Studying at University

A guide for first year students

4th Edition
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2014 (4th edition)

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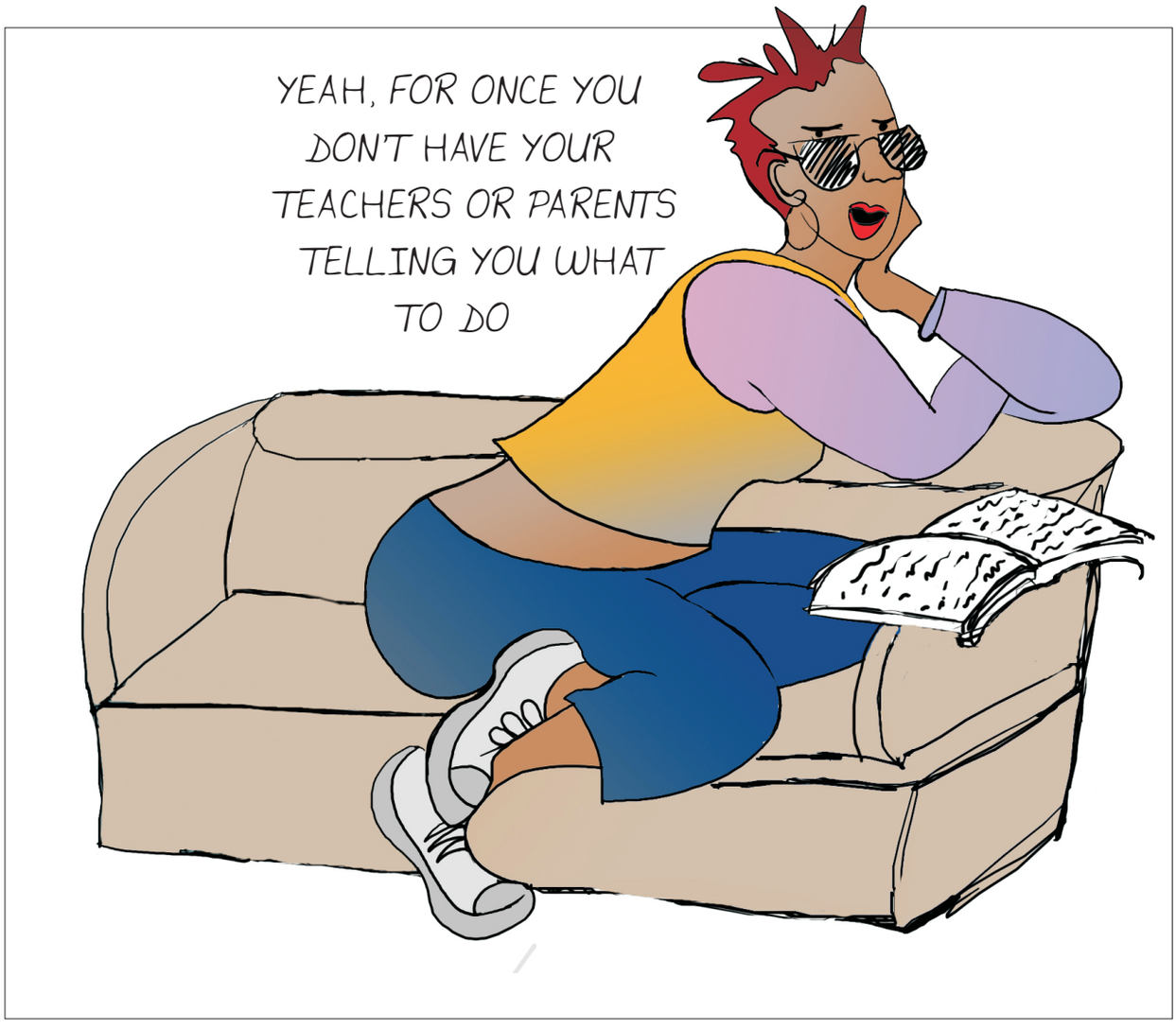


The central, and most important 'rule' at university, is that you have to take responsibility for your own learning

Umthetho ongundoqo nowona ubalulekileyo eyunivesithi kukuba umele ukuthatha uxanduva ngokufunda kwakho

Die mees belangrike reël op Universiteit is dat jy verantwoordelikheid moet neem vir jou eie studies.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS BOOK

Welcome
to your first year at the University of Cape Town!

Wamkelekile
kunyaka wakho wokuqala kwidyUnivesiti yaseKapa!

Welkom
in jou eerste jaar by die Universiteit van Kaapstad!

Being here for the first time marks a big change in your life. You are at the start of a new and exciting journey! But before going on, take a moment to look back at the road behind you.

So far in your life, you have managed to establish yourself in a number of areas: home, school, social circles and perhaps work, sports, religious communities or political organisations. Looking back, you will probably agree that each area required you to behave in particular ways in order to be accepted and to succeed. For instance, when you first went to school you had to learn the rules around correct ways of behaving, how to dress, how to talk (and even when to talk), what to avoid, what rewards and punishments to expect, and so on. All these special 'school' behaviours had to be learnt.

Many people think that university is a place for *freedom* from petty rules, like having to wear uniforms, not talking or eating in class, having to attend detention, and so on. It is true that life for a university student feels much more free, but, in fact, the university is a separate world with its own set of 'rules' and new requirements that must be learnt if you are to make progress in your university career.

Often, unfortunately, the norms and rules underlying life at university are hidden. You'll have to discover many of them for yourself as you live through your first year as a student. It takes time and experience to get to know how things work on campus, what you *can* do, what you *must* do, what is not acceptable, and so on.

For most students, this is easier said than done, and really, no one can tell you just how to do it. The specific purpose of this book is to help you to adjust to the *academic learning* aspects of life at UCT. We will tell you what kind of learning situations the university offers you and what is expected of you in return. We will also give you some guidelines on how to cope with these opportunities and demands. So we are hoping to make the academic rules and norms visible for you.

Remember:Part of being at university is asking for help when you need it. UCT offers many services, from tutoring to career advice to emotional support. No problem is too small to ask for help. You are encouraged to use the UCT website, www.uct.ac.za, to explore the services the university offers. There is also a site on Vula, called 'The First Year Experience (FYE)', which all first year students are connected to. It provides information on talks and support for students, answers common questions and it is interactive, so if you can't find the answers you are looking for, you are able to post a question on the site.

Certain words in this introduction are underlined. This means that you will be able to find a whole section dealing with the highlighted issue later in the book. Look at the Contents page to locate the sections

Amanye amagama kule ngabula-zigcawu enziwe ngqindilili. Oku kuthetha ukuba uza kukwazi ukufumana lonke icandelo elidilishana nendawo ezenziwe ngqindilili ekupheleni kwencwadi. Jonga kuludwe lwezalathisi ukufumana amacandelo

Sekere woorde in hierdie inleiding word beklemtoon. Dit sal jou in staat stel om 'n meer volledige stuk, wat betrekking het op die beklemtoomde woord, later in die boek te kry

Doing this reading should not be seen as extra or optional work it is part of the work required for your course. In many courses, the lecturer will assume that you have done the prescribed reading before coming to the lecture

Ukufunda lomqulu makungabonwa njengomsebenzi owongeziweyo okanye umsebenzi onokuwenza xa uthanda- ngomnye wemisebenzi ekufuneka uwenzile kwikhosi yakho. Kwezinye iikhosi, umhlohli uyathekelela ukuba uwufundile umqulu obunikwe wona phambi kokuba uze eklasini

Hierdie leeswerk moenie as optioneel of as ekstra werk gesien word nie dit is deel van die werk wat vereis word vir jou kursus. In baie van die kursusse sal die lektor aanneem dat jy die voorgeskrewe leeswerk gedoen as voorbereiding vir die lesing

These meetings all require your active participation
Zonke ezi ndibano zifuna uthathe inxaxheba
Die vergaderings vereis aktiewe deelname

Do remember that within the university, different faculties and departments operate according to their own subject-specific 'rules'. This book cannot replace the important information that faculty handbooks and departmental guides will give you. So, please note that, rather than specific departmental and course requirements, this book offers general information and guidelines. It is important that you seek specialised information from your lecturers, tutors and departments whenever necessary. As part of taking responsibility for your own learning, you should always make sure of the detailed requirements for each of your courses by checking with the lecturer or tutor and consulting the relevant handbooks.

In Brief

Much of the formal instruction at university takes the form of lectures, during which the central information for each course is introduced and explained. For each course you will be given reading material. This reading material might be a course reader or textbook that you have to buy or a set of notes or readings made available on the course's Vula site, or it could be a list of references for books or articles you will have to find in the library or online materials that you have to find on the web. Whatever form it is in, this reading material will expand on the content of the lectures and introduce new ideas that the lectures don't cover.

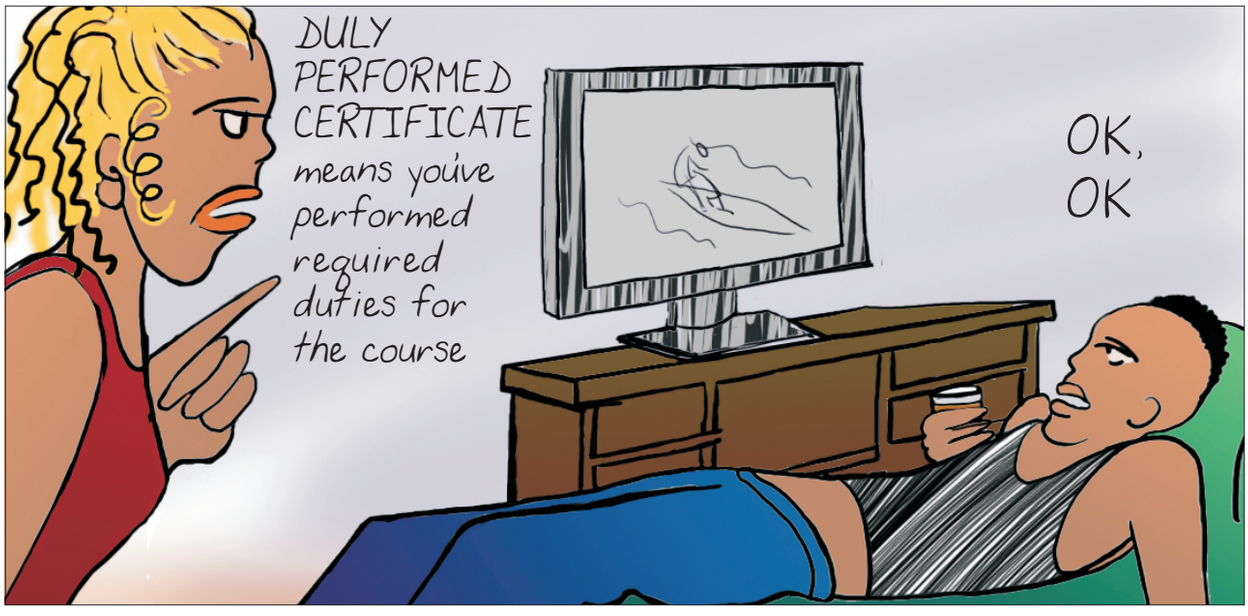
Another part of the formal learning environment is some kind of smaller group structure in addition to lectures. This could be in the form of tutorials, seminars, workgroups, fieldwork sessions, laboratory sessions or practicals.

In a tutorial or seminar, you will typically meet in a small group with a member of staff, to discuss the content of the lectures and the prescribed reading. Tutorials provide the staff with an opportunity to determine whether you are coping with your coursework and to help you with any concepts which you do not understand. Tutorials also provide you with an opportunity to discuss the course content with your classmates and to ask your tutor about any parts of the work that you find difficult or confusing. Seminars are usually bigger discussion group meetings in which students will be asked to prepare and present discussion papers to the rest of the group, usually for assessment. In workgroups, fieldwork sessions, laboratory sessions or practicals, you will have to apply the information you gain from the lectures and prescribed reading. In some courses, particularly in the science faculty, marks you achieve in the practicals are included in the end-of-year mark.

Vula is the university online webpage to which you will be signed up for each of your courses

Vula yi-online webpage yeyunivesithi apho uza kusayinela ikhosi nganye

Vula is die universiteit se webblad waarop jy aangeteken sal word vir elke kursus



By the Way … What your course marks mean:

A pass mark is anything above 50%; a failure is anything below 50%.

75% and above is a first class pass
70-74% is an upper second
60-69% is a lower second
50-59% is a third

Then, if you get
an 'S', it means that you have failed but that you can write a supplementary exam
an 'F' means that you have failed,
and an 'AB' means that you were absent from the examination
a 'DPR' means that you have been refused a DP.

Final marks can be accessed via PeopleSoft 2-3 weeks after the end of exams

Formal evaluation usually takes the form of essays or other written assignments, online quizzes, class tests and examinations. The marks of class tests and assignments written during the course usually count towards your final course results, sometimes as much 60%. Written assignments and class tests offer you the opportunity to revise what you have learnt and express your growing understanding of the subject. They also offer a further learning opportunity because the feedback you receive from your lecturer or tutor will help you to see how well (or badly) you are coping with the work and where you can improve.

Some courses require essays and assignments to be submitted on the course's Vula site. Here the lecturer or tutor retrieves the assignments online. Using Vula, lecturers may also generate an 'originality report' using a programme called 'Turn-it-In', as part of checking that your essay is original, correctly cited and not plagiarised.

Most departments expect you to be present at your seminars, tutorials, workgroups or practicals, and usually prescribe a minimum attendance, for example at least 80% of class sessions. They also expect you to hand in all compulsory written assignments (*on time*!). The consequences of not meeting the minimum requirements or of not handing in the compulsory assignments are serious: you could be refused a 'd.p.' (a '*duly performed certificate*' basically meaning that you have performed the required duties for the course!). If you are refused a d.p. for a course, you will not be allowed to write the examination for that course. The 'd.p.' lists are put on course notice boards, and, sometimes, on course Vula sites just before the exams; *do* make sure your name is there!

If your name is not on these lists, that means that you have not earned a d.p. (due to poor attendance or not having handed in all the required work). You will then not be able to write the exam.

So, the learning activities central to your student life are:

- listening to lectures, reading references given and taking notes,
- participating in small group discussions, and interpreting, integrating and assembling information in
- written assignments, tests and examinations.

As has been mentioned, this book contains notes which provide a general orientation to these activities but don't forget to consult your departmental and course handbooks as well!

You must hand in all written assignments on time

Yourself as a Learner

Your progress at university will depend very much on *you:* how prepared you are, how motivated you are, how organised you are, how responsible you are, so it is appropriate to begin your study preparation by thinking about yourself. Your ability to study and learn successfully will depend on many personal factors, including your emotional state, your lifestyle and your social relationships.

Your first year at university, particularly the first semester, is a time of transitions (changes moving from one state of being to another). For some students, it is the first time they have lived away from home. Although almost all students are excited by this transition, and exhilarated by its possibilities, it can also be scary. Sometimes it seems that nothing is stable and predictable any more, and you might experience this as a sort of identity crisis, feeling that you are becoming a different person. This is especially acute if your previous home and school life didn't share any of the features of university life. You may experience shyness, perhaps because your accent sounds different from everyone else's; you may feel anger and resentment at not being able to use your own language more; or you may be pleased at the many opportunities you have to practise speaking English. You may feel intimidated due to your different financial circumstances or to other apparent differences from those around you. Whatever you feel, it is important to recognise and acknowledge your feelings, and perhaps to discuss them with friends. Similar dilemmas arise around issues of smoking, drinking, sex, styles of clothing, music and many other things that embody personal and cultural values. If these issues are too difficult to talk about with your peers, you can book an appointment through the Student Wellness Service to talk with a counsellor. In each case it will be up to you to understand and deal with your feelings about your identity and the changes that inevitably accompany growth.

You should also consider your physical state; if you aren't healthy it will be very difficult to concentrate and do the amount of work that university study requires. Student Wellness Service can offer detailed advice about this aspect of your life, but, in general, you need to consider whether your habits in the ffollowing areas suit your new needs, or whether you need to change any of them:your diet, the amount of sleep you get (or don't get!), relationships with others and recreational activities.

Where do I belong?!

My home self (and how others at home see me)	Vs	My university self (and how others at university see me)

Your diet

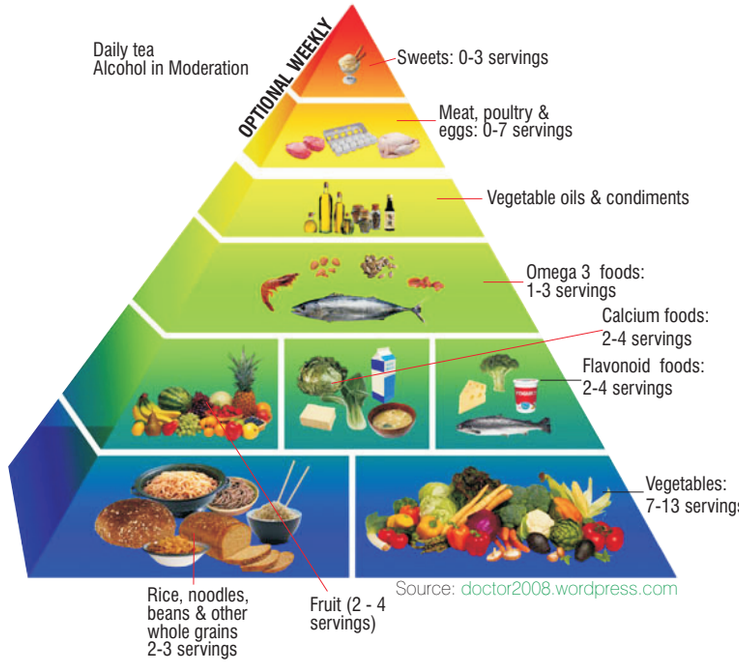
Sr Zurayda Maneveld from Student Wellness Service, offers the following nutritional advice:

Healthy eating is not about strict nutritional dieting, wanting to stay unrealistically thin or depriving yourself of some tasty foods that you love. Choose foods that you can enjoy and that will be beneficial to your health at the same time.

Using the food pyramid is one tool to help you choose from the groups of food essential to maintain a healthy eating plan. From the major food groups that are illustrated in the food pyramid, choose a variety of foods to gain the most essential nutrients that your body requires to promote good health and functioning.

The lifestyle of being a student may make this choice difficult, especially if you live in a catered residence. However, you will still have choices regarding meals on campus and snacks you may keep in your room. It is possible to eat healthily without increasing your food costs.

- *Choose a variety of foods from each major group so that you ensure that you get the nutrients your body needs.*
- *Adapt a plan to your taste and preference e.g. popcorn on campus can fit into your servings of grains.*
- *Combine food groups in one meal experiment with different tastes to make your meals interesting.*



The food pyramid may be a useful guideline: It gives a suggested number of servings per week for each type of food

You can search the web for more information about nutrition.
The Nutritional Information Centre (NICUS) at the University of Stellenbosch has a useful website.

Carbohydrates are essential for giving us energy. Good carbohydrates are plant foods (grains, fruit and vegetables). They also provide your body with essential nutrients, a variety of vitamins, water and fibre necessary for good immunity, concentration and body functioning.

Try to eat unprocessed, unrefined foods such as whole grains, fruit and vegetables that are dark green or have yellow/orange flesh, legumes, nuts and seeds. Eat fruit and vegetables every day, drink 8 glasses of water a day and exercise daily. Think about walking to campus instead of taking the shuttle.
Processed foods should be avoided. Unfortunately these are often the things we like, such as burgers, chips, gatsbys and fizzy cold drinks, but they contain unhealthy ingredients, such as additives and unhealthy fats, and have extra calories.

Initially you may need some help with planning a healthy diet. The trained professionals at the University's Student Wellness Service can assist you with this.

Your sleep

Different people need different amounts of sleep, but most people can't really do with less than 7 or 8 hours a day. A late night here or there won't have a long-term effect, but consistently having less sleep than you need will seriously undermine your ability to concentrate on your studies. It can also make you more susceptible to illness and depression.
Think carefully about your own sleep needs and how they affect your studying. If you have early lectures on some days, try to adjust your evening schedule so that you aren't too tired to get up in time on those mornings, or to concentrate in class when you do get there. This is easier said than done, especially if you are living in a university residence and those around you seem to be operating on a different schedule. Remember, though, that the university residences do have rules about 'quiet time' and 'noisy hours'. Find out what the rules are in your own residence, so that you can plan your studying and sleeping accordingly.

Your recreation

It is not possible or desirable to spend all your time studying (you haven't come for *just* that!). Relaxation is a necessary part of your life and the time you do spend studying will be more productive if you are enjoying leisure pursuits as well. Don't think about recreation as something that *competes* with your time; rather see relaxation or physical exercise as an essential complement to the intense mental exercise required when studying. You do not have to spend hours running or cycling; even small doses of *regular* exercise are beneficial to your health, for instance in building up the immune system and reducing stress.

For some people, the perfect break from studying is working out at the gym; for others it is watching a movie. Whatever your preference, there is a vast range of recreational activities available to choose from on campus and in Cape Town. There are student clubs and societies that cater for almost every need, be it sport, exercise, outdoor pursuits, religion, arts or culture. Keep an eye on the notice boards around campus for information on these.

Your relationships

You may think that your personal life is separate from your intellectual life, but disturbances in your relationships or deep unhappiness with your personal situation can certainly affect your university work. It is important to sort out problems before they interfere with your studies. Counsellors are available at Student Wellness Service for you to talk to about any problems.

As a new student at a big institution, you will come into contact with many new people, lots of whom may come from different cultures or backgrounds to yourself. Some students find this exciting, but it can be quite overwhelming, especially if your peer group at school was small and relatively unchanging. It is common for first year students to find themselves missing their family and friends and their familiar environment at home. Some students find it difficult to find a group of people with whom they feel comfortable, and so they don't venture out of the circle of friends they have known for a long time. It might be useful to remind yourself that everyone else is probably as nervous as you are (even if you think they're hiding it better) so try to develop relationships with your peers.

A note on security

Be security conscious at all times look after yourself as well as your possessions. Call Campus security if ever you feel nervous about your security or you need help.

Campus safety 24-hour hotline

021 650 2222 or 021 650 2223

Much of your learning at university will happen informally, and conversations with others, even outside classroom or tutorial situations, will contribute to your growth and development

Uninzi lwento oza kuyifunda apha edyunivesiti luza kwenzeka ngaphandle kwe gumbi lokufundela, kwakunye neencoko nabanye, nangaphandle kwegumbi lokufundelela okanye kumaqela afundayo *itutorials*, konke oku kuya kufaka isandla ekukhuleni kwakho

'n Groot deel van jou opvoeding by die universiteit sal informeel plaasvind en daarom sal gesprekvoering, selfs met mense buite die klaskamer of hulp-lesings, bydra tot jou groei en ontwikkeling

Your Successful Learning Strategies

All of these considerations around diet, sleep, relationships, leisure and exercise relate to maintaining a healthy self in general, but there are more specific aspects to think about in relation to your own learning. Ask yourself the question:

"What kind of student am I?"
"Ndingumfundi onjani?"
"Watter soort student is ek?"

You have already spent many years of your life studying, so use this experience to help you understand your own needs, and to plan for a successful first year at university. It might help you to think about your answers to questions such as:

- When I study, what helps me more: support or challenge, or both?
- How much feedback do I need?
- When have I successfully used group work?
- When has individual study been better for me?
- What really motivates me: the fear of failure, intellectual interest, the pressure of a deadline, the promise of a reward?
- When do I work best: early in the morning, late at night?

Your answers to these questions are unique to you, so you alone can plan appropriately for your needs. For instance, if you recognise that you really need a supportive group environment in order to study well, you should do your best to create one: ask a couple of people from your residence or tutorial group to join you for study sessions, or go and work with others in the library. If you realise that you produce good essays only when you are working to a deadline, and you also do your best work early in the mornings, then you need to make sure you go to bed early around the time your essays are due so that you will have enough time and energy to complete your work in time, in the way that best suits you.
You might also realise that the way you have always studied at school will not be suitable at university. In this case, you may have to abandon your old habits and explore new ways of studying. Refer to other sections of this book (Lectures, Reading, Essay Writing) for some ideas that may be helpful, or discuss with friends or tutors how to improve your study practices.

The following are very important to successful learning, and you have control of them all (if these are absent, they could prevent you from learning successfully):

Motivation

Your state of mind is important. Wanting to learn and having a sense of purpose are prime requirements for successful learning. Things that can help keep you motivated are trying to keep a clear idea of your goals in your learning (but being open to change as you discover new ideas through your learning experience), being positive and aiming high within your reach.

Practice

Remember how you learnt to ride a bicycle? you fell off, sometimes laughed, sometimes hurt yourself but you got back on and you picked up the technique. Your mistakes can be great teachers!

Engagement

Engage with your learning community and taking part in discussions with fellow class mates, teachers or others inside and outside the classroom really does promote your learning. It gives you new ideas, generates feedback on your own ideas and questions (which can promote your self-esteem), and can stimulate further exploration of ideas. The existence of chat facilities on cell phones and the internet makes it easy to take up conversations about your course topics with others who are

Learning is about making connections!
Ukufunda kukwenza unxibelelwaniso!
Om te studeer, gaan oor die vorming van verbintenisse!

Reflection

While community is important, time to think on your own is also essential to learning. Reflection is important for making sense of what you have learned, what you have read, heard, seen and expressed.

There *will* be times when you lose confidence and when you may fail at things. Keeping healthy and fit and making use of the resources available around you can aid you in your recovery from the low moments.

Your mistakes can be great teachers!
Iimpazamo zakho zingayimfundiso enkulu!
Jy kan baie leer ui jou foute!

Yourself as a Learner

Stress Management

All of us experience stress (pressure) and anxiety at times. In fact, a certain level of stress gives us energy and can help us perform to our best ability. However, too much stress affects academic performance negatively. For example, your ability to concentrate becomes poor and you are easily distracted, remembering information becomes difficult, you feel constantly tired and exhausted, you may suffer from headaches, stomach aches, sleeping difficulties, trembling or shaking, or you may have difficulty breathing.

Student Wellness Service offers the following tips on your stress:

Keep up with assignments and coursework

- Make an assignment schedule
- Make daily 'to do' lists
- Reward yourself for completing work.

Review lecture notes each day

Take breaks while studying

- Stand up after 20 minutes
- Switch to a different subject
- Write, draw and talk out loud.

Study actively

Get enough sleep

- Lack of sleep has a negative effect on your ability to remember
- Establish a good bedtime ritual to tell your body its time to sleep: read, do yoga or stretch, take a warm bath or drink warm milk
- Don't take afternoon naps.

Eat healthy food

- Avoid junk/fast foods
- Take multi-vitamins
- Include foods such as fish, whole grains and fruits
- Drink 2 litres of water a day.
- Avoid caffeine, bioplus, stimulants, cola and alcohol
- Visit Student Wellness if you feel ill.

Take care of your body.

- Exercise: walk, go to gym or dance
- Do physical activity: it is a good way to relieve stress
- Get a massage
- Do progressive relaxation techniques, visualisation and slow, deep breathing to relax.

Ensure you have quiet time

- Balance your family, social and work time to ensure that you have time for yourself
- Have a hobby
- Unwind by taking a walk on the beach, soak in the bath, listen to music or watch the sunset.

Use positive self-talk

Ideal Learning Conditions

In order to create ideal conditions for learning, it is important to organise yourself in terms of *where* you study and how you manage your *time*.

Organising a place to study

It is possible to learn anywhere. You may be someone who can read on the train or think through ideas in the shower but for the kind of long-term, sustained and concentrated studying you will need to do at university, it is probably better to set aside some place in which to study.

You will have to do lots of reading. You may argue that you find it easy to concentrate even when sitting on a bed or in an easy chair; however, much of the reading you will do will also require you to make notes while reading (see the section on Reading), so a table or desk is probably necessary. Working on the floor for a long time can be very uncomfortable, and lying on your bed might tempt you to go to sleep, so it is better to make serious provision for somewhere special that is more suitable for studying. An upright chair and a table or desk, where you will need to spread out the various books or documents you are referring to, are also essential for your writing tasks. These basic necessities are provided in all the residences, as well as in various venues on campus, including the library. It is useful to have your own space so that you can leave your things set out instead of having to pack them up every time you take a break, or stop studying for the day.

Good lighting is another essential feature of a suitable place for studying. Poor lighting can cause eye-strain, tension headaches or sleepiness. Some of the lighting problems might be a light that is too dim, lights that are too bright and glaring, and lights that flicker. These problems can usually be solved by changing the strength of the overhead globe or adding a desk-lamp, or both.

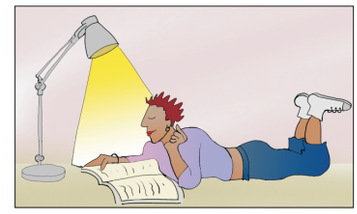
If you have your own laptop computer, it is also important to work at it in a position which will not cause physical stress from odd postures for example bent necks, curved spines or an outstretched arm to the mouse or eye-strain and dryness from bad lighting or long periods of staring at the screen.

Distractions are a very real problem. Wherever you live there will probably be distracting noises: other family members chatting, children playing outside, other students talking, laughing or arguing, even your own television, radio or music centre not to mention constant SMSs and so on! Exert whatever influence you can on the environment. For instance, you could put your cell phone away and on 'silent' for your study and work periods, you could ask your family or room-mates to keep the noise level down for a certain time every day, you could switch off the radio or television if it is up to you, or you could close the door or windows to minimise the sounds coming from outside. For most of us, these options are very limited, and it is not possible to demand silence in a home or in a residence full of hundreds of other students. Try, instead, to find ways to work around the problems. For example, if your room-mate always goes out for 3 hours on a Thursday night, use use that

sit upright...

not like this

sit up with good lighting



not like this

opportunity to get some work done, or try to work when other family members are out or asleep (as long as this doesn't deprive you of your own sleep). Plan to spend time in the library or computer lab or Knowledge Commons when you have essays or assignments to complete, or tests to prepare for.

When you are having a hard time concentrating, almost everything can constitute a distraction. It is not possible to create a distractionless environment if you are willing to be distracted, anything will seem to be more urgent or interesting than the studying you are supposed to be doing. Studying *is* an exercise in self-discipline! Of course you can, and should, work at reducing distracting things in your study space, and try out different places and times to find the conditions under which you will be able to do your best work.

Organising your time

We are all familiar with feelings and thoughts like: 'I know I could do this well if only I had more time!' Given the amount of work involved in studying at university, you are likely to feel this fairly often in your first year, especially if you haven't managed your time very well. If you have come to university straight from school, you may not have had to organise your own time very much, as schools tend to be quite rigid and dictate when and how you study. They also require you to spend a lot more time in class, and this leads to the mistaken belief that there is so much 'free' time at the university. It is this 'free' time that you will have to take responsibility for now. There *are* ways to make time more concrete.

You could begin by thinking about the year as a block of time, and of all the things you have to fit into that time. The university year has its own pattern and rhythm which is embodied in the academic calendar. Here is an example of the pattern for the first semester of one year. It shows the semester measured in academic weeks, and notes days when there are no lectures.

Week	Dates	Notes
00	16 Feb - 20 Feb	Registration Week / Iveki yobhaliso / Registrasie week
01	23 Feb - 27 Feb	Lectures start / Ukuqala kwezifundo / Lesings begin
02	02 Mar - 06 Mar	
03	09 Mar - 13 Mar	
04	16 Mar - 20 Mar	
05	23 Mar - 27Mar	
06	30 Mar - 03 Apr	Lectures end / Ukuphela kwezifundo / Einde van lesings
07	06 Apr - 09 Apr	Autumn Vacation / Iholide yoKwindla / Herfs vakansie
	10 Apr - 19 Apr	Lectures start / Ukuqala kwezifundo / Lesings begin
08	20 Apr - 24 Apr	
09	27 Apr - 1 May	Freedom Day / USuku lweNkululeko / Vryheidsdag (27 April) Workers' Day / USuku laBasebenzi / Werkersdag (1 May)
10	04 May - 08 May	
11	11 May - 15 May	
12	18 May - 22 May	
13	25 May - 29 May	
14	01 Jun - 05 Jun	Lectures end / Ukuphela kwezifundo / Einde van lesings
15	08 Jun - 12 Jun	Study week / Iveki yokuzifundela / Studeer week
16	15 Jun - 19 Jun	Examinations / Iimviwo / Eksamens Youth Day / Usuku loLutsha / Jeugdag (16 June)
17	22 Jun - 26 Jun	Examinations / Iimviwo / Eksamens Graduation / UThweso lwezidanga / Gradering

Number of teaching days in the first semester: 67

It would be more practical to translate this information into a more useable form, like the following eg of a semester planner. You can buy a year planner or make one like this yourself, and then fill in the basic information like public holidays, university vacations, study week and so on. When you get all the information about your own timetable, fill it in, including due dates for assignments, test dates and other important information that will help you to plan.

Below is an example of a partially completed calendar, which shows the semester at a glance. It can be used to illustrate exactly when more work will be needed (for example before the Economics test) and when less time will be available for studying (for example around the time of the bursary interview), which means that you can plan for when you need more time for work, or how to compensate for time that will be lost to other activities.

Week	Monday Mvulo Maandag	Tuesday Lwesibini Dinsdag	Wednesday Lwesithathu Woensdag	Thursday Lwesine Donderdag	Friday Lwesihlani Vrydag	Saturday Mgqibelo Saterdag	Sunday Cawa Sondag
00	Registration Week Iveki yobhaliso Registrasie week						
01							
02		No lectures					
03							
04					POLS assignment		
05	ENG essay						
06				HISTORY test			
07				ECON test	POLS assignment		
08		HISTORY project					
09							
10					POLS assignment		
11				HISTORY test	bursary interview		
12				ECON test			
13			POLS project				
14	Study Week Iveki yokufunda Studeer week						
15	Exams Iimviwo Eksamens						
16	Exams Iimviwo Eksamens						

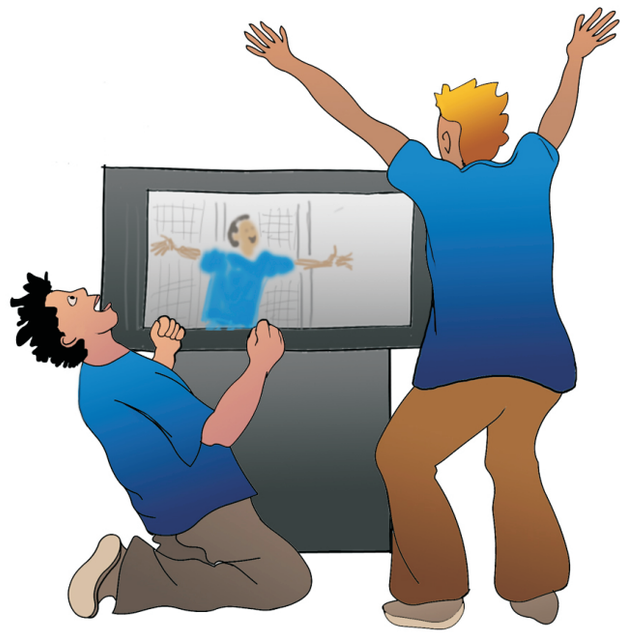
Ideal Learning Conditions

When you have blocked in the time commitments at this level, it is time to start planning on the smaller scale. You should begin by looking at your daily and weekly time use. Try for a week to keep a detailed timetable of what you do.This means taking note of how much time you spend doing the following things:

- Attending lectures, tutorials and practicals studying, reading, online browsing or doing other work related to your courses,
- Working in a part-time job,
- Travelling to and from university and your job, sport, recreation and hobbies,
- Relaxing at home (reading the newspaper, watching TV, listening to music, browsing the web),
- Socialising (including Mix-it, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Skyping, emailing and talking on the telephone!), domestic duties (cleaning, cooking, laundry, going to town to pay accounts),and sleeping.

When you review this information, you'll need to identify where you're spending a lot of time. If it's in front of the television, or in the student union playing cards, then you will know that you can afford to spend a lot more time studying. If you see that you spend long hours studying without any breaks or relaxation, you might want to reread the section above on Yourself as a Learner. Remember that relaxation is a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle, and try to find a more sustainable pattern of work. If you are spending too much time on domestic work (for yourself or others), you need to think about why this is so, and whether you can do anything to change this.

With your own requirements in mind, draw up a weekly timetable that will suit you. If you need to study in long, uninterrupted sessions, then plan for those; if you can get a lot done in short bursts of time, make full use of the time between classes and other bits of time that would otherwise be wasted. If you study best in the night, make sure you get all sorts of other time-consuming activities out of the way during the day; if your residence is too noisy in the evenings, plan to spend Saturday mornings in the library doing the work that needs the most concentration. Be honest with yourself. If you sit at your desk for the two hours every evening that you have allotted for studying, but you chat on WhatsApp, re-read old love letters, or fill the margins of your paper with sketches of cars, then you cannot count this time as 'studying' time. Try to stick to your timetable, but don't be totally inflexible sometimes you might learn more by watching a debate on television, or having a discussion with a friend who comes around unexpectedly, than by sitting resentfully in front of your books. Good planning means that you should never get behind with your work, and so you can afford to be spontaneous now and then.



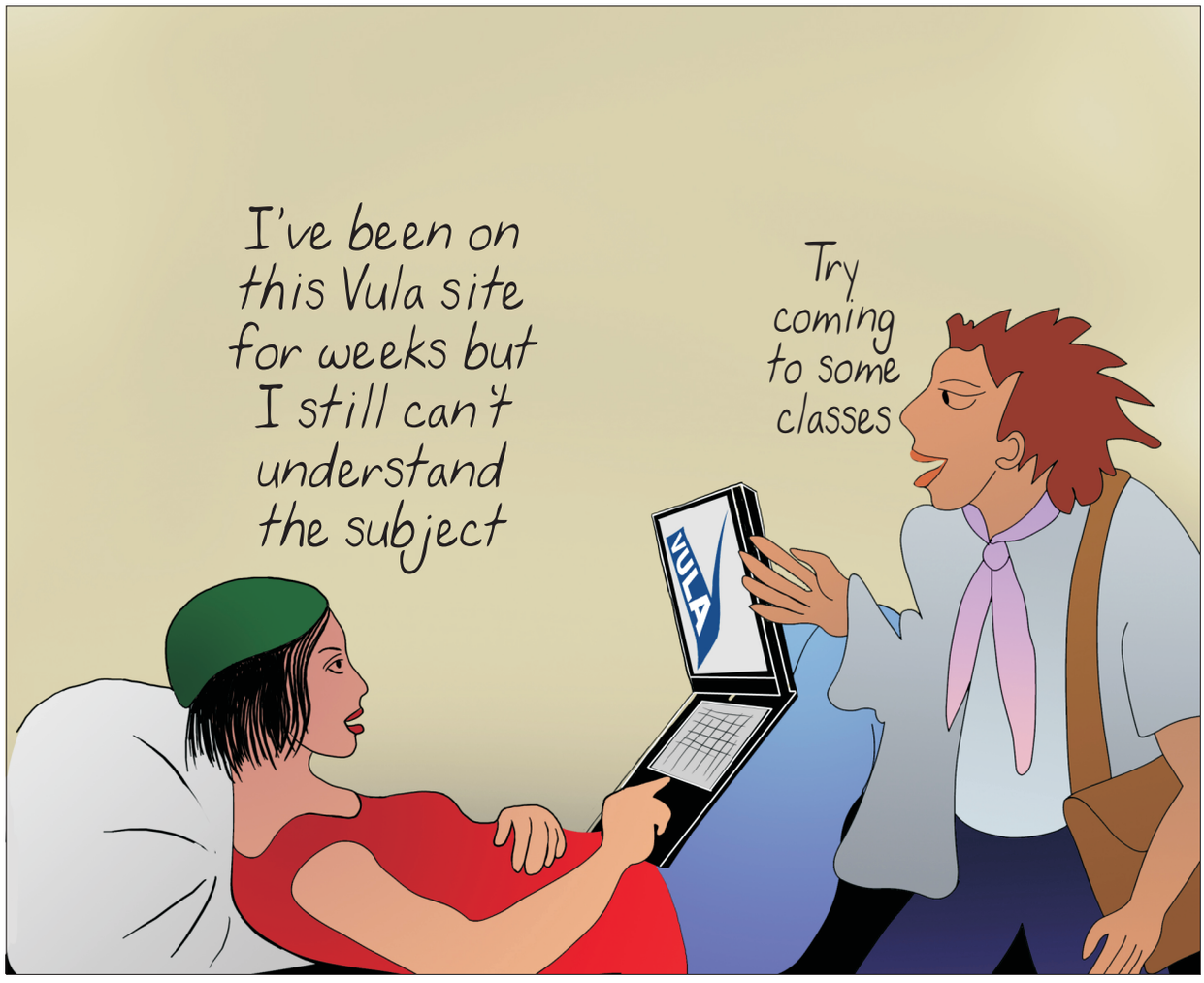
Overall, it is important for you to assess whether you are spending enough time on your university work. Remember also that this can change as the year progresses. The pressure of work increases through the year, especially if you have not used your time wisely at the beginning, and have allowed things to pile up till the last minute.Your time management depends on your understanding of how much work you need to do, and how long it will take you to do it. This might be more or less time than is needed by your friends and room-mates, and it is up to you to put in as much work as *you* need to, in order to achieve what you want to achieve. One way of making the most of your time is to make productive use of free periods on campus and quiet spaces like the library and knowledge commons. Use your timetable to allocate regular slots for reading for each of your courses. Generally, course lecture and tutorial times are arranged according to the following periods: (some practicals, for example in Music, Drama or Dance, or Science laboratory sessions, may be arranged over a few hours).

Period	Monday Mvulo Mandag	Tuesday Lwesibini Dinsdag	Wednesday Lwesithathu Woensdag	Thursday Lwesine Donderdag	Friday Lwesihlani Vrydag
Week					
1st 08.00-8.45					
2nd 09.00-9.45					
3rd 10.00-10.45					
4th 11.00-11.45					
5th 12.00-12.45					
13.00-13.55					
6th 14.00-14.45					
7th 15.00-15.45					
8th 16.00-16.45					
9th 17.00-17.45					
10th 18.00-18.45					

As you can see, the periods are numbered 1 to 10, with a median slot at lunch time. The lecture slots each last 45 minutes and there are 15 minutes between each slot to enable you to change venues. So, for example, when your course handbook states

Lectures: Monday to Thursday, 7th, Leslie 3C.
Tutorials: Tuesday 4th or 6th, Wednesday 3rd or 6th

it means that you will have lectures every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 3pm in the lecture theatre 3C in the Leslie Social Science building and that your tutorials will be on Tuesdays either at 11am or at 2pm and on Wednesdays either at 10am or at 2pm. Remember that tutorial class lists and their venues are decided after you have registered and the lists are put up on departmental notice boards and Vula sites. (If in doubt, ask the Departmental Secretary).



A lot of this information is now made available on the course Vula sites together with lecture notes and further readings. BUT downloading the notes instead of going to the lecture is not an adequate substitute. The notes are provided to add to what is explained in the lecture in other words, the lecture is designed to help you to understand the notes!

Ulwazi oluninzi luyafumaneka kumacandelo kaVula- nembalelwano engezifundo neminye imiqulu efundwayo. KODWA ukukhuphela inotes kwi-internet endaweni yokuya eklasini asiyonto eyaneleyo. Inotes uzinikelwa ukuba zikucacisele into iklasi ibingayo ngamanye amagama, isifundo sakhiwe ngendlela yokuthi uziqonde inotes!

Baie van hierdie inligting is nou beskikbaar op die Vula kursus web-blaaie, tesame met lesingnotas en verdere leeswerk. MAAR om die notas af te laai in plaas van om die lesing by te woon is nie voldoende nie. Die notas vul aan wat in die lesing bespreek word. Met ander woorde, die lesing is ontwerp om jou te help om die notas te verstaan!

Yourself as a Learner

Lectures will probably be less familiar to you than any other learning situation in the university; they differ from high school classes most obviously in terms of size, but also in terms of function. At first, these two features might feel problematic to new students.

In some first year courses, you may be one of several hundred students sitting in a big lecture theatre, listening while the lecturer talks for 45 minutes, often about things you've never heard of before. Some students find it very difficult to learn in this situation, where they are anonymous and feel distant from the lecturer; they might end up feeling bored or frustrated. Some find it tempting to bunk lectures, knowing their absence will not be detected.

Although lectures can be easy to skip and hard to follow, it is very important to attend them! A lot of what the lecture does for you can't be done in any other way. In a short space of time, lectures

- introduce you to new fields of study, new concepts, new terminology
- provide you with a lot of information (usually synthesised from various sources) in a relatively short space of time
- reveal to you the lecturer's own position and point of view in relation to the subject matter of the course
- give you an overview of the course, including important dates (tests, due dates for assignments), requirements and administrative issues

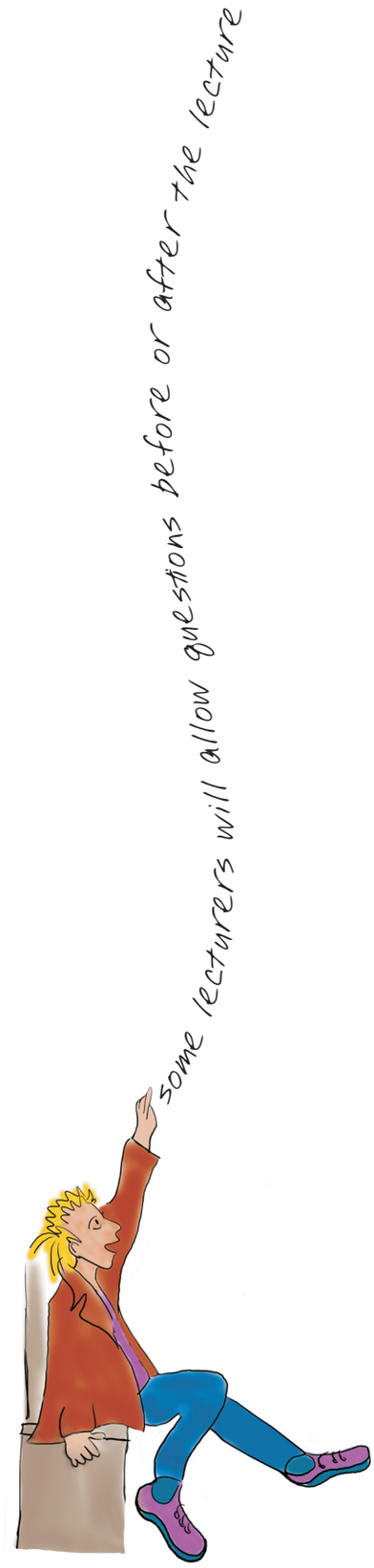
Lectures are generally not interactive, although some lecturers will allow time for questions during or after the lecture. Lectures are *delivered* by the lecturer, to the audience. This implies a degree of passivity on your part, but there are ways to be an active listener, which will enhance your learning experience in lectures. The following sections will offer some ideas about what to do before, during and after the lecture to achieve this end.

Before the lecture

Although you are not usually expected to 'perform' or 'participate' in lectures as you may have done in an interactive classroom at school, or in the same way that you would do in your tutorials, you should still prepare yourself for the lectures. The most important thing to do is to focus your mind before the lecture. Two possible steps in this process are thinking about the topic itself and considering what you already know about it. Let's look at these

Read this riddle:

The beginning of eternity
The end of time and space
The beginning of every end
And the end of every place



Before the Lecture

What is the topic?

Without an answer or title you can gaze at these lines for hours (or give up in frustration) without being able to say what they mean. They make no sense, although you 'understand' each word and the whole thing is perfectly straightforward on some levels. Now, if you knew before you saw the riddle, that this was a verse about the letter 'e', your reading of the verse would be more like this:

The *beginning* of **e**ternity
The *end* of tim**e** and spac**e**
The *beginning* of every **e**nd
And the *end* of every plac**e**

With this new information, you would understand each word and phrase *in relation to this title* with the greatest of ease on the first reading, because you would be mentally prepared to take advantage of every clue.

This principle also holds for your lecture preparation. Try, before each lecture, to remind yourself what the topic of the lecture is. You could find this out by looking at the course outline the lecturer gave out at the beginning of the course, or on the course Vula site. The course outline might have the title of each day's lecture listed, or it might be blocked out in weeks, or according to the different sections being handled by various lecturers. In any case, it should be possible for you to use the course outline to orient yourself and know in advance the topic of the day's lecture. As in the riddle example given above, you will then be able to make sense of the new information delivered in the lecture *in relation to the topic*.

You could also consult the notes you took in the previous lecture or lectures, or, indeed, those made available via Vula. You could find out, for example, if the new lecture will be a continuation of the section handled previously, or a new section. Being aware of the context will allow you to ask yourself the next important question.

What do I really know about the topic?

Having said, in the section above, that lectures are the place where *NEW* information is provided, it might seem strange to suggest that you ask yourself what you already know about the topic. This suggestion can be explained by referring to the way human beings learn. Although there are competing theories about it, it is generally accepted that:

Learning builds upon what is already known
Ukufunda kongeza kulwazi obusele unalo
Studie bou op wat jy alreeds weet

It is easier to learn something that can be connected to something you already know, or something that you have experienced. By the time you reach UCT you have already accumulated a multitude of skills and vast quantities of general and specific knowledge. It is important that you use what you already know to create a 'hook' for the new knowledge to hang on to. You could also think about it as using what you already know about the topic as the foundation, which will support the new understandings you will build up, using the new information in the lectures.

Once you know what the topic of the lecture is, spend a little time thinking about what you already know about this topic. Do you recall having studied this or a closely related subject at school? You may have read something in the newspaper, heard about it on the radio or seen a programme on television that referred to some aspect of this topic. You might also be able to exchange ideas and experiences with a fellow student or read over a relevant section in the textbook or course reader in anticipation of the new topic. Your lecture notes from previous lectures might also help you to realise what you already know about the topic.

You could also make a note of any questions that arise in your mind or your conversations, or things you are curious about in relation to the topic as far as you know it (or don't). This can also make it easier to learn about the topic because you may then be alert for or recognise the 'answers' to your queries or the clearing up of your confusions!

Some practical hints

From a practical point of view, you can also prepare for the lecture in the following ways:

- Try to arrive early for your lectures, so that you have time to organise your writing materials and your mind before the lecture starts. If you miss the introduction to the lecture you are probably missing the main point and the signalling of important issues to look out for, which would have helped you to make sense of all the subsequent details.
- Arriving early also means that you can choose a seat from which you will be able to hear the lecturer clearly, and that will allow you a clear view of the board or screen. This means that you can concentrate without being distracted by people coming late, or the struggle to see or hear the lecturer. It is also possible that lecturers will respond to your reactions if they can see you, and this could be very useful. For instance, if you were looking puzzled or worried, the lecturer might repeat an important point, or explain it in another way to help clarify your understanding.
- Make sure that you get any handouts that are distributed at the beginning of the lecture, and glance over them if you have time before the lecture starts.
- Not all lecturers make course notes available on the Vula site, but even when these notes are made available, they may be incomplete and not cover every aspect, so it remains important to make some of your own lecture notes.

Knowing what the topic is, recalling what you already know about it and thinking about questions around the topic will help to focus your mind, and allow it to take in the new knowledge in the lecture

Ukwazi okungaso isihloko, ukukhumbula osele ukwazi ngaso nokucinga ngemibuzo emalunga ngesihloko kuza kukunceda ukuba umilisele ingqondo yakho, kwaye kuyivumele ukuba yamkele olu lwazi lutsha olufumene eklasini

Om vooraf te weet wat die onderwerp is, om te onthou wat jy reeds daarvan weet en om te dink aan vrae rondom die onderwerp, sal jou help om te fokus en die nuwe kennis in te neem wat in 'n lesing gegee word

In this way your experience in lectures will be part of building up new understandings out of previous ones, instead of simply overwhelming you with unfamiliar and apparently disconnected facts.

During the lecture

- Many students have got into the habit of recording their lectures and the lecturers' slides on their cell phones. Whilst these recordings can serve as useful reminders later, your *active* rather than passive listening will improve your memory and your experience!

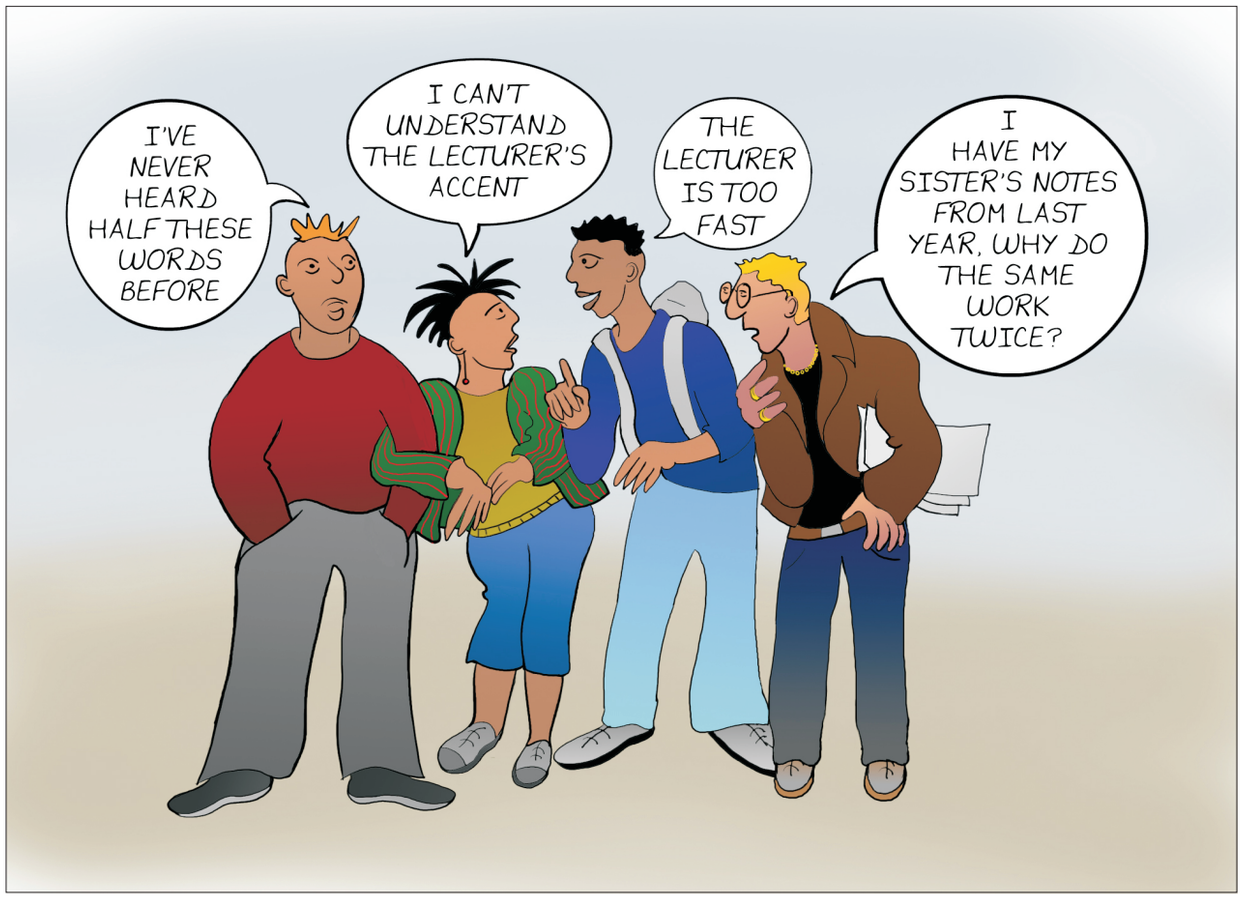
The taking and making of notes need to be done in ways which are useful to YOU!

Ukuthathwa nokwenziwa kwe*notes* kufuneka kwenziwe ngendlela apha eza kuba luncedo KUWE!

Maak notas op so 'n manier dat dit nuttig is vir JOU!

Developing your skills in note-taking is essential to your studies. Your notes taken from lectures, tutorials, discussions and readings can be used in preparing for assignments and examinations therefore they serve as reminders and resources. However, the (skilled) *process* of taking notes also helps with understanding and digesting the information you are presented with this process serves as an aid in concentration and in promoting questioning and debate.

Note-taking in lectures is difficult, but the difficulty is more complicated than just not being able to write fast enough to write down everything the lecturer says. This is why it is important not to give in to the temptation *NOT* to take notes. If you are a new student, struggling with note-taking, there are many excuses that seem attractive:



These commonly heard responses to note-taking presume that it is the job of the student attending lectures to copy down faithfully whatever is said in the lecture. Is this true?

We have said that lectures are occasions on which lots of new information is provided, new ideas are introduced and new concepts are explained. This means that simply listening to the lecture is hard work. On top of this, many students believe that they have to record all this new information in its entirety. Actually, this is almost impossible. It is also a misguided assumption (*phew!*). Even the most complete set of notes that captures every word uttered by the lecturer (for example, a full transcription) is not the best set of lecture-notes. This is because it is not possible for knowledge that is in the lecturer's head to transfer itself in a solid block to your head. The way you will gain knowledge is by processing what you hear in lectures, and finding a place for it in your own scheme of knowledge, by somehow making it your own representing the facts in a way that makes sense to *you* (rather than the lecturer). This is why a digital recording of the lecture (something that often seems to be a perfect solution!) is actually not as good as a set of good notes that you have made for yourself.

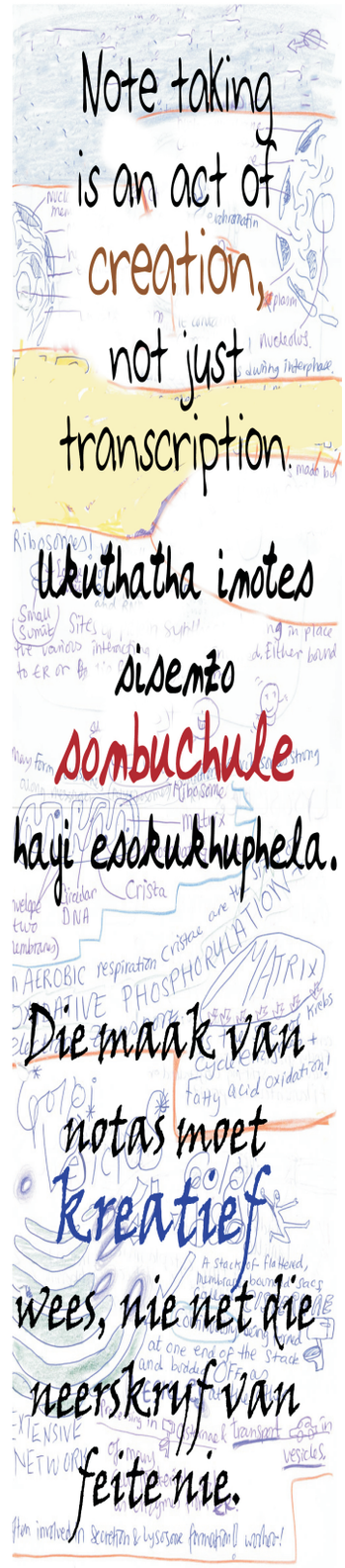
The notes you take in lectures will provide the 'raw material' with which you can construct your own new understandings. They will also provide the 'raw material' for many of the things you'll be asked to produce, like assignments, essays, and test and exam responses. The quality of your written work and, ultimately, your success in your courses will probably be related to how well you have taken notes in lectures.

Note-taking is important, and lack of skill in this area can have bad consequences, *BUT* do not panic if you can't come up with a brilliant set of notes in your first week of university. It takes time to get used to the pace of the lectures, the unusual accents you will be hearing and, perhaps, the level of language you will have to keep up with, especially if English is not your first language. Note-taking is a skill that will improve with time and practice.

Note-taking is best thought of as a creative process, during which you recreate your understanding of the concepts, ideas and information in the lecture, so your notes will not look the same as anyone else's. Although you will develop your own system, there are some common note-taking strategies.

Select the keywords and main ideas

Don't include anecdotes, jokes, little stories and illustrations. How to detect the main ideas is, of course, the difficulty, but the lecturer's outline (sometimes displayed on the board, via an overhead projector (OHP) or PowerPoint) can help. The language used in the lecture can also alert you to main points.



During the Lecture

You will know that something the lecturer repeats, writes on the board, or shows on an OHP or PowerPoint is a main point. Sometimes he or she will restate the same idea in a couple of different ways; this is also a sign that this is an important point. A point that is illustrated by an example or two is probably also important. A rhetorical question is often also a sign that the lecturer is going to make a significant point. Sometimes the structure is revealed in the language, for example,

Retorical Question:

A question for which an answer isn't really expected
Umbuzo ongadingi mpendulo
'n Vraag waarvoor 'n antwoord nie verwag is nie

'Today we are going to discuss the three major philosophical approaches to knowledge. Firstly ...'

This will help you to select the main points, and arrange the supporting ideas around them. If you miss the main point, take down whatever you can and then try later to reconstruct the main point.

NB: Don't be tempted to write down only material that is shown on the board or screen and not listen; listening is your main priority for understanding the lecture!

Abbreviate

Use abbreviations you are acquainted with, such as 'i.e.', 'e.g.', 'viz', 'etc.' or SMS-type abbreviations and shortening of words. And if, say, your lecture is about a particular revolution, and this word occurs in every sentence, you might write 'rev' or even just 'r'. Remember, you must be able to decode your own notes later on!

Organise

Your organisation will probably be related to the structure of the lecture, which can usually be seen in the lecturer's outline or preamble. She might say, 'Today we will deal with the three major causes of …', so you will know that there will be three major sections. There are several ways of organising your lecture notes. People do have individual learning styles, so the 'best' style is the one that best suits your own learning style.

Let's look at three different ways of organising notes. Let's say we wanted to take notes on the piece of text above labelled Lectures: Before the Lecture. You have read the text already. Now look at the different note-taking styles explained below and see which one seems to work best for you.

The most familiar is what might be called 'linear' notes; it would look like this:

Lectures

i. What they do:
1. *Introduce new stuff*
2. *Lots of info in little time*
3. *Show L's p.o.v.*
4. *Admin, business, dates etc.*

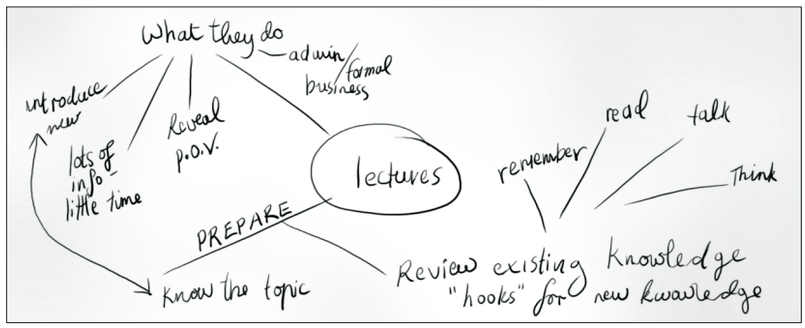
ii. How to prepare for them:
1. *Know the topic (title) and relate all details to it*
2. *Existing knowledge - use as building blocks*

Focus the Mind!!!

iii Practical stuff:
Arrive early
Sit near front
Get handouts

As you can see, this style attempts to recreate the 'bigger picture' behind the lecture. It makes it possible for you to show the connection between two ideas, even if they didn't occur consecutively in the lecturer's presentation. This method is often more useful in note-making while reading (see later). It is quite hard to do this effectively while under pressure, especially if you haven't used this method very often before.

In this style, as you can see, you use headings and subheadings, underlinings and numbered paragraphs to emphasise important points. This style preserves the order of the lecture, and this is useful if the exact sequence is important for your understanding.



Another style that you may have seen before is the 'mind map' style. It is worth trying this out, as some people find this very useful and helpful.

Lectures	*(ref. orientation booklet)*
What they do:	*What about tutorials?*
a. Introduce new stuff	*Is this important to know?*
b. Give lots of info	
c. Show L's p.o.v.	
d. Practical info,e.g. test dates	*Also noticeboards*
How to prepare:	
a. Know the topic course outlines	*All this, every day!!???!!!*
b. think of previous knowledge or experience - 'hooks' or building blocks	
read/think/discuss	*Can you do the readings in advance?*

Another way of organising your lecture notes is the 'double column method' which combines some features of the two styles mentioned above. You divide your page in two, and write the actual lecture notes on one side, using the other column for your own thoughts and responses to the lecture material. You might also use it to note down questions to ask at the end, or later in your tutorials.

During the Lecture

As you see, it allows you the freedom to add to your notes after the lecture, or to ask questions of your own without interrupting the flow of the lecture. You need to record the information, but in order to build up your own knowledge, you need to interact with the new knowledge – the double column allows you to do this, recording questions and even disagreements that you have in response to the lecture material. In cases where you have missed the main point, you can fill it in later.

Whatever method of organising you choose (and you may find that one style suits the lectures given in one course but not those in another!), it is very important to organise your notes in the more superficial sense of labelling them with course title, lecturer's name, date and specific topic, and numbering each page. This means that should your files become disordered, as they will when you use them for lectures, tutorials, readings, essays and exams for all the courses you are doing, you will easily be able to reorganise them properly.

Some hints on general behaviour expected during lectures

Etiquette in lectures includes the following:

- Arriving on time: This is good for you and also shows respect towards your lecturer and towards your classmates, rather than disrupting them all.
- Switching your cell phone onto *Silent*: Students do use their cell phones for recording lectures and whilst it is acceptable to use your phone or laptop for academic purposes during lectures, taking calls, sending or reading SMSs, going on Mix-it or playing games on your cell phone (or laptop) distracts others as well as yourself.
- Not running private conversations.
- Raising your hand to ask something: In terms of asking questions or raising issues with lecturers, it is better to raise your hand to alert them than simply to interrupt them. Lecturers will often make time for questions and points towards the end of a lecture. If space is not given for this, and you have a burning issue, approach your lecturers after lectures and ask to speak to them or make a time with them.
- Addressing your lecturers appropriately: There are various ways of addressing your lecturers – the most common is with their title and surname – e.g. 'Dr Sicelo', 'Prof. Letlaka', 'Mr Aronson'.

After the Lecture

Reflection and review after the lecture are also important. It is always advisable to read over your notes soon after the lecture, so as to fill in extra important bits of information that you remember. You may reflect on any questions the notes raise for you and use the opportunity to add to your notes and anticipate what is to follow in the coming lectures. You may also follow up on the topic by consulting readings and handouts, researching further or discussing issues that arise with your fellow students or in your tutorials.

Filing your Notes

You may work very hard on your lecture note-taking skills, and you may produce impressive notes in the appropriate style, but if you lose them, or can't find the ones you want, you will not be able to use them when you need them. Retrieval of your notes is just as important as their creation.

There are different methods for keeping track of all the new information you are gaining. If you are taking notes on loose, lined sheets of paper, or an examination pad, then you should file them each evening in ring binders, preferably one for each course you are taking. There are many details to be considered here. For example, in most courses you will have lectures and tutorials every week. Do you divide your ring binder into two sections, one for lecture notes, and one for tutorial notes? Or do you file everything chronologically, in the order in which it happened? This would mean that this week's tutorial notes would be filed with this week's lecture notes, last week's tutorial notes with last week's lecture notes and so on.

There are advantages and disadvantages to either system and it is up to you to decide on the one that suits your purposes. You may decide to divide each ring binder into sections representing different sections of the course, different lecturers, the four academic terms, or whatever, using coloured plastic or cardboard dividers. Of course, you may also type up notes on a computer. Whatever you choose to do, make sure that you are *consistent*, and that you label sections, dividers and binders or computer files and folders properly.

It is very easy to spend a lot of time setting up a system for your notes, and tempting to spend money on beautifully coloured ring binders, plastic sleeves and so on, but remember that the point of making notes, filing them and retrieving them is to use them to construct and demonstrate your new knowledge in essays, assignments, tests and exams.

A bit about your lecturers themselves

A lecturer's job consists of other duties apart from teaching or lecturing. Usually lecturers are responsible for a few courses – often for large numbers of students. They may also act as supervisors of individual postgraduate thesis writers or small group research projects. They have to conduct research of their own and write this up for publication. They are often called on as consultant experts in their fields or to do presentations around or off-campus, and act as reviewers of journals or external examiners for other institutions. They also have a fair number of administrative commitments within the university and their departments. So, while they are there for you, their time is not always immediately available for you. You are certainly allowed to request time with them but it may have to be arranged with them beforehand – done personally, by phone call or email. Some Vula sites also enable you to communicate with your lecturer directly.

Emailing your lecturer is a formal communication – don't use SMS text or overly casual address!

Different kinds of Class

No matter which faculty or department you are in at the university, lectures will not be the only formal learning opportunity offered. You will be required to attend some other classes, which will be smaller than the lecture, and will have different purposes

Tutorials

These are generally small groups which meet to discuss matters arising from lectures, work not covered in lectures, essays or other tasks that have been set or some aspect of the readings. Tutorials are generally referred to as 'tuts', and are led by a tutor, who may be a post-graduate student or a member of staff. Tutorials are usually the same length of time as a lecture, i.e. one period, or 45 minutes, long.

Practicals

Different faculties have different ways of running practicals, but in general, a practical is an opportunity for students to test and apply their understanding of the concepts and ideas introduced in lectures. 'Practicals' are called this name because they are the place where the *theoretical* knowledge gained in lectures and readings is put into practice. They are also often referred to as 'pracs'. In the Science Faculty, practicals take place in a laboratory, and students might work in pairs. In the Humanities, students attending practicals do individual work in the presence of tutors, who help and supervise the exercises. Practicals are usually much longer than the normal lecture or tutorial period, sometimes 3 hours long.

Workshops
These are an opportunity for students to work together in small groups, focusing on certain sections of the work. The purpose here is to develop skills, as well as to work on the concepts related to the course. Workshops occupy a longer time than the 45 minute period, usually a double period.

Computer-aided learning
Depending on your courses, you may also be required to attend other kinds of class sessions, such as applying your knowledge in working through material that has been prepared for you online and working in 'virtual communities'. Your participation is important in these cases. Formal assessments done via computers are becoming more popular.

Why do we have them?
All of the smaller group learning situations referred to above are included in your curriculum because of the idea that learning is an active, rather than a passive, process. In the section on Lectures, we said that taking notes during the lecture is the beginning of this learning process, where you work out where this new knowledge fits into your own existing schemes of knowledge. As you place and integrate this knowledge, you are making it your own. You are creating your own understanding of the concepts and ideas.

This view of learning is called the '*social construction of knowledge*' and it is worth thinking about. You will probably agree that humans have to learn almost everything they know – as we grow, we learn our language and our behaviours from those around us. But there must be more to it than just taking over what those older than us already know … If we *only* learn exactly what is passed on to us, then how do *new* ideas and discoveries come about? This puzzle can be answered if we change our idea of what learning is to include not only the things we receive from others, but also the unique way in which we receive and use that information. At school, where you probably had to learn lots of facts and get them right in examinations, the idea of 'constructing' your own knowledge may not have been very useful – in fact, it might have landed you in a bit of trouble! University is, like school, a place where knowledge is stored and transmitted to new students, *BUT* it is also a place where the creation of new knowledge is highly valued as well!

This means that your job as a student not only involves listening, learning, reading and understanding the knowledge being presented to you in lectures and books, but it also involves critical thinking. In other words, it involves questioning and challenging the knowledge presented to you and trying to work things out yourself – making new connections with your own previous understandings. One of the most fruitful ways of doing this is by discussing ideas with your fellow students, and this is why the small group learning situations are very important to your development.

You will learn most from participating *actively* in your tutorials

Uza kufunda kakhulu ngokuthatha *inxaxheba* kwi*tutorials* zakho

Jy sal die meeste leer deur *aktief* deel te neem aan die tutoriale

TUTS (tutorials) ± 45min

PRACS (practicals) ± 3hrs

WORKSHOPS ± 90min

Different Kinds of Class

A lot of students have struggled to participate actively in tutorials, for reasons such as being shy and nervous about speaking up, or feeling that it is a waste of time to listen to other relatively uninformed opinions, and that they would rather just go to lectures to hear the 'right' ideas. Sometimes, although they may feel that they have some good ideas, they don't want to talk about them in tutorials because they would be unpopular with their peers. Some might also feel that they don't want other people to copy, or 'steal', their ideas, especially if they are all busy preparing for an essay or assignment.
In order to get past these reasons for *NOT* participating actively, remember the benefits to be gained by the interchange of ideas:

- Remind yourself that everyone else is probably as nervous as you are, and try to contribute. This will get easier as you get to know the people in your group, and as you get used to the idea of learning from your peers.
- Your own ideas may be challenged in a discussion, pushing you to rethink; you may come up with a much better argument because of the opposition or support of your fellow students.
- As a result of discussion, you may be able to think of good arguments to refute or oppose the ideas of others.
- You will develop the skill of listening carefully and analytically to the arguments of others, and verbalising your own ideas will help you to formulate your written assignments and essays more convincingly.

Sorting out the details

Getting all the details of your tutorials, practicals and workshops sorted out will be a big job. It will probably be confusing at first, as your tuts, pracs, etc. will take place in different venues and in different time-slots from the main lectures in the course. Your times and venues will also be different from those of many of your fellow students, as the groups do not all meet at the same time. You will not always be in the same small groups as your friends, so don't rely on them for this information. If the information is not available on the course Vula site, go to the departmental notice-boards, the departmental office or your lecturer to find out which group you are in, and when and where they meet. Once you have this information, fill it in on your timetable (see the section on Organising Your Time).

If you discover that the tutorial you have been assigned to clashes with another class of yours, ask your course convenor or the departmental secretary if they can put you in another group.

Attendance is compulsory at these small group meetings, and the tutor or supervisor will take the register. If you do not attend the required number of tutorials, you may be refused a 'd.p.', the 'duly performed' certificate that allows you to write your final examination.

There will always be some preparation for tutorials and other such meetings. This might be the completion of a reading task, a writing assignment or something else. It is very important to do the preparation properly so that you can get the benefit of the discussion. Going to a tutorial without having done the preparation will contribute to the feeling of not wanting to say anything, and make your participation in the discussion less useful than it should be.

Your tutor, facilitator or supervisor will probably have 'consultation hours' every week. This is a time when he or she will be in an office or other appointed room, and available for individual discussions. If there are things that you don't understand and that you feel you can't bring up in the tutorial, then go and see your tutor during this time to talk about it. If you always have another lecture or meeting during the consultation hours, then ask the tutor if you can make an appointment to see him or her at some other time. Alternatively, you can consult your lecturer.

Learning outside the classroom

You are expected to conduct learning activities outside the classroom. These activities include reading, writing assignments, using computers for research and studying for exams. UCT has various resources to assist you with these activities, for example, Computer Labs, Libraries, Knowledge Commons, Vula and Lynda.com. The services provided by these resources might change slightly from year to year. The most up to date information can always be found on UCT's website: www.uct.ac.za.

Vula

Vula is UCT's official online learning system. It houses websites for academic courses, student societies, study and research groups, faculty and departmental groups, and assorted projects and initiatives. For many courses on campus, you will need to use Vula to access important announcements, lecture notes and readings, online discussion groups, assignment information and hand-ins, plus tutorial group sign-ups and contact information.

You can access Vula using the UCT homepage or the link provided by your lecturer.

When you log in to Vula you will find yourself in My Workspace. This is your own private site in Vula where you can manage your profile and preferences, store data, view a consolidated calendar and announcement information, and even create your own new sites.

Along to the top of the screen you will see your tabs, beginning with 'My Workspace'. The number of tabs you see will depend on your membership of other sites. If your lecturer has created a Vula site for your course you will be automatically added to it. (If you don't see a tab for a particular course please ask your lecturer or tutor if they are going to be using Vula). You will also be added to the Student Representative Council (SRC) and Faculty Student Council sites, and you may see tabs for your faculty, residence and other student groups.

If you are already a member of many sites, you may see a tab titled 'My Active Sites', which, when clicked, will reveal a list of all your sites. Click the site names to enter the sites.

Updating your profile and preferences

On your profile page, you can edit your information and fill in missing information. It is your responsibility to keep this information, especially your email address, up to date. Remember to click 'Save' after editing!

It is important to edit your profile when you first log in, and to keep it up to date.

It is extremely important to check your UCT email on a regular basis - like daily!

FYE is here!!! This site answers all sorts of questions about UCT resources.

Note: You may use a non-UCT email address such as Yahoo or Gmail

Inside your Vula sites

When you click on a tab and enter a Vula site you will see a range of tools available in the left menu. This list of tools will vary from one site to the next, but the most common tools you can expect to see are Announcements, Resources (where course information, readings and lecture notes are normally stored), Forums (for online message posting and discussion), Assignments (for task information and online hand-in) and Groups (for tutorial group allocation and sign-up).

Tutorial group sign-up

If you are required to sign up for a tutorial group, click the link in the left menu named Tutorial Groups, Groups or Section Info (naming varies from site to site). View the available groups and then click the 'Join' link on the far right alongside the group that you want to sign up for.

Note: Group size may be limited. Once a group has reached its maximum size, you won't be able to sign up for that group. If you are permitted to switch sections, you can do so by clicking the 'Switch' link. You will automatically be removed from the first group and added to your new group. If all the groups are full, consult your lecturer, tutor or departmental administrator.

Help!

For further assistance with Vula, please email help@vula.uct.ac.za

Computer Laboratories

Each faculty has its own computer laboratories for students, often simply referred to as 'computer labs'. You gain access to the lab by swiping your student card through a card reader. Check the opening hours of your faculty lab and its location. The student lab computers are installed with software that is used for coursework in your faculty. A course may require you to visit a computer lab to retrieve additional readings, do research or check on updated course information. Some courses have tutorials and practicals in the computer labs. The labs can be busy when assignments are due. It is good to be well prepared before you go to the lab, having worked out all the tasks you will need to complete. Lab assistants are on hand to help you with technical problems, password changes, McAfee (antivirus software) updates, etc. and to provide basic support for applications. The library's Knowledge Commons assistants will also be able to help with searching for course materials online.

When working in a student lab, don't save your files to the hard drive. Your file will be lost as soon as the next person logs in to that machine. Each student is allocated 50MB of file storage space (known as your F: drive) on the network. Rather save your work to your F: drive or to a flash drive. You can even access your F: drive when you are not on campus by using NetStorage.
(For more information about this service, visit the Information and Communication Technology Services website: www.icts.uct.ac.za).

A note about computer viruses

Computer viruses can infect your computer in three ways: if you use infected files already on discs or flash drives that are put into your computer; if you open infected emails; or if you useuntrustworthy sites via the internet. Remember that with more people using the same computer, there is more chance of infection. The computers in the labs are protected through antivirus packages, but it is important to be safe everywhere. If you have your own computer or laptop then you *MUST* install McAfee antivirus software onto it. You must also make sure that you regularly update the antivirus software. Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS) recommends that you update the antivirus signature files (sdat files) every day. These updates are available from all student labs, from the ICTS Downloads page and from the ICTS Front Office. Remember to scan your flash drive regularly too. If you do get a virus on your computer or your flash drive, get it cleaned as soon as possible.

The ICTS website has a number of articles that will provide you with information about computer-related issues for students.

By the way, each student is given a UCT email account (and a monthly internet quota). You may already have your own email through other systems such as Yahoo or Google. However, when lecturers send out announcements, they will send these to your UCT email address. Any messages alerting you to the fact that there are new readings or messages on the Vula site will also be sent to your UCT email address, so do keep checking it. Remember that by going to Yahoo or Google to read your email, you are using up your internet quota. Using the UCT email account does not count towards your internet quota.

Accessing/surfing the internet

You are able to access the internet from the computer labs. You are allocated a quota of 200MB per month when accessing the internet from campus. Each time that you surf the web and go to off-campus sites you use up quota. Sites that are hosted at UCT (like the journals and databases from the UCT Libraries) do not use up quota.

Each time you browse the internet (go to an off-campus website), a dialog box will appear on your screen. You will need to log in before you can go outside UCT's caches. You need to include the UCT domain (@wf.uct.ac.za) to your username when using the internet, e.g. username@wf.uct.ac.za. Don't add the '@wf.uct.ac.za' to any other type of login box for any other services – it is only for internet access.

It is illegal to download, copy or distribute copyrighted material (music, movies, TV series, games, etc.) without the explicit permission of the copyright owner. Please respect copyright law.

It is always important to backup your files – in case one gets damaged or lost onthe computer. Also remember to run a virus scan regularly – to protect your work and others!

Kubalulekile ukuba usolok uzikhusela iifayile zakho-xa kunokuthi enye imoshakale okanye ilahleke kwikhompyutha. Okunye khumbula ukusebenzisa ivirus scan - Oku kukhuselaumsebenzi wakho nowabanye!

Dit is belangrik om altyd 'n aparte kopie van jou lêer te maak in geval een beskadig word of verlore raak op jou rekenaar. Onthou ook om 'n anti-virus progam te gebruik om jou en ander mense se werk te beskerm!

Use of Libraries

Use of the Libraries

One of the places where the phrase 'taking responsibility for your own learning' becomes really meaningful is the UCT library system. The Libraries often feel very intimidating to students at first, due to their size and their seemingly complicated arrangements. It is worth taking some time to explore the many different ways in which the Libraries can help you with your studies.

The different parts of the Libraries are useful at different times and for various needs. As a first year student, you may be required to read books or articles that are housed in the Short Loans Centre, especially if you are in the Faculty of Humanities. Other immediate study needs, like looking up definitions or doing preliminary investigations into any subject area, can be met in the Ready Reference sections. More in-depth readings, or special interest questions, can be pursued in the main book stacks, the Current Journals Reading Room, or specialised places like Government Publications or the African Studies Library. ALEPH, the online catalogue, will help you to find printed resources in UCT Libraries. The Libraries also subscribe to many electronic subject databases, which enable you to search for, and access, journal articles on particular topics.

You can get help in using the electronic databases or with any other aspect of using the Libraries by asking a librarian at one of the Libraries' Information Desks or in the Knowledge Commons. There are also pamphlets and handouts available throughout the Libraries, explaining how to use the different services. In addition, once lectures have started, you can ask your lecturers about arranging subject-specific Library instruction, particularly in the use of the Libraries' electronic resource subscriptions.

What follows is a summary of the general Libraries guide:

UCT LIBRARIES

http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/

UCT Libraries consist of the Chancellor Oppenheimer (Main) Library, which is situated in a U-shape around the Jameson Hall, and 9 branches across the various campuses.

The hours of the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library in term time are:

Monday–Thursday	08:00–22:00
Friday	08:00–18:00
Saturday	09:00–17:00

Opening hours of the other (branch) libraries can be found on the Libraries website.

Borrowing Material

Your student card is also your Library card and books will not be issued to you without it. Books and other Library items must be issued or returned at the Loans Desk.

Borrowing conditions for undergraduate students are as follows:You may borrow 6 items for 7 days and may use journals inside the Library only.

An additional 3 Short Loans items may be borrowed together with the above.

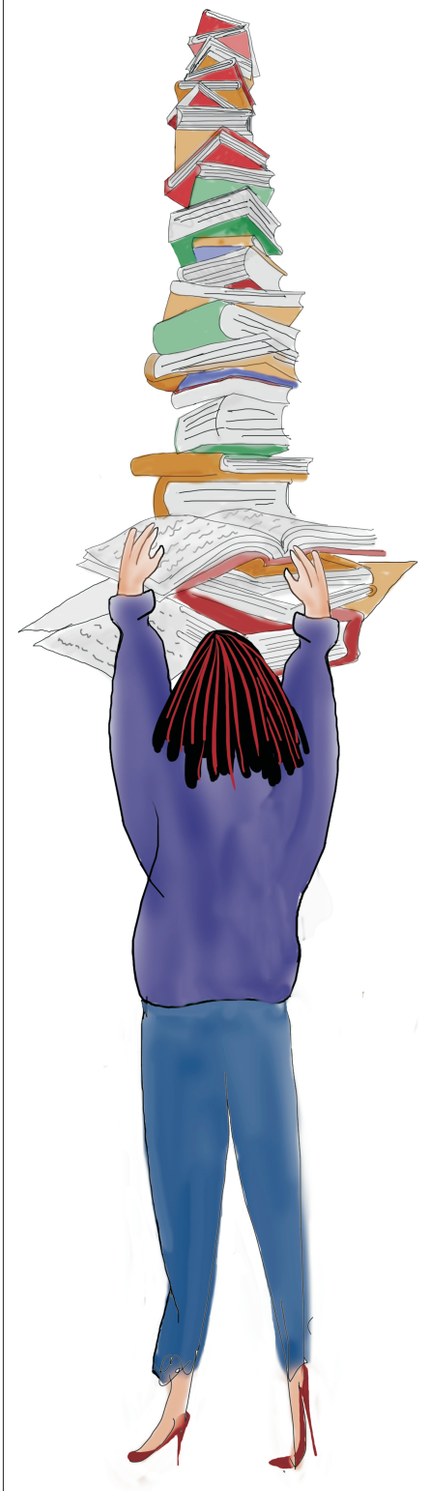
Students may renew books three times, telephonically or in person – unless the book has been reserved by another borrower. It is possible to renew your material via ALEPH, the Online Catalogue, using the *My Library Card* facility.

The Library reserves the right to recall items.
You will be charged a fine for all books you return late or after items have been recalled. The maximum fine amount is R100,00 per item. Once a fine of R10 or more is accrued, however, borrowing privileges will be suspended until the fine is paid.

Information sources & resources available in the library

- **Reference books**, including dictionaries and encyclopaedia – essential for basic background information in all subjects.
- **Short Loans books and journal articles** - these are transferred into Short Loans because they have been identified by lecturers as useful for particular courses, and would therefore be in high demand.
- **Books on the open shelves** - a vast array of material waiting on the open shelves. Use this material to supplement your required reading and to write papers, assignments and projects.
- **Journals** (also known as magazines or periodicals) – journals are kept in different places according to their publication date and forma
  - **Current Journals Reading Room** for the most recent issues of the journal.
  - **Open shelves** – the last 15 years of journals in the Commerce and Humanities sections can be found near the general Library stock in those areas. Science and Engineering journals from the last 5 years are shelved at the far end of the Science & Engineering section, beyond the Sci-Tech books.
  - **Older journals** – on levels 2 and 3, beneath Short Loans. Take the spiral stairs in front of Short Loans.
  - **Electronic full-text journals** – access to 35 000 titles via the Electronic Journals list.

- **Electronic databases** – Also available via the Libraries' homepage are over 180 electronic databases to help you find journal articles. Some of these provide full-text; others are indexing and abstracting databases.
- **Past exam papers** – Some previous exam papers are available from Short Loans and are useful when preparing for upcoming exams.
- **Videos & DVDs** – There is a large collection of videos and DVDs available in the library. Ask for them at the Loans Desk. Many are required viewing for the various media courses that are on offer. There are 14 audiovisual facilities located at various points throughout the library.
- **Internet facilities** – There are a number of PCs in the Library, which are available to students for searching the internet. Head for the Knowledge Commons if you need assistance.
- **Photocopying machines** – These are located throughout the Library, mainly near each Reference Desk and the Short Loans Centre. Photocopies are charged per page and all the machines operate on a swipe card system using your student/staff card. To put money onto your card, you need to go to the University Document Centre, next to the main entrance doors of the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library



Use of the Libraries

Important Services and Facilities

Knowledge Commons

Situated just inside the entrance to the Chancellor Oppenheimer (Main) Library, this is a crucial area for first year students – it is here that you can start to learn to use the Libraries' vast array of electronic resources. As an undergraduate facility, it consists of

- staff (librarians, student navigators and IT people) who are always available to assist students,
- 104 computers with CD/DVD writing and USB memory stick facilities,
- printers,
- a scanner,
- MS Office software,
- internet browsers and other programmes for student use in preparing assignments, essays
- and reports,
- access to the Library catalogue (ALEPH),
- access to electronic journals, databases, books, and the web,
- 7 group study rooms, containing computers, which can be used by students, academics and staff for seminars, group projects, etc.,
- an audio-visual room with DVD/VCR equipment, a PC and a group work table,
- a core collection of print reference books – dictionaries, encyclopaedia, atlases, handbooks, etc.and
- a training room equipped with 20 wireless laptops, a data projector and DVD/VCR equipment.

There is no booking system for the PCs. They are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The group study rooms can be booked. Bookings are limited to 3 hours per group per day.

Short Loans

It is here that many prescribed and required readings for undergraduate students will be found. There are books, photocopies of journal articles and book chapters, videos, DVDs and exam papers in Short Loans. Short Loans material may be borrowed:

- during the day for 1 or 3 hours, depending on demand,
- overnight during the week (out at 15h00, return by 09h30 the following morning), and
- at the weekends, material may be checked out at 15h00 on Friday afternoon, to be returned by 09h30 the following Monday morning

> Because Short Loans material is in high demand, there is a heavy fine for material which is returned late – **you are charged per hour for each item that is late.**

Online Catalogue

ALEPH is the Library's online catalogue, and is used, among other things, to search for titles of books and journals in UCT Libraries. A bank of computers dedicated to using ALEPH is situated near the Short Loans desk. *ALEPH can also be accessed from home via the Library's home web page.*

There are 3 Information Desks (also known as Reference Desks) for the 4 faculties served by the Chancellor Oppenheimer (Main) Library, namely

- Science & Engineering
- Commerce
- Humanities

Library staff at the desks are trained to help you find material beyond the small collection in Short Loans. They can assist you

- to use ALEPH (the library's catalogue), and
- to use electronic databases, electronic full-text journals, electronic books, and the Web.

Each reference desk has a collection of dictionaries, encyclopaedia and other reference books, which are incredibly useful.

Government Publications Department

The Government Publications Department houses the centralised collection of government documents in UCT Libraries. This collection includes census, legislation, parliamentary, planning, policy, public finance and statistical documents. Material published by government departments, agencies and public entities, and some major international governmental organisations (IGOs) can also be found here. Resources include legislative and other databases.

Interlibrary Loans

If UCT Libraries does not have a particular book or journal article, it may be possible to obtain it on interlibrary loan from another southern African library. This department is situated next to Short Loans. All requests for items available in South Africa are obtainable at no charge to UCT staff and students.

Please note that because material may need to come from an up-country library, you will need to plan ahead in order to obtain your information in good time. Remember to ask about the Interlibrary Loans online request facility!

A note on Library Etiquette

In order to keep the Library as a pleasant work and study space it is important to be mindful of the Library rules, which need to be respected and observed. The most important of these are that

- Entry is by student registration card; no card = no entry.
- No food or drinks are allowed, except in spill-proof bottles.
- No cell phone calls are allowed; cell phones must be switched to silent.
- Library computers may be used *only* for academic purposes.
- Keep quiet – don't disturb others by talking loudly or playing music.

A full list of Library rules can be found on the library website.

Reading

As a reader, you are not simply a 'blank slate' onto which the ideas in the text are re-written. Reading is actually an interactive process during which your pre-existing ideas influence how you understand the ideas embodied in the text

Ukufunda akuthethi into yokuba akukho nto osele uyazi ngalento ufunda ngayo nanjengoko ezi ngcinga zibhaliweyo sele zikhe zabhalwa ngaphambili. Ukufunda kukuthatha inxaxheba kwinkqubo apho izimvo osele unazo zilukuhla indlela oqonda ngayo izimvo ezibekiweyo kokubhaliweyo

As leser is jy nie bloot 'n skoon lei waarop idees uit die teks oorgeskryf word nie. Lees is 'n interaktiewe proses waartydens jou voorafbestaande idees 'n invloed het op hoe jy die idees in die teks verstaan

The amount of reading required of students in different faculties does vary, but no matter what courses you are registered for, you are likely to spend more time reading than you have before. Reading is one of the major ways in which you will learn at university. Reading for pleasure is an important leisure pursuit for many people, and if English is your second or additional language, then reading can also contribute a lot to the improvement of your English.

If an author is writing about something you are very familiar with, or something you agree with, or something you are already interested in, then you may find this text easy to read. Someone else, who disagrees with these ideas, or who has never heard of them before, may find them difficult, contradictory, illogical or impossible to understand. If the meaning of a text were situated entirely with the text, then everyone who read the text would agree on its meaning; we know that this is not always so, and this can be explained by this view of 'active reading' where the reader interacts with the text. Knowing this, as well as being able to choose the most useful strategy (see section below on Different kinds of reading strategies), might help you to read more efficiently, more productively and with greater confidence.

In the section on Lectures, we encouraged you to be an active listener in lectures. This involved identifying the topic or purpose of the lecture, preparing your mind by asking questions and recalling prior knowledge and taking notes. It is also necessary to be active when reading.

Know your own purpose

Before you select a text, or before you start reading a selected text, ask yourself why you are reading it. Is it an assignment for a tutorial? In that case, are there accompanying questions that you should try to answer for that tutorial? Are you reading in preparation for an essay? In that case, you should already have a clear understanding of the essay topic and its requirements. Are you reading to consolidate some knowledge before examinations? Are you reading over something completely new as a way of preparing for a lecture? Are you following up a reference mostly for your own interest? Once you have a clear idea of what you need to get out of your reading, you are more likely to choose the appropriate kind of text (if it is not already prescribed) and the appropriate strategy for 'reading' it.

Different kinds of reading material

Different purposes require different kinds of reading material. It is important to know where to find particular kinds of information. If you need to find out what a word means, you know you can consult a dictionary. Of course this is often a good beginning, but it is important to remember that there is a difference between everyday use of the language and academic use of the language.

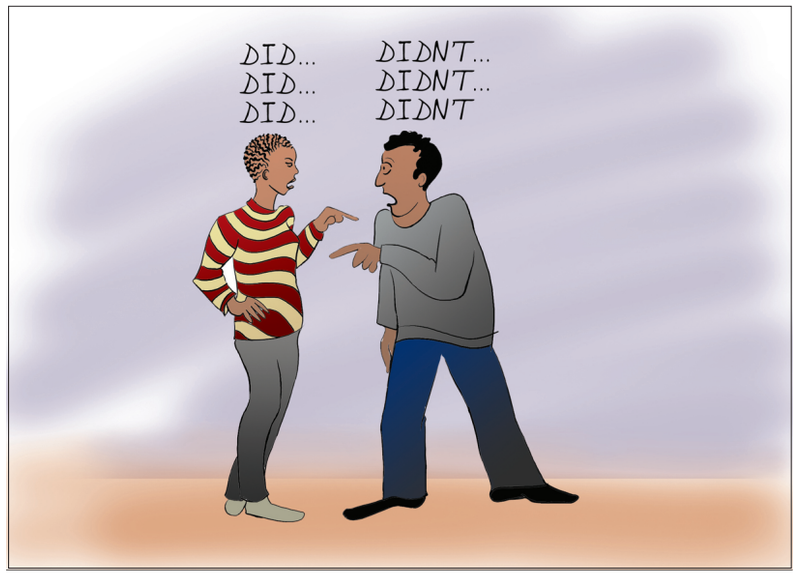
'Active reading' also involves understanding your own purpose or purposes, selecting appropriate reading strategies and making notes

'Ukufunda okukuko' kukwaquka ukuqonda injongo yakho okanye iinjongo, ukukhetha iindlela ezizizo zobuchule kunye nokuthatha *inotes*

'Aktiewe lees' beteken dat jy jou eie doelwit/doelwitte verstaan, geskikte lees strategieë kies en notas maak

Know your own Purpose

- An example of this is the word 'argument', which means one thing in everyday usage, but means something a bit different in academic usage.
- Another example is the word 'character', which will mean different things to students of literature, drama, mathematics and computer science



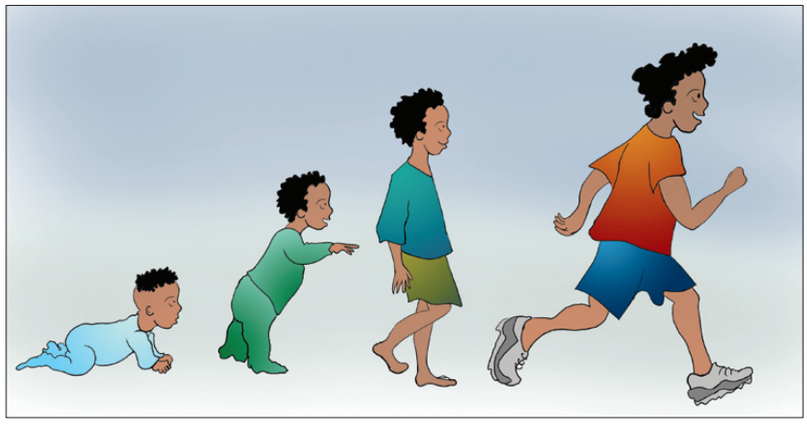
(If you want to find out more about a word that has a particular meaning in your own subject area, then you need a subject dictionary).

Always make sure that the material you are reading is appropriate to your subject or discipline and to your needs and purpose.

If you want a piece of information that has long been established and accepted, it will be found in an encyclopaedia or a textbook, but if you want to survey the most up-to-date research findings, the latest volume of a journal or periodical will be most useful. In some disciplines, for instance in the Humanities, it is useful to read the newspapers, as these are where a lot of current views are expressed.

In your first year at university, your lecturers and tutors will, most probably, offer very specific guidelines for reading materials, so finding the correct kind of reading material will not be a big problem, but it is often interesting and rewarding to explore further readings anyway. The more you read on a subject, the more familiar you will become with the whole field of study, including the language used and the range of opinions.

Different kinds of reading strategies



As toddlers, we all learnt how to put one foot in front of the other and move forward over the ground, and as we became more skilled, we learnt how to do this in different ways, and at different speeds. We also learnt when the best time to do particular kinds of movements forward was.

In each of these cases, our decision about which method to use in 'moving forward' is determined by our purpose. In the same way, we all learnt to read when we were little, but we would waste a lot of time if we *always* read in the slow, careful way we first learnt – paying attention to every word.

There are as many different types of reading strategies as there are types of walking. Efficiency in either of these skills depends on choosing the appropriate method for your particular purpose.

Here is a useful way of thinking about three approaches to reading:

Preview broad - selecting the right texts for particular purposes
ukunaba (kwezimvo) - ukukhetha eyona mbalelwano ilungileyo ngenjongo ethile
wyd – kies die korrekte teks

Overview narrow - getting the general idea
ukuncipha (kwezimvo) - ukufumana izimvo eziphangaleleyo
nou – kry die algemene idee

Inview closely focused - getting a proper understanding
Ukumilisela ingqondo okusondeleyo - ukufumana ukuqonda okukuko
duidelik fokus - begryp behoorlik

Acquaint yourself with the Libraries and learn how you can find books and resources there or on the internet. Remember the librarians are available to help you in this! (See our section on Use of the Library)

Ziqhelanise nelayibrari ufunde ukuba ungazifumana njani na iincwadi nezinye izixhobo apho okanye kwikhompuytha. (Khumbula abancedisi elabrari bakhona ukukunceda kule nto)

Maak kennis met die Biblioteek en leer hoe om boeke en materiaal daar of op die internet te vind. Onthou dat die bibiliotekarisse daar is om jou te help! (Sien ons uitlegging Use of the Library)

Know your own Purpose

PREVIEW

OVERVIEW

INVIEW

Preview

Preview represents a '*pre-reading*' stage, where you would select a text that suits your purposes. Usually, in your first year, departments will give you a specific reading list for each assignment, but you might still be interested to see what else is available on the subject. Even within the range of titles on the reading list you will probably want to be selective, even if it is just to decide *which* book or article to read first, or to devote more time to.

In the light of your assignment topic, you could look at the following features of the books to decide which ones are more relevant or seem to offer the kind of information you are seeking.

- The title and subtitle of academic books usually reveal the central concerns addressed by the book
- The front and back covers of the book usually include the publisher's description of what the book is about and comments by reviewers or other experts in that field. Useful information that you might find here could be an indication of who the author is and what his or her perspective is on the topic. The short 'blurb' on the covers might also reveal who the book is written for. If it is aimed at established scholars or experts working in a particular field, it might be too detailed to be of use to you at this stage. If it is too general, or too basic, it might not tell you anything you do not already know, and you might decide it would be a waste of time to read it. If you are looking for sociological material (looking at society in general), then a book by a psychologist (studying people in their individual capacity) – even though it is on the same topic – will be written from a perspective that you would find less useful.
- The contents page is always at the front of the book, and can be very helpful, especially if the chapters are by different authors. You can choose the chapter by an author who is familiar to you, or well known in the field of study. You might be able to tell from the chapter titles and subtitles which parts of the book would be most useful to you.
- The printing history is usually found on the back of the title page. It will contain the date the book was first published, how many editions there have been, how many reprintings there have been. If you are only looking for recent information, or information since a certain date, then glancing at this page might eliminate a book from your list, or confirm for you that it is important. For instance, if you are required to find out about certain consequences of South Africa's first democratic elections, then anything published before 1994 will not be useful and you would not spend time reading it for this assignment. If a book was first published long ago, but has been re-issued and re-edited many times since then, this might indicate to you that it is an important book that is probably still relevant.

Overview

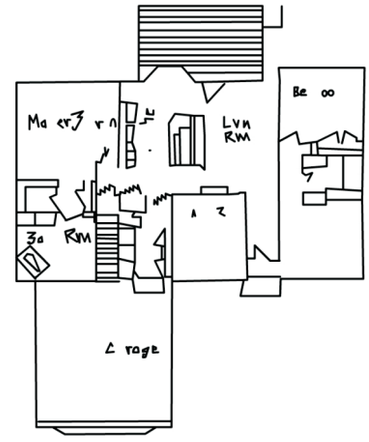
Having *previewed* several texts (as outlined above), and finally chosen one, it is still better not just to open the book at page 1, begin reading, and plod through to the end. Your understanding of any text will be enhanced by conducting an Overview. This kind of reading is sometimes also called 'skimming'.

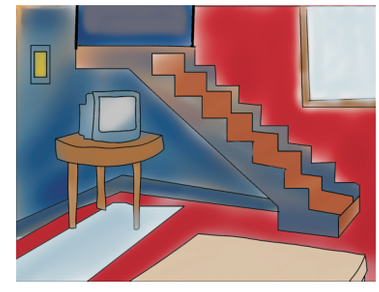
When you enter a room for the first time, you glance around to get your bearings. You establish some 'landmarks', for instance, 'Oh, there are two windows', 'There's a table in the middle', 'There's a sliding glass door at the back' or 'There's someone in the corner that I would really like to get to know'. Although you don't know every detail of what's in the room, or whether the doors and windows work properly, you have a general impression of the room and could probably say whether it is a dentist's surgery or a hairdresser's or a family's sitting room. Now, when you approach a piece of text for the first time, you can use the same sort of strategy. Instead of getting straight into the details, take a little time to look around, or *overview*, the whole text.

Let's say that you have to read an article or a chapter in a book in preparation for an essay you are writing. In order to get an overview of the article, you would begin by reading the title, any subtitles and any words that are emphasised, perhaps by being printed in italics or bold type. If, for instance, an article is entitled 'Intelligence and IQ: Nature or nurture?', then the fact that the title is in the form of a question might suggest to you that the author is going to present more than one side of this argument. Subtitles like '*The History of IQ Testing*' clearly reflect what that section of the article is about.

Flip through the article and note whether there are illustrations. Graphs or tables can often reveal what kind of argument authors are making and what kind of evidence they are using. Pictures and diagrams are also useful because they can highlight main points, and can also make the subject seem easier to understand.

Other strategies you can employ are: read the introduction and conclusion, as this is often where authors will summarise their whole argument; read the first and last paragraph of each section; and read the first and last sentence of each paragraph. This should give you an idea of the structure of the article, without any distracting details. The details can be filled in slowly as you read through the article again, doing the kind of reading we call Inview





Inview

Once you have some general ideas about the article, and you believe that, for your purposes, it will be necessary for you to read and understand the article more fully, then you begin a careful, detailed reading. As you do this kind of reading, you can take your time, going back to check on points the author made a few paragraphs back or facts that you don't remember. The purpose here is for you to recognise the author's argument. This involves identifying the facts or information the author is presenting, the author's point of view (which is sometimes hidden) and the author's interpretation of the data or information. You also need to see the connections the author is making between the different ideas and to understand how the conclusion is reached.

Know your own Purpose

As an active reader, it is up to you to question the text and to think about what ideas and presuppositions you bring with you

Ngengomfundi oqondayo, kukuwe ukubuza nokucinga ngezimvo nezinto oqgiba ekubeni mawuzithabathele kuwe

As 'n aktiewe leser is dit jou verantwoordelikheid om die teks te bevraagteken en om na te dink oor watter idees en aannames jy met jou saambring

You might ask questions like:

Do I agree with the author's basic assumptions?

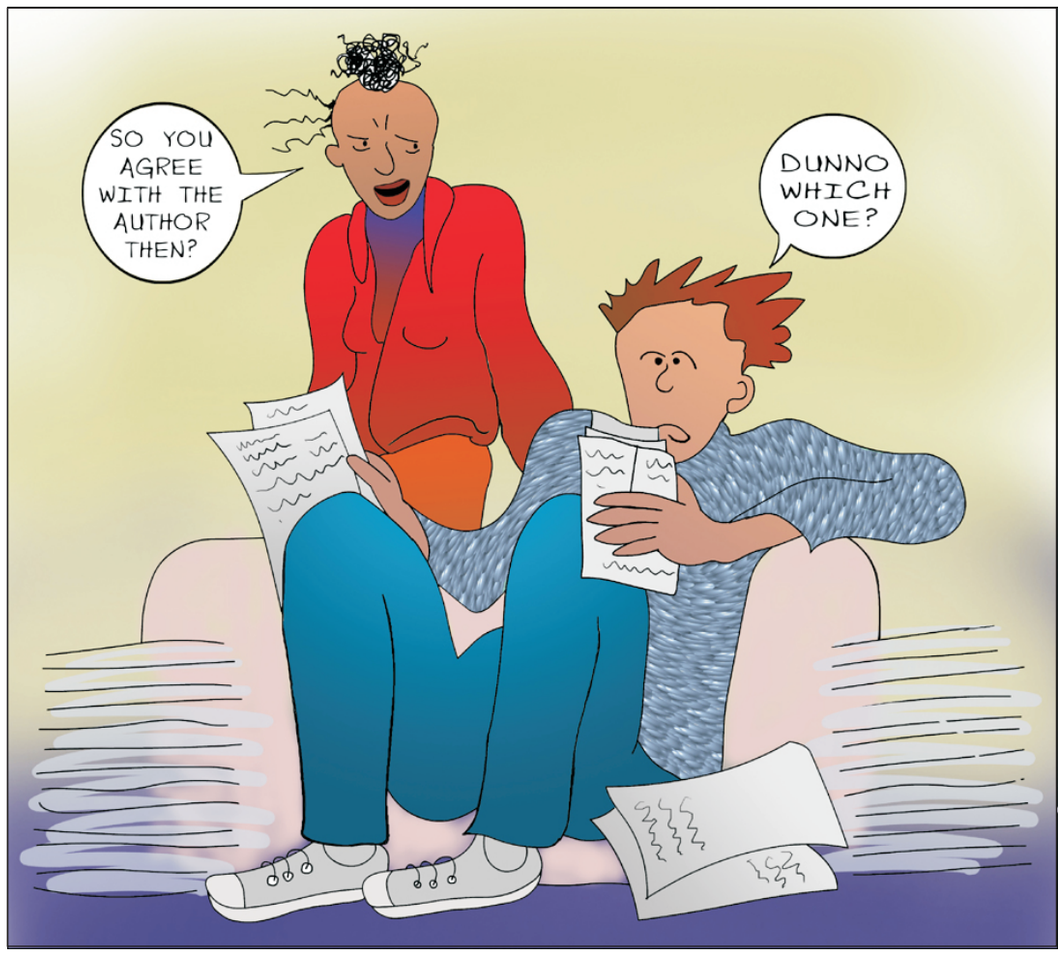
Are there some facts that have been left out or misinterpreted?

Do I dislike this argument because it challenges my own beliefs?

How does this fit in with other things I've read on this subject?

Does the author's conclusion seem logical and well supported?

What is this author's bias or position?



This questioning approach to reading will help you to develop a critical and analytical approach to the information and ideas you are reading about. Part of your active reading process should also be making notes on what you read.

Making notes from reading materials

Many of the purposes for which you will read at university also require you to make notes on that reading. If you are reading to prepare for examinations or tests, you will want to have notes to refer to when you revise. If you are reading for the purpose of writing an essay or assignment, then you will need notes so that your references will be accurate, and so that you remember the points that are relevant to your topic

There are different ways of making notes from your readings. If you own the book or course reader or have made your own photocopy of the text, then you may want to underline the important points or highlight them with a highlighter pen (*NOT* if it belongs to the library or to someone else!). One of the problems with this kind of note-making is that it is very easy, and can be done quite mechanically and passively. Sometimes students read very carefully, underlining or highlighting as they go, and when they get to the end they realise they have underlined the whole paragraph, or sometimes even the whole page. This means that they have failed to separate the main point out from all the other supporting points. When they return to the reading material, they will have to read the whole page or section again, instead of just being able to locate the main point immediately. Remember that the notes you make from your readings serve the same purpose as the notes you take in lectures – they serve as the 'raw material' which you will use to build up the essays, assignments and other work that you are required to produce for your courses.

If you own the material (again, not if you don't!), selected underlining or highlighting can be supplemented with notes made in the margins. These can vary from simple numbering to short summaries of the paragraphs. These brief summaries are often very useful because making them involves thinking about the material and using your own words to relate the main points. The limited space can be a problem, however, and illegible, squashed notes are almost useless.

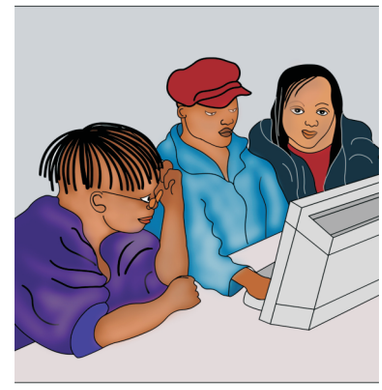
If the material is not your own, but has been borrowed from the library or someone else, then you will have to make notes on a separate page.

The way you make notes can vary according to your preferences and purpose. You can choose from the same styles that were described in the section on Lectures. These were *linear notes* and *mind-mapping notes*. A good test of your comprehension is to write a summary of the article or chapter you have read. This will also serve as a good reminder to you at a later time of what was important about the reading. Actually writing out a summary, as opposed to point-form notes, is an opportunity for you to practise using the language of the subject, and will help you to identify concepts that you don't understand very clearly.

As with lecture notes, it is important that your notes reflect your understanding of the material, as well as your own critical response to it. Again, as with the lecture notes, your notes on the readings will be helpful only if you can find them when you need them, and if you do actually use them.

You can highlight if the book is yours

You should always carefully copy down the full details of the text (title, author, date of publication, name of publisher and pages) so that you can refer to it correctly in your essay or assignment (see section on Essay Writing for referencing conventions).



If you have a computer, it is a good idea to store the details of all your readings – either in a file or via one of the citation programs, such as 'Refworks', 'Endnote' or 'Mendeley'. Remember people at the Knowledge Commons can show you how to use these!

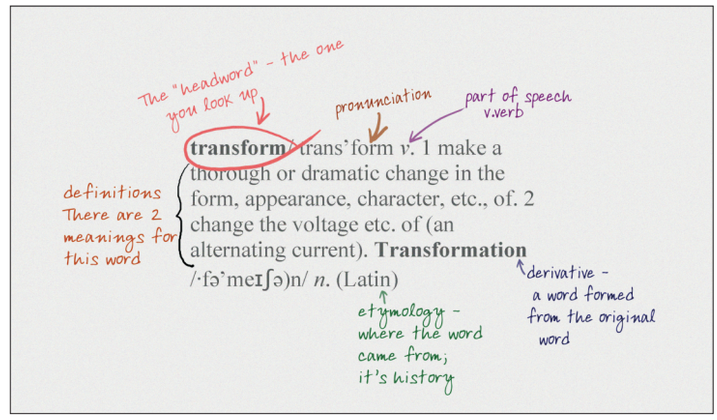
How to Use the Dictionary

If you are reading and you come across a word which you do not understand, you can often work out the meaning without having to interrupt your reading to look it up in a dictionary. In fact, your first strategy should be to read the sentence, and see whether you can get the gist or general sense of it without actually understanding the word. Sometimes it is more important to just get the sense of what is being said than to find the precise meaning of the word.

If, however, you decide that you cannot understand the sentence without understanding the word, then you will need to think a little bit about what the word means. Sometimes, especially if a word looks long and complicated, the structure of the word gives a clue. For example, if the word you don't understand is 'subterranean' and you know that '*sub*' means under or beneath (as in *sub*merge or *sub*marine), you might be able to figure out enough of the meaning to be going on with, even if you don't know what '-terranean' means.

If you cannot follow the meaning of the sentence without the word, and there are no useful prefixes or pieces of the word that can help you figure out its meaning, it is sometimes useful to use the clues in the context (the sentence or the paragraph). For example, consider the following sentence: 'In Britain, the 1944 Education Act established the *tripartite* system of education'. If you don't know what the word 'tripartite' means, and you don't know about the prefix '*tri-*', then you could guess the meaning of the word by reading the next sentence: 'Children were allocated to one of *three* types of school …', where more details of the system allow you to guess what the word 'tripartite' means.

If you cannot work out the meaning of a word yourself, then you will have to turn to the dictionary. This is not a bad thing to do, it is just that in some reading situations it should be treated as a last resort, as it can be very difficult to follow an author's argument if you are constantly having to interrupt your reading to consult the dictionary.



Of course, a lot of people use Wikipedia or other online dictionaries – they work in similar ways! Once you have worked out what a word means, or looked it up, it is worth trying to remember it, so that you don't have to look it up again next time you see it, and also so that it is available to you when you write your essays and assignments. Some students keep a little notebook in which they write down all the new words they are learning, and the explanations of those words. Others may list them at the back of their textbooks or course readers. If you are using the double column method of lecture note-taking, the second column of your notes is a useful place to note down newly learnt words and their meanings. Try using your new vocabulary in tutorials, assignments and essays, as the feedback you receive will help you to modify and refine your understanding of new words, especially those that are subject specific. During your career at university you will almost certainly be asked to do some other kinds of writing, like reviews, dialogues, summaries and reports. The academic essay, however, is still the central means for creating academic understandings in most disciplines, and is probably the least familiar to most first year students, which is why this section concentrates on it.

Why Write Essays?

There are two ways of looking at this question. The first is purely pragmatic – you write essays because they are required, and they constitute the primary way in which you will be evaluated as a student at university. Lecturers and tutors use the essay (and other written assignments) as a way of assessing your mastery of the content of your courses as well as your familiarity with the kind of specialised language used in that discipline. Your success at university will depend very much on how successfully you complete your assignments.

The other way of thinking about the question 'Why write essays?' centres more on your intellectual growth and development. One of the things you can reasonably expect to acquire at university is a set of *skills*. If you think of a *skill* as something that can only be learnt by doing, then you will quickly realise that in order to acquire the kind of writing skills expected of a university graduate, you will have to practise that kind of academic writing. Every essay and written assignment offers you the opportunity to practise and improve your academic writing skills.

Many students feel that the academic essay is boring and that it doesn't allow them any creative or unique self-expression. It is true that academic writing is very different from the essays or compositions written at school; it seems fairly confined with all its rules around structure, argument, language and referencing – and it is essential that students learn the 'rules' for academic writing. However, it can be a very creative means of exploring ideas and reaching clarity in your own opinions and in the communication of your and others' ideas!

The section on Tutorials mentioned the idea of the 'construction of knowledge'; similar ideas came up in the idea of active note-taking and interactive reading. This view of learning can also help you to view your essays and written assignments positively, instead of simply as a chore. All the ideas and theories that you read about and hear about in your lectures have been generated by humans, each of them affected by his or her own context (which will include the ideas and theories they have been exposed to, the time in which they lived and wrote, their geographical situation, their religion, their gender and other factors). When you are asked to *analyse* or *critique* or *comment* on these ideas, remember that they are not holy, untouchable or absolute.

Although not obviously 'creative', the essay is not just an occasion for presenting the ideas of others, but an opportunity for you to 'construct' your own response to the question and to the readings and lecture notes related to the topic

Nangona ingeyonto uzidalelayo, isincoko asiyonto apho udlulisa izimvo zomnye umntu, kodwa lithuba lakho lokwakha eyakho impendulo embuzweni nakwimiqulwana efundwayo kunye ne*notes* ozifumene eklasini ezisondele kwisihloko

Alhoewel nie ooglopend 'kreatief' nie, is 'n opstel nie net om die idees van ander weer te gee nie, maar 'n geleentheid om jou eie reaksie op die vraag te formuleer, asook op dit wat jy gelees het en op die lesingnotas oor die onderwerp

Why Write Essays

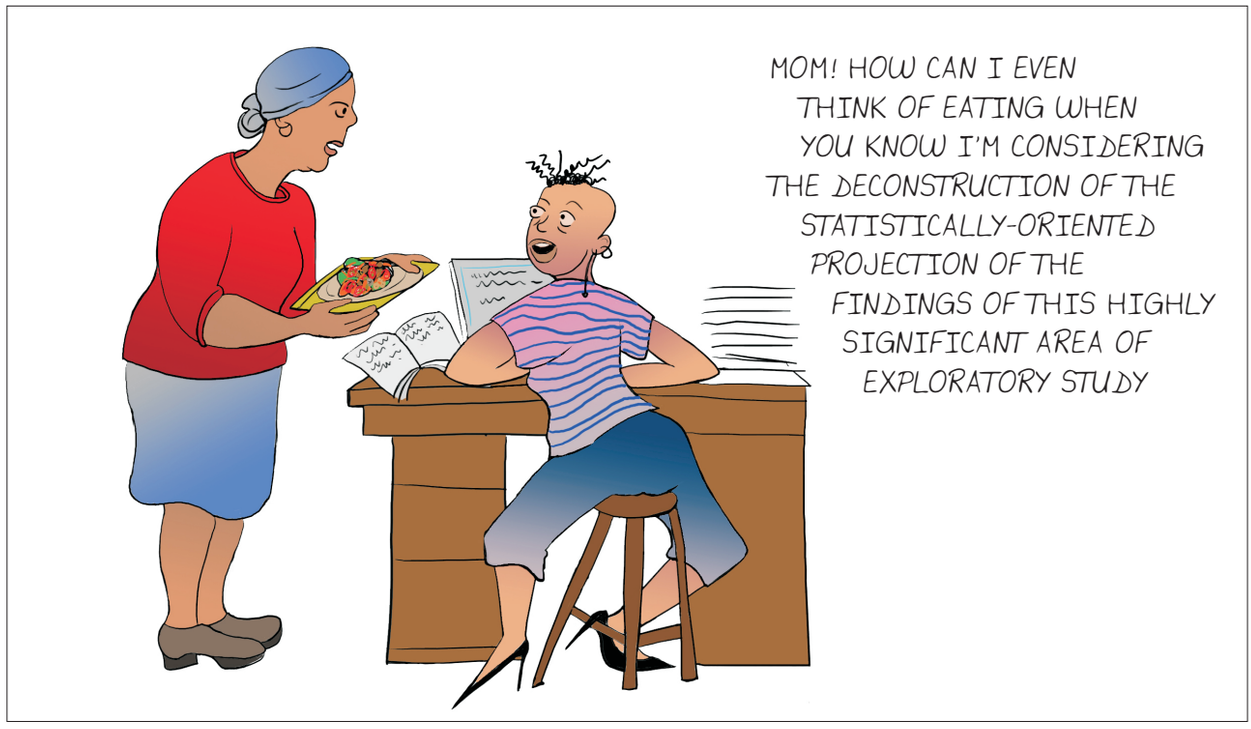
You do not have to believe and accept everything you read or are told. Once you have understood them, you can – and should – question the ideas you read or hear about. If you do this responsibly and respectfully, you will be constructing your own ideas and your own arguments

Akukho mfuneko yokuba ukholelwe yaye wamkele yonke into ebhaliweyo okanye oyixelelweyo. Usakube uqondile, unakho - kwaye kufanele - uzigoca-goce izimvo ofunde ngazo nove ngazo. Ukuba wenza oku ngendlela elungileyo nehloniphekileyo, uza kube usakha eyakho ingxoxo

Jy hoef nie alles te glo of te aanvaar wat jy lees of hoor nie. Sodra jy 'n idee verstaan, kan - en moet - jy dit bevraagteken. As jy dit op 'n verantwoordelike en eerbiedige manier doen, bou jy jou eie idees en redenasies

As you get used to writing academic essays, you will begin to see that writing about academic topics actually allows you to come to grips with all the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the topic in a very useful way. Writing often highlights contradictions and issues that could be ignored or vaguely explained away in a casual conversation. For many people, writing an essay helps them to shape an argument more forcefully and more coherently.

A positive, constructive approach to writing your essays must, of course, be accompanied by learning the structure and the formal aspects of the academic essay. This will help you to create your arguments and present your thoughts in a way that will be useful and acceptable to other readers and thinkers in your discipline. Bear in mind that there are fine differences in essay requirements for different disciplines – essays in Law, Chemistry, Music, Psychology and English are all dealing with different types of 'knowledge' and 'evidence' and therefore require different conventions. Your different academic departments will issue you with specific instructions on how to write essays appropriate to that discipline, but here are some general approaches that will be helpful in writing for any subject or course.



Writing as a Process

Writing as a process is an idea about writing that is useful in dealing with most of the writing you will be asked to do at university. It might be more realistic to say that writing is a *long* process and includes many stages. UCT has a Writing Centre that can help you with each stage of this process, whether you are struggling to understand the question, revising a draft or formatting your references.

The first stage of the writing process will always be: *understanding the question*. This can take longer than expected at university, as it may involve re-reading some of your notes, or the recommended readings. You might need to consult your tutor or lecturer in order to clarify some of the terms or other aspects of the question that you don't understand. Part of understanding the question always involves **careful reading and analysis of the essay title**. The title will indicate what general and specific areas of the subject should be included in the essay, and it might give you some idea of the kind of evidence that should be used. It will also tell you what you should be doing with this content. Should you be '*identifying*' causes of something, or should you be '*demonstrating*' how something happened? Should you simply give one side of the story, or should you be '*comparing*' two interpretations? Analysis of the essay title will reveal to you what *activity* you should be doing in your essay. It is usually indicated by the *action word* – for example, '*discuss*', '*analyse*', '*review*' or '*explore*'. At the end of this section is a list of possible 'action words' commonly found in essay titles, and an explanation of what each word would require you to do.

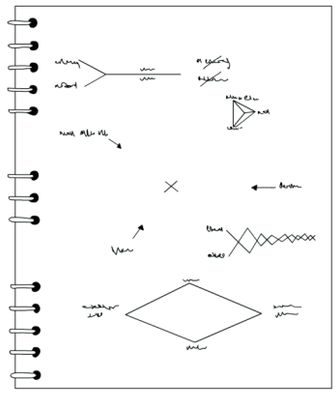
Once you are sure you understand the question, you can move into the next phase, which is *planning*. This stage looks different for different people, but in general, it must include the gathering of information (from the required sources and any others you have available to you), thinking about how the information can be used to answer the question and the drawing up of a plan for how you think the information can best be arranged in the essay. Reading is a major part of this early stage in essay writing. Often it takes place in a cyclical sort of way: you might do the required readings, which might raise some questions in relation to the topic; then you might go to the library to do some extra reading or research or look at academic articles on the internet, before adding some ideas to your plan. As your plan gets more detailed, you might want to do a bit more reading, or re-read something you have already read. Some people also like to talk to friends about the topic, or discuss in their study groups or tutorials how they are thinking about the essay. This planning stage is absolutely crucial and should not be neglected. As you write more essays you will become more familiar with your own writing rhythms – some people spend a long time thinking and talking and reading before they ever put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard!), while others will begin sketching out plans on paper and do most of their thinking while they draw and re-draw their plan. Some people will come up with a carefully ordered numbered plan while others will be able to work from a mind map full of arrows and circles. Whatever works for you, you will discover that it takes *time*!

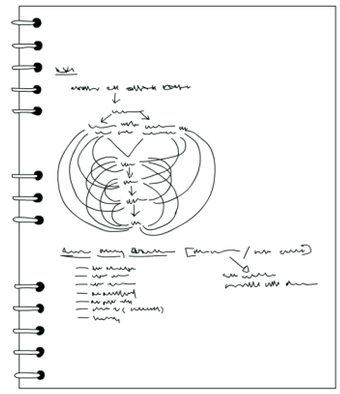
You cannot begin writing an essay the day before it is due to be handed in

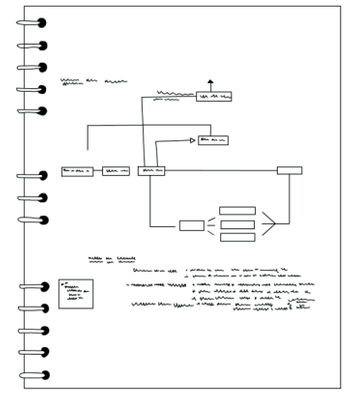
Writing as a Process

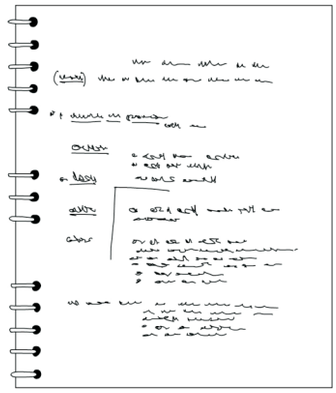
So far, the essay writing process may look familiar, except for the fact that at high school you may have been required to produce an essay or composition overnight. You probably then handed it in to the teacher and waited for your mark to be returned to you, after which you moved on to the next section of the work. The *writing process approach,* however, is based on the way real, published authors go about their writing, and its most important principle is that the first piece of writing you do in response to the title or questions is never the final one. Your first attempt (or *draft*, as it is called) should be read by someone who will then comment on it, or give you *feedback*. Sometimes tutors are willing to read and comment on first drafts, but very often students will ask a fellow student to read their first drafts. It is also a good idea to ask a consultant at the Writing Centre to read one of your drafts. This reading by staff at the Writing Centre is not so much to edit or point out spelling or grammar mistakes, but to comment on the logic, how well the information is arranged or how clear the meaning is. The comments made by the reader will often help you to see where your argument does or does not make sense, or where what you say is unsupported by evidence. Perhaps they will point out a contradiction, or a weakness in your essay that you hadn't recognised while you were writing. They might point to something you have mentioned that is worth elaborating upon or they might draw attention to a vital piece of information that you have left out.

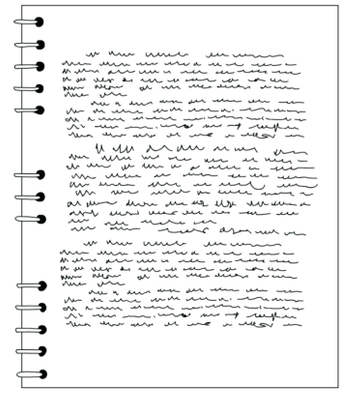
This leads you into the next phase, which is *re-writing* to produce your second draft. Some people repeat the whole cycle so far – again, getting feedback and then writing a third draft.









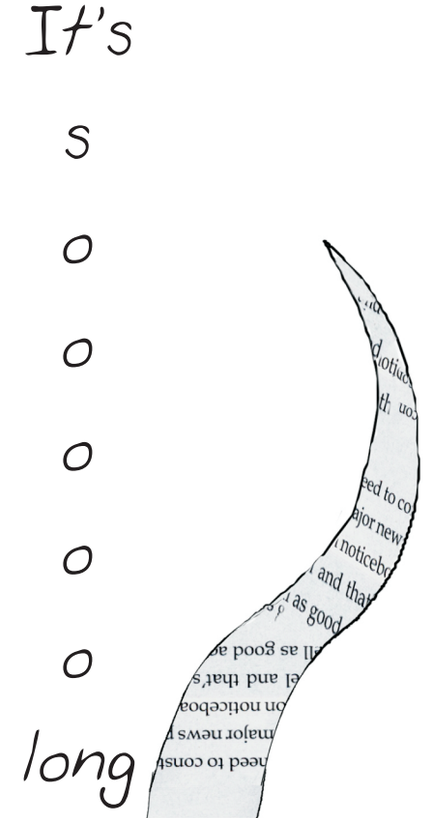


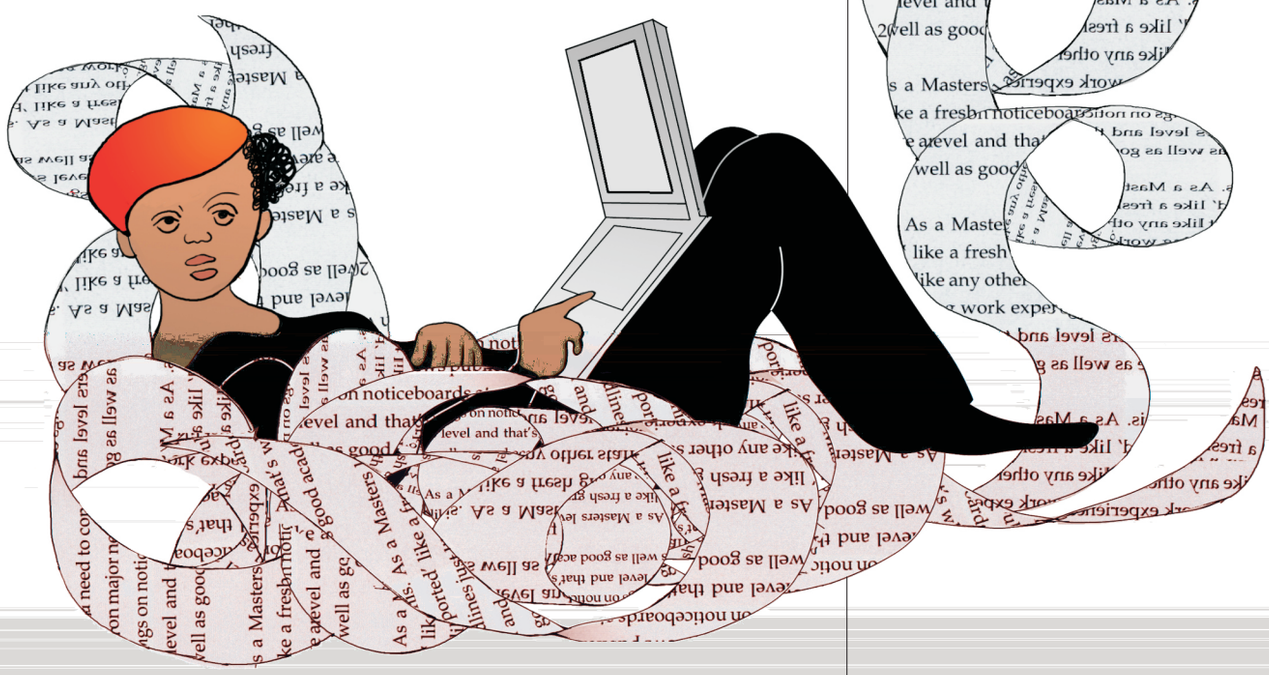
As you can see, these stages are not all self-contained, and some of them can be repeated many times. Every time you go through the loop of reading-planning-writing, you should re-read the essay title to make sure that your new ideas and re-written arguments still fit in with the original actions required by the title. It is quite common, as your thoughts develop, to wander a little from the central topic. Including details that are *irrelevant* is a serious weakness in an essay; it is always worth making quite sure that you have kept to the required topic and completed the required activities as specified in the title.

The final stage in the writing process is the *editing* you will do before handing in your final draft. At this stage you will have settled all the questions about content and style and structure, and you read through simply to make sure that the spelling, punctuation, grammar and references are correct. It is sometimes more useful to get someone else to read it through for this edit, as it is very easy to miss your own mistakes.

Some students don't like the process writing approach, complaining that it is too time-consuming. It *is* time-consuming, but time is always a necessary ingredient in writing an essay that will result in a good mark for you, and also increase your writing skills. Most faculties at the university require essays to be typed. If you use a computer to write your essays, the whole drafting and redrafting process becomes much less time-consuming, as changes can be made and text moved around without having to re-write the whole essay every time.

Another objection to the drafting–feedback–redrafting phase of writing is the fear of showing one's writing to other students. Most of us are a little shy of having our writing read by our peers. This is because it seems so public, and if we've misunderstood something, or written something down in a way that isn't appropriate, we may feel that our peers will think we are stupid. The solution is to ask someone you really trust, who will take you seriously, and not put you down for making a mistake. Sometimes the fear of sharing writing is based on the suspicion that your reader will 'steal' your ideas or copy your essay. Once again the idea of getting someone trustworthy comes to mind, but also remember that you have constructed your essay yourself by putting your understandings together in your own way, and no one can really steal that – and that this is your first draft, and you will probably alter it and improve it before you hand it in. If trust is a big problem for you, try using the Writing Centre – where confidentiality is guaranteed.





Writing as a Process

Part of the process approach to writing is that we never stop learning from our writing. It is useful to remember this when you get your essays back. Many students turn straight to the page which bears the mark. If they see 75%, they feel elated and cram the essay into the back of a file, never to be seen again. If they see 50%, they feel disappointed, crumple up the pages, tossing them into the bin, never to be seen again. Don't underestimate the value of feedback! You will learn more if you read through your essay again, taking note of the comments made by the marker – otherwise how will you know which parts of your essay were correct or successful, and what aspects of it caused you to lose marks? If you don't understand the feedback given by your tutors or lecturers, ask them to explain it – this is where you can really clear up misunderstandings and learn about writing in your discipline. You can use the insight gained by writing one essay to help you write the next one.

Some Structural Aspects of the Academic Essay

Course guides, handbooks and departmental handouts will usually give details of how that department expects students to write their essays and assignments. In fact, some are very detailed and helpful, and it is worthwhile reading them carefully. The following list provides some very general definitions and guidelines about what your *finished product* should look like, whatever guidelines are provided by your departments.

Introduction

The introductory paragraph tells your reader what your essay is going to be about. It should refer to the title of the essay without merely restating it; you could think of this as the part of the introduction that contains the information *given* to you. It should also indicate what direction your argument will be taking, but this should be a general statement, not a detailed piece of your argument; you could think of this as the part of the introduction that contains the information that you will *create*. When you have finished writing your essay, you should re-read your introduction to make sure that you have in fact done what your introduction says you will be doing.

Argument

We are all familiar with this word in its everyday meaning – being that of disagreement, fight or dispute. In academic writing, this word has a slightly different meaning. It is the logical arrangement of information, which can include facts and interpretations, often relating different points of view or theories, so that a certain point can be proved or disproved, confirmed or brought into question. Your argument will always be in the main body of the essay, and will require your hardest, most creative thinking.

Evidence

Every claim you make in your essay should be supported by evidence. If you want to write, 'Women are naturally more talkative than men', you would have to consider someone who might say, 'How do you know that?' or 'Can you prove it?' Evidence is almost like '*proof*', although real proof is often impossible, especially in the Humanities. The evidence used in academic essays usually comes from the readings or the information supplied in lectures. You do *always* need to give the source of your information in the form of a reference.

Here is an example where a claim is made, which is followed by evidence to support it:

> 'Gender equality in the home is still something that needs to be achieved in modern society. This is evident in the fact that it is still women who do most of the household labour and caregiving, according to research findings by Goldscheider and Waite (1991).'

Conclusion

The last paragraph is where you round off your essay. You can do this by summarising your argument or re-stating any conclusions the argument might have reached. You should never introduce new ideas or information in the conclusion. It is important to check that your conclusion is relevant to the essay title. If it is not, it means that your argument has wandered away from the required topic.

Referencing

This is often the hardest thing new students have to learn about writing academic essays.

When and How do We Reference?

Often we wish to use other peoples' words or ideas in our own writing. We do this because we want to build on or discuss their ideas, or to compare different peoples' ideas, or to support what we are saying ourselves.

A reference is used when we refer to someone else's work or ideas in our own writing. In other words, whenever we use words or ideas that we have got from other people, we have to provide the reference in our writing. The reference serves to acknowledge that it is the other person's words or ideas, and to show where we obtained our information from and where the reader could find it. It also serves to show that we are using an authority to support what we are saying and that we are joining a conversation or debate where other people hold certain (and sometimes different) ideas.

We reference as we are writing, in the body of our essay, as well as at the end of our essay – in the *bibliography*, or *list of references*.

The bibliography contains all the details of the book or article, but in the body of our essay, we simply give the *author's surname* and the *date of their publication* and sometimes the *page numbers* that the quote or idea came from.If you use the author's words, you must use quotation marks and provide page numbers as well. When you include the author's ideas but state them in your own words, you do not need to use quotation marks, but you still need to give the author's surname and the date of publication

Every time you refer to, or mention, or quote, the ideas or words of another author in your essay, you must make a formal reference to it by using the referencing convention favoured by your discipline or department

Ngalo lonke ixesha usebenzisa amagama, ukucaphula izimvo zomnye umbhali, kwisincoko sakho, kufuneka wenze ngokusemthethweni usebenzisa indlela evunyiweyo lisebe elo ufunda kulo

Elke keer as jy verwys na, melding maak van of aanhaal uit die woorde of idees van 'n skrywer in jou opstel, moet jy 'n formele verwysing gebruik in lyn met die verwysingsmetodes van jou studierigting of department

This is because, in the academic world, theories and ideas are 'products' – people work hard to produce them, and expect to be recognised and rewarded for them. It is as if because they have produced them, they then own them. If you use someone else's product without acknowledging it, it is considered to be like 'stealing' their ideas. This is what is called plagiarism.

Writing as a Process

There are three main ways in which the work of others can be incorporated as part of our written text:

Quotation
Paraphrase
Summary

Quotation is the reproduction of someone else's words in our own text. For example,

Dlamini (2003:53) explains, 'language is not created in a vacuum. It emerges out of a particular culture, and as such, it is a carrier of culture'.

Paraphrase is our own formulation of the other person's argument. For example:

Dlamini (2003) argues that language is created with a culture and that because of this fact, it also serves to carry or contain that culture.

Summary is a highly condensed form of paraphrase in which the essence of a whole essay or book is conveyed in a few sentences or paragraphs.

A reference is simply the identification of a source. In this sense it must *always* accompany summary, paraphrase and quotation. Reference can, however, be used to support and clarify our own argument. For example,

Many writers emphasise that language and culture are closely linked. (See, for example, Ngugi, 1986, Appel & Muysken, 1987 and Dlamini, 2003.)

In referencing within the body of your text, you *MUST* include the author's surname, the date of the publication (book, article or internet site), and the page numbers that you got the quote or idea from.

(When referencing from an internet site, if you do not have the author's name, give the first part of that address, for example http://www.digitrends.com/crossingcultures, and if you cannot find the date it was written, give the date on which you accessed it, for example (accessed 27/11/2007).)

Certain disciplines will have specific aspects that require referencing in their own specific way, for example legal cases in Law, orchestral pieces in Music, documentaries in Film & Media. Check with your departments on the specific formats for these.

You *DO NOT* have to include the author's initials, the title of the book or article, or any other details apart from those stated above.

It is always better to try to put the author's ideas into your own words, because this helps you to absorb the ideas. However, sometimes it feels most appropriate to quote what the author has said. If you do quote authors, their words must be put in inverted commas, 'like this', and you must not add any extra words of your own. Do not use too many quotes in your essay. We want to hear *your* voice as the author of *your own* writing: we want to have an idea of how you have understood the readings and interpreted the ideas you have come across.

It is best to use the present tense when introducing other people's ideas. The verbs you use when doing so are also important – they tell your reader how you think, feel or regard the ideas you are relating. Here are some suggestions:

Ngugi believes… thinks… insists… feels… demonstrates… recommends… suspects… argues… says… claims… hypothesizes… asserts… finds… reflects… complains… writes… suggests… notes… states… concludes… explains… continues… indicates…

Further advice on referencing

People new to higher education often find it difficult to understand the idea of referencing. Referencing (also sometimes called 'citing' or 'citation') refers to the value and practice of always acknowledging the ideas and work of others you have depended on to produce your assignment.

In academic writing, one of the important values expected of any writer is that we are truthful. Part of that truthfulness is to acknowledge that we have borrowed ideas from the work of those who have gone before us. We all do that; after all, it would be impossible for us to go back and re-discover all the ideas and information that thousands of scholars have already uncovered and developed! So, in academic writing (and also in much professional writing) we read journal articles, books, web articles and the like, find ideas there, and then use them to build the foundations for our arguments and ideas. But, following the academic value of truthfulness, we must then signal to our readers that this is what we have done. We do this to

- *reflect honestly what has happened,*
- *demonstrate that we have read about the topic and that our reading is current and relevant*
- *allow our readers to follow up on the reading and see if they agree with how we have used the ideas of others.*

Citation lays a path that shows the journey we took to reach the ideas in our writing.
Perhaps we could borrow an idea from an ancient western scholar called Bernard of Chartres, who lived around the year 1126 (Merton in Muller, 2005). Talking about how his ideas appeared greater than those who had gone before him, Bernard commented that:

August Rodin: The Thinker 1902

We are like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. Our glance can thus take in more things and reach farther than theirs. It is not because our sight is sharper nor our height greater than theirs; it is that we are carried and elevated by the high stature of the giants (Oxford Reference Online 2009: Bernard of Chartres)

Writing as a Process

So let us say you have been asked to write an essay for Sociology on the relationship between culture and behaviour. Perhaps as part of your preparation you read a general sociology text and find this quotation:

> *To a large degree culture determines how members of society think and feel: it directs their actions and defines their outlook on life.*

If you use this quotation in your essay, you would need to show others

- *that it is a quotation, and*
- *where you found it.*

You show others that it is a quotation by adding quotation marks (' and '). You show where you found it by adding the author(s) name(s), date the book was published, and the page number where your reader can find the quotation. This you would do in the body of your essay. So it may appear like this:

The claim has been made: "To a large degree culture determines how members of society think and feel: it directs their actions and defines their outlook on life" (Haralambos, Holborn & Heald 2000:3).

Alternatively, you may wish to put this in your own words – to paraphrase it. However, you still need to acknowledge the original idea. So, you may do something such as:

Culture has a major effect on peoples' thoughts, feelings, actions and outlooks, according to Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2000:3).

But that's not enough. Now at the end of your essay you must add a list of books and sources that you have used in preparing your essay, just as we have done about this section (see 'References' below). These give the full details that will help others find your sources. These two parts (the in-text author/date) and the references at the end, make up the two main elements of citation or referencing.

Each department in the university may have different ways it would like you to reference. You must make sure that you know what your lecturer expects of you.

References

Haralambos, M., Holborn, M. & Heald, R. 2000. *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*, 5th Edition. London: Hammersmith.

Oxford Reference Online. 2009. Attributed to Bernard of Chartres in John of Salisbury, Metalogicon [1159], Book III, chapter 4, quoted in E. Jeaneau, 'Bernard of Chartres', in C. C. Gillispie, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (1971), Vol. 3, pp. 19. In "Bernard of Chartres" *The Oxford Dictionary of Scientific Quotations*. Ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University of Cape Town. 5 February 2009.
http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t218.e122

Muller, J. 2005. The world is not enough: knowledge in question. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 19(3):89–103.

Reference list

Once you have referenced properly within your text, you must create a reference list. This is a list of all the pieces of writing you have consulted and referred to in your essay. It should contain all the details necessary to help your readers find the articles or books if they want to read more about the subject. Reference lists need to be formatted in the style that is required by your department and discipline. Here we have given a few examples from the Harvard style of referencing.

When you list the details of a book, you include:

The author's surname, author's initials. Year of publication. *Book title* (italics). The place where the book was published: The publisher's name.

Schmied, J.S. 1991. *English in Africa: An Introduction*. London: Longman.

When you list the details of an article in a book, you include:

The author's surname, author's initials. Year of publication. 'Article title' (in inverted commas), in the editor's initials and surname (ed.) *Book title* (italics). The place where the book was published: the publisher's name. Page range of the article.

Van Wyk, E.B. 1978. 'Language contact and bilingualism', in L.W. Lanham & K.P. Prinsloo (eds) *Language and communication studies in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. pp. 29–52.

When you list the details of an article from a journal, you include:

The author's surname, author's initials. Year of publication. 'The article title' (in inverted commas), in Journal title (italics). Volume number of the journal, Page range of the article.

Dlamini, K. 2003. 'The Tongue is Fire', in *Agenda*. 57, pp. 52–54.

When you list the details of an article from a newspaper, you include:

The author's surname, author's initials. 'The article title' (in inverted commas), in *Newspaper title* (italics), the full date of the newspaper edition.

Farquharson, J. 'Legacy of a language that unites us with the world', in *The Sunday Times*, 11 June 1995.

When you list the details of an article from the internet, you include:

The author's surname, author's initials. 'The document title' (in inverted commas). [The web page address] (the date of the document). The date you accessed it (*This is because articles are often changed on the internet).*

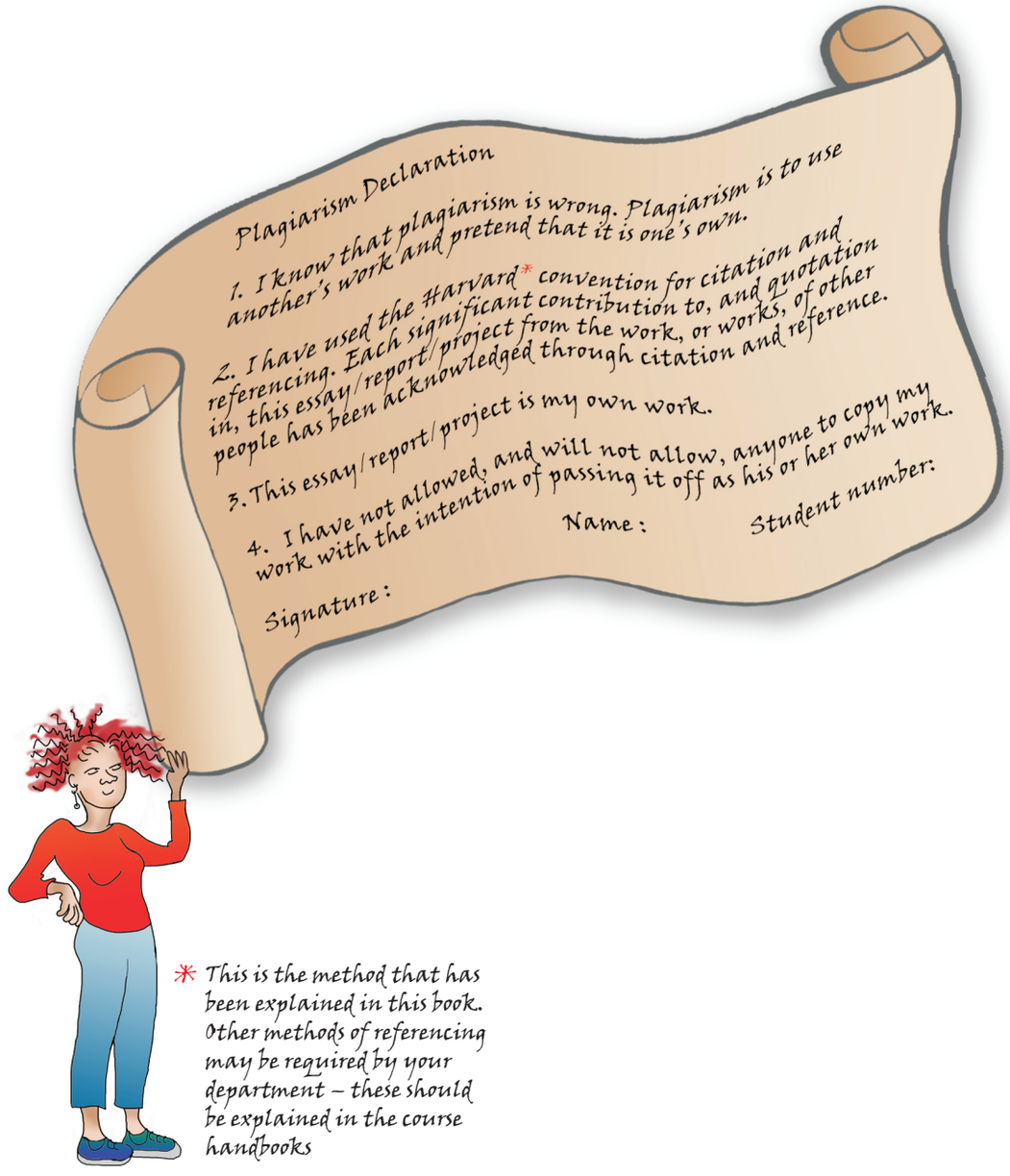
Dyers, C. 'Tensions between Xhosa and "Coloured" in the Western Cape'. [http://vryeafrikaan.co.za/lees.php?id=488] (2006-02-16). Accessed on 22 January 2007.

Generally, your list will be organised in the following manner:

- It follows alphabetical order by surname of author.
- Book titles are in italics or bold.
- Articles are in inverted commas.
- (The list should not be bulleted or numbered!)

Submitting the Final Product

Some departments require you to submit your essay via their course Vula site – they will give you instructions as to how to do this. Others require you to place a typed copy (sometimes two copies – check with your department!) in a departmental box (be sure you to find out where this is). In whatever way you submit it, your assignment must have a cover page with the following information on it: your name and student number, the course name and code, the assignment topic, the name of the person to whom it is being submitted and the date of submission. You also need to complete a form declaring that the work is your own and that you have not plagiarised. An example of this declaration is given at the end of this section. In printed form, this declaration should be stapled to your assignment at the top left hand corner of the page. It is not necessary to do fancy bindings and decorations for normal first year academic essays.



* This is the method that has been explained in this book. Other methods of referencing may be required by your department – these should be explained in the course handbooks

Improving as a Writer

At the beginning of this section on Essay writing, we defined a skill as 'something you can learn by doing'. This implies that your writing skills should improve as you have more and more experience as a writer. Much of this improvement will be the result of your deliberate efforts to learn from your mistakes and build on your successes. There are several ways of doing this:

- Make use of consultation times with, and feedback from, your tutors to correct errors and overcome weaknesses in your writing.
- Make an appointment with one of the consultants at the Writing Centre (see Yellow Pages) to help you in unravelling a difficult essay title, to discuss early drafts of your work or to polish up a final draft.
- Share your writing with some of your peers or the members of your study group. You will learn as much from reading and commenting on their drafts as you will from their feedback on your own writing.
- Find out and use the conventions appropriate to the various disciplines. If you make mistakes in referencing in your Sociology essay, ask your Sociology tutor to explain what you did wrong, and how you can correct it; don't rely on information from your tutors or senior students in other departments. Seeking advice within the disciplines is essential to your success as an academic writer.
- When you read, be conscious of how other authors compose and structure their writing. When you think about how you, as a reader, are responding to a written text, you are preparing yourself to consider how to write for your own readers.
- Above all, plan well in advance, and allow yourself time to learn how to write academic essays.

A frequently asked question: 'How will my essay be marked?'

Each assignment will have its own criteria against which it is marked – and these will be given with the assignment topic. For essays in the Humanities, your lecturers will generally look at whether you have addressed the essay question(s), how you have structured your argument, how you have used your evidence, your referencing, your language and your adherence to specific criteria such as the length.

As a general guide, you might want to check your writing against the following:

Assignment task

Have you:

- clearly identified different positions in the debate?
- positioned yourself adequately in relation to the statement?
- referred to the different readings required?

Argument/discussion

- Have you constructed a logical argument?
- Does each paragraph have a purpose that contributes to the argument?
- Does each paragraph link to those before and after it, thereby providing a flow to the discussion? (Is the argument coherent?)
- Are important concepts defined?
- Are readings discussed rather than merely summarised?
- Are the arguments supported with evidence from the readings?
- Are examples integrated into your discussion?
- Does your relating of your own experiences build on to your argument?

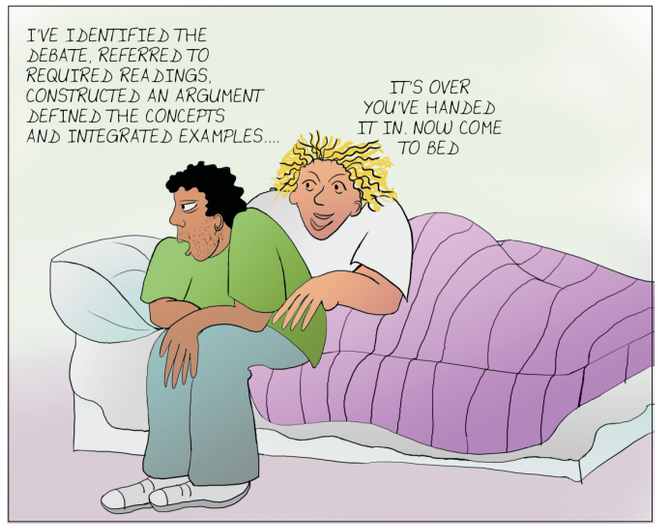
Structure of the essay

- Is the assignment well organized in terms of the essay genre?
- Does the essay have an introduction that provides an idea of what it is about and of what your (the writer's) position is?
- Does the essay have a conclusion that brings closure to the discussion and re-emphasizes your (the writer's) position?
- Does each paragraph have a main theme/topic sentence?

Language and referencing

- Is the language appropriate to formal academic writing?
- Are references cited correctly in the body of the text (author's surname, year: page number)?
- Is the referencing style consistent throughout the essay?
- Is there a list of references at the end, with all the publication details included?

Also Have you attached a cover page?
Have you attached a plagiarism declaration?



Glossary of 'Action' Keywords in Essay Titles
Uluhlu Lwamagama Abalulekileyo Kwizihloko Zezincoko
Woordelys van Sleutel Woorde in 'n Opstel

Words given as tasks for you to do or actions for you to take
Amagama owanikwe njengomsebenzi ukuba uwenze okanye uthathe intshukumo
Woorde wat gegee word as take om te doen of aksies om te neem

Note: This list is not complete. Also, some lecturers/tutors will require slightly different things to be done even though they have used the same word as another lecturer/tutor. Always check with your lecturer/tutor if you are not sure!

Qaphela: Nceda uqaphele ukuba olu luhlu lwamagama alugqitywanga. Kwaye, abanye abahlohli/abancedisi baza kufuna kwenziwe izinto ezingafaniyo ncam nangona besebenzisa kwala magama manye njengabanye abahlohli okanye abancedisi. Yiba soloko ungqinisisisa kumhlohli/mncedisi ukuba akuqinisekanga!

Let wel: Hierdie is nie 'n volledige lys nie.
Let ook daarop dat lektore/tutors nie altyd dieselfde vereistes het nie, al gebruik hulle dieselfde woord as 'n ander lektor/tutor. Doen altyd navraag by jou lektor/tutor indien jy onseker is!

Keyword Igama Elingundoqo Sleutelwoord	Action Required Into Ekufuneka Uyenze/Okufunekayo Kuwe Stappe Wat Geneem Moet Word
Discuss	This is the most widely used action word. A variety of possibilities for response exist – depending on subject or topic. This action word is used particularly when some sort of open -endedness is intended, so that you may exercise your creative talents to interpret the subject or question imaginatively. What is generally required, however, is an exploration of the area/topic through argument and reflection showing your insight and grasp of the subject matter.
Xoxa	Eli lelona gama lixhaphake ukusetyenziswa kakhulu. Limbono ngembono ezinokuvela kwimpendulo ziyenzeka -kuxhomekeka kwinto ekuthethwa ngayo okanye isihloko. Eli gama lisetyenziswa ngakumbi xa ingxoxo engenasisombululo ncam ilindelwe, ukuze usebenzise izakhono zakho ukutolika loo nto kuthethwa ngayo okanye umbuzo ngendlela eyodwa. Eyona nto ifunekayo noxa kunjalo, kukuvelela zo nke iinkalo zengxoxo kulo nto kuthethwa ngayo/kwisihloko ubonise iliso elibukhali nokuqonda kwakho ngokucacileyo into ekuthethwa ngayo.
Bespreek	Hierdie aksie woord het 'n wye reeks betekenisse. Verskeie moontlike antwoorde bestaan – afhangend van die onderwerp of tema. Hierdie aksie woord word veral gebruik wanneer daar nie 'n besliste slotsom is nie, sodat jy kan oefen om die onderwerp of vraag op 'n kreatiewe manier te interpreteer. Wat oor die algemeen verwag word, is dat die tema ondersoek word deur redenasie en oordenking wat jou insig toon en wys dat jy die onderwerp begryp.
Account for	Provide reasons for something or show causes.
Okulindeleke kuwe	Nika izizathu zoko okanye ubonise oonobangela.
Verduidelik	Voorsien redes of toon die oorsake.
Analyse	Find and describe the main ideas through careful argumentation showing how they are related and why they are important.
Cacisa kangangoko	Fumanisa yaye uchaze ezona mbono zakho ngengxoxo ecwangcisiweyo kakuhle yaye uchaze ukuba kutheni zibalulekile.
Ontleed	Deur versigtige beredenering, identifiseer en beskryf die hoofgedagtes, om sodoende aan te dui hoe hulle verwant is en waarom hulle belangrik is.

Ideal Learning Conditions

Argue **Xoxa** **Beredeneer**	Give a logical set of carefully explained and supported reasons as to why you take a particular position or opinion. Nika ingcaciso ebekwe ngobuchule enezizathu eziyixhasayo zokuba kutheni uhambelana nembono ethile okanye uluvo. Gee 'n logiese stel redes wat baie duidelike ondersteun is, hoekom jy 'n spesifieke houding of mening het.
Assess **Vavanya** **Evalueer**	Evaluate an argument or issue, looking at the positive and negative attributes. Phonononga ingxoxo okanye umba, ujonge izinto ezilungileyo nezingalunganga ngawo. Evalueer die redenasie of saak deur te kyk na die positiewe en negatiewe eienskappe.
Comment **Hlomla** **Lewer kommentaar**	Discuss briefly giving own observations and criticisms. Xoxa kancinci unika ezakho iimpawu yaye ugxeke xa kukho imfuneko. Bespreek kortliks deur jou eie opmerkings te maak en kritiek te gee.
Compare **Thelekisa** **Vergelyk**	Show both the similarities and differences, emphasizing similarities. Bonisa izinto ezifanayo kunye nezingafaniyo, gxininisa kwiindawo ezifanayo. Toon beide die ooreenkomste en die verskille en beklemtoon die ooreenkomste.
Contrast **Fanisa** **Kontrasteer**	Show differences by setting differing points in opposition to each other. Bonisa izinto ezingafaniyo ngokudwelisa imiba engafaniyo kumacala omabini. Wys beide die ooreenkomste en die verskille, maar beklemtoon die ooreenkomste.
Criticise **Ncoma okanye ugxeke** **Kritiseer**	Give your considered judgement or opinion in a well -reasoned argument. Beka olwakho uluvo olucingisisiweyo okanye imbono yakho ngengxoxo ecwangciswe kakuhle. Gee jou weldeurdagte bevinding of opinie in 'n welberekende redenasie.

Demonstrate	Show by reasoned argument why a particular opinion judgement or assertion is true.
Bonisa	Bonisa ngengxoxo ecingisisiweyo kutheni isigwebo okanye isigqibo esithile siyinyani.
Demonstreer	Toon deur 'n welberekende redenasie hoekom 'n sekere opinie, bevinding of bewering waar is.
Distinguish	Identify the features that make one position or concept different from others.
Yahlula	Bonakalisa iimpawu ezenza umahluko kwezinye.
Onderskei	Identifiseer die eienskappe wat die verskil maak tussen konsepte of posisies.
Evaluate	Discuss advantages and disadvantages, reflecting on your own opinion or assessment.
Phonononga	Cacisa izinto ezilungileyo nezingalunganga kweyakho imbono okanye uvavanyo.
Evalueer	Bespreek die voor- en nadele, gebaseer op jou eie mening of evaluering .
Examine	Explore from different angles, showing cause/effect, considering relationships or focusing on important points.
Vavanya	Velela zonke iinkalo, ubonisa unobangela/isizathu, qaphela ukuzalana okanye ujonge iimpawu ezibalulekileyo.
Ondersoek	Ondersoek deur verskillende oogpunte in ag te neem, die verwantskappe tussen oorsaak en gevolg te toon of op belangrike punte te fokus.
Explain	Make clear or intelligible in a fairly detailed way.
Cacisa	Cacisa okanye ubonise ngobuchule unika inkcazelo ebanzi.
Verduidelik	Maak duidelik of verstaanbaar op 'n redelike gedetailleerde manier.
Illustrate	Give examples to make your meaning clear.
Bonisa	Nika imizekelo ukunika ingcaciso ethe gca kwimpendulo yakho.
Illustreer	Gee voorbeelde om duidelik te maak wat jy bedoel.

Ideal Learning Conditions

Justify **Thethelela/Xhasa** **Regverdig**	Present a valid argument about why a specific idea or theory should be accepted. Nika ingxoxo eqinileyo ngokuba kutheni uluvo oluthile okanye imbalelwano ethile kufuneka yamkelwe. Bied 'n geldige redenasie aan waarom 'n spesifieke idee of teorie aanvaar behoort te word.
Outline **Cacisa** **Som op/omskryf**	Give a short summary, focusing on main points and omitting minor details. Nika isishwankathelo esifutshane, ugxininisa kweyona miba uziyeke izinto ezingabalulekanga. Gee 'n kort opsomming, fokus op hoofpunte en laat minder belangrike besonderhede weg .
Relate **Nxulumanisa** **Beskryf**	Link ideas or events or compare or contrast them. Nxulumanisa izimvo okanye iziganeko okanye uthelekise okanye uzahlukanise. Verbind idees of gebeure of vergelyk of kontrasteer hulle.
Review **Phinda uqwalasele** **Beskou krities**	Examine a topic critically. Phonononga isihloko ngobuchule . Ondersoek 'n onderwerp krities.
Solve **Sombulula** **Los op**	Work out the problem, explaining your reasoning, to show a solution. Fumanisa ingxaki, ucacise izizathu zakho, ukubonisa isisombululo . Werk die probleem deur om 'n oplossing te wys en verduidelik jou redenasie.
State **Beka** **Lys**	List main points briefly without details. Dwelisa eyona miba unganiki nkcaza. Maak 'n lys van hoofpunte alleenlik.

Study **Funda ngokubanzi** **Bestudeer**	Explore and explain the details or facts. Khawandlale yaye ucacise iinkcukacha okanye iimbono. Ondersoek en verduidelik die besonderhede of feite.
Summarise **Shwankathela** **Som op**	Give a brief account of the main ideas omitting details, illustrations or examples. Nika ngokufutshane oyena nobangela unganikanga nkcukacha zininzi, imiboniso okanye imizekelo. Gee 'n kort omskrywing van die hoofgedagte maar laat besonderhede, illustrasies en voorbeelde weg.
Support **Xhasa** **Ondersteun**	Substantiate or back up a statement or assertion with evidence, illustration or explanation. Chaza ngokubanzi okanye xhasa izimvo okanye isigqibo sakho ngobungqina, ngemiboniso okanye inkcazelo. Bekragtig of ondersteun 'n stelling of bewering met bewyse, illustrasie of verduideliking.
To what extent **Ukusukela phi** **Tot watter mate**	This is basically asking you to justify the validity of an argument in as far as it can be accepted. Oku kukucela ukuba uxhase ukuqina kwengxoxo kangangoko unako. Hier word jy gevra om die geldigheid van jou redenasie te regverdig so ver dit aanvaar kan word.
Trace **Landa** **Volg na**	Describe the history or development of a topic from one point to another. Chaza imbali okanye uphuhliso lwesihloko ukusuka kwenye indawo ukuya kwenye. Beskryf die geskiedenis en ontwikkeling van 'n onderwerp van punt tot punt.

Your test and essay results should help you to answer questions like:

Am I working hard enough? Do I need to adjust my timetable or my learning habits?
Ndisebenza nzima ngokwaneleyo? Kufuneka ndilungalungise itimetable okanye indlela endifunda ngayo?
Werk ek hard genoeg? Moet ek my rooster of my leer metodes aanpas?

Do I need help with understanding the work? Should I consult my tutor?
Het ek hulp nodig om die werk te verstaan? Moet ek my tutor raadpleeg?
Ndifuna uncedo ngokuqonda umsebenzi? Kufuneka ndidibane nomncedisi itutor?

What factors contributed to my success? How can I make sure I succeed again?
Zeziphi izinto ezifaka isandla empumelelweni yam? Ndingenza njani ukuba ndiphumelele kwakhona?
Watter faktore dra by tot my sukses? Hoe kan ek verseker dat ek weer sukses sal behaal?

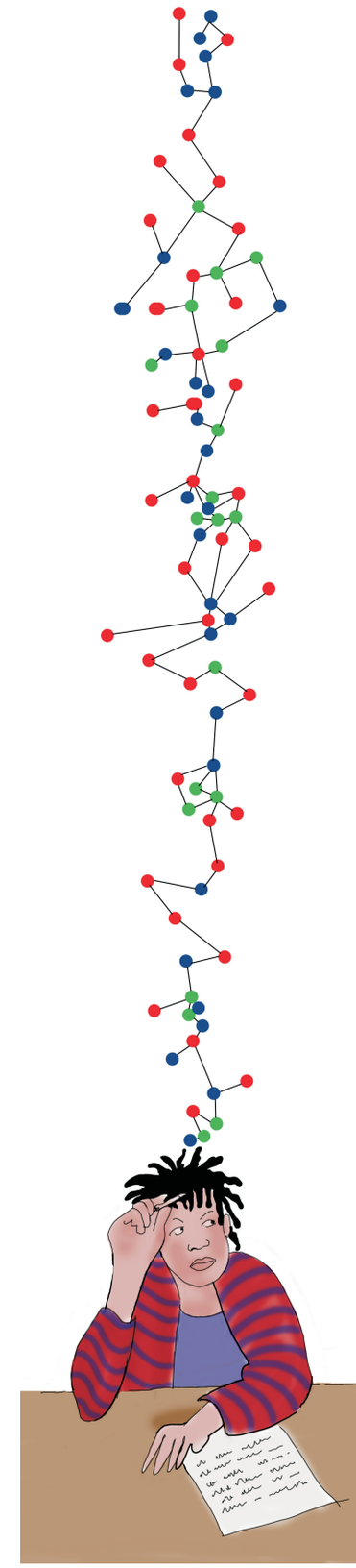
Although this often seems to be the most threatening aspect of life as a student, testing is not all bad. You will write several tests during the year and, of course, your assignments and essays will also be assessed. These are good opportunities for you to monitor your own progress.

The more tests and essays you write, the more familiar you will become with your departments' expectations for their students. Even if you learn what you are supposed to learn, you also need to know what the department expects you to do with that information (Analyse? Compare? Apply?), and class tests and essays will show you the kinds of skills the department will finally evaluate you on. Your final exams (if your courses have them) will also test not only content, but also skills.

Preparing for the Exams

The end of the semester or the end of the year is too late to *start* preparing for exams. All the work you have done throughout the semester constitutes preparation – this becomes apparent when those who haven't worked well throughout the semester realise that they cannot suddenly get everything into their heads in the few days before finals. If you don't have much experience of studying at this level, it is all too easy to get into this position – after all, when you look at your year planner, you see that big empty space called 'study week' as this is the time, after lectures have ended, when there is no new information coming in, but all the ideas, facts, information and skills accumulated during the year must be *consolidated*. According to the *South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, consolidate means 'to make or become strong or secure' and 'to combine'. This is exactly what you should be doing before your exams: making connections between ideas and concepts, constructing the 'big picture' using all the bits and pieces you have gathered during the year, and strengthening your understanding of the whole subject area. This kind of preparation will allow you to respond to a broad range of questions about the work, even ones that haven't been explicitly prepared. This also means that you should expect to do some thinking (and not just regurgitation) in the exam room itself.

One way to work on constructing the 'big picture' is to try writing answers to old exam questions or practice questions given by the lecturer. This will test not only your understanding of content, but will also develop your skills at answering questions quickly and clearly.



Preparing for the Exams

Find out about the exam

As the end of the semester or the year approaches, take care not to miss lectures, as this is the time when lecturers will share information about the examinations. They may clarify which sections must be learnt or which may be left out; they may illustrate the type of questions that will be asked, or how many of each kind you are obliged to answer in the exam; they may be prepared to answer some of the questions you have about the exam.

It is usually useful to go to the Library to look at copies of the examination papers from previous years. Some courses offer these on their Vula site. This will give you a much better understanding of what you will face in the exam room, and if you copy down some questions or photocopy them, you will be able to practise answering the various kinds of questions usually asked. (This is not a strategy you should depend on if the course curriculum has changed very much recently.)

The danger in looking at old exam papers is that it encourages some students to 'spot' certain questions or sections for the exam. This is highly unreliable – you have no guarantee that just because every paper for the past 5 years has had a question on 'gender and poverty in the Western Cape' this year's will too. Concentrating on one section of the work and neglecting others is always risky. Proper preparation should make such strategies unnecessary.

Get the timing right

When the provisional examination timetable comes out, it will be displayed on the UCT website, on noticeboards around campus and on Vula. For each course, it will show the name of the course, how many papers are being written, how long each paper is, which day it is being written, whether it will be in the morning or the afternoon and where it will be written. Sometimes a big course will be written in two venues, one for students whose surnames start with the letters A–M, and the other for those with names starting with N–Z, or some such division. Read the timetable carefully, make a note of the times and venues of your exams and report any clashes to your lecturers. Read the final examination timetable when it is put up, confirm the dates, times and venues of your exams, and note any changes. Although these details may be mentioned in your lectures and tutorials, it is ultimately your responsibility to find out about them.

Draw up a study plan for yourself. This will be a similar process to the one described in the section on time management in the Preparing to Study section in this book. Start by drawing a grid of the time period from the end of lecture to the last exam you write.

Fill in the exam slots, and show other fixed commitments. As with any time planning, try not to be unrealistic. The week between the end of lectures and the first exam is called 'study week' but it is unlikely that you will study all day every day during that week. By this time of the year you should have a good idea of your own patterns of learning, and should be able to draw up a plan that makes allowances for your specific learning needs. How long does it *really* take you to read a long article? Can you *really* get up at 06h30 and start studying at 07h00? Will you *really* manage a 4-hour study session with only one 10 minute break? Can you (and should you) come home from a 3-hour exam and begin work immediately without eating a meal or taking a break? You should also timetable in any other activities that you will spend time on – the laundry still has to be done, even though it is exam time. And exercise is very important at this time, so you may want to keep up with that weekly squash game, or your twice-a-week hour at the gym.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12	13	14 Lectures end 2-3 pm Gym	15	16	17 laundry & shopping	18 2-3 pm Gym
19	20	21 Exams start 2-3 pm Gym	22	23	24 shopping	25 2-3 pm Gym
26 **Soc101** 2-5 pm	27	28 2-3 pm Gym	29 **Psych** 9-12 am	30 **English** Paper 1 9-11 am	31 shopping & laundry 6-7 pm squash?	1
2	3 **Politics** Paper 1 2-5 pm	4 **English** Paper 2 9-12 am	5	6 Exams end	7	8

It is easier to keep track of how much time you are spending on which parts of the work if you plan it like this, and also of whether you are achieving your goals in your allotted times. If you are not, then try to adjust your schedule so that you don't keep falling further and further behind.

Keep the whole of your exam timetable in mind as you prepare your study timetable. Don't direct all your efforts during study week to the first exam you are scheduled to write, in the belief that you can prepare fully for all the others after the first one has been written. Try to include advance preparation for each of your exams in study week.

It is unwise to have a full social calendar at this time of the year and some activities will certainly have to be deferred, but you should still devote the minimum required amount of time to sleeping, eating and exercising. It would be foolish to put your body under extra stress at this demanding time.

It is not a promising start to arrive in the exam room breathless and hot and five minutes late because you missed the bus or got up late. You can prevent getting yourself into this distracting situation by getting up in time, eating a healthy breakfast, dressing comfortably and getting to the examination venue at least ten minutes before the exam is due to start. **Remember that you are required to present your student card at all university examinations.**

Do not use the short time before the exam to start going over whole sections of the work, or frantically trying to learn something new. Try to stay calm, and don't let the pre-exam talk of others upset you, especially if they seem to know a lot more than you do, or if they are nervous and panicky.

Make sure your cell phone is switched off and left in your bag – you are not allowed to have your cell phone with you at your desk.

Once you are seated in your allotted seat in the exam room, you must listen to all the spoken instructions. There will be many groups of students there, writing different exam papers, so some of the instructions may not apply to you, but you should be alert so that you can take note of those that are relevant.

When you see a big time-slot free for studying, don't just write in 'Sociology, 4 hours a day'; rather try to divide the work up into sections, and visualise which part of the day you will spend on each, for instance:

Writing the Exam

When you get your exam paper, make sure that it is the right one – it should have the course name and code on the front cover – and then read the instructions very carefully. This is probably the most important piece of advice you will get about exams:

Read the instructions on the exam paper carefully

Funda imiyalelo kwiphepha lemviwo ngobunono

Lees die instruksies op die eksamen vraestel baie versigtig

If there is any confusion, or if there is something you don't understand about the instruction, ask the invigilator to explain. There will always be someone from your department in the exam room at the beginning of the examination. This person is there to answer questions, so don't hesitate to ask.

When the invigilator officially starts the exam, you should flip through the whole paper and choose the questions you will answer, in accordance with the instructions. Decide on how you are going to divide up your time. If you have to deal with three sections of equal weight, and the exam is three hours long, you should plan to spend an hour on each section. Be strict with yourself throughout the exam and stick to the times you have allowed for each section or question. Answering the first two sections very well will not make up for leaving out the third section altogether. If you feel that you probably can't do the third section very well, you should at least spend enough time on it to get the maximum marks you can for it. If you have time left after doing the best on that section, you can always go back to the first two sections to improve your answers there. Remember that your marker knows that your answers have been produced under exam conditions, and won't expect you to include every possible thing.

It is not always best to answer the questions in the order in which they appear on the paper. You can choose to start with any questions, as long as you *number them all correctly*. It is often a good idea to begin with the question that you feel you can answer best. This will make you feel confident about your knowledge and may help you to answer the next question well, too. Before handing in your paper, check that your questions are properly numbered.

You should be prepared for the different types of exam questions.

Essay type questions

These should be treated in a similar way to essays that are written during the term (see section on Essay Writing). Of course the big difference is time, but otherwise the same steps should be followed:

- Analyse the essay title. What is the focus of the question, and what are the action words? Keep the title in mind as you plan and write, as going off the topic will lose marks.
- Plan. You might think that this is a waste of time in an exam, but, in fact, it could save you time as you won't get stuck halfway through the essay, wondering how to proceed.
- Write the essay, keeping to your plan. If you are writing an 'open book' exam, observe all the usual rules for referencing and quoting. Plagiarism is as serious an offence in an open book exam as it is in an assignment during the term.
- Watch the time carefully, and don't get carried away with one essay if it means neglecting other questions

Multiple choice questions

These are very often included in exams. Although they look as if they should be quick, they often require careful thought, and sometimes you have to go through the process of eliminating the impossible or obviously wrong answers before choosing between two that look similar. In some subjects, for example in the Commerce Faculty or the Science Faculty, you will have to complete some calculations before being able to choose the right answer. You should always check beforehand whether your department will employ 'negative marking', in which they will penalise you for a wrong multiple choice answer. This is done to discourage guessing. If no marks will be deducted for wrong answers, it is definitely worth guessing; if the penalty is very small, for example a quarter of a mark, then it is sometimes worth guessing, especially if you have excluded one or two of the possible answers already.

Short questions

These are so called because they require answers that are shorter than essays. You do not need to do the kind of planning for them that you would do for an essay, but you do need to write short paragraphs which require some degree of thought. You should always be aware of the number of marks allotted to a short question so that you can give it the right amount of time. A question asking you to list six properties of something, for 3 marks, should obviously take less time than one asking for a paragraph on the advantages and disadvantages of something, for 8 marks.

Enjoy your studies, and Good Luck!

Nizonwabele izifundo zenu, yaye Sininqwenelela impumelelo!

Geniet jou studies, en Voorspoed!

a collection of resources specifically for first-year students.

These sites guide students through their first year, offering helpful information about the services they can access to support their

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

FYE Talks

FYE Vula sites bring students information on faculty-run workshops. These sessions offer key information on managing the first year. The workshops are interactive and packed with practical advice on exams, managing stress, and career advice, amongst other topics.

Ask for Help

In the Ask for Help section of these sites, students can remain anonymous while posting an enquiry. The sites are checked throughout the day so students will receive a response.

A-Z of First Year Support

This section has a full list of services students can call on for help, whether they need access to buildings and directions to the Fees Office, or information on the Student Representative Council and Vula.

Common Questions

This section answers common questions on: Help with technology, UCT Libraries, Early Assessment, Essays/Assignments, Emergencies, Student Wellness and Curriculum
and Career Advice.

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE
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The vision of the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) is to be a cross faculty unit that contributes to continual improvement in the quality of higher education through widening access, promoting excellence through equity, developing the curriculum in partnership with faculties, and enhancing the competence of graduates by ensuring the provision of key skills