a few tips to help:

- Sketches do not need to be perfect in terms of shading and quality. Use a ruler and a pencil, make sure the sketch is tidy, large, labelled accurately and easy to understand.
- No paragraph should be longer than half an A4 page. Every paragraph or set of bullet points should have a corresponding sketch so let the sketch do the talking.
- It can be very enticing to spend an extra 5 minutes perfecting a drawing question, but it will not be worth it if you run out of time halfway through your last question.
- Study the marking schemes in terms of the amount of the marks awarded for each part of a certain question as some parts can be worth much more than others.



- If you are unsure about a question, don't ramble on writing paragraphs without any substance, you will be rewarded no marks for this. Just write down what you know in bullet points and move on.



## Final Tips

- I preferred answering questions that had definite answers using sketches and bullet points rather than writing time-consuming, long-winded paragraphs that have little substance. Because of this I prioritised the order of the questions that I was going to answer before the exam, first was Q.1 then Q.7, Q.5, Air-tightness Question, Services Question, Q.6, Q.10 and finally Q.3.
- Trust yourself. For example, if you have spent more time studying for Question 7 but a different question looks easier on the day of the exam, do not attempt the other question. It may look nicer, but you won't have enough practice done for that question and will find yourself rambling on about something you're not sure about.
- Don't go over 35 minutes per question.
- Practice really does make perfect!





*Finally, I would like wish you  
the best of luck in the exam!  
You will be fine 😊*