At home for the holidays, I was able to revise with the benefits of having tea on tap and a cat to entertain me. He’s getting on a bit, but he’s evil nonetheless, so attempting to bandage him or test my anatomy was out of the question if I wanted to keep my fingers and skin intact. Instead, I spent time at the stables where I was able to poke and prod horses to my heart’s content. It provided light relief from sitting at a desk looking at a computer screen all day. Being able to contextualise the information I learnt last term helped it to become more understandable. I was lucky enough to be around when the physiotherapist visited, so I could ask questions about muscles and movement that I was unsure about.

I returned to university three days before exams started to settle back into university living. I’m never sure how to go about revising, apart from sitting down at my desk and going over everything . . . . However, I found that attempting it that way just increased the amount of tea breaks I took. Mind maps proved very useful; I would write down everything I knew/remembered and then add to it using my notes. They also helped me link different topics together. I found that once I felt confident in one topic and moved on it felt like I was back at the beginning again . . . and there are so many topics. It did have an impact on how I felt about the exams and the confidence in my knowledge. I was never going to feel confident or understand everything, so I became content knowing the most I could at that moment in time. I still have five months until the real thing in June to keep adding more content.

When it came to the exams, I felt my knowledge was strongest in infectious diseases and the kidney, and it was just unfortunate those two topics didn’t come up in the first exam. The first exam was multiple choice and it felt very specific and, having the answer and other options made me double guess myself. The short answer question paper was okay; there were questions I struggled with, but I did try to write at least something that related to the answer. The integrated paper comprised a scenario, with associated questions. Out of the three papers, I preferred this one; it helped me recreate the mind maps more readily in my head, linking what I had previously linked on paper.

Whether my answers were correct is a completely different matter, but I was happy to have the chance to get a feel for the layout of the exams in the summer. I now know how to organise my notes, plus the level of detail and knowledge required, so the revision is easier and I am better prepared.

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First-year student diary

Rosie Perrett

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