

Guiding Effective Studying

Parent Workshop

- Session 1** Improving Study Organisation
Revision Techniques
- Session 2** Exam Preparation
Frequently Asked Questions
- Session 3** Drop in Q+A



Guiding Effective Studying

Session 1 - Organising Study

SQA + School Assessment 2020/21

Study Planning

The Role of Parents/Carers

Revision Techniques



SQA - The Decision so far

Qualification Level	SQA Assessment	School Assessments
National 5	Teacher Estimates SQA Moderation	December 2020 February / March 2021 May 2021
Higher	SQA Exams May/June 2021	December 2020 February / March 2021
Advanced Higher	Projects (see class teachers) SQA Exams May/June 2021	December 2020 February / March 2021

alongside ongoing assessment and
evidence (coursework, HW, class tests, etc)

SQA - Exam Timetable

The SQA has released an exam timetable running from Monday 10th May 2021 to Friday 4th June 2021.

These dates and times are subject to change over the coming weeks and months, so please check regularly to make sure information is correct.

Full SQA Timetable available at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/1439.html>

For more information on SQA National Qualifications, please visit <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95157.html>

Information will also be shared through:

School Website <https://www.stdavidshighschool.co.uk/>

Headteacher's Newsletter (monthly email)

St. David's Twitter @StDavidsHS

Why Revise?

Revision should be a long-term, ongoing learning strategy reinforcing school work

Memorising summarised notes + repeated practice recalling key information

Improved understanding of key components

Improved exam technique

Improved confidence + wellbeing

Maximising time in school

Teachers will be providing work to prepare learners for SQA assessments. All work is important and students should maintain high standards in tests, classwork and homework.

Asking for help is critical - If a learner doesn't understand, their teacher will help! – take advantage of their knowledge, revision and assessment expertise!

Do not hide away from issues – encourage your child to speak to their Guidance Teacher if there is anything that is stopping them from doing their best. Contact Pupil Support or Guidance directly if you are concerned.

Get organised and meet all deadlines: Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

Use Show My Homework - keep on top of deadlines and differentiate between homework and study.

Make connections between work in school and revision, and current work and previous concepts

Be Organised

1. Exam Timetable

Know when the exams / key assessment dates are - make a calendar with each subject on it. Include all details including dates, times, what assessment it is, etc.

2. Study Planning

Create a timetable that fits in with your family and child's schedule. Make this their routine. Display this plan in their room, study space and kitchen to keep everyone organised. Study timetables will change depending on school week, proximity to exams, holidays and exam leave.

Have a look at Study Planners from [SQA](#) and [YoungScot](#)... or make your own.

Plan adequate time for every subject. Priority should be given to areas which your child is less confident in, but they should continue to practice all areas of each course. Include all Study Support classes in this timetable.

Block study sessions into 45 minute chunks with short breaks in between

Be Organised

3. Stick to the Study Plan

Do not let your child procrastinate – Stick to start and finish times. Getting started is the hardest part – just do it.

Young people should sit down before their revision is set to start allowing them to get all their materials ready for the upcoming session. They may also prefer to take a couple of minutes to clear their head before starting on time.

4. Study Space

Make sure this space works for your child. Different people prefer working in different areas. Make sure it is quiet with no distractions and that they use the same space every time.

The space should be organised with all equipment that they require close to hand – Pens, pencils, calculators, etc. And don't forget notes, Past Papers, Flashcards, etc.

Keep it tidy – Young people should take two minutes at the end of every session to tidy their equipment and file away their work

Family agreement – have rules in place to help maintain positive working environment. If you have other children or pets – keep them away from this space

Study timetable

Plans should be printed and take pride of place in a shared family room, as well as the designated study space. Young people may wish to photograph or use an app to have them on their phones.

Study timetables should change over time: increased time during holidays / study leave, increase time in lead up to exams, change to meet ongoing assessments.

Make sure to know any key assessment dates throughout the year, including internally assessed components of National Qualifications – these will take priority at different times of the year.

To help you start, please view these Revision Resources, including Study Planning apps and templates.

Unconscious Bias

A young persons perception and confidence relating to a subject or area can be changed by the way their parents / family / friends feel about a subject.

It is important to stay regulated and positive about all subjects, and try not to discuss areas you feel are less important or that were negative in your own experiences.

Instead, provide praise where a young person deserves it and encourage them to be aspirational for all subjects.

The Role of Parents

Help with organisation of studying

Support healthy living through their diet, exercise and sleep.

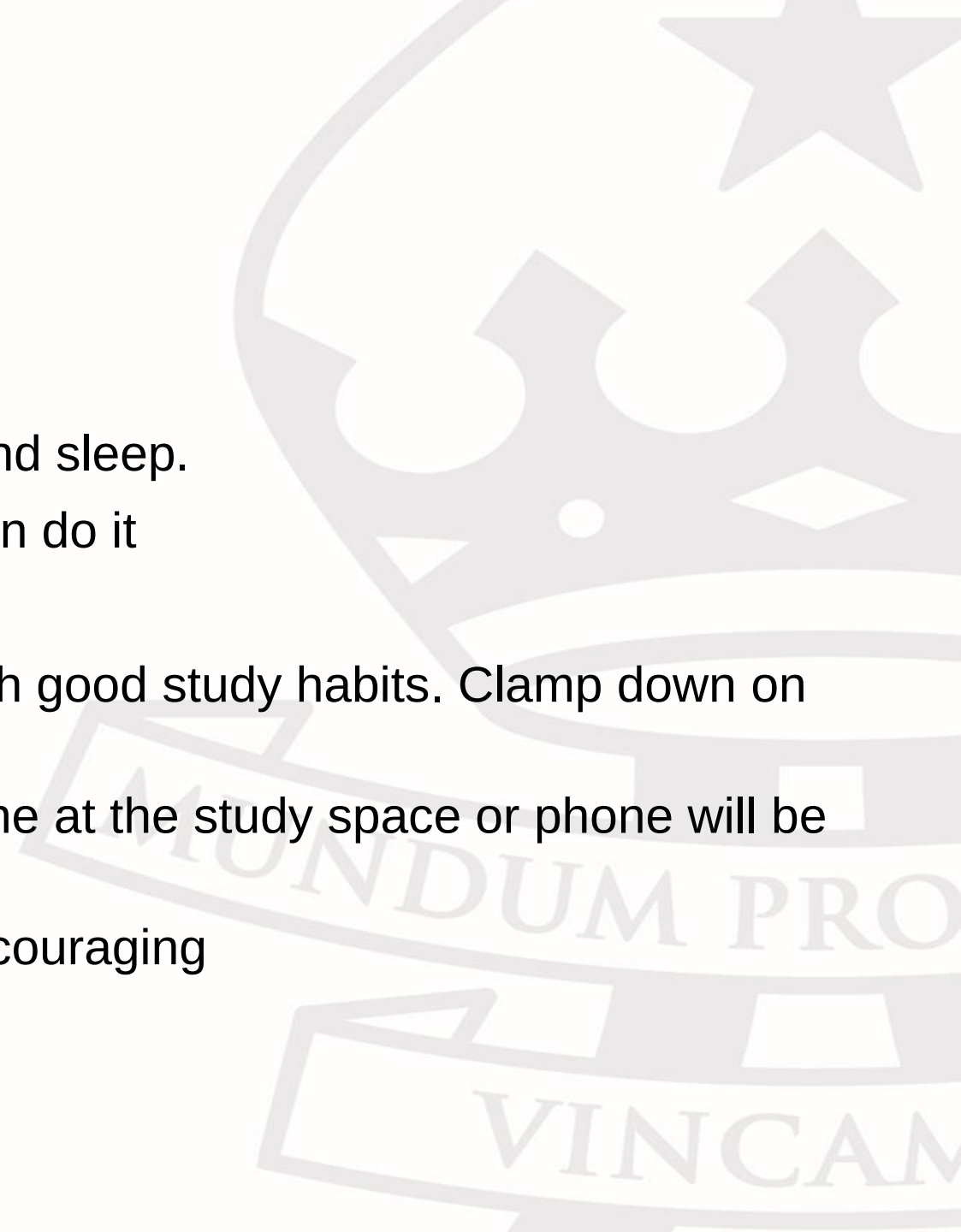
Be aspirational and reassure your child that they can do it

Minimise distractions and interruptions

Establish routines – long term hard work to establish good study habits. Clamp down on procrastination.

Clear boundaries and consequences – e.g. no phone at the study space or phone will be taken off you.

Be there for them - be available, supportive and encouraging



Practical Tips

Give additional incentives or treats for their efforts

Leave them a note wishing them good luck

Offer drinks and snacks to keep them going (avoid unhealthy foods which may affect concentration and energy levels)

Be aspirational and reassure your child that they can do it

Help by testing them with their revision

Be a de-stresser: Stay cool, calm and collected at all times (even when you are not!).

Support a young person's down time and actively support their wellbeing by joining in with practicing relaxation techniques.

If you are worried about them, sign post them to help (either a useful website or to their guidance teacher). Contact Pupil Support or Guidance if you are concerned.

And most importantly...

Support your child on results day – you can't change the grades in the envelope but you can change what a young person does with them. [#NoWrongPath](#)

"I failed my exam in some subjects but my friend passed. Now he is an engineer in Microsoft and I am the owner."
#Believe

– Bill Gates, Microsoft



Revision Techniques

Work should be completed in short chunks of time with regular breaks. Give time for hobbies and relaxation. This will help staying focused and motivated when revising.

Have clearly defined times for a variety of revision techniques including practicing questions, marking answers, condensing notes, completing past papers and using memory aids such as flashcards.

If your child is struggling and wasting time with a task, move on and come back to it. However... they shouldn't avoid areas they don't like or find difficult.

Note Taking

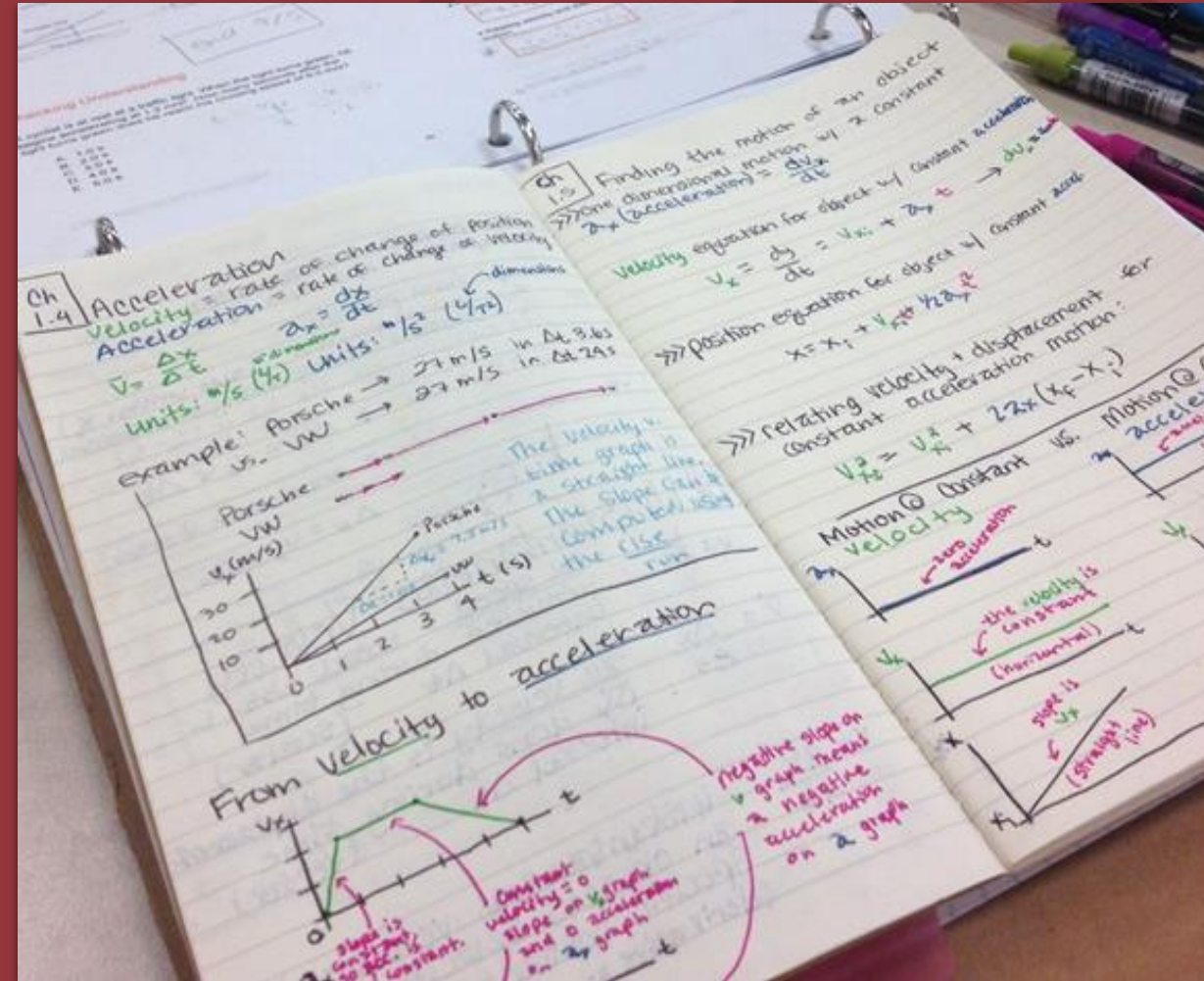
Bullet points and abbreviations will help to minimise reading and writing time

A different colour of pen for each component will help you visualise content

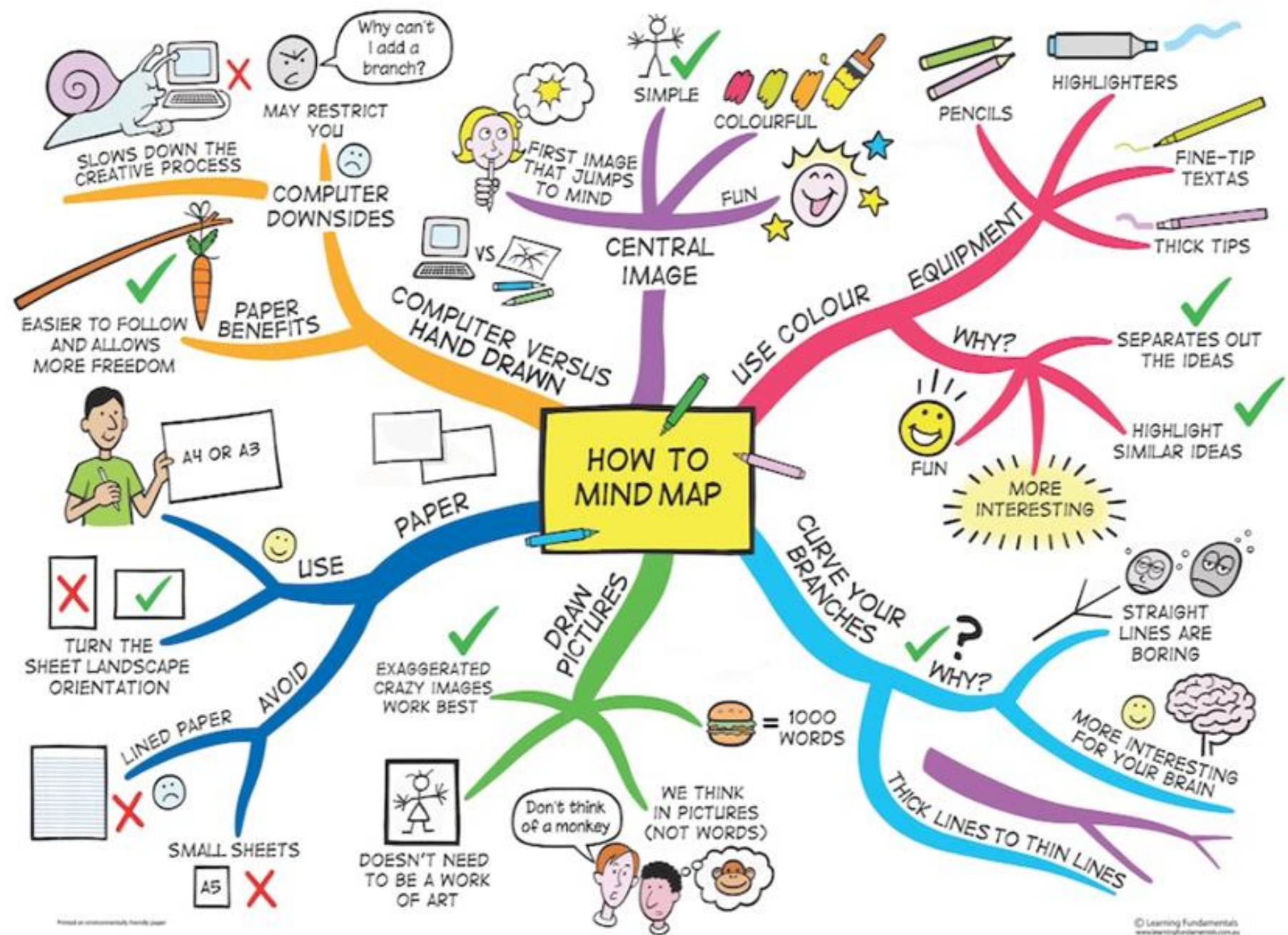
Drawing boxes around key words will make them stand out

Underlining or highlighting key words will deepen your understanding

Writing notes should not be the main focus of revision. It will, however, make it easier to review topics and revisit specific areas of weakness.



Mind Maps



Practice makes perfect

This should be the main revision approach used by learners.

Practise helps consolidate freshly-learnt mental processes until we can do them (almost) without thinking.

Practise should be ongoing, initially practicing processes as chunks of repetitive questions, and later recalling information through problem solving or randomised questions in a variety of contexts.

When strengths and weakness are identified (class tests / past papers, etc), different areas will require different types of practise:

For example: Areas of strength will be practiced through exam style questions.

Areas of weakness will require shorter, repetitive styled practise.

Past Papers

Completing past papers should be a key part of exam preparations. With most subjects, all course content won't be covered until after Christmas – so students should speak to their class teachers about which questions are suitable to try first.

As your child approaches their exams, try and complete full or chunks of past papers. This will help them become more efficient at processing information and time management.

If they are giving your completed practice paper to their teacher, give them the marking scheme too. Students should make clear and definite arrangements to get feedback to discuss areas that need further revision.

Use the marking instructions to mark work at home. This will let learners see where marks are given, and how to structure their answers to access as many marks as possible.

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm>

Flash Cards

Have a question or topic on the front and key information, such as themes, headings, answers or definitions, on the back.

Read the front, attempt your answer verbally/written and then check the back. Get family/friends to quiz you.

Osmosis

Movement of water molecules from a region of high water concentration to a region of low water concentration through a selectively permeable membrane.

What may happen to red blood cells placed in distilled (pure) water?

They will burst.

What will happen when plant cells are placed in distilled (pure) water?

They will become turgid. They do not burst as the cell wall (cellulose) gives them a rigid structure.

Other Revision Techniques

Revision Aids – Have key information around your study room to help you memorise it

Revision Videos – Take key points down in note form

Tests/Quizzes – Bitesize, Kahoot, or homemade tests

Teach someone else – This will allow you to organise key points

Acronyms – E.g. **SMART** Targets

Specific / **M**easurable / **A**chievable / **R**ealistic / **T**ime-bound

Mnemonics – Can you make up a phrase to help you remember a key concept?

Richard of York gave battle in vain

Red Orange Yellow Green Blue Indigo Violet

Where to start...

- With your child:
 - Make calendar for your child's main assessments and SQA exams.
 - Create a timetable of their week and agree on timeslots for homework and revision.
 - Negotiate a study plan. Each specific subject should be given time. Include what will be done in the sessions (e.g. practice questions / flash cards / past papers / etc).
 - Access SQA Past Papers and Marking Schemes. Have all subjects and years available for use.
 - Agree on rules / expectations (phone usage / music / etc)
 - Enforce this plan and provide praise and reward when it is followed.

Guiding Effective Studying

Session 2 - Exam Preparation

Prelims / Subject Assessments

Command Words

Last Minute Revision

Exam Day

Managing wellbeing

FAQs

Achievement Service Perseverance Inclusion Respect Excellence



Starter Task

Think of your own exam experiences -

what did you find positive and what did you find negative?

Exam Preparation

Prelims / Subject Assessments

Prelims help learners discover any weaknesses in subject knowledge, how effective their study skills are and identify their ability to perform under exam pressure.

Speak to class teachers about areas of the subject assessments that were strengths and areas that require more work.

Review study approaches after subject assessments: Did they do enough? Did they revise the correct areas? Did they use the right techniques? Make changes **now** for final exam preparations.

2020-21 Subject Assessments will provide evidence - but are not the be all and end all.

Command Words

The command word will have a big impact on how you structure your answer and what information you include in your answer. Practice your approach for each command word and use SQA marking instruction to see what you should include in your answers.

Command Words

These instruct the candidate on how to answer the question.

Understanding what is required in answering questions with different command words will be crucial to gaining marks.

Each subject will use different command words and different strategies for answering these questions. Practice these.

Calculate	Work out mathematically.
Compare	Are the things alike or are there differences? Which do you think is best? Why?
Contrast	Look for differences.
Define	Give the meaning.
Describe	Write in detail - step-by-step.
Discuss	Write about the important aspects of the topic. Are there two sides to the question? Consider the arguments for and against.
Evaluate	Judge the importance or success.
Explain	Make reasons clear.
Illustrate	Give examples which make the point clear.
Interpret	Explain the meaning in your own words. For example, you may be asked to interpret a graph.
Justify	Give reasons to support an argument or action.
State	Write briefly the main point.
Summarise	Bring together the main points.

Alternative Assessment Arrangements

Any young person who notably improves their performance with alternative assessment arrangements in place is entitled to them.

No diagnosed additional support need is required.

This is done subject-by-subject, so if they have AAA in place for one subject, speak to other class teachers to see if it can be put in place in other subjects.

AAA is evidenced based - there must be proof of a significant change in performance.

These should be used in day-to-day learning and teaching, and in all class tests already!

COVID Exam Measures

St. David's, Midlothian Council, the SQA and Scottish Government will communicate any additional measures that will be in place for the exam diet.

COVID measures are the 'norm' for our young people at present and most will take it in their stride.

For those that may not; alternative assessment arrangements and special circumstances will be available. Likewise for those unwell or isolating.

Clearer guidance will be shared once passed on from SQA.

Last Minute Revision

Yes – it is worth it. By the day before the exam, revision notes should be short enough to read through in one session. The final read-through, alongside key flashcards, will help vital quotes and concepts stick in mind.

On the morning of the exam, refresh key quotes, formulae, etc that are likely to be in the exam – learners can write these down as soon as the exam starts allowing them to fully concentrate on the paper.

Even if last minute revision helps candidates get 1 extra mark in the exam – that could be the difference between the candidate achieving their goal or not!

But... **No cramming!**

The night before...

Get organised: Sort out everything you need so as to avoid a rush in the morning.

SCN Card

Pens and pencils

Eraser

Highlighters

Calculator

Dictionary

Complete last minute revision

Sharpener

Spare pens and pencils

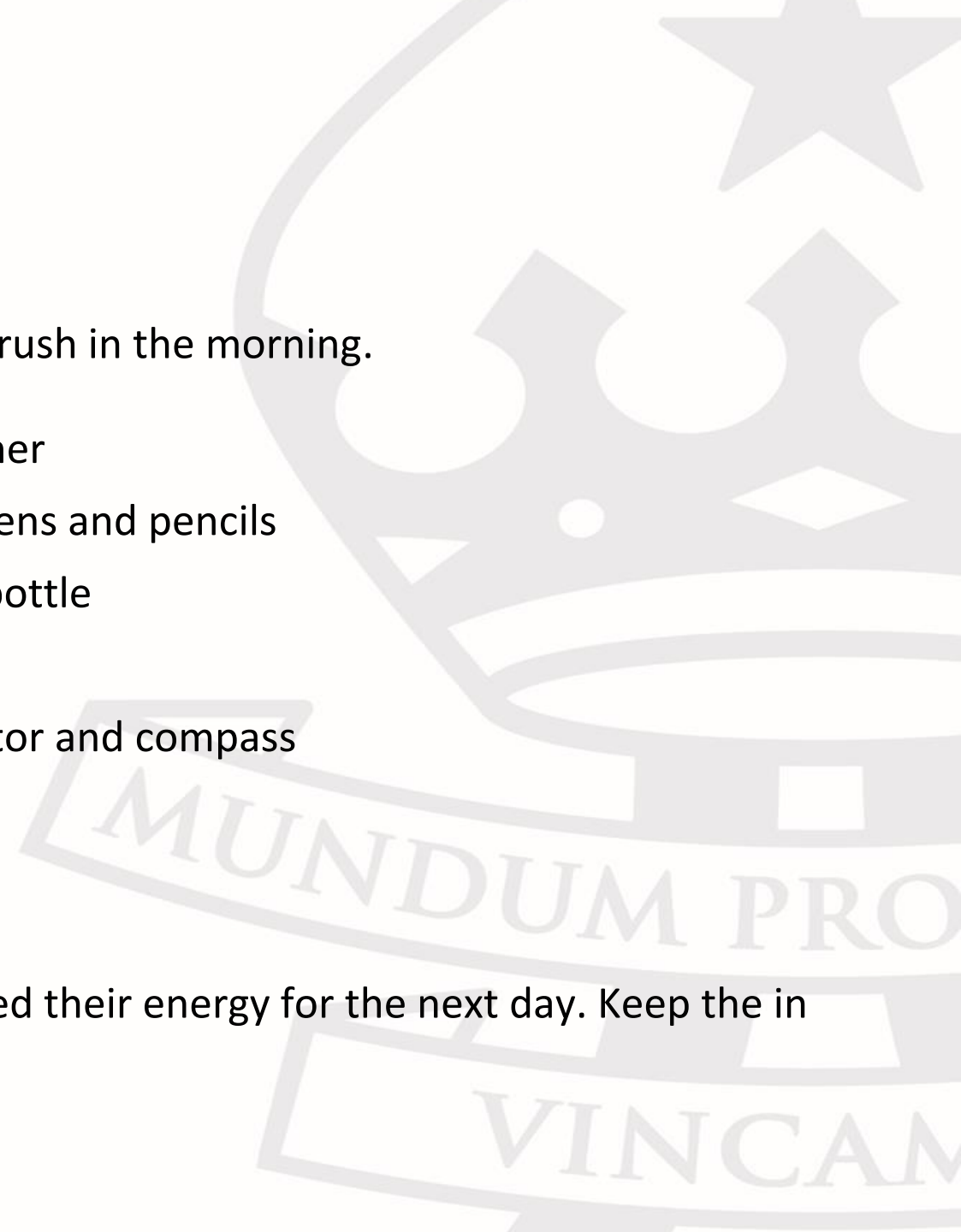
Water bottle

Ruler

Protractor and compass

Watch

Sleep – Don't let them stay up cramming! Candidates will need their energy for the next day. Keep the in their sleep pattern for the full exam timetable.



The day of the exam...

Set an alarm and get up early

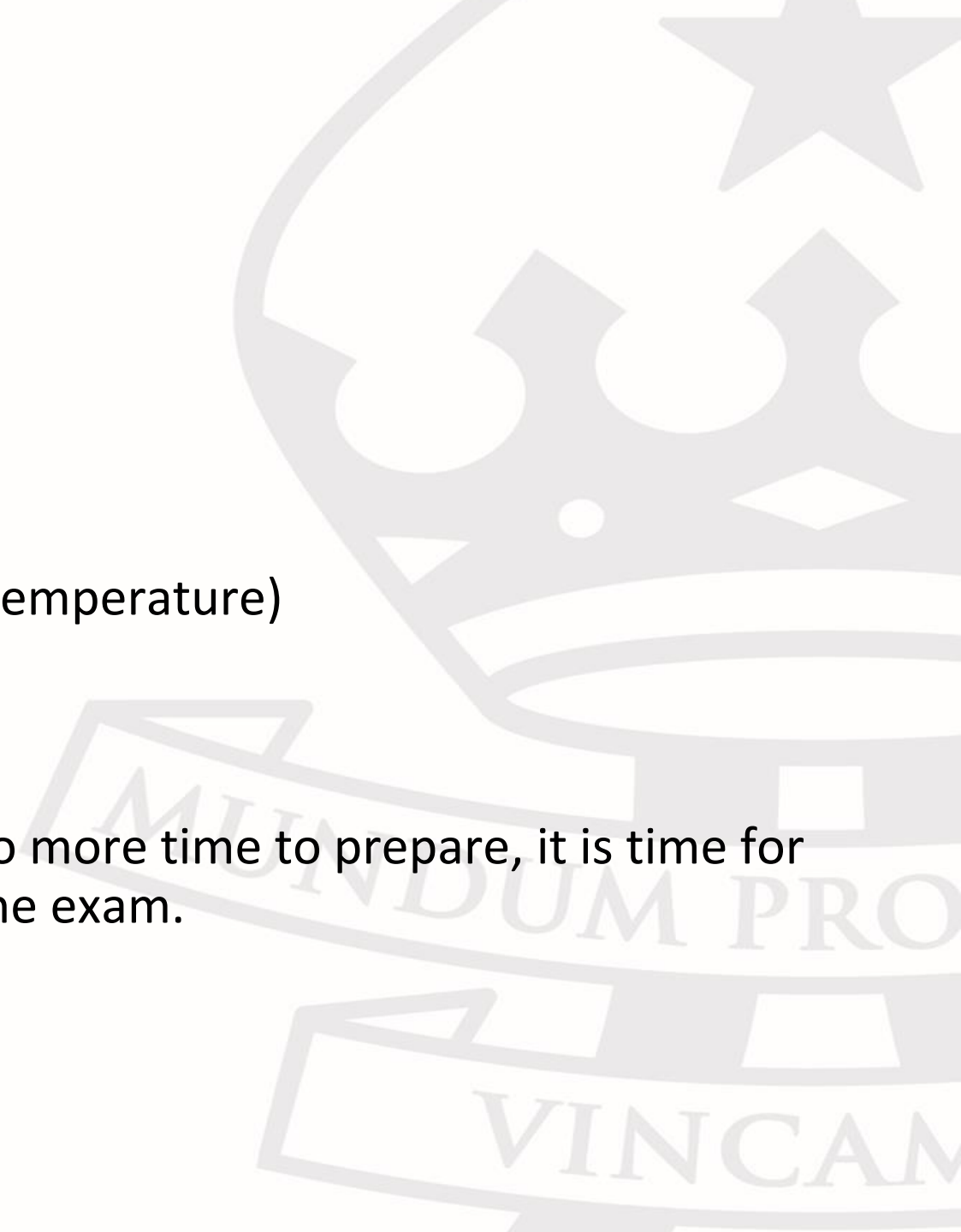
Eat a healthy breakfast (+ lunch)

School uniform (sensible dress as halls can vary in temperature)

Get in to school early

Ignore other people's fears and worries. There is no more time to prepare, it is time for candidates to focus on their own performance in the exam.

Breathe and stay calm.



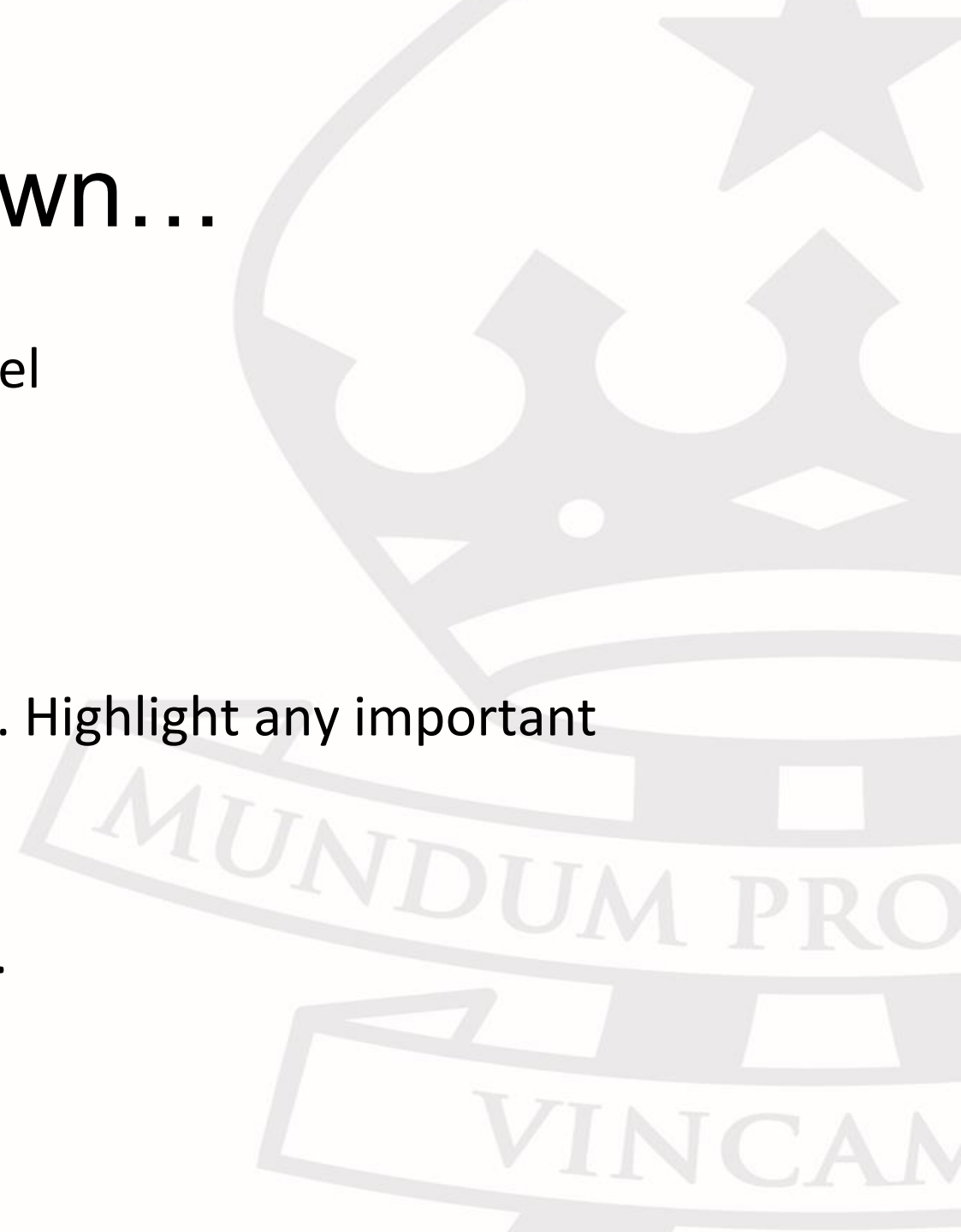
When a candidate sits down...

Check the paper for the correct subject and level

Fill in all personal details

When instructed, read all instructions carefully. Highlight any important instructions.

Note the start time and end time of your exam.



First 5 minutes of the exam...

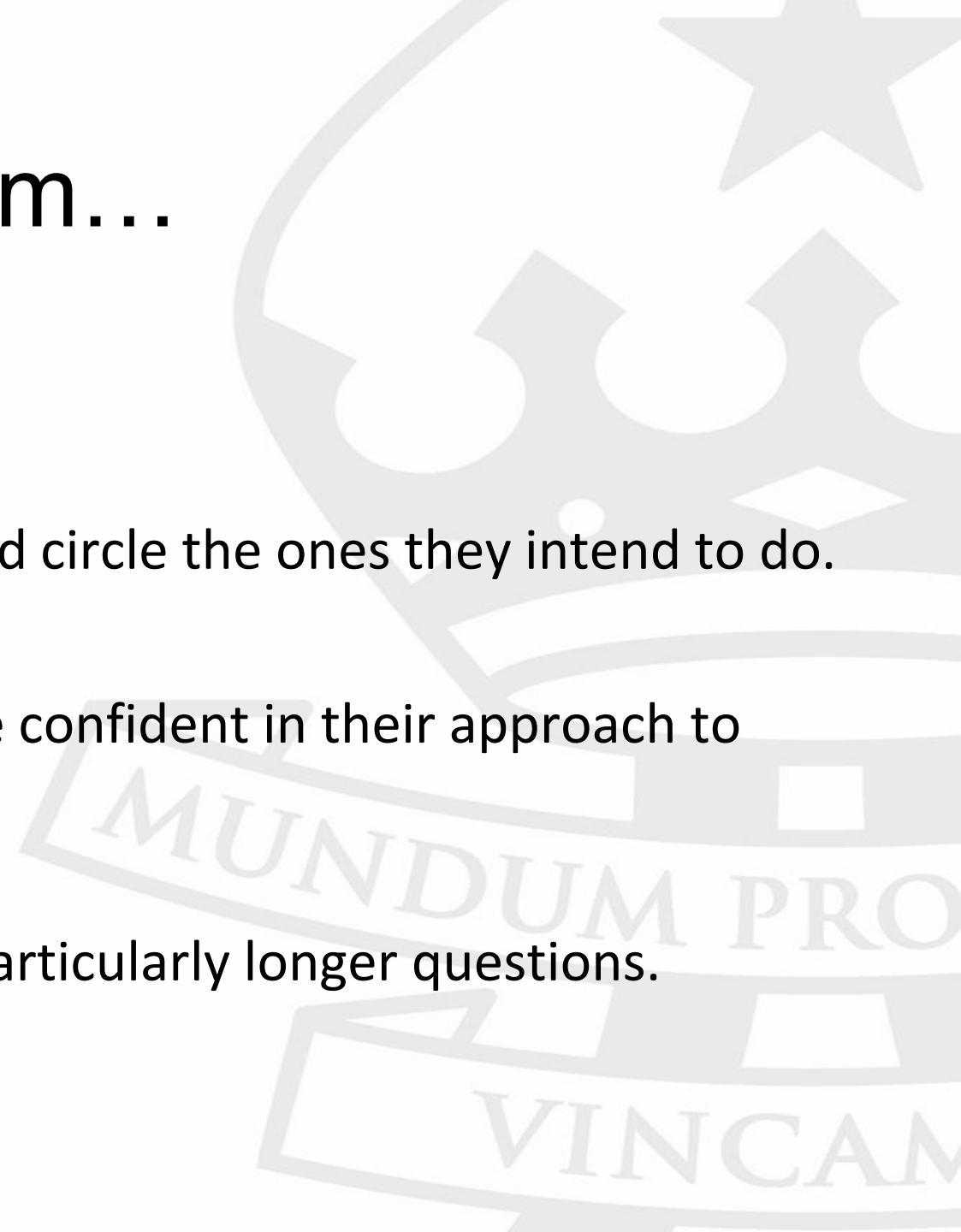
Read through all questions

If there is a choice of questions, students should circle the ones they intend to do.

Or

Candidates should circle the questions they are confident in their approach to answering - do these first.

Decide how long for each question/section – particularly longer questions.



During the exam...

Candidates should:

Highlight key words in the questions to focus their attention on what they are being asked.

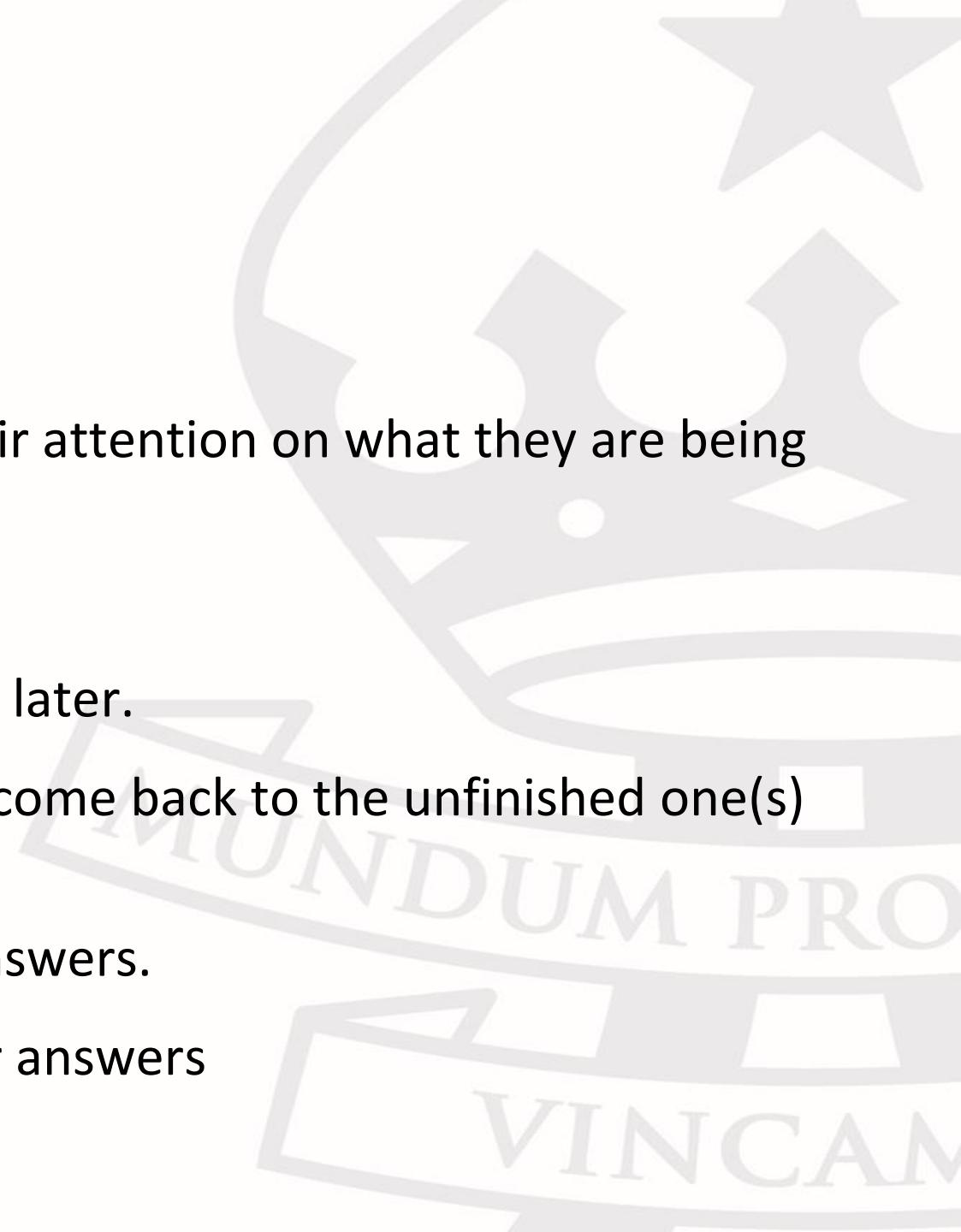
Plan their answers.

Re-read difficult questions or come back to them later.

If they get stuck, go on to the next question and come back to the unfinished one(s) at the end.

Stay until the end of the exam and check their answers.

If they are running out of time - bullet point their answers



Presentation

Write legibly, keep work as neat and clear. No doodling!

Show all working and underline final answers.

Score through anything that they do not want to be marked.

Ensure all graphs / diagrams / etc are accurate and clearly labelled.

If continuing an answer at the end, make sure to make clear that it is a continuation of a previous answer (e.g. "*Q8 continued*")

After the exam...

Don't over-analyse. How they feel it went isn't always a true reflection. There's nothing they can do to change it.

They shouldn't worry if their friends have attempted different questions or found different answers. It is about accumulating marks over the whole paper.

Have a physical and mental break – encourage them to do something they enjoy with friends or family. If they don't have an exam in the next couple of days, then they can take the rest of the day of their exam off.

Settle back into their Study Plan - begin preparing for their next exam.

If it is their final exam – celebrate and relax!

Wellbeing

Managing stress and anxiety

If they become overwhelmed when studying. Hit 'pause' and have a short break.

Practise strategies for managing stress (mindfulness, breathing exercises, keep a work-life balance)

Talk things through with friends, parents, family and teachers

Don't dwell on exams – keep the focus on preparation

Exercise

Build exercise into the routine – walk the dog / play football / go a run – whatever works for them

Diet

Maintain a healthy diet and drink plenty of water.

Avoid sugary foods and drinks (especially energy drinks) – these will reduce concentration levels and make learners more lethargic.

Sleep

Quality sleep should be an important part of their routine.

Sleep is vital for consolidation – where learning throughout the day is re-organised as long-lasting memories within the brain.

Try and stick to a bed time and wake up time – they should be aiming for around 8-10 hours of sleep each night.

Do something relaxing between studying and bedtime.

Avoid screen time near bedtime.

Avoid caffeine and high sugar food and drink.

Stick to your routine – sleeping-in or napping can have a huge impact on your sleep pattern for the next few days.

FAQ

How long should students be studying for?

Between 45 + 90 minutes per day. This will increase in the build up to the exams.

ICT/Phones

Some of the most valuable resources are located online. It is advantageous to use electronic devices to access these, but only when it is not a distraction. Follow strict rules when using ICT such as – no phone / phone on 'do not disturb', no social media, and stick to the study plan at all times.

Music

There are advantages and disadvantages to letting young people listen to music whilst studying. It can block out other noises in the household, can relax them which can stimulate the brain and increase the chances of the information being absorbed into memory. However, loud music can be distracting and young people can focus on this rather than their studying. They may become more interested in their playlist than their work. And it can sometimes lead to day-dreaming... try and find a rule that works for the individual.

Exams FAQ

What happens if a student is late?

Contact the school immediately so that they can inform the chief invigilator (they will determine whether the candidate can be admitted late to the hall)

Depending on the length of time / type of exam they are late for, they may still be able to be admitted.

What happens if a student is unable to attend? (exceptional circumstances)

Contact the school immediately.

A medical certificate will be essential for the school to make an appeal for an award where a candidate is sick.

Any illness, accident, bereavement or family circumstances which may affect the student's overall performance, arising before or during the exams, should be discussed with the student's Guidance Teacher as soon as possible so that an application can be made to the SQA.

What happens if a candidate fails to attend?

Should a candidate fail to attend for no valid reason, then an asterisk will appear opposite the subject name on the student's award certificate. This may damage future employment prospects.

Exams FAQ

Dress Code?

Full school uniform. Candidates will have to leave bags, coats, etc at the back of hall so it is advisable for them to bring only what they need.

What is not permitted?

Electronic equipment such as **phones**, music players, earphones.

Tippex or any correction fluid/pens

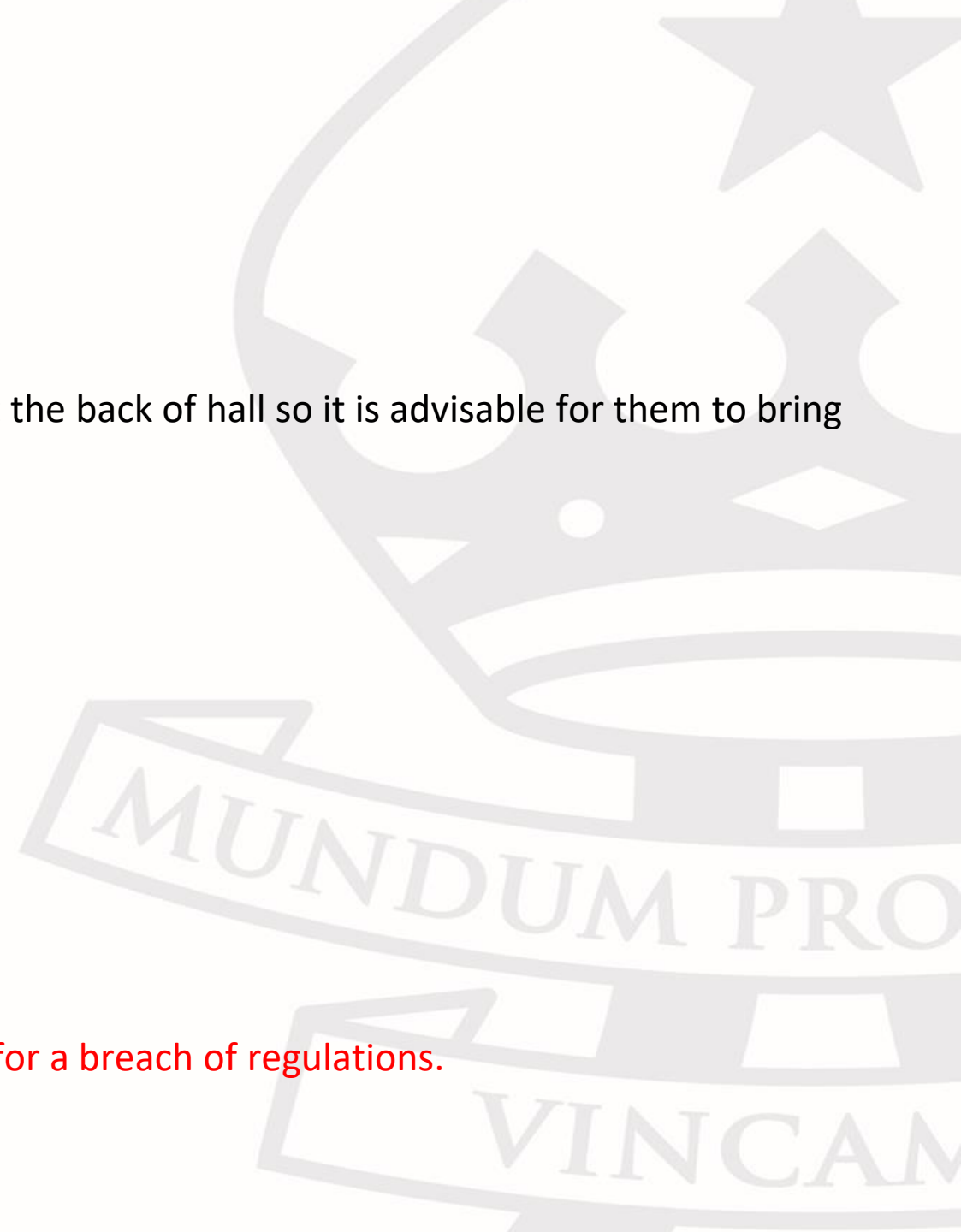
Food, sweets or chewing gum – only water can be taken to desks

Notes, books or paper of any kind

Pencil Cases

Sharing / borrowing of any equipment

Any pupil with a mobile phone on in the exam hall will be reported for a breach of regulations.



Useful links

The SQA provides a range of [Information for Learners](#) as well as [Past Papers and Marking Instructions](#) for every subject and level. This includes advice on [study timetabling](#) and an [exam-timetable builder](#).

[Parentzone](#), from Education Scotland, provides a wide variety of information and support for learning at home and [revision](#). It also offers ‘*in a nutshell*’ summaries for [National 4](#), [National 5](#) and [Higher](#) courses.

[BBC Bitesize](#) has learning and [revision tools](#) for many subjects at National 5 and Higher level. Many subjects utilise Heriot-Watt University’s [SCHOLAR](#) resources and will have provided students with login details.

[Childline](#), [NHS](#), [REACH](#) and [YoungScot](#) have some tips on dealing with exam stress. Check out Young Scot’s [5 Ways to Chill Out in 5 minutes](#).

Maddie Moate is a British television presenter, writer and YouTuber. She has produced some helpful videos focusing on exams, including [What’s the Best Way to Study?](#) and [Dealing with Exam Stress](#). YouTube offers many useful videos – however make sure it is specific to Scotland’s National Qualifications.