

Academic Skills Centre

Revision and exam strategies: Planning for a two-hour open book exam

Chenée Psaros
Senior Academic Skills Adviser

What would you like to know about revision and preparing for exams?

Any set structure that can work well for all essays, especially how to get top marks, maybe a checklist

do we have to do full references?

a little bit everyday

Do we just use our information from lectures?

any advice you would have around best ways to revise

so we should memorise research ? by 'we don't need to reference' do we still need to cite papers ?

Do we have access to past papers?

how do you recommend to prepare

What would you like to know about revision and preparing for exams?

how exactly does a timed vs coursework essay differ, what does a good timed essay look like

Example model essay!!!

how does referencing work in a timed essay

If you would recommend in-text citations over references if this is something we've revised?

Why cant it be longer?Is it marked using similar criteria to first and second year where we had all day?Are the questions descriptive or evaluative?

What exactly is meant by critical evaluation and analysis?

do you have to know all content 100% to do well?

Why would we be given timed essays in third year when we've had no practice the first two years?

What would you like to know about revision and preparing for exams?

Model top essay under
timed writing

what could the
questions ask about

example exam
questions

How does the submissions
work for people who have
extra time for their exams?

will the essay mainly be
knowledge/description
based or will it be critical
evaluation and require
evidence

references

is the markscheme fixed or
flexible meaning that if you
articulate your points well to
link them that itll still count
and youll get good marks?

are there grade
boundaries?

2



20



What would you like to know about revision and preparing for exams?

We had longer before
and it was fine

how long is the essay
expected to be, is there
a word cap

If we going to use the
knowledge from our
lectures and slides, how we
can be sure we won't have
a high turninit score?

Session Plan

Organising your revision

Using revision techniques

Passive v Active

Exam techniques

Essay based exams

Planning for an essay exam question

Keeping a healthy balance



Section 1 – Organising your revision



Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Helps us get organized, and feel less overwhelmed

Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Helps us get organized, and feel less overwhelmed

1st step – gather information

Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Helps us get organized, and feel less overwhelmed

1st step – gather information

When are the exams?

Topics?

Gather notes and reading

Where are my gaps?

Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Helps us get organized, and feel less overwhelmed

1st step – gather information

When are the exams?

Topics?

Gather notes and reading

Where are my gaps?

2nd step – plan your timetable

Revision Timetable

Why create a timetable?

Helps us get organized, and feel less overwhelmed

1st step – gather information

When are the exams?

Topics?

Gather notes and reading

Where are my gaps?

2nd step – plan your timetable

When will I work on each topic?

Work backward from the exams

Gradually build up time to the exams

Interleave (see **active learning**)...

Using SMART goals

- Don't just set out to "revise"
- Set yourself SMART revision goals (daily? Weekly?)



e.g.
AVOID "Revise on Thursday"

INSTEAD:

"On Thursday morning I will spend 1 hour creating a mind map on topic A and identifying any gaps in my knowledge"

Making sure your timetable is effective

- Revising little and often – better than a few long revision sessions!
- Prioritise **active learning**
- Plan in plenty of breaks, exercise, and time to do other things.
- Each week assess how you are doing – is this working so far?



Section 2 – Revision strategies



Avoiding revision “bad habits”

- How you revise is as/more important than how much you revise
- Be conscious of what you are doing and why.
- Just because you have always done it doesn't mean it works/is right.
- Make sure you're using your time well
- Try new things.



Revision - What doesn't work well

Re-reading and excessive highlighting.

- Time-consuming
- Not goal oriented
- Little thinking is required
- i.e. it is passive
- Doesn't lead to memorisation



Making revision work - Active learning

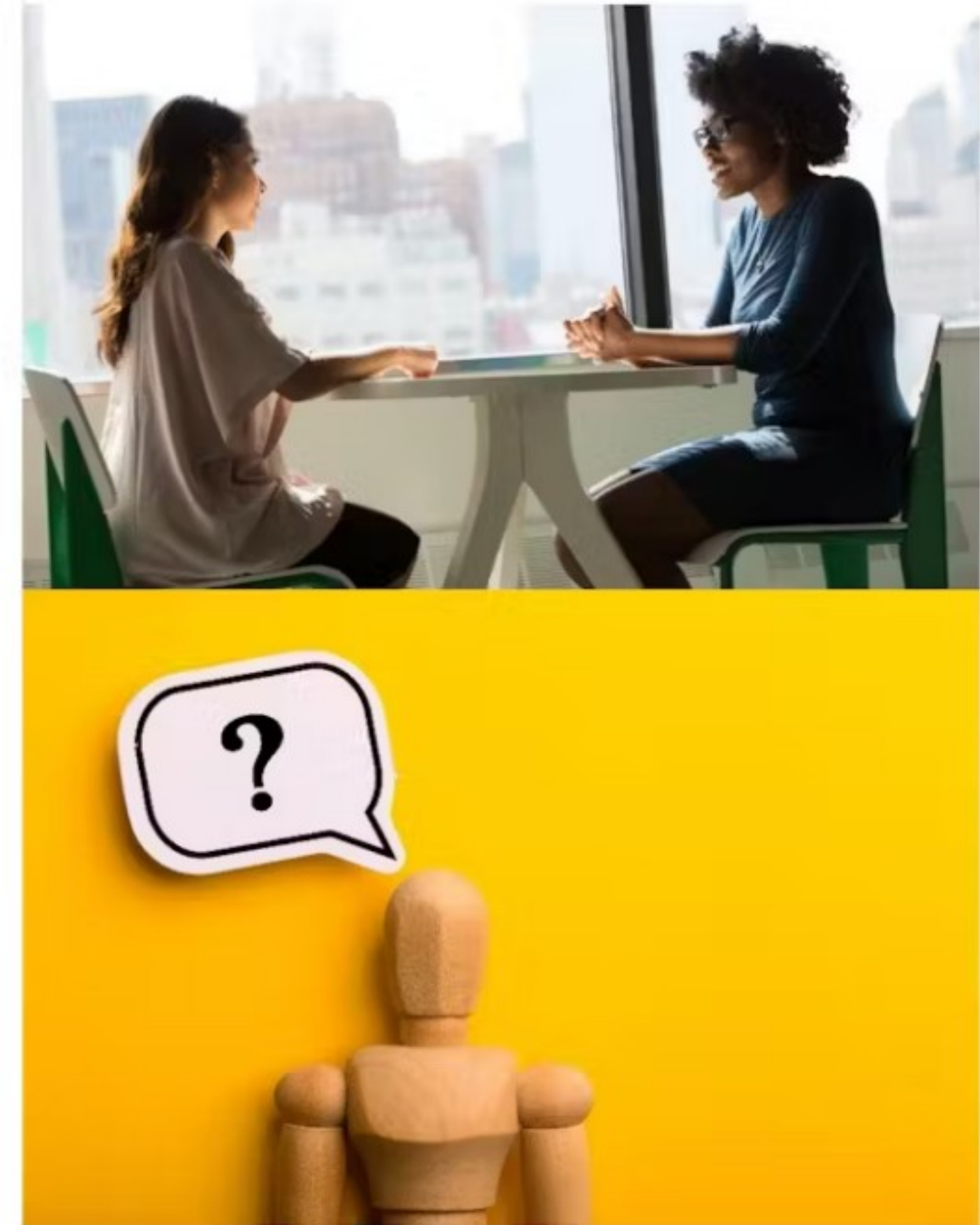
- Revision strategies that make you **do something** with the material
- Involve actively thinking about and processing the information
- Goal-oriented
- Recall-oriented

Active recall techniques

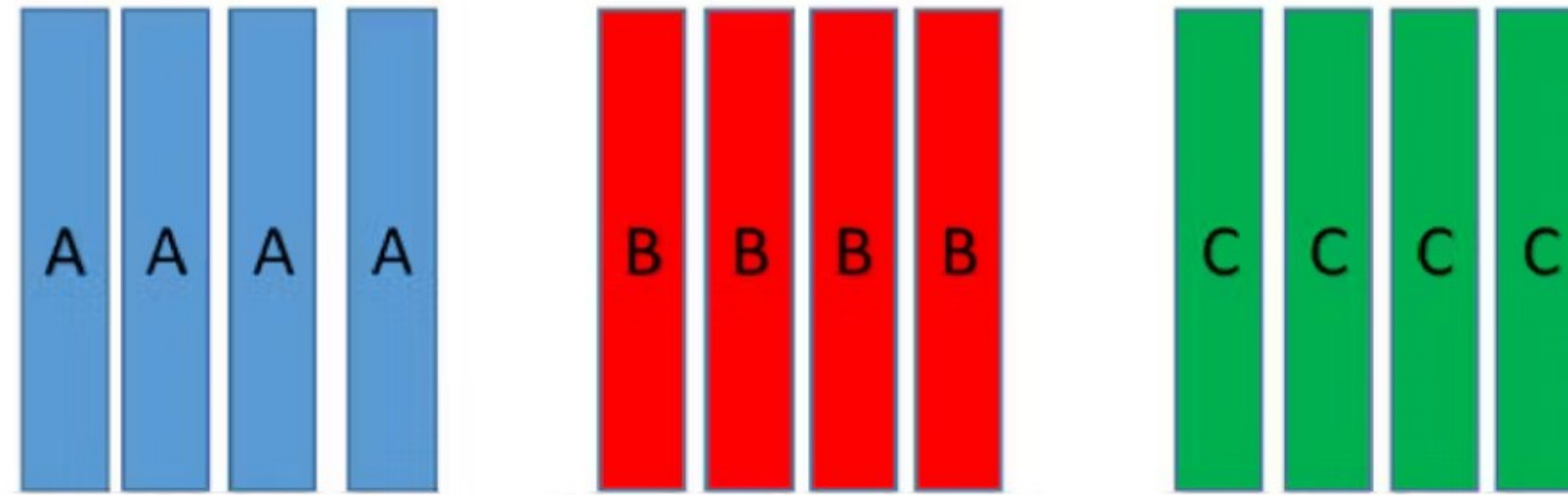
Putting information into different forms:

- Talking to friends
- Recording yourself
- Visuals - drawing
- Write a summary
- Elaboration
- Creating questions

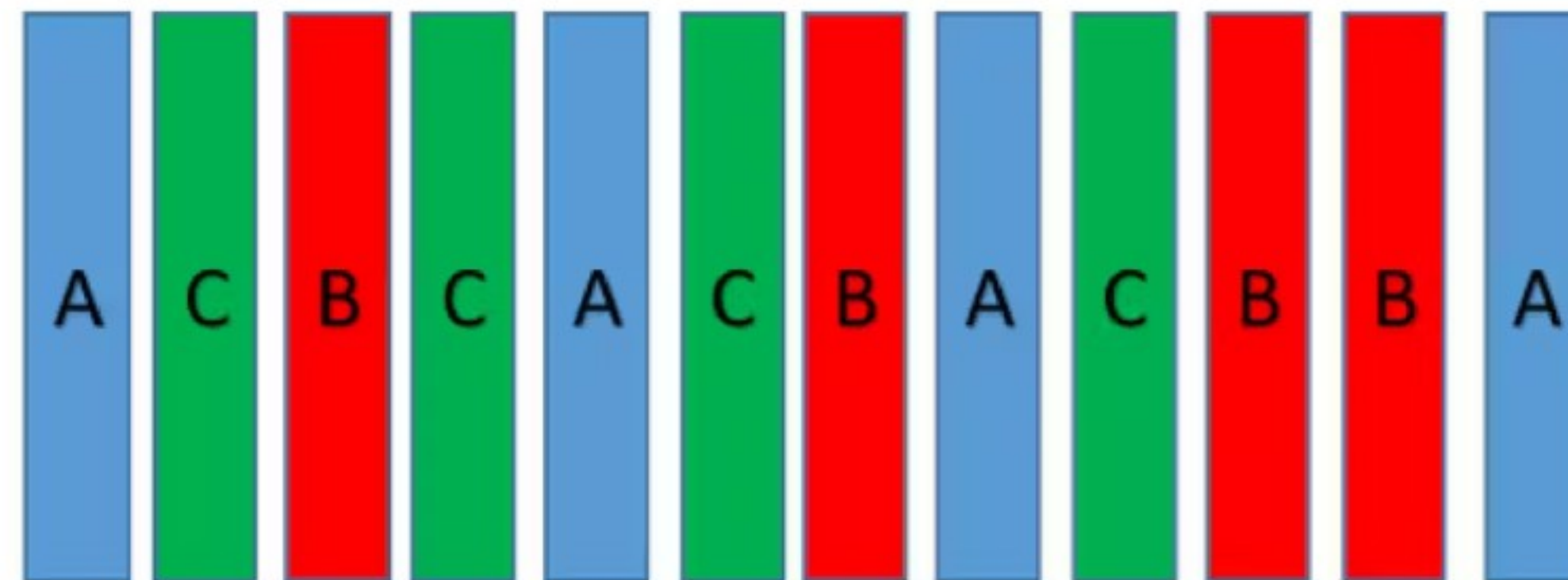
Real-life examples, case studies



Massed Practice



Interleaved Practice



Retrieval practice - know your gaps

Fundamentals Global Mental Health	
Concept of mental health and mental illness	Know well
Mental health and mortality	Know well
Mental health and morbidity	Know well
Mental health, human rights, and human security	Needs lots of work
Culture and mental health	Know well
Contemporary approaches and frameworks to mental health system strengthening	Needs practice

Retrieving our knowledge

Flashcards, mindmaps

Never too early to try a practice question or paper

Helps you to see what you know and don't know – even if this feels difficult!

Think about 'traffic lighting' your work

Know well

Needs practice

Needs lots of work

Organising your information in open book exams

Your notes

- Make your own notes
- Summarise
- Use images
- Have a system
- Apps (but these take time to learn)



Organising your information in open book exams

Topic	Lecture notes	Journal Articles
CBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Patient Factors</u>• <u>Treatment Factors</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dunne (2018)• Jonas (2021)
PCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Patient Factors</u>• <u>Treatment Factors</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smith (2012)
Psychoanalysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Examples</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Freud (1923)</u>

Your sources

- Hyperlink to your sources
- File or save them using a system
- Have a Word document with links to your sources
- Have data



Section 3 - Exam techniques



Before the exam

Avoid cramming! Rest and nutrition are much more important for exam success

Online:

- Get suitable workspace set up
- Notes available – organised and designed to use in exam
- Food and water available
- Laptop (not a tablet)
- Charger
- No phone!



Getting started

- Take your time!
- Read through the instructions – TWICE!
- Read through all the questions.
- Decide:
 - Which you think you will answer
 - How much time to take on each question
- Make sure you know exactly what's required.
- Different sections? Plan how much time to spend on each



Essay Exams

- Read the question – break down the title
- Look for instructions (verbs e.g. analyse, compare, discuss), limitations and key words
- Make a plan, or mind map
- Think of timings
- Write draft
- Re-read essay:
 - Does it address the question?
 - Do the paragraphs flow?



Structuring your essay

How many words?

1500 words

The introduction - approx. 10% = 150 words

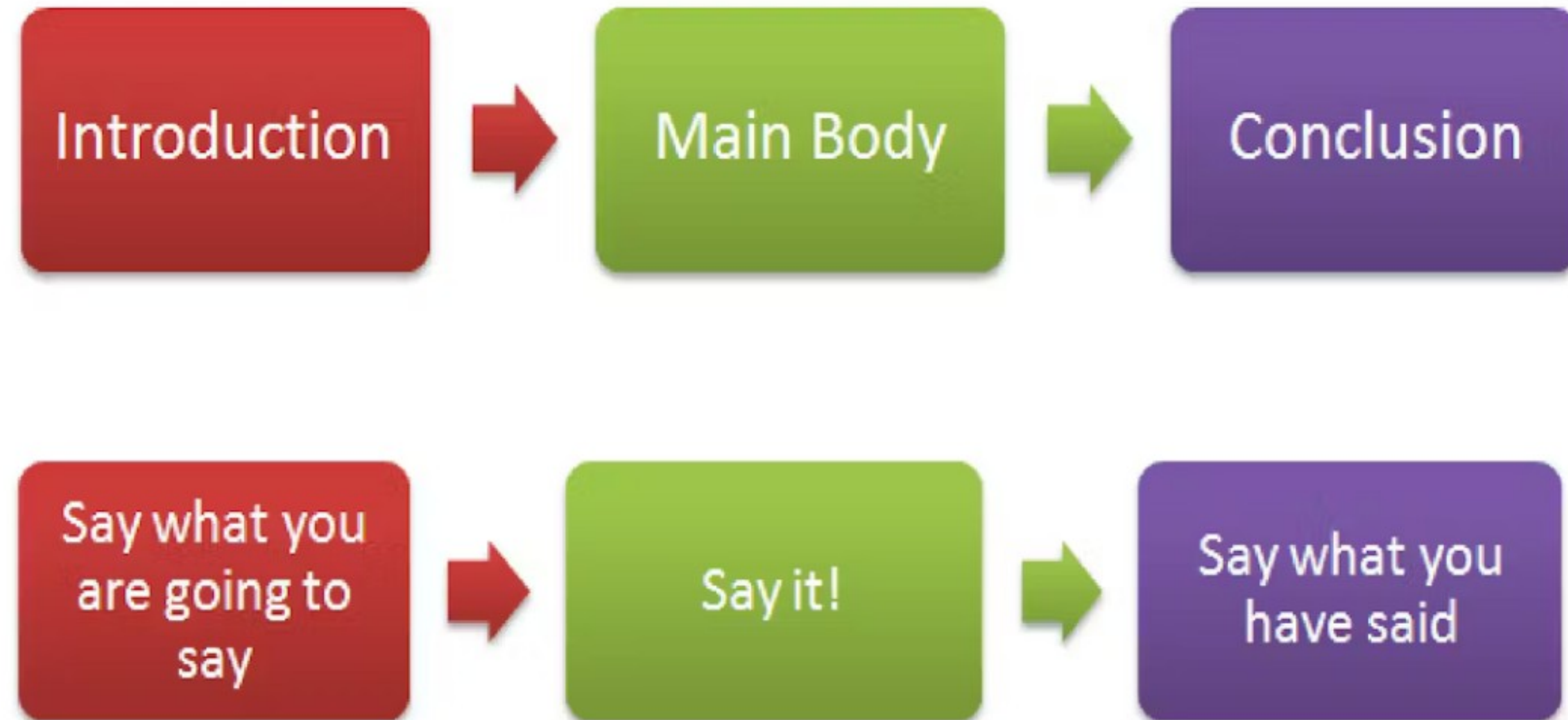
Main body paragraphs – 1200 words

The conclusion – approx. 10% - 150 words



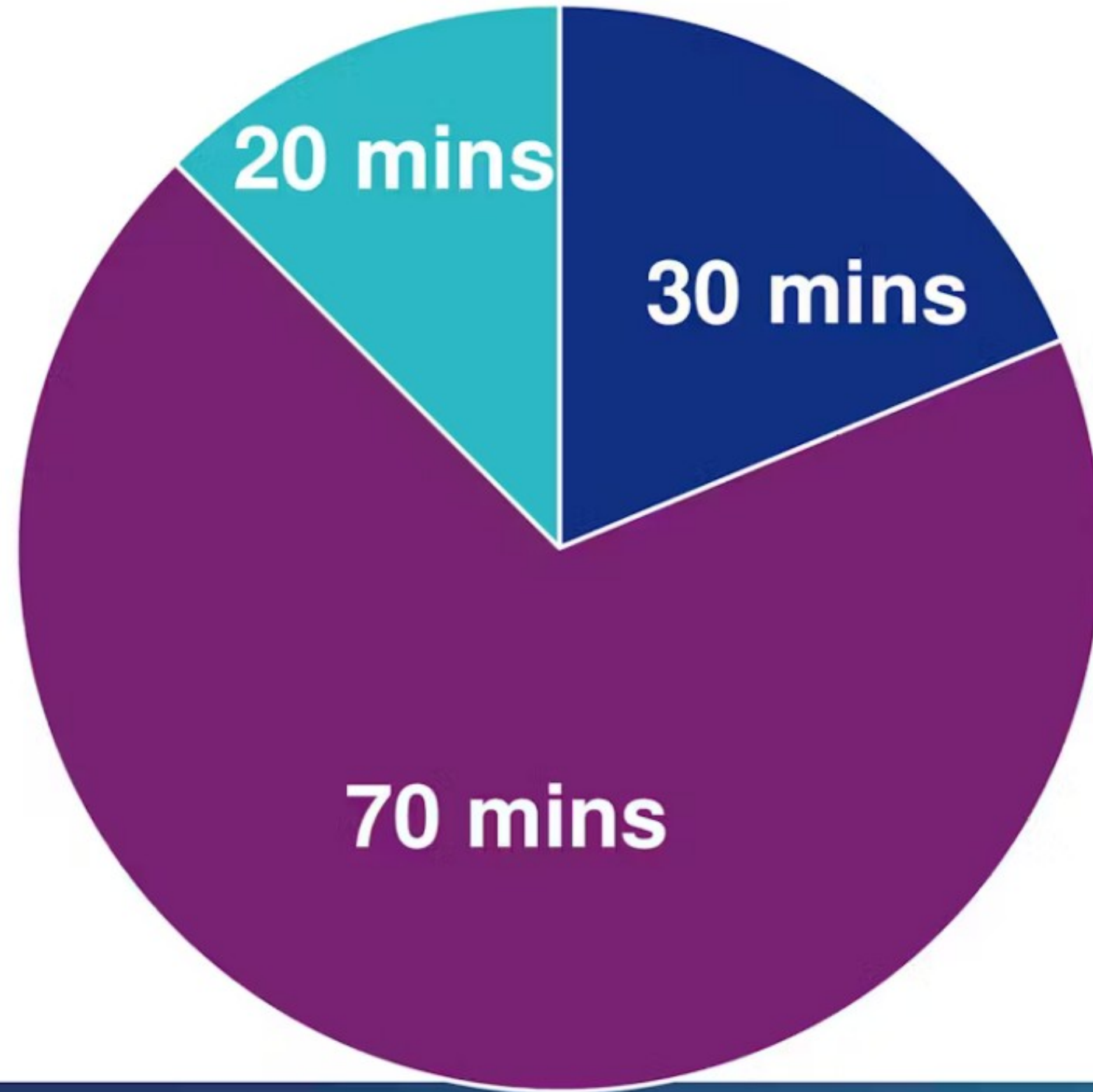
Break your essay into smaller tasks

Essay Structure



Timing yourself

2 hours = 120 minutes



- Planning
- Writing
- Reviewing

Padlet link



Support available from the Academic Skills Centre

- Workshops
- One-to-ones
- [Academic Skills QMPlus pages](#)
- Studiosity – online feedback service
- Study Well – Students Union

Support available from Queen Mary

- Disability and Dyslexia Service (Extenuating Circumstances)
- Advice and counselling
- Wellbeing

Questions?





Queen Mary
University of London