301 Academic Skills Workshop Programme Revision planning

Good revision strategies

A good revision session requires creativity, interactive study techniques, a high degree of motivation, time management, working well with others, writing skills and being able to use your powers of selectivity, critical thinking and memory.

Understanding how you learn

- Acknowledge your learning preference: visual, auditory, read/write and/or kinaesthetic (learning by doing)
- Try adapting your revision approach to suit your learning style
    - Visual: colourful note cards, pictures, mind maps, videos, flow-charts, memorise positions of notes arranged on a large surface, colours and symbols to denote themes/key ideas.
    - Auditory: Recordings of notes or information made by others or yourself, using music to trigger memories, group discussions, radio and podcasts
    - Read/Write: writing and rewriting/condensing notes, past papers, practise exam questions and essay writing, get books, papers and articles from the library/internet
    - Kinaesthetic: going through examples, creating models/writing code, creating images or drawings to help with memory, associating information with different actions

Motivation and time management

- Revision mentality for the whole year, start as soon as possible
- Draw up a revision timetable, working **backwards** from exams – allow time for unforeseen, and *adapt and review this regularly* *(some sections might go quicker / slower than others – what to do with extra time? How to cope with less time?)*
- Consider priorities, don't focus on topics you know well
- Alternate between topics
- Allow time for breaks, so that revision time is focused and you have time to reflect
- Set realistic goals for revision sessions, stay positive and reward yourself! Can use the Pomodoro technique to help keep yourself focussed and quantify progress

Get together with course-mates and revise in groups

- Use group study areas in university, positive learning environment, not in your front room with TV on!

- Explain and discuss topics – best way to learn is to teach

- Support friends on weaker areas and ask for help

- Seek extra help or explanations from others as a group

- Use group revision to help with motivation and time management – agree not to take a break until X, or to reward yourselves with Y if you've achieved Z

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Writing skills

- Practise handwriting – physical skill

- How much can you write in an hour?

- How long does it take to write 400 words?

- Can you read your writing? Have you left room to correct mistakes?

- Practise this by making index cards and writing out notes **by hand**

Being selective about what you revise

- You cannot revise everything on a module successfully, revise the things that are **most important**, and that you have **least knowledge of**

- Distil your notes to key words, phrases or terms

- Look at past papers (can find on MOLE or in the IC) – what are the aims and outcomes? What information must you demonstrate knowledge of?

- Which topics are important? Which apply to more than one module? Which questions / topics come up regularly?

Using past papers

- Brainstorm answers to past questions.

- Make outline plans for as many questions as possible. Practising structuring answers and estimating timings per section of an answer can be very useful.

- Time yourself writing *some* of these.

- Discuss questions with others; work out plans together.

- Consider in advance what detail needs to be *left out* of exam papers.

- Try to think about the questions that *might* come up, but in the exam don't turn the actual questions in to what you'd hoped for.

Critical thinking

- Not enough to learn and repeat information in exam; need to demonstrate critical thinking and understanding.

- During revision time, think about how what you're learning relates to the topic: why is a particular idea important? Why should I or anyone else care?

- Plan and discuss how to **analyse, examine, compare and contrast, evaluate, consider critically assess** etc. this information

- Do you need to learn / remember everything? Which information is new to the module? Which topics covered most in the course?

Managing stress before the exam

- Take care of your mind. Think **positively** in the final run up to the exam and make sure that you avoid the company of those with a negative outlook.

- Regularly have a quick look over the material you have revised.

- Take care of your body. Avoid spikes in blood sugar levels by eating proper meals at appropriate times. Ensure you get enough sleep and that you give yourself time to relax before sleep. Exercise to disperse excess adrenaline and make you feel calmer and more alert. Make sure you are properly hydrated.

- Take breaks and time to relax. Let your brain rest; this can help with the consolidation of information.

- Plan out how to use your time during the exam.

- Don't try to cram at the last minute. You will remember little of what you try to learn and it will make you more stressed.

Additional resources

- University of Leicester – revision and exam skills

  http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/study/revision-exam

- University of Sussex – Study success at Sussex

  http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=70

- Open University – Revision and exams

  http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/revision-and-examinations/content-section-0

Other relevant 301 Academic Skills Workshops

- Exam Technique
- Beating Procrastination
- Academic Writing

Learning Preferences

Visual (V):

This preference includes the depiction of information in maps, spider diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, labelled diagrams, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices, that people use to represent what could have been presented in words. This mode could have been called Graphic (G) as that better explains what it covers. It does **NOT** include still pictures or photographs of reality, movies, videos or PowerPoint. It does include designs, whitespace, patterns, shapes and the different formats that are used to highlight and convey information. When a whiteboard is used to draw a diagram with meaningful symbols for the relationship between different things that will be helpful for those with a Visual preference. It must be more than mere words in boxes that would be helpful to those who have a Read/write preference.

Aural / Auditory (A):

This perceptual mode describes a preference for information that is *"heard or spoken."* Learners who have this as their main preference report that they learn best from lectures, group discussion, radio, email, using mobile phones, speaking, web-chat and talking things through. Email is included here because; although it is text and could be included in the Read/write category (below), it is often written in chat-style with abbreviations, colloquial terms, slang and non-formal language. The Aural preference includes talking out loud as well as talking to oneself. Often people with this preference want to sort things out by speaking first, rather than sorting out their ideas and then speaking. They may say again what has already been said, or ask an obvious and previously answered question. They have need to say it themselves and they learn through saying it - their way.

Read/write (R):

This preference is for information displayed as words. Not surprisingly, many teachers and students have a strong preference for this mode. Being able to write well and read widely are attributes sought by employers of graduates. This preference emphasizes text-based input and output - reading and writing in all its forms but especially manuals, reports, essays and assignments. People who prefer this modality are often addicted to PowerPoint, the Internet, lists, diaries, dictionaries, thesauri, quotations and words, words, words... Note that most PowerPoint presentations and the Internet, GOOGLE and Wikipedia are essentially suited to those with this preference as there is seldom an auditory channel or a presentation that uses Visual symbols.

Kinesthetic (K):

By definition, this modality refers to the "perceptual preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real)." Although such an experience may invoke other modalities, the key is that people who prefer this mode are connected to reality, "either through concrete personal experiences, examples, practice or simulation" [See Fleming & Mills, 1992, pp. 140-141]. It includes demonstrations, simulations, videos and movies of *"real"* things, as well as case studies, practice and applications. The key is the reality or concrete nature of the example. If it can be grasped, held, tasted, or felt it will probably be included. People with this as a strong preference learn from the experience of doing something and they value their own background of experiences and less so, the experiences of others. It is possible to write or speak Kinesthetically if the topic is strongly based in reality. An assignment that requires the details of who will do *what* and *when*, is suited to those with this preference, as is a case study or a working example of what is intended or proposed.

Taken from http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=categories (Accessed 11/09/2014)

Revision Action Plan

Name ....

My Learning Preference(s):

Visual   Auditory   Read/Write   Kinaesthetic

To improve my revision in the next two weeks I will:

1.

2.

3.

At the start of my revision I will

1.

2.

3.

The week before the exam I will:

1.

2.

3.