What do exams measure?

- How much I know.
  Exams are a limited measure of this. Think of all the things you do know but were not asked.

- The quantity of revision I have done.
  Exam results do reflect this, but less strongly than some other things mentioned below.

- How intelligent I am.
  If exams measured for intelligence there would be no point in preparing for them. Exams measure other skills and problem solving abilities that do not solely rely on intelligence.

- The quality of revision I have done.
  Yes - exams definitely reflect the quality of your revision. How you prepare and what you prepare are connected to your success in exams.

- How much practice I have had at answering exam questions.
  Yes – your exam results will reflect how much exposure you have had to similar exams. However it is not the only factor.

- How well I can spot exam questions.
  Spotting possible questions can be useful but it is not enough to base your entire preparation on this strategy. Also this practice can increase your anxiety levels before an exam as you wonder “What if those questions I’ve prepared for don’t turn up on the exam.

- How quickly I can write in exams.
  Many students are concerned about this. But it is the quality of your answers not the quantity that is important.

- How good I am at managing my time in exams.
  Yes - this is an important factor. Many exam failures are caused by students mismanaging their time during the exam thus only answering three questions instead of five.

- How good I am at addressing the question in exams
  Yes - this is one of the most important factors. Misreading the question or going off on a tangent and not addressing the question wastes both your time and energy as you are unlikely to gain marks. Sticking to the question is an important skill.

- How much I managed to learn the night before!
  Some students do use this strategy to pass their exams. However this method must be the most dangerous and painful of all and produces a great deal of last minute panic.

Study Success without Stress, Carol McLeod, Swinburne University of Technology.