

Start early to reduce stress and increase your chance of success

- **Write and revise summaries of your notes** as you complete each section of the course. Summarise your summaries and reduce information to keywords. You may find it helpful to write your keywords on coloured cue cards (packs of cards are available from Student Success Reception for \$1 per pack).
- **Go over your summaries** regularly.
- **Focus on understanding** material as it is covered in class - ask your lecturer or classmates if you need help. It is very difficult to learn material that you don't understand.
- **Turn course objectives into questions** and try to answer them. Imagine you are setting the exam/test and predict possible questions. Make a note if the lecturer emphasises a particular section/topic. If your course is based on Unit Standards, use the performance criteria to guide your revision.
- **Record important dates on a wall planner** (eg dates for assignments, tests and exams). Download or buy a planner at the start of each term, semester, or year.
- **Write weekly and daily plans.** Include specific tasks to be completed and the time you expect each task to take (e.g. summarise Cell Biology notes, one hour). Prioritise tasks according to their urgency. Try to set precise, realistic, manageable goals for each study session (free weekly timetables and day planners are available from Student Success).
- **Attempt to keep to deadlines but be flexible** - revise your timetable if you find it's not working. The time needed for each subject depends upon the relative proportion of marks allocated in the exam, your subject strengths and weaknesses, the amount of material you have to cover, and the time you can spare.
- **Develop a routine** (e.g. time, place of study), as this will help you stick to your study plan. Use your best study times for the material you find the most difficult.
- **Have breaks every 30 minutes or so.** Relax and reward yourself.
- **At the end of each session, revise what you have learnt** - jot down the key points, recite material, draw a mind map, or test yourself using cue cards etc. Take an active approach!
- **Keep balance in your life** - adequate exercise, sleep, diet, and relaxation, as well as study.

As the exam or test gets closer...

- **Find out as much as you can about the paper** - eg its format, content, length, whether you can take reference books/notes etc. If possible, look at previous exam papers. Some Schools

put past papers on Moodle. If you can't find any there, ask your School administrator whether you can have access to them. Practise writing answers to previous questions under exam conditions.

- **Plan how you will divide up your time** in the exam or test (try to allow for reading and checking time).
- **Double-check details** such as the venue, date and time.
- **Get equipment organised** - e.g. pens, calculator, water bottle.
- **The night before** - try to get enough sleep, eat well, briefly revise your summaries, mind maps, cue cards etc.

On the day...

- **Skim through your summaries** again on the morning of the exam or test to refresh your memory, but don't try to cram new material. If you feel a bit panicky try to reassure yourself by thinking about the preparation you have done.
- **Get to the exam/test early.** If you can choose your seat, find a place where you feel comfortable and will be able to concentrate.
- **Make use of reading time, if available** (exam papers usually allow 10 minutes for reading) - skim the paper and read instructions carefully. Jot down a quick plan of the approximate time you expect to spend on each question or section.
- **If you are anxious, try the following relaxation exercise** (Hinton & Casey, 1999).
 1. Take a deep breath in and a long breath out.
 2. Breathe in again and straighten your back as if someone is pulling a lever between your shoulder blades.
 3. Look straight ahead at something inanimate (e.g. clock) and focus your mind on a positive thought such as 'I can do this exam' as you breathe out.
 4. Take another deep breath in and a long breath out. Then breathe normally. Relax and lower your shoulders.
- **Take short breaks** during the exam to stretch and take a few deep breaths.
- **Keep an eye on the clock** – try to stick to your time plan.
- **If you finish early, check your paper** to ensure that you have answered all required questions, and proofread your answers for legibility, spelling and grammar (ideally, you should leave 5-10 minutes for checking your exam paper – this is not generally possible with shorter tests).