Exam Revision & Preparation
Workshop Objectives

- To provide students with strategies and tips to approach exam revision rationally and with purpose, thereby maximising exam performance.

- To provide students with strategies and tips to approach their exams effectively on the day.
Planning Exam Study

• Have you checked the exam timetable?
• Do you know what exams you have?
• When are these exams?
• Where are they held?
• What will you be tested on?
• How will you be tested?
• Special Conditions in Exams?
Discussion

1. Share at least two good exam tips and advice.


3. What mistakes have you committed in the past – in the preparation phase and during the exams? Do you have any solutions to avoid these mistakes?
Planning Exam Study

- Draw up an overall revision plan covering all of your exams
- Using a timetable, write down the dates that you have exams. Block out time slots for each subject that you need to study for and stick to these
- Plan the schedule to match the timing of the exams, beginning with the earliest.
- Decide on the amount of time needed to study for each exam. For example, if you have an exam worth 30% of your total mark, and another worth 60%, you may want to spend more time studying the second paper.
- Have regular breaks.
- Remember to allow times for input (memorising information) and output (retrieving and practising what you have learnt).
- Break each session into topics that you will study and practise.
- Review your timetable every week.
HELPS exam preparation

David Taplin
Learning Skills Psychologist
UTS Counselling
Revising for an Exam

• Attention & focus

• Performance during acquisition vs learning
Ebbinghaus was an 19th century psychologist who reported the phenomena now known as the forgetting curve.

Learning new unfamiliar material – Without revision

recall about 60% after 20 minutes. About 44% after 60 min. About 35% in 9 hours. About 30% after a day. About 10% after a week

So reviewing new material helps consolidate it. Note well this is for low meaningfulness – make meaningful = low forgetting

Memory “prunes” what it considers unuseful (ie judged by frequency of recall – or danger 1 trial learning)

Bad news – need to regularly review

Good news – use tags importance in the memory and maintains accessibility.

Wardrobe or pot draw in the kitchen – what’s used recently tends to be at the front – easily accessible. What hasn’t been used recently tends to work itself to the back
*Time Management*

- Distinction between learning & exam prep
- % value of exam hints at weeks of preparation
- Find out topics covered by test/quiz/exam
- Identify strong and weak topics (aim to work through all topics once quickly)
- Reserve preparation time slots in your timetable/calendar/diary
- Specify target content for revision
*Identify type of Examination questions

Match study to test structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is being tested?</th>
<th>Match prep Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic knowledge</td>
<td>Memorisation- rote learning, mnemonics, glossary, flash cards, mind maps,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Review case studies, textbook examples, lecture &amp; tute/lab material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis/Evaluation</td>
<td>Understanding elements of concept and application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to relate theory to practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Exam revision session:*

1. Write a summary of what you already know (from memory)
2. Review notes and resources. Make new summary of main points (use diagrams/tables/concept maps)
3. Free recall summary
4. Compare for completeness
5. Practise tests – make up your own if necessary
### An example prep template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concept / Terminology</th>
<th>Meaning in your own words</th>
<th>Issue/Application</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous Recovery</td>
<td>Memory phenomena that a failed attempt at recalling may produce a delay recall</td>
<td>Frequent activation of retrieval attempts will lead to more recall in a delay condition</td>
<td>Sense of familiarity with a question in exam, but unable to answer then ‘remember’ as leaving the exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple choice short answer – large volume of content subject
University maths students, 2 practice sessions 1 week apart - test 1 week later
4 different types of problems – 4 sets
Blocked -4 the same, interleaved, 1 of each
Larger SD in Interleaved
Exam Day

• **Day before:**
  - Exercise
  - Sleep
  - Selective revision

• **At the Exam:**
  - Calm yourself
    • Breath
    • Think

• [Exam anxiety workshops](#)
Revision Phases

1. Initial read-through
2. Re-reading and self-testing
3. Monitoring your recall
4. Practising
Revision Phase 1: Initial read-through

• Read
• Summarise from memory
  - Break into sections, organise it in different ways (e.g. mind maps).
• Check your summary
• Identify important points that you did not remember, and add them to the summary

Read a topic. Make your learning meaningful.
Summarise what you have read from memory. Don’t just list information, break into sections and organise it in different ways (e.g. mind maps).
Check the accuracy of your summary against the original notes.
Identify important points that you did not remember, and add them to the summary. Unless you spend time remembering these points, you are likely to forget them again in the exam.
Revision Phase 2: Re-reading and self-testing

- Re-read and test yourself (the same day, the next day, or up to 3 days later).
- Re-read the summary.
- Use different strategies (e.g. diagrams, mind maps, acronyms, numbered lists).
  Changing the activity = active memory
- Mark the sections that you did not recall.

Re-read and test yourself on the material. This might happen later in the same day, the next day, or up to 3 days later. Don’t leave this phase any longer than 3 days or you will lose some of what you have gained.
Re-read the summary.
Use different strategies (e.g. diagrams, mind maps, acronyms, numbered lists) to test your knowledge of the information.
By changing the activity, you are keeping your memory active. Once again, mark the sections that you did not recall.
Revision Phase 3: Monitoring your recall

• Read through your summary again.
• Focus on sections marked.
• Modify your learning strategy for material that is still difficult to recall.
• Re-read the study notes.
• Re-test yourself.
Revision Phase 4: Practising

- Access past exam papers from UTS Library
- Do a search under subject name or number
- Test yourself under exam conditions
- Review the points that you could not remember
- Review your exam strategies
The day...

The day before...
- Revise lightly
- Eat healthily
- Prepare materials needed for the exam
- Go to bed early

On the day...
- Get up early
- Travel early to the exam
- Avoid those who can take your confidence away – the super confident or negative or panicky ones
The Exam: Reading Time

**Check the exam paper**

- Check the subject name and number on the cover sheet to confirm you have the right exam
- Check the number of pages you should have
- Count the pages you have to confirm that you have everything
- Make sure that you have any additional materials if specified
- Ask for extra/scrap paper straight away
The Exam: Reading Time

Read and re-read the instructions

• Check which questions or sections are compulsory.
• Check for words that indicate options within the exam (e.g. “Either”, “And”, “Choose Two (2)”). Missing these words can cost you dearly: if you complete both essays where you had the choice of two you have wasted time and marks.
• Check for any specific instructions, e.g. “All working for calculations must be shown”.

The Exam: Reading Time

**Allocate your time**

- If a section is worth 60 marks out of 100 then it should be allocated 60% of your time.
- If that 60-mark section is divided into 3 questions of 20 marks each, then each question should be allocated 20% of your time.
- Write out a timeline

Allocate your time for each question based on how much it is worth, the type of questions, and whether the section is compulsory.
If a section is worth 60 marks out of 100 then it should be allocated 60% of your time.
If that 60-mark section is divided into 3 questions of 20 marks each, then each question should be allocated 20% of your time.
Write out a timeline of when you want to complete questions and stick to it.
Remember that if you spend too much time on a difficult question, you may not have enough time for easier questions after it.
The Exam: Reading Time

Decide on a plan of attack

- Plan the order you will complete your questions
- Complete the compulsory questions
- Start with the “easy” ones

It is good idea to attempt the questions you feel most confident with first.
The Exam: Questions

- Multiple-choice and True/False Questions
- Short Answers
- Essays
- Case Studies
The Exam: Multiple Choice

- **Try to supply the answer before you read all the options**
- Use the process of elimination to narrow down the options
- If two options are the same, they cancel each other out
- If two options are similar, one is likely to be correct – look for subtle differences
- If two options are complete opposites, one is likely to be correct
- ‘All of the above’ may be good if more than one is correct
- Those with absolute words (e.g. all, none, always, never) usually make a statement false (unless it’s been proven as a fact)
- Those with qualifying words (e.g. most, some, usually, seldom) are more likely to make a statement true
The Exam: Multiple Choice

Be careful of:

- negative phrasing – Choose the option that DOESN’T describe...
- Subjective/Judgment questions – Choose the MOST CORRECT option OR Choose the option that BEST describes...
- Multiple answers – Choose MORE THAN one
The Exam: Short Answers

- Stick closely to the allocated time for each question (more answers = more marks)
- Leave 1 or 2 lines after each answer – you may remember something important later
- Check exactly what the question is asking for, especially if it has several parts
- There is often a specific, countable, number of points to make for short answers. E.g. *Explain and provide reasons for why it is consistent or inconsistent.*
- State your answers clearly and to the point. If necessary, start a new sentence for each answer, rather than combining two answers within one sentence.
- Answer the specific questions given. Include the keywords, ideas or phrases the examiner was looking for when the question was designed. Do not just write about what you know about the topic in general.
The Exam: Essays

- Analyse the question
  (instruction words, content words and limiting words)
- Do a plan
- Develop a thesis statement
- Structure the points in the body paragraphs logically
  one paragraph = one point (with support)

Before you write, **analyse the question**: instruction words, content words and limiting words
Do a **plan** before you start writing (mind map?)
Develop a **thesis statement** from the question and include it in your introduction.
**Structure the points in the body paragraphs** so that one point follows the other logically and clearly.
As a general rule, **one paragraph = one point**, supported by an example, explanation, and evidence.
Task Words

- **Analyse**: break an issue down into its component parts, then examine each part and describe the relationships between them.
- **Assess**: consider the value and significance of an issue, event or other matter, weighing up the positive and negative features.
- **Compare and contrast**: show similarities and differences between characteristics or qualities.
- **Criticise**: analyse and make a judgment, weighing up positive and negative features. Base your judgment on criteria and give examples of how the criteria apply.
- **Discuss**: give reasons for, explain; also to weigh up and compare several views on an issue, develop a thesis, attitude or viewpoint.
- **Explain/ account for/ justify**: give reasons for, clarify cause and effect; reason and result.
- **Evaluate**: consider various arguments to reach a judgment on significance or value.
The Exam: Case Studies

- **Analyze and interpret the question** carefully.
- **Skim read** the scenario to get the big picture.
- **Read again slowly**, underlining words or numbers that relate to course concepts or indicate a particular kind of problem.
- Use each of these issues (the words you have located and underlined) as a heading and list the course concepts or theories (and theorists) that underlie or match them (mind map?). Recall (and add) relevant acronyms, definitions, details and examples.
- **Think how you will integrate your answer.** Remember you will have to mention both the issue from the scenario and the course material that relates. Try to demonstrate the implications of implementing your solutions(s)/plan/intervention/model. Include the influence of external agents and possible conflicts of interest.
- **Decide which issue you will deal with first.** If there is an expected sequence (as in a diagnostic scenario) follow that order. Otherwise, EITHER write on the issue that you know is a core concept in the course (and which you have therefore learned well) first OR write on the issue about which you know most first.
- **Check again** that you are following the command(s). For example, if the question asks you to make recommendations – have you included these?
You will need to understand and be familiar with the material **before** starting the exam. The exam is not the place to try to read and understand material.

You will only have a small working space, so take the minimum material; being crowded and messy will make information retrieval difficult.
Help & Support

- Lecturer/tutor
- Faculty learning support
- Classmates/friends
- Library – past exam papers
- HELPS
- Counselling
Discover these!

- Online self-help learning resources
- Drop-in & 1:1 consultations
- Writing support sessions
- Conversations@UTS
- Intensive academic English programmes
- Daily workshops
- Volunteer programmes

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