Top Ten Exam Revision Techniques

1. Review your materials and divide it up into sections.

Review your module information overall and identify which elements will form your exam. Divide this up into sections that you can tackle on individual days. There may be some areas of your work that you are already familiar with and where you have a good understanding. Some areas may be complex, and you might want to split these across two days.

2. Close reading of your notes

Rereading your notes is a good starting point to get an overview of the module, but only doing this can be passive. The most successful revision techniques involve active learning. Try and identify the key information that is essential to your understanding. You want to be able to reduce the quantity of material from your full notes to the essential ideas and theories.

3. Index cards

Many students find index cards a useful tool for noting down the key concepts of their work. Be concise and strategic with what you include focusing on the most important information. Try bullet points, phrases, mnemonics or images. If you need to identify connections between material, you might include an index card dedicated to this. If you have essay answer questions you might include a revision card with a suggested essay plan. Or a short answer exam might need a single card bringing together the topic as a model answer. As an additional step you can use your phone to record your index cards and play back the recording when you are doing other things such as cooking or going for a walk.

4. Apps

Explore apps such as OneNote that you can access via your university account, or Evernote that is freely available. These can be used to collect your revision materials in one place and are accessible across multiple devices via the web. If this interests you it is a good way to combine relevant websites, photos, recordings and text in one place. Try using apps alongside other tips listed on this guide.

5. Read and recall

Having read your notes try and explain the key elements to someone as they test you against the answers. You might do this with a friend or family member or set up a study group either in person or virtually. You can try this yourself by recording your answers and checking against your notes.

6. Mnemonics

A phrase whereby the first letters of the phrase indicate something that you want to remember. For example, **n**ever **e**at **s**hredded **w**heat is a well-known mnemonic for the **n**orth; **e**ast; **s**outh; **w**est points of the compass. You may find that there are some well-known mnemonics that already exist for your area of study that you can adopt.

7. Tweet challenge

Can you sum up the theory or definition in 140 characters? Being able to do this will make you identify the key points and concisely summarise what you have learned.

8. Apply your knowledge

Can you put your revision information into real life scenarios? By doing this you are applying your knowledge to a case study or experience which needs deeper understanding than recalling facts.

9. Identify connections

Look to the big picture and think about how one element might link to another. Can you use arrows, tables, flowcharts or spider diagrams to show the relationship between material? You can arrange index cards, post-it-notes or large pieces or paper on a table or wall. Some students find that using a large space helps them visualise the information more clearly.

A spider diagram has the topic named in the centre with a number or spokes radiating from it that might indicate elements of the answer or important parts of the theme. You might use spider diagrams for essay planning before and during your exam.

Flow charts are best when showing linear processes and indicating what comes next in line. Write down the first item at the start of the process and use arrows and words to show the sequence of events or elements. These are good for logical information or short answer questions or essays as it is easy to see if you have missed something out.

Mind maps also focus on one big idea noted in the centre of your paper but may mix words, images and arrows to represent your information. Or you might use different colours or shapes to indicate relationships. Mind maps are especially suited for complex areas; however, they often take longer to create than spider diagrams or flow charts.

10. Practice tests

Ask your tutor if they can make some past exam papers available for you to take a practice test. Look closely at the types of question that are included, it is a good indication of what your own exam may look like. You can use past papers in two ways:

A. Replicate the exam experience. Allocate the same amount of time as the real exam and work under exam conditions. Make sure you manage to answer all the questions and manage your time effectively. After the practice test, reflect on what went well and what you might want to do differently next time.

B. Use this as an information gathering exercise. Try and answer all the questions as fully as you can without time constraints. Don’t worry about using full answers, instead bullet points to show what should be included. In this way you can check your given answers against textbooks and notes later and respond to any gaps in your knowledge.