

# Revision & Exams

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# Part 1: Preparation

# Part 2: Making the most of revision sessions

# Part 3: The exam

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# Warm-up exercise

## Task 1: The interview

Please pair up with someone you don't know and complete the warm-up exercise.

# My exam fears

- Feedback – what worries you the most about the prospect of taking an exam?

# Myths about exams

Exam questions are carefully worded to trip you up or catch you out.

Examiners are generally very mean with marks.

Exams are essentially a test of memory, favouring those with perfect recall.

You can only score well in exams if you can think and write very quickly.

You WILL get stressed out by exams and this can be dangerous and destructive.

# Benefits

What are the benefits of assessing via examinations?

# Benefits

- They provide an accurate way of measuring how far you've progressed with your course.
- They enable your lecturers to assess your own original work, with the guarantee that it isn't copied from or inspired by others.
- They encourage you to focus your efforts towards a specific goal, assess what you know and address any gaps in your skills or knowledge.
- They are objective and fair methods of assessment: all candidates take the same test.

# Part 1: Preparation

*Making a  
good start*

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# Time: your worst enemy

Academic year is 9-10 months, max

Exams are sooner than you expect

You need to integrate revision early

# Organising your notes

- If you're one of those people who always loses notes, or has trouble organising, the following may be suitable for you:



Blogger



Wordpress



tumblr.

# The ‘Revision Mentality’

- If you’re one of those people who always loses notes, or has trouble organising, the following may be suitable for you:



- ~~increased visibility of my notes, blog posts, images, what I have learned and questions I might be posed using the information opportunity for collaboration with others~~
- ~~Blogger~~
- ~~easy to find, edit and update~~



~~Wordpress~~



~~tumblr.~~

# The ‘Revision Mentality’



Evernote ([www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com))

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# The ‘Revision Mentality’

- Exams DO count towards your final grades, so it’s really in your best interests to embrace them. Learn how to pass them well – don’t ignore them, they won’t go away!
- In order to pass exams successfully, you are required to prepare for them intensively – they should be respected and taken very seriously.
- Sound preparation and the right revision strategies will vastly increase the likelihood of you passing.
- Your own preparation is likely to directly impact your performance.
- If you have to take exams (and it’s very likely you do), you may as well be constructive in your approach – face things head-on.

# The ‘Revision Mentality’

- Think about your exams from day 1.
- Don’t think of exams as a separate exercise.
- Feel good about your exams.
- Look forward to them: they provide a chance for you to show what you can do!



# What examiners want

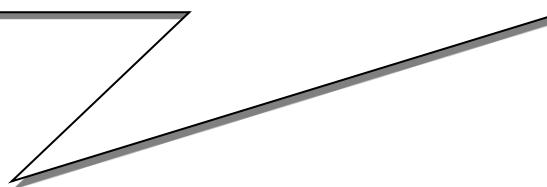
Task 2: Look at the following quotes from exasperated examiners

In pairs, try to identify the root problems with the way in which the students approached the exams, and suggest possible strategies to combat these.

# What examiners want

1. Many students simply did not read the instructions at the start of the exam paper. Some answered fewer than required, and some even answered more!

Some failed to answer the required number from each section and others missed out elements of a multi-part question.



# What examiners want

2. Students did not read the questions carefully enough. A question in a 20<sup>th</sup> Century history paper asking for causes of the outbreak of World War I prompted answers from some candidates relating to World War II!

# What examiners want

3. Students did not manage their time effectively which meant that many did not finish. Others wrote unnecessarily long answers to some questions and only a few lines for the final ones because they ran out of time.



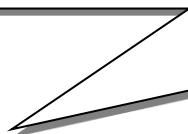
# What examiners want

4. Students did not take careful account of the verb in the question which told them what to do e.g. *assess, compare, describe, argue, list*, etc. Instead, they regurgitated all they could think of about the topic involved.



# What examiners want

5. Students did not plan their answers. They produced an uncoordinated mass of prose which jumped around from point to point with no logical thread running through the answer which made it very difficult to mark.



# What examiners want

6. Judgements and viewpoints were not supported by clear evidence. Lack of objectivity was often evident with wild generalisations and personal prejudices included.

## Part 2: Making the most of revision

*having and  
implementing  
a plan*

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A reminder of  
everything you've  
learnt so far

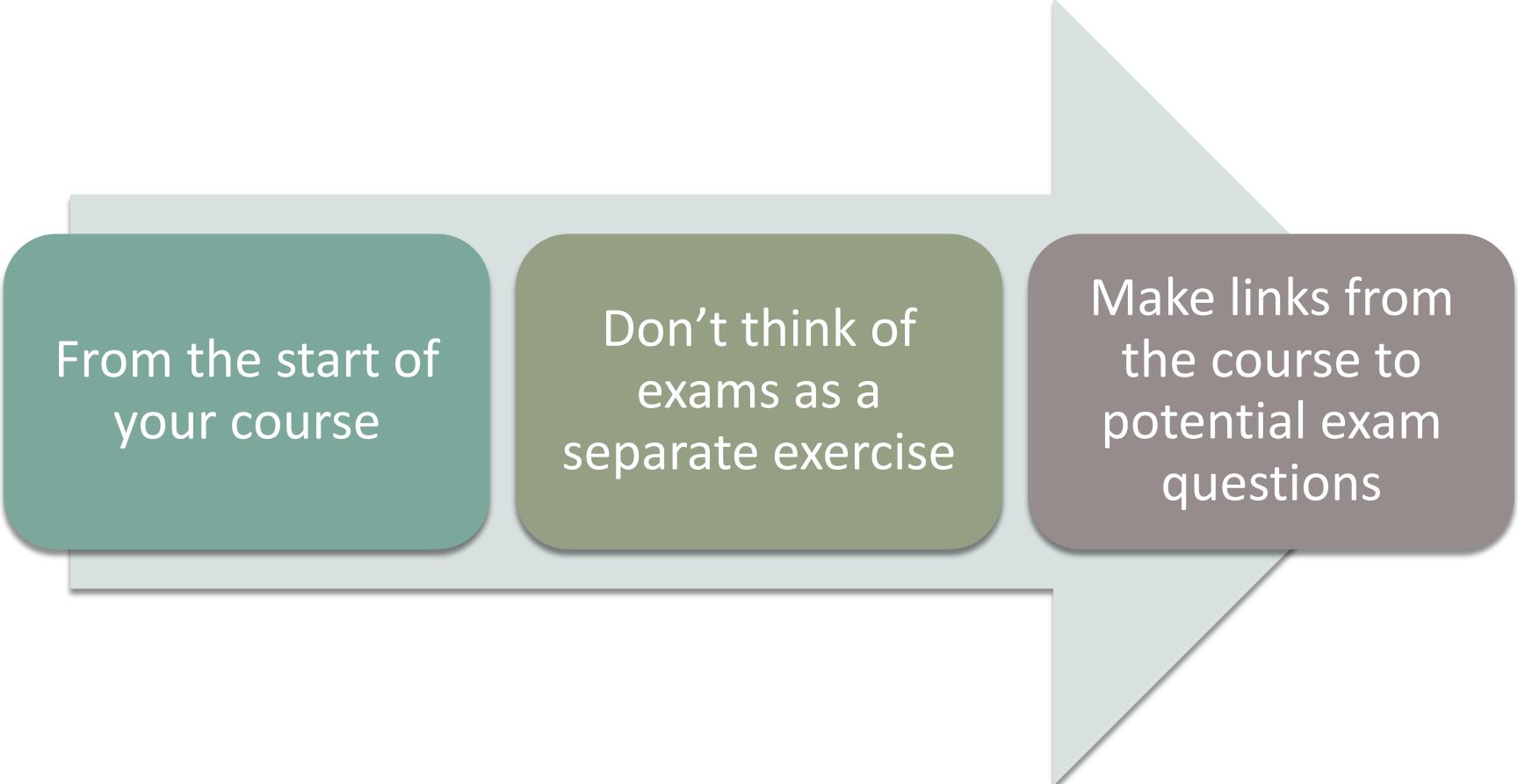
A check that you  
have understood  
everything

## What is revision?

A chance to fill in any  
gaps in  
understanding

Time to reorganise  
useful information to  
make it easy to recall

# When to start revising



From the start of your course

Don't think of exams as a separate exercise

Make links from the course to potential exam questions

# Time: your new best friend!



What are the advantages of revising over time?

You are more likely to see links between topics when revising one while learning another (cross-pollination)

There is an increased chance of understanding difficult subject material the second time around

Final exam prep feels Psychologically more manageable. last-minute feeling is lessened

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# How best do you learn?

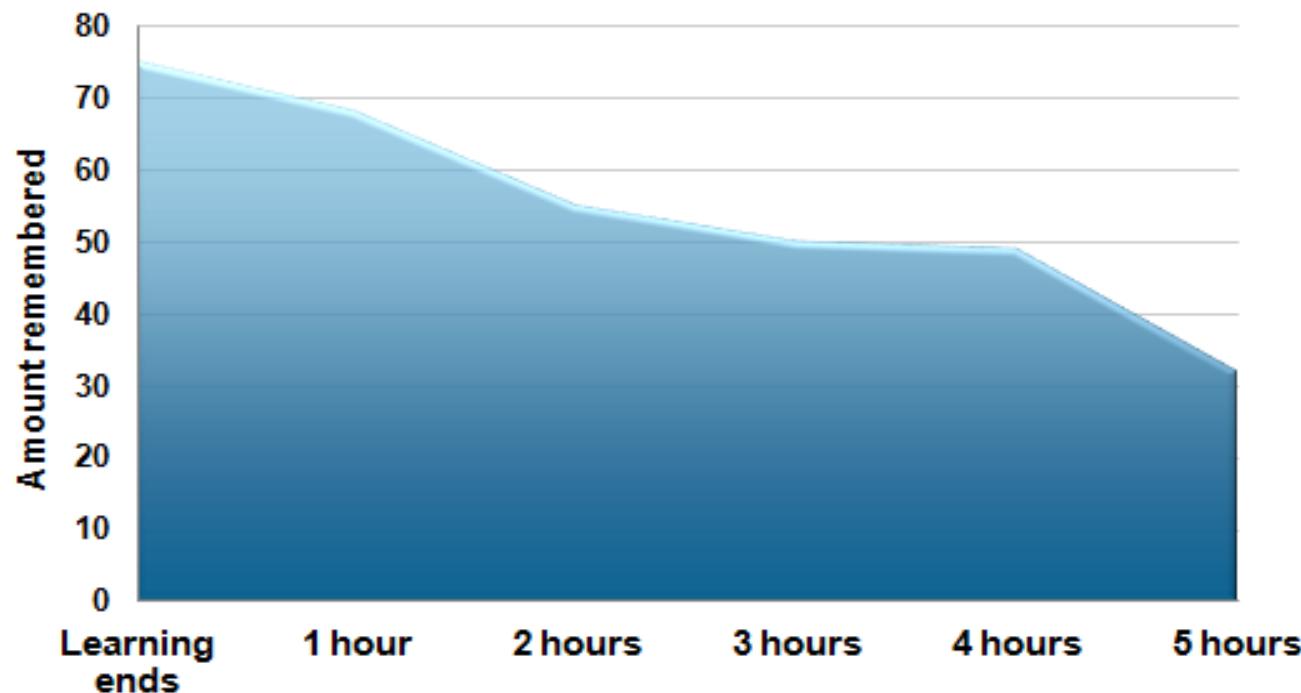


Task 3: We all learn in different ways. Consider some of your own learning preferences.

# Preparing a revision timetable

- When it comes to your timetable, don't become obsessed.
- Are you producing multiple timetables as a delaying tactic to put off actual study?
- Why are you doing this? Is this an area that needs to be confronted?

# Take breaks

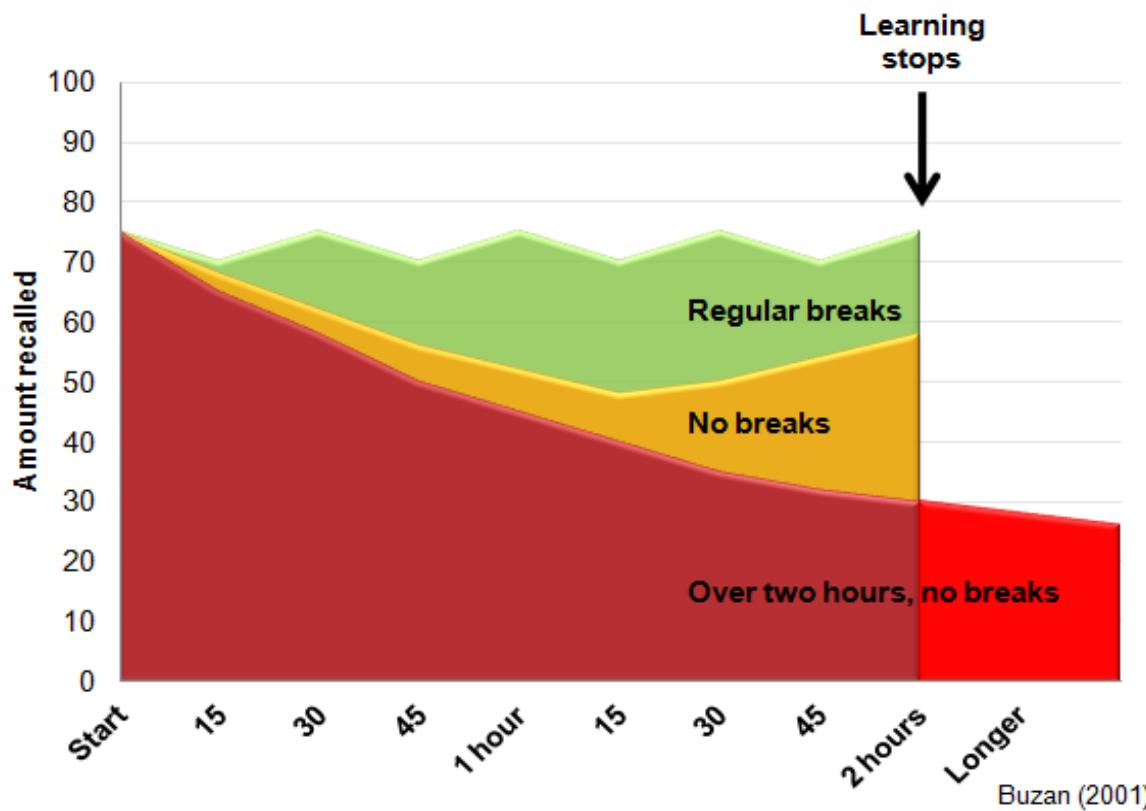


Based on Buzan (2001)

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# Take breaks



# Strategies for revision

What do you actually DO in a  
revision session?

# Strategies for revision

What's wrong  
with just reading  
lots of books or  
notes?

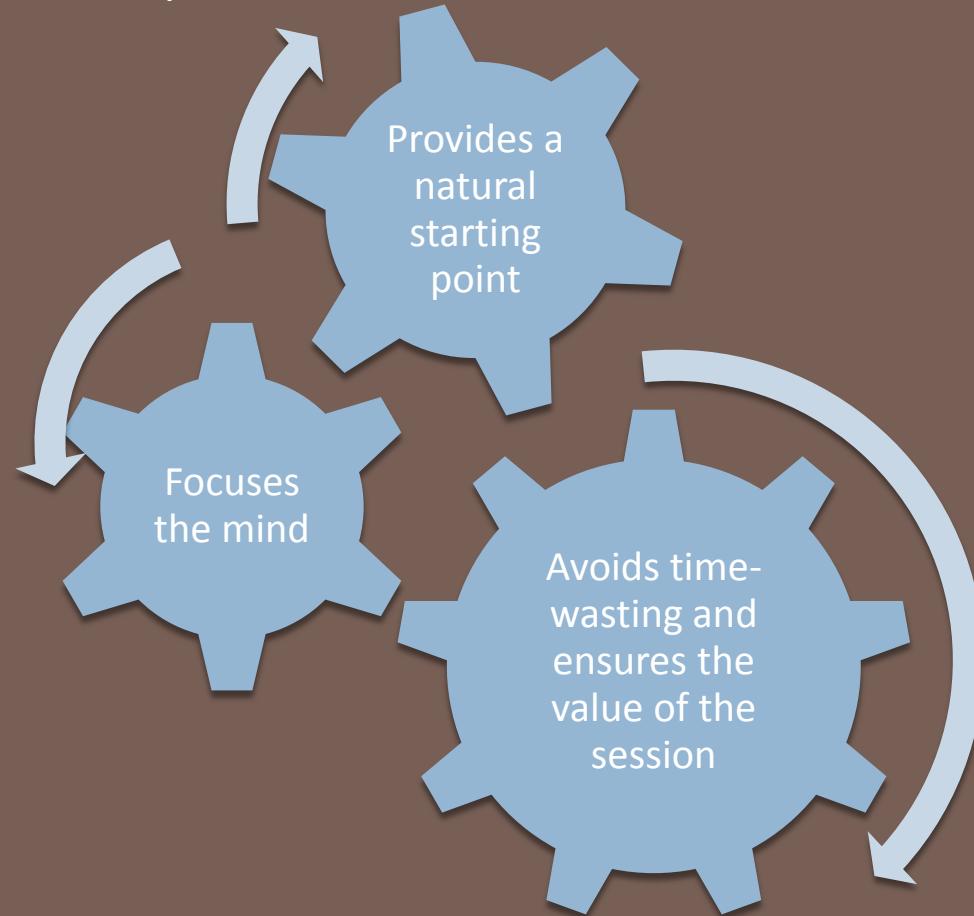
Nothing, but you'll  
learn better if  
you're more active  
and set yourself  
tasks

# Personal revision plans

- The following are plans for your individual revision sessions.
- They can be amended or changed in any way you see fit – adapt them to suit you!

# Why have session plans for revision?

Many students produce a revision timetable, yet ignore the content of the designated sessions they set aside.



# Past papers

- You can access the past examinations database via the "my.exams" tab in [www.my.bham.ac.uk](http://www.my.bham.ac.uk)

[ my.bham ]

- You are automatically signed up the Past Papers Database channel on the portal.

# Personal revision plans

- a) Assess your speed
- b) Exam details
- c) Gauging your exam paper
- d) Becoming familiar with key question language
- e) Sorting out your material
- f) Condensing your notes
- g) Preparing an outline to an exam question
- h) Preparing answers from different angles
- i) Complete a full answer
- j) Complete a full, timed mock paper
- k) Swap questions with others on your course and quiz each other

# Personal revision plans

Task 4: In groups, look at the personal revision plans provided.

- Can you think of ways you might amend them to make them more suitable for your needs?
- Can you think of any other useful activities around which you might build a revision session plan?

# Part 3: The exam

*the main  
event*

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# Checking and making arrangements: a week prior

- The date and time of the exam.
- The whereabouts of the exam. If time is going to be at a premium on the day of the exam, it would be well worth checking how to get to the exam room, and how long it will take. You may have to decide on your mode of travel, and look into parking arrangements if you are going in your own car.
- Do the items you can take into the exam - texts, dictionaries, calculators etc. – have a particular specification? Your exam guidance should give these details if you are unsure.
- Is it permissible to take light refreshments, sweets or drinks into the exam room? Decide what to have with you.

# What to do on the big day

- Get up at a reasonable time after an early night (8 hours please)
- Eat a good breakfast – don't rush
- Leave in plenty of time
- Avoid sugars – these can lead to a drop in sugar levels during the exam
- Remember your pens, pencils, ruler and whatever else you need
- Stay positive. You know that you're ready, so enjoy the day
- At the venue, think about whether you should talk to others or stay on your own
- Breathe deeply and stay calm
- At your desk, read ALL the instructions on the front of the paper carefully – don't assume they are the same as in past years
- Organise your desktop for your own comfort

# After the exam

- Don't assume you've failed – the probability is that you've passed
- Try not to brood on anything you couldn't answer – you did your best
- Don't pay any attention to other students who gloat about how well they've done – they are trying to make you feel insecure about your exam performance: don't let them

# Conclusion

- Please feel free to ask questions or suggest any ideas for future workshops
- Thank you for attending, please leave feedback!