

In any room full of students there will be a set of good ideas about study strategies

One simple way to help students develop their study strategies is to encourage structured discussion about possible study methods. This can be done in lots of different ways but one possibility would be:

i) About three or four weeks before the exam weeks ask students to write notes individually under a set of headings (e.g. Have you done an exam like this one before? If so, what went well and what was tricky? What have you learned from that experience? If it's a completely new type of exam, what do you think might be challenging about it?). (5 minutes)

ii) Get the students to discuss what they've written in small groups (5 minutes)

iii) Give each group a large piece of poster paper and ask them to develop a poster logging all of the possible strategies they can think of that would help them do well on the upcoming exam. Emphasise that it doesn't matter if they think the strategies will definitely work, the idea is just to log possibilities. Members of staff to circulate and discuss posters with the students (20 minutes)

iv) Each small group briefly reports on their posters to the whole group. Members of staff chip in with comments (10 minutes)

If you think the above would take up too much time, replace steps (c) and (d) with a 10 minute whole group discussion.

Another variant on this strategy would work well at the start of a second semester course –

i) Get the students to write notes individually under headings (e.g. Looking back on the last semester what went well in your studies and what was more difficult? What have you learned from that for this semester? What are you still puzzled about?)

ii) Students share their answers in small groups.

iii) The whole group discusses the questions.