Using Past Papers for Effective Revision

Please add your suggestions below. Once the ideas have gathered I will attempt to put them in a student friendly booklet. Thank you to every one so far. Much appreciated.

1. Thank you to Mary Whitehouse for this link. Not the same thing, but on the theme of making better use of examiner reports I have written about creating formative assessment items using the comments from examiner reports and mark schemes in the York Science Blog here http://yorkscience.org.uk/making-best-use-of-exam-questions/

2. Take one question at a time and see exactly the parts of the specification it has been taken from. Highlight that part of the specification with a highlighter. This way you will become very familiar with the specification as you revise.

I use this method a lot and explain to the students to try and put themselves into the mind of the examiner. They

3. Look at the answer of one question from an examiners mark scheme and try to guess the question without looking at the actual question. You will be surprised how much you can learn from this.

4. Look at the number of marks a question is worth, don’t answer the question but work out what you think each mark will be for - then check the mark scheme to see if you are right. This will get you into the habit of working out how much to write and stop you missing out on easy marks

5. Look at the stem of a question and try to guess what the questions will be.

6. I find using an old fashioned egg timer useful when revising with a class using past papers. Give out a paper. Choose the 1st question, and set the timer for the exact number of minutes as the number of marks available. Allow the students to answer the question in the time available then go through the question. If students finish the question early then they could turn to the back of the paper and work on the last question. If you allow them to do the next question then the lesson falls apart. This technique doesn’t really help extra timer however. Students could also time themselves at home when they revise.

7. These are from Mike Metcalfe

Before using past papers

i. Make notes!
your own notes rather than a revision guide - distill your notes

ii. Highlight spec in red, amber and green (RAG-ing) - red for not much of a clue, amber for general idea but don't get all the marks, green for all OK

iii. Use past papers (with mark schemes and examiners reports) Attempt those questions that are 'red' or 'amber' on the spec - do not keep going over the same 'green' ground - do the hard thing

8. Students can find past paper questions on a specific topic useful so I have separated out question and answers by topic. This is for AQA GCE Physics A:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4wcsm1ewahiwp2/vTerutZxnc

Brilliant, thanks for sharing this. I find students really like to do questions of the same type and see how similar the questions are

9. Perhaps the most important thing is for pupils to be honest with themselves about the questions they can and can’t do. A struggling pupil will often look at the work of the person next to them to find out the correct approach to use, and then be able to answer the question, but we’re trying to get pupils into a position such that they automatically know the correct approach.

10. If you are going through past papers in class - you might try Papers in Threes - putting students in threes. Each attempt a different question (mark a minute allowed). Swap papers - correct and add previous attempt (70% of mark a minute), third swap use the Mark Scheme.

11. Students with dyslexia (not my idea - got from special need specialist) should try to use different senses eg record AND write revision notes.

1. If you really want the students to find the real subtleties and study the mark scheme, do a paper yourself with some obvious and some hard to find mistakes, and have them mark it. Find this covers a lot of the things people are saying on here about what the marks are for etc