

## Eight useful tips

### ... for revising for and doing exams

#### 1. Make sure you are familiar with your set texts.

Remember, one of the key things we are testing is your ability to analyse, evaluate and interpret your set texts. As a consequence, your texts should form the basis of your revision. You should know them well and have thought about them.

#### 2. Plan your revision strategy by looking at past exam papers.

In revising for an exam, it is possible to learn everything. Consequently you need to be intelligently selective about what you revise. Try to think about what the main themes of the module are, and how many questions you have to answer. Looking back at past exam papers can help you to identify significant themes, by seeing the kind of questions that come up. If you look back over a number of years, you will probably find that the same kind of questions repeat themselves in different forms.

While you cannot revise everything, don't revise too few topics. Try to make sure you have one or two topics up your sleeve as 'insurance' in case the question for one of your topics doesn't suit you, or doesn't come up at all.

#### 3. As part of your revision, write practise-essays and essay plans.

Exams, as we have said, are about responding to your texts, and applying ideas generated in one context in a slightly different way. So you need to practise manipulating the material and ideas that you have formed in a number of different ways, and see how it can apply to a range of questions and situations. You can do this through writing short, timed essay or gobbet answers (in an exam, you would probably spend 40 minutes on an essay and 15 minutes on each gobbet). Past papers can be a good way of finding questions to practise with. It can also help you to think about the module and its themes if you devise your own questions. Just because you can ask yourself the question doesn't mean that you have the answer ready to hand.

#### 4. Read the paper carefully before you start writing in the exam.

Once in the exam room, it is always easy to panic. Making sure you read the whole paper through carefully before you start writing can help to keep you calm. Also take note of how many questions you are required to do. Valuable marks can be lost if students don't read the instructions properly and not complete the right number of questions.

**5. Spend a few minutes planning your answers before you start writing.**

Exams are not simply a test of knowledge. Exams assess how you use knowledge to construct an argument. Therefore it is important to spend time thinking about how you are going to arrange your material most effectively to form a strong and coherent response to the question.

**6. Set time-limits for yourself for each of the questions.**

Another common mistake students make is to run out of time. Work out how much time you can allow yourself to write an answer, and then keep to it. If you run out of time to write one essay, you will score no marks for it. On most papers (with a compulsory gobbet questions and a choice of three essays), you should allow yourself about 40 minutes per essay, and 15 minutes for each gobbet.

**7. Allow five minutes at the end of the exam to read over your work.**

Mark sure you proof-read your exam paper. Small slips can creep in (particularly when your mind is racing ahead of your hand), which can change the meaning of what you wanted to say, or make it obscure.

**8. Make sure your hand-writing is legible.**

Although your markers will make every effort to read what you have written, if it is impossible to read, it is also impossible to mark.