



Revision and exam techniques

Introduction

This guide gives ideas and techniques for effective revision and exam performance.

Strategic revision

- Set your own positive goals for revision
- Focus on key questions/topics.
Use past papers, own key questions, seminar topics, length of time spent on topic, emphasis in lectures to decide key areas to focus on.
- Aim to be good enough, not perfect. Perfectionism is flawed!

“Doing your best is about working as ...well as you can in the time available. Tackling flawed perfectionism begins by saying no to unreasonably high demands of yourself.” (Moore et al., 2010, p.148)

Multisensory active revision techniques

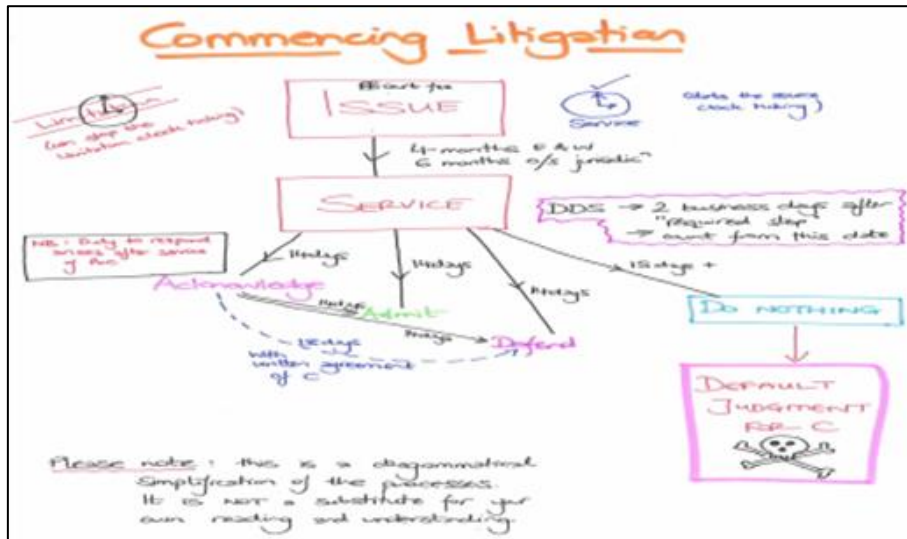
- **Actively review knowledge**
New knowledge often needs to be recalled four times to enter long-term memory. Also active learning involves making your own sense of knowledge.

Example of active reviewing

1. Identify key points in lecture notes & reading on topic
2. Make a flow chart of topic's key points
3. Test yourself on topic, covering parts of chart & recalling
4. Answer past exam question on topic

- **Use multisensory techniques** – here are some examples:

Pattern notes/Flow diagram

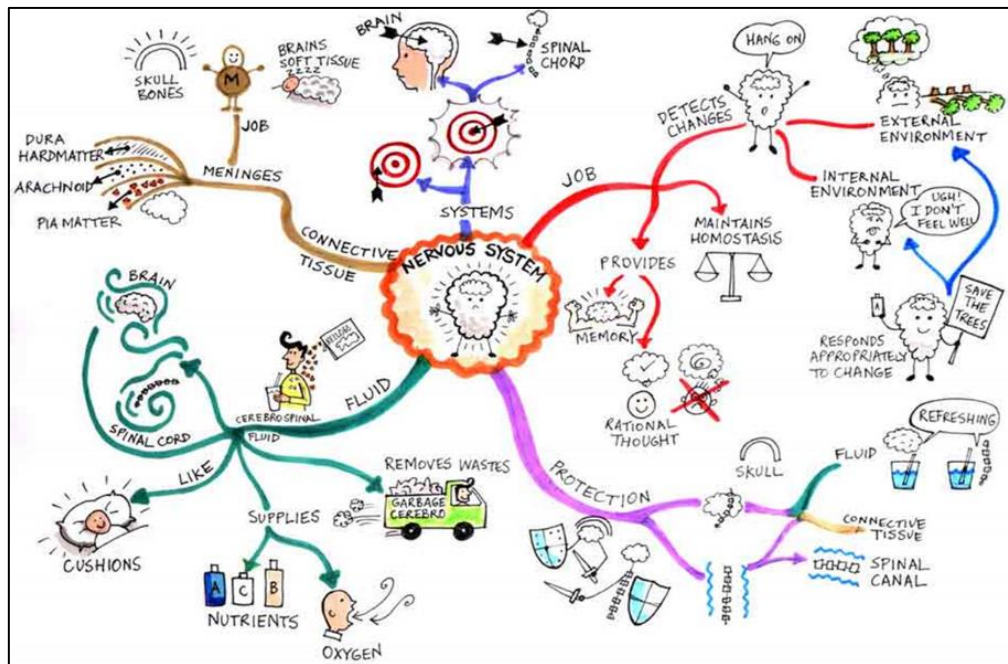


Recording and listening to notes



I record myself on my phone making key points in revision and listen to it on the train

Mind maps



(Buzan, 2011)

Flash cards

You can use these for a question and answer session to test if you can recall key information. Relate it to your own experience to make it meaningful and memorable. For example, if you were studying Law:

<p>What if a police officer stopped and asked to search me. What am I entitled to ask under PACE law?</p>	<p>I could ask the police officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What legal power am I being detained under? • What is the reason for & aims of the search? • What is the officer's name & police station? • Could I have a copy of the search record?
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Revising in groups/pairs



What really helped in my exam prep was a few days revising with a friend. Talking through answers and explaining topics makes a huge difference when the person is serious and focussed. During our study breaks, chatting with a friend helped me relax.

Exam techniques

- Reflect on your techniques from previous successful exams



In an exam I did well in, I went running in the mornings before revising. I had the night off before the exam chatting with family. As I travelled in I listened to music before the exam.

- Plan your exam strategy before you go in
 - What order do you like to do questions – easier/more difficult first?
 - When reading questions, how do you get yourself to focus on key points – highlighting instruction words, topics, number of marks?

- What's useful to include in plans for longer questions?
- How much time will you spend on each question, reading questions at beginning and reviewing answers at end?
- Dealing with nerves – what will you do?
 - If you go blank, move on to another point.
 - Make some rough notes. Re-read question, jot down key words, free associate, keep your pen moving.

More advice from the Academic Skills Team

For further study skills advice, please enrol on our Moodle page:

<https://moodle.city.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38922>

To make an appointment for one-to-one study skills support, please complete this form:

<https://city.tfaforms.net/4723090> or email skills@city.ac.uk

References

Buzan, T. (2011) *Mind Map Gallery*. Available at: <http://www.tonybuzan.com/gallery/mind-maps/> (Accessed: 31 March 2017).

Moore, S., Neville, C., Murphy, M. and Connolly, C. (2010) *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.