



## Effective Exam Review

Faculty often wonder if it's worth the extra time to conduct exam review sessions. It can sometimes seem like a lot of extra work for few perceived benefits. As instructors, we also don't want to feel as if we—instead of the students—are doing all the work. It should be up to the students to do the heavy lifting of figuring out what and how much to study—right? Yet, before exam time we often hear the words, “What’s going to be on the test?”

For instructors who desire to conduct engaging exam review sessions that require students' best efforts, consider implementing the following ideas:

- 1. Student-Constructed Test Items.** Give your students two or three minutes to look through their notes and write out a few key concepts that they think will be covered on the exam. Once they have had a few minutes to think and write individually, ask them to form groups where they will then share ideas and create lists to be shared in class. Create a master list of the students' ideas and share it with the whole class. You can also ask students to construct actual test questions and offer bonus points to any group who creates an item that actually appears on the exam.
- 2. Coach students through the writing of good answers.** If your test contains short answer or essay questions, you might consider coaching students through what makes a good answer. Ask students to evaluate answers to example test items at varying competency levels. Either provide or co-construct a rubric with students that will be used to evaluate their exams.
- 3. Teach students how to study.** Teach students that simply reading over their notes or chapters in one or two cram sessions won't lead to lasting retention. Inform students of the latest brain research which finds that they retain information better when they study for frequent, shorter periods spaced out over time. Help students come up with strategies for testing themselves throughout the semester rather than waiting to study until right before the test. Teach them note-taking strategies that require a synthesis of information rather than simply copying your PowerPoint slides.

Study strategies can be discussed after the test as well as during the exam review. Ask students what strategies they tried. Which ones worked well? Which ones didn't work at all? Ask students to recommend study strategies for students who take your course in the future.