Revision Skills

VALUE MaP
19/iii/2016
Shaun Theobald
srt@kent.ac.uk
The Student Learning Advisory Service
Aims of the workshop

• To enhance students’ readiness to prepare for University exams and assessments
• To examine the process of revision
• To provide practical tips and techniques for successful revision
Intended Learning Outcomes

At the end of the workshop students will have:

- examined revision
- considered what to revise
- understood the concept of a revision timetable and a personal action plan
- learned about new revision tactics
- understood the concept of a learning style
Agenda

• Planning targets
  – **What** to revise…
• Defining revision aims
  – **How** to revise…
• Time management for revision…
  – **When** to revise…
• Revision methods…
  – **How** to revise effectively
Looking Ahead

• Next few weeks are critically important
  – Easter Vacation: crucial revision period
• Plan to revise systematically and regularly
• Take charge of and organise revision at the end of term!
  – Listen carefully to advice of tutors
  – BUT remember: all advice is just that – advice
  – Students must also exercise own judgement
• Generic advice needs to be tailored to fit
  – Requirements of exams differ significantly
General tasks to do now...

Check that you know *and* understand:

- Module Learning Outcomes
- Coursework and exam requirements per module, including the weighting of exam/coursework
- Number of exams to be taken
- Precise requirements for EACH exam
- Exam timetable on SDS
- Look at past Exam papers
The Exam Time-table

- This will appear on your SDS
- Click on the “Exams” button
- You will find: (Illustrative example in red)
  • Module SP310
  • Location Gillingham (Medway)
  • Day Friday
  • Date 03.06.2016
  • Start time 14.00
  • Finish time 17.00
The Exam Time-table

• Monday 9th May to Friday 17th June
• Weeks 25 to 30
• Including Saturdays; excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays
The Exam Time-table

- **Stage 1**: Generally, Tuesday 23rd May>
  - NB Some exceptions e.g. early Law Stage 1 exams
- **Stage 2 & 3**: Monday 9th May >
- Note instructions from Examinations Office: it is your responsibility to check your SDS entry regularly for updates
What is Revision?

- **Active** Process of *re-visiting* what’s been learned

- **Ongoing** and **systematic**
Good revision requires these attitudes and skills:

- Creativity
- Interactive study techniques
- Motivation
- Time management
- Willingness to work with others
- Selectivity
- Critical thinking
- Effective use of memory.

Not just reading through past notes, however conscientiously!
Good revision has an explicit objective: for example…

- to produce a summary of a module
- to produce a sample answer
- to produce cue cards/a poster etc.
- to produce a new summary of existing lecture notes
Good revision is explicit about **time** and **methods**:

- It takes place within an explicit/identified time frame
- It uses explicit/defined methods
- It uses methods that always end in a rehearsal of an exam experience
Examples:

• Read 4 weeks notes

• Write 2 sample answers

• Consult one key text chapters 1-5

• Convert one of the above into notes for/plan for a practice question or convert to notes + then write practice answer…
What to revise?

- How to select revision topics:
  - Examine course outline/syllabus
  - Check recommended reading lists
  - Essay/assignment topics
  - Past Papers
  - Topics emphasised by lecturers/tutors
Module Audit

• The simplest method!

• Good to ‘get started’...
  – 1. Take module outline
  – 2. Try and break down into single word/short phrase topics
  – 3. On an A4 sheet, set up 3 columns +/?/-
  – 4. + = OK about topic; ? = not sure; - = weak topic
  – 5. Decide which topics you place in the 3 columns
Module Audit

• This allows you to select/prioritise topics
• You will probably start by ‘filling in the gaps’ of the weaker (- column) topics
• Of course, supplement with more sophisticated/rigorous module scrutiny!
Should you learn everything?

• Be systematic—work out what you can’t afford to leave out and tackle it now

• Analyse the pros and cons of learning all or part of your syllabus

• How much choice does the assessment framework provide?
Setting targets...

- Exams usually cover several modules
- Think about the marks you **already have** and the marks you **need** for each module!
  - E.g. Two modules, A and B.
  - On A, you have a high coursework mark
  - Therefore you may need less marks in the exam to pass/pass successfully
  - On B, you have a low coursework mark
  - Therefore you may need to gain a higher mark in the exam to pass/pass successfully
Setting targets...

– In prioritising ‘exam effort’, you would spend more time on B?

• Assessment weighting
  – If a module is 80% exam; 20% coursework then more effort needs to be spent on the exam than in a 50%-%50% module?

• Make **choices** about concentrating your ‘exam energies’
  – To paraphrase George Orwell, “All modules are equal, but some modules are more equal than others” !!!
Setting targets…

• How much to revise?
• For **Essay questions** (choice)
  – Focus on about 60% + of possible topics
  – perhaps 8 topics of 10-12 in 15 credit modules
  – Plus ‘insurance’ topics?
• For **short answers/ exercises**
  – ALL but look at specific exam (amount of choice ?)
Setting targets...

• For **multiple choice**
  ALL areas/ topics

• For **some [STEM] modules**, everything...
  – E.g. In Computer Science you can’t just know ‘part of’ programming!
Time management – key points

- Schedules
- Priorities
- Flexible targets
- Contingency planning
- Use gap time
- Review schedules & targets
Prioritise

• Establish time needed for each subject
• Plot out a schedule that’s realistic and based on past experience
• Allow for the unexpected
• Balance revision before and during exams
• Plan each week in advance and review regularly-adapt plan accordingly
Timetable

• Key Dates/ Exam start-up dates: as outlined above
• We are now at Week 21
  – End of Term: 8th April
  – Beginning of Summer Term: 9th May
  – Depending on your year, exams start from here…
• Draw up your own overall time table
• Supplement with weekly schedules
How to revise?

• Divide topic/material into manageable chunks

• Identify key facts/theories/concepts in each topic

• Work with the material by making:
  - lists, flow-charts, tables, cue-cards, bullet points

• Vary activities
  - work when you are receptive and productive
How to revise?

- Have clear and realistic daily targets
- Take regular breaks
- Move on when really stuck
- Form a revision group?
# Revision Techniques

‘Breaks and Changes’ / BBR method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Break</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revision techniques
Understand, reduce, repeat....

• WORK repeatedly with the material
• Summarise core issues in each topic
• Identify ‘schools of thought’/ different view points/ insights/ discoveries/ revelations
• Look for hooks and links
• Summarise case studies/ examples/ key date
• Reduce information to one side of A4
• Reduce information to single side of Index Card
• Practice reciting the cards (learn off by heart)
Subject Packs

• Notes
• Articles
• Related assignments
• Graphics/illustrations/diagrams
• Mind Maps
• Sample Answers
Vary your methods

- Flanagan (1997) says we remember:
  - 20% of what we read
  - 30% of what we hear
  - 40% of what we see
  - 50% of what we say
  - 60% of what we do
  - and 90% of what we read, hear, see, say and do!!
  - So always build in practice exam answers & vary your revision techniques
A variety of methods...

- Brain maps
- Notes on smart phone
- Flash/index cards
- A4 paper, using white space/layout/bullets
- Short word documents that can be opened and closed
- Post-its on lecture notes to summarise key points...

What suits you?
Work with your learning style

- Visual
- Aural
- Kinesthetics (doing)
- Read/write/study strategies
Sample Answers

• Prepare open book answers
• Prepare answer plans, spider diagrams,
• Produce 1 page of key bullet points per proposed answer and memorise
• Answer a few in full against the clock.
• Swap answers with friends
• Build towards a closed book timed answer
Checking answers

• Check answers for the number of key points
• Check for clarity
• Check for your focus on the question: how close to the question were you?
• Check your handwriting: is it legible?
• Check for reading and learning
• Check for original thought and independent evaluation
Memory Aids/more varied techniques...

- Mnemonics- *Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain*: colours of the rainbow
- Speak aloud
- Tape yourself reciting key facts etc.
- Map them out colourfully
- Work in pairs testing each other
- Rhymes/raps
- Post-it notes in your room
- Posters/flow carts etc
Improving Concentration

- Prepare Time Table
- Start on time
- Clutter free zone
- Quiet place
- Comfortable (but not TOO relaxing!)
- Be assertive-say NO to distractions!
- But allow time for leisure/breaks!!
Improving Concentration (Cont.)

- Work with your ‘body clock’
- Arrange room & equipment in advance
- Be active
- Move on at agreed times
- BBR
- Manage other anxieties
- Practise relaxation
Personal Action Plans

- A4 document used to plan revision
- Holistic
- Relate to schedules
- Broader, ‘global’, targets
- PAPs must have key dates attached to them
- They should conform to SMART criteria
- They should include evidence
- They need to cover different methods and materials
- They should not take you too long to complete!
SMART criteria

- **S** specific
- **M** manageable
- **A** accurate
- **R** realistic
- **T** time-defined targets
Common revision pitfalls:

- Leaving it until the last minute
- Lack of organisation
- Learning essays by heart
- Procrastinating
- Feeling of isolation
- Starting to panic
- Getting bored
- Other responsibilities
Evaluation and Close

• The three principles for effective revision:
  – Selecting revision targets
  – Realistic revision schedules that can be achieved over time
  – Active revision!
Good luck....

• For all your studies, and for the 2016 Examinations!
• Any questions: Shaun Theobald
  – srt@kent.ac.uk
• Further support:
  – www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/learning