**GENERAL STUDY ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

**General**

Whether you are completing coursework units or preparing for written exams the key to success in all study is careful planning, preparation and organisation. There is no perfect way to study or revise; different methods suit different students, but if you do not manage your workload in a planned and structured way the following statements made by many students will soon apply to you:

*“*I just can’t meet the deadlines; the work keeps piling up.”

“Concentration is my problem; I can’t settle to anything for very *long.”*

**Your keys to success are:**

**Careful planning and preparation**

* devise a study and revision plan and stick to it. Learn how to balance your workload
* for those students who are keen to succeed the time to work hard is NOW!

**Organisation**

* choose an appropriate place to study
* have suitable materials, record deadlines / exam dates and create a work plan
* keep organised notes and folders

**Time management**

* meet deadlines; don’t leave it until the last minute. Divide your time equally between your subjects. Make a plan and stick to it
* break all subjects down into manageable units
* a file full of notes can be daunting!

**Be active not passive**

* ask if you do not understand
* practise – read, understand, and apply. Highlight key points – use colour coding. Keep testing yourself

**Act on your tutors’ feedback and use revision sheets, cards or websites. Your success will not only depend on your interest and ability in the subject and your knowledge of it – it will be influenced by a range of other factors:**

* your ability to use information will influence how well you tackle your work
* your notes need to be good enough to use later, e.g. for revision or assignments
* you need to organise and store notes so that you can retrieve them to use again
* the quality of your work will depend on how effectively you allocate your time
* your performance in examinations will be influenced by your revision / exam techniques, time management and how you cope under pressure
* your tutors will inform you what factors or criteria your work will be assessed by

**How to make a plan**

**Two essentials of good planning**

* make regular and complete lists of everything that has to be done. At the same time each week, look ahead and identify what has to be done next week. Draw up a list for that week
* next, compile a chart for the week and sub-divide each day into sessions. Base the length of the sessions on the duration of your classes. This will be a familiar unit and already part of your pattern

**How to complete your daily plan**

* block out your “committed time”, e.g. lessons, part time work
* build in some time for relaxation / recreation
* plot the time you will spend on Private Study

**Hints and tips**

* when compiling your schedule for the week ahead, check back to last week’s to see if there was anything you failed to complete. If so, add it to this week’s list
* after each session review briefly what you have done; if work is left incomplete, allocate further time to finish it

**REMEMBER, A LOT CAN BE ACHIEVED IN A 30 MINUTE SLOT**

**What does a ‘good’ folder of work look like in the Sixth Form?**

It is VERY important that you adopt good study habits right from the start of your Sixth Form journey – failure to do so will inevitably lead to FAILURE in August!

* Make sure all folders are clearly titled with the Unit of the syllabus – use dividers to highlight the different Units you are studying
* Work in folders will form a revision guide during your exams so they need to be kept up to date, detailed and well-organised
* All folders should have your TAG on the front
* A ‘Progress Tracking Grid’ should be at the front of your folder and will be provided by your subject teacher where you track all assessed work and identify where and when you have achieved your personal best
* All folders should have a copy of your ‘Good Progress Action Planning’ booklet – which is up to date and evidences the learning conversations you will have with all your subject staff each half-term
* When work is marked by your teachers you should respond in RED pen to any questions they have written or any REWIND and REWRITEs they have asked you to do.
* Your folders will be checked regularly during your Progress meetings with your subject staff and may be called for by Mrs Flaherty from time to time to ensure this minimum standard is being maintained
* Please note that failure to meet these standards may result in an Individual Action Plan being set in order for you to get ‘back on track’ with your organisation and independent study habits

**PREPARING FOR EXAMS – REVISION AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

It is essential to plan using a revision timetable. Prepare well in advance. Check you are aware of coursework, deadlines, exam dates and times. Display them on your bedroom wall!

**Prepare**Prepare your timetable well in advance

**Break** Breakdown each subject into modules, then individual topics

**Divide** Divide into revision sessions. Work out how much time you need for each one. Do not leave your last exam or final piece of coursework to the end

**Tick off**Tick off each session on completion. Don’t forget to leave time for testing

**Always**Always try to revise the more difficult topics first and earlier in the day

**Subject Preparation**

For each subject you study find out and record the following information in your file:

* What are the AOs?
* How will this unit be assessed?
* What deadlines need to be met?
* Track your progress for marked work on a ‘tracking sheet’ at the front of your file.

**REMEMBER: ‘REVISION’ MEANS ‘SEEING AGAIN’**

* revision should be about condensing information
* the manageable units of the course should be allocated to appropriate ‘slots’ in your revision plan
* you should revise in ‘slots’ of about an hour
* tick off topics when revised to show progress and give sense of achievement
* use mnemonics
* consistent study pays
* revision starts when you start studying
* take notes which you understand
* learn something, cover it, and recite it
* it is easier to remember pictures/graphs/diagrams
* associate new information with old
* review with others; share knowledge and everyone gains
* study past exams papers and any specimen questions
* practise writing answers in full, under timed conditions
* give yourself treats and rewards – if you deserve them!

Revise in a quiet room with no distractions; some people need silence whilst others work better with quiet music in the background. Check you have all the resources and stationery you need.

**Revision planning**

Plan your revision programme for each subject well in advance and reap the rewards. Start 10-12 weeks before your first exam.

**Final hints and tips**

Make a final revision hit list of the topics you absolutely must cover.

One month before your exams commence, check all dates, places and times.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Exam/final CW hand in | Date | Time | Duration | Place | Additional notes |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**REMEMBER: SLEEP, REST AND EAT WELL. SOME LEISURE IS STILL IMPORTANT. CHECK YOU HAVE ALL OF YOUR ESSENTIAL STATIONERY AND ARRIVE EARLY FOR EXAMS.**

**PREPARING FOR EXAMS – ESSAY WRITING**

Essay writing poses a number of diverse challenges. It requires the ability to:

* know and understand a subject area in some depth
* select and organise material from the subject area in response to a title
* present facts or argue a case (usually both) in a formal and structured manner

Although some aspects of your essay writing techniques will vary depending on the subject, there are key points which are relevant when approaching any essay:

* it is not a one-session task but should be spread over several sessions
* you should not simply sit down with a blank sheet of paper and start to write
* you can expect to do the bulk of your work before you write the ‘real’ thing
* you should break the task into stages so that you can tackle it a bit at a time

**REMEMBER: CAREFUL PLANNING IS THE KEY TO A GOOD ESSAY**

**The criteria of good essay writing**

When a tutor reads your essay he or she will be asking the following things:

* have you answered the question in the title?
* have you drawn on the relevant parts of the subject area for the main content?
* have you presented a coherent argument?
* is the essay written in an objective, analytical style with the use of evidence, etc?
* is the essay well written? (i.e. is it easy to read?)

**Activity** Choose an essay from one of the subjects you are studying.

* list the pre-writing tasks you would need to do
* make a plan using a mind map under the headings given below:
* key words in question
* resources that may need to be drawn upon
* key words/information needed to be covered throughout the essay
* logical structure – number of paragraphs and overall idea for each of them
* introduction
* conclusion

**Checklist for essay writing**

**Pre-writing**

* identify any key directive words in the question
* identify any key ideas in the question
* make a simple mind map
* find suitable sources
* use a variety of sources
* note all your sources
* make notes in your own words

**Planning**

* make a suitable plan
* take account of any key words in the question
* select suitable and relevant material
* check each paragraph has a clear, controlling idea and is adequately supported
* present your ideas logically

**Writing**

* check your ideas are in the right sequence
* check the structure of the essay is clear
* check you have written a sound introduction & conclusion

**Editing**

* check sentences are clear
* check punctuation and spellings are correct
* read your essay aloud if possible
* is there a word limit applied? If so, does it fit?
* record all sources and quotations

**Improving your essay writing**

Read all comments on practice essays that are returned to you very carefully. Discuss these with your tutor and use them to improve your future work.

**REMEMBER: YOU WILL LEARN A LOT FROM YOUR TUTOR FEEDBACK ON WORK SUBMITTED FOR MARKING!**