Veterinary Medicine and Science
Study Skills for Vet Students by Vet Students

www.nottingham.ac.uk/vet
The Veterinary course is unlike any other educational experience that you may have encountered before. The course is intense and there are many new concepts and ideas that you will be exposed to. Most students find that they cannot work the way that they did during A levels or in other previous degrees. Adapting to these new demands is challenging, and you will need to develop new methods of learning and revising very early in your days as a new vet student. But the course is very fulfilling and as outlined in this booklet, many students have made this adaptation with great success.

The following reflection from a third year veterinary student outlines how she successfully adapted to the veterinary course. This is followed by tips and advice from vet students in their own words...

"In first year I chose to make all of my notes on my computer and then copy them up by hand at a later date as part of my revision. Although this worked it took a lot of time and I had to abandon copying up some modules in order to get on with proper revision. I revised simply by re-reading the notes over and over again. I realised that I did not like revising from a computer screen but needed a method of producing hand-written notes that took less time. I also needed a revision method that encouraged me to retain a larger proportion of information.

In second year I decided to write my notes up by hand in the lecture itself. This worked with certain lecturers but with others I got left behind. I often ended up with large amounts of notes to finish writing up each evening leaving me with very little time to relax and do other things. This often left me feeling stressed. Again I felt that I needed to find a note taking technique that required less time.

I found a better way to revise was to work through my notes with a friend, testing each other about what was written on each page. However, the problem with this method was that it only works when somebody else is able to revise with me. I needed a technique that I could also use when I was alone.

This year I have finally found a note taking technique that works well for me. I print off the lecture slides in advance and simply write additional points the lecturer makes onto my print-outs. This is a quick method that allows me to read through my notes without staring at a computer screen. For revision, I intend to make myself flash cards. On one side I will write key bullet points from my notes. On the other I will write myself prompts so that I can test my memory of what is written on the other side of the card. I will also be able to use the card with friends.

The evolution of my note taking and revision techniques over the past few years shows how I have used my reflective abilities to make new aims and work towards them. I have improved each year until I have found techniques that I am happy with. This shows the importance of reflecting on things that I do so that I can strive to better myself in the future."

Jenna Lamb,
Year 3 Veterinary Student
Get Organised!

Revision timetable split by module to make sure that I get time to cover each module as fully as possible without getting stuck on one aspect.

Y2
- Make detailed revision plan — don’t jump to more than 2h at a time.
- Make posters/spider diagrams.
- Go out for fresh air!!
- Summary/bullet points — highlight!!!
- Don’t leave new things until the night before

Revision timetable: year
- Make notes through your highlights & make notes on diseases.

Plan ahead with a Timetable

I make a detailed revision timetable to settle my mind. I make sure there are loads of breaks! Then once I have revised topics I teach it to other people — this helps me remember it.
Go over each teaching session as soon as you can to check you understand the key concepts!
Condense lecture material and try to understand the big picture

Try to understand the bigger picture - combine notes!! 😊

One Note

Try combining lecture material - gives the bigger picture - Y2

YEAR 2
Annotate lecture slides during lecture, type up in OneNote
Then print off + highlight during revision period

Keep going through all notes condensing them down each time

I write the lectures into word document (making it to a short version), write the most important, write the anatomy and physiology, use anatomy and physiology book, internet and then copy the word document print out for exam.

Write lecture up to condense to 1 side of A4

Writing down one page of A4 to one page of A4 can be very hard - each lecture - use pretty pictures and lots of colour

I repeatedly condense my notes, using worried hand crossing out what I know and what I know. "Know" until notes to be over before the exam.

YR 2
Write up lectures
→ Summarise
→ Note down key points
→ Flashcard these and you'll be the cleverest person ever

Condense lectures onto flashcards
Use the learning objectives to help you identify the important points.

Make revision cards from LOs

Copy the LOs into a word doc and write the answers underneath during the lecture. I then go over this afterwards and add info.

Year 2
Read through lectures beforehand; make notes by answering the lecture learning objectives.

Go over e/lecture u had that day & answer the LO’s & make sure u understand all the concepts, that way u’ll be up to date with the info & it’ll be easier when u revise it later.

Make written notes of lectures during revision, summarising the key points.
Work out what the key points are and learn them!

* Make funny pneumonics
* Underline
* Bullet points

- Flash cards - need to get down the "need to know" points.
- Write notes - do not spend too much time on them.
- Do not pet the pad throughout year.

I make notes in different colours so they stand out better.

Highlighter
Consider a variety of approaches to help you remember the material.

What works for one person might not work for you.

\[ \text{First get a broad theory (overview)} \]

\[ \text{Then add details.} \]

\[ \text{DON'T FORGET THE BIG PICTURE!} \]

\[ \text{Flick through lectures at high speed discussing key points with peers. Making funny stories helps.} \]

\[ \text{I read through lectures, write notes + then make revision question cards} \]

\[ \text{I make case studies for OSCE tasks with all the skill techniques with pictures & diagrams, posters & diagrams} \]

\[ \text{Colour coding e.g. diseases in green, treatment in blue...} \]

\[ \text{Make sure you have first set of typed notes by getting friends to share typing load e.g. 5 friends type up 2 lectures each before week commences - then you'll have notes there to add to} \]

\[ \text{Do plenty proessor!} \]
Helps things to stick.

Spider diagrams:
- Helps you to condense notes.

Flashcards - one word on the front and everything relating to it on the back. Test yourself on each word by writing on the whiteboards.

Y2:
- Put posters on the toilet door (makes parasite learning more interesting...)
- Also make up stories about arteries & veins (make associations)
- Big flow diagrams which can be pinned up on the walls to help visualize everything

Use flashcards - make a quiz from your lecture

Use lots of different formats

Mindmaps:
- Bullet points
- Tables
- Diagrams
- Flashcards
- Get everybody together in one place

Mind maps:
- Not too many words, lots of pretty pictures

Cut each lecture down to key points on one page

Summary sheet/brainstorm

I write all my lectures up in OneNote then read through them and make revision posters
Use a variety of resources to help your learning.

Don't rely just on the lecture material.

Year 2

Make a timetable to help you plan
Use CLIVE + digital slidebox for histology
draw out diagrams to make sure the info goes in!

I make my own notes from lectures including diagrams and info from textbooks

Use wikitvet for Clin Rel cases
- PDF print-out format
- Book/Revision guide makes

When making notes from your lectures use Oxa + other relevant textbooks from the library to supplement your notes.
Use your condensed notes for your final revision.

Condense lectures to the bare points. Read over them with someone else a week before exams so they can teach you the bits you don't know. Cram it all in.

Summarise each lecture to a page of concise notes for easy reference & revision.

All notes in 1 folder for each module. Scrap paper to one side & scribble it all down. Screw up piece of paper and try to get it in the bin! Challenge yourself.
Consider working with friends or in a group

- Work with others
- Take it over
- Ask for help and advice
- Put notes up around the house, i.e. post-it notes in the bathroom, so you see them all the time

Get asked questions by a friend after raising a topic or a check

Write colourful notes from lecture slides and go through answers with other students

Ask friends that you trust not to bull**t to help you answer questions, I find peer learning very helpful.

Do a quiz in the style of MCQs for your friends.

I tell people what I have learnt so it sticks! 😊

Try explaining key concepts to someone who is not on this course, it will make you simplify things in your mind and then make it gradually more complex 😊

- Make flashcards for each module

Use report cards to make A + A cards at end of each lecture. You can then test your friends!

- Make flashcards so you can have some test you - talking through helps/ teaching helps...

- Make flashcards with questions to test myself or pet friends to test me.
Look after yourself!

Have many breaks.

Exercise before you work.

Plan your day - have lots of regular breaks or walking the dog to break up the day.

Work in short bursts of lots of activity. Do something you enjoy at least once a day.

Year 2
Read over lectures, but don’t waste time writing them up. Use the tea time to do something you enjoy instead.

Take a break - do some exercise.

Take regular revision breaks; you can’t concentrate for long periods of time!

DRINK LOTS OF TEA.

Make sure you have one nice thing planned each day.

Short sessions then breaks, make posters and spider diagrams.
Pace yourself throughout the year and don’t leave all your revision until the last few weeks!

Write up lectures during term. Write revision notes pre-revision period. Learn notes during revision period. ... hopefully!:

- Don’t leave to week before
- Make sure your notes are clear and concise
- Teach a friend, Q&A sessions

1 Yr - little + often throughout year
- Dictaphone (in lectures)
- Take notes + pictures in practicals
- Use textbooks in SOL’s
- Better notes than walki’s
- Less stress → more work
  Stressing isn’t constructive
Remember that not everyone learns in the same way!

What works for one person may not work for another, so try a number of approaches until you find what works for you.

don't compare yourself to others

~we all learn differently

And, if the worst happens?

Resits aren't the end of the world
Other resources you may find helpful

Nottingham University Academic Support:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/supportforyourstudies/academicsupport](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/supportforyourstudies/academicsupport)

Nottingham University Counselling Service:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling)

University of Southampton Academic Support:  
[www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/lcd/academicskills](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/lcd/academicskills) Has some useful advice in downloadable PDF files.

[www.learnhigher.ac.uk](http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk)  
Centre for excellence in teaching and learning - contains loads of advice including videos

[http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills)  
Skills@library support for students

[www.dyslexia.uk.net](http://www.dyslexia.uk.net) and  
[www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk) for more information about these specific learning difficulties

[www.studentdepression.org](http://www.studentdepression.org)  
Advice for students about depression and where to go for help

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t +44 (0)115 951 4591  
e: alternativeformats@nottingham.ac.uk

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