MINI-GUIDE

LISTENING, NOTE-TAKING AND READING SKILLS

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Listening

- Involves decoding what is being said
- Receptive skill
- Noticing and recognising some new concepts, terminology and information
- Associating new information with the familiar

Note-taking

- Transforming of received information into notes, while listening or reading.
- Making notes involves a different operation than listening.
- By making notes you produce representation of what you hear.
- Making notes requires attentive listening, hearing and recording in writing of what you hear.

How to enable attentive listening and effective note-taking

- Before the lecture, have a look at the lecture topic or theme and the Unit Outline – its Learning Outcomes and Content items.
- For note-taking, write on one page of your note-pad, leaving the other for notes to be added later on.
- Try to associate what you hear with the main topics – looking at main headings and subheadings of the Lecturer’s presentation.
- Note down key words only; do not try to record every word on paper.
- Make sure your notes are clear enough for you to read, but do not attempt calligraphy contest.
- Do not attempt to write down ALL the PP presentation slide text.
- With time, try to establish your own code of abbreviations or shortened versions of the most frequently used words for the Unit of Study.
- Work with your notes after the lecture.
- Read your notes the same day or the day after – you still remember what was said. You might add some more notes or...
insert more words. For any other additions – you have an adjacent page, as well.

- Compare your notes with the Lecturer's handout material or Presentation.
- Read a summary of the Chapter related to the lecture notes (refer to your Unit Semester Plan).
- Identify which notes fall into specific sub-themes, headings and sub-topics.
- Label and mark these your way, separate with lines or brackets – use what works for you best.
- We can use colour-coding – the same category or topic - marked with one specific colour both in your notes, chapter notes and any other material. Concept maps and chapter maps are very useful at this stage.
- By colour coding, we create typology of the material, qualifying it for easy access, clarity and to enable the process of retaining the information for assignments and exams.

**Concept Maps**

- Create a concept map for a particular Week: one for lecture notes, one for the textbook chapter and another one for any other source.
- Look for the features that mark the textual information according to the same type of titles or subheadings, for any commonalities.
- Produce a map on the basis of these features – the main headings will lead to sub-headings and these, in turn, will have some detailed sub-points.

- Such concept maps should now include dot-points of the content.
- The dot-pointed material when completed is a very useful material for selecting and colour-coding the notes of the map which correspond to the same discussion item in your essay, report, review.
- Review all the concept maps from all the Week One sources for careful search and identification of commonalities – to be circled and marked the way it works for you. This is useful for associating information needed for a particular paragraph. The same colour will indicate one type of information, which will be presented as one paragraph or more paragraphs.
- Such a representation of the collected information should be in the shape and format (always handwritten, if possible) of your own choice. For example, big boxes with arrows leading to smaller boxes and then to dot-pointed notes or key words. The same can be done with circles and any other notation, symbols and type of marking. Make sure some notes are clearly distinct from others – depending on the “hierarchy” of their order of reference.
- This is about management of the information. We need to manage the information and material we have collected.

**Effective Reading, Terminology and Note-taking**

- The more sources we read on the same topic, the larger vocabulary we acquire, which helps when listening and note-taking.
• Frequent exposure to the same topic from different sources and approaches enables understanding, note-taking and retention of the information.
• *Repetitive* use of the same notes will then enable retention of this information.
• When we need details and particulars – we access our concept maps first and particular parts of the texts next, guided by our concept maps (“road maps”).
• Determined and regular practice of the same, in several contexts, leads to understanding, remembering and retaining. We need to bombard out brain with the same sort of information many times from various sources to understand the concepts to the extent that we can speak and write about them.
• It occurs, for example, when we use our notes relating to Week One lecture, textbook chapter map, a journal concept map, etc – all relating to the same theme or module.
• Every person has some repository of words to name concepts and ideas. To understand a new concept, it is important to accept and retain new terminology for what you already understand. Treat new terminology as a foreign language and establish a glossary of your own for each Module of study (for each Course Unit).
• When preparing for writing assessments, after reviewing the lecture notes and concept maps, find and note down definitions of the words that relate to the Unit Outline. You are building your notes “empire”.
• Enable your retention capability and capacity by consciously relating the new words and concepts to more general ones. In this way you also understand the concepts in contexts.

• Know the general first and the particular next.
• Think about how to store this entire information bank. Files? Folders? And properly marked and labelled. You can use specific software for concept maps, but hand-written maps are made much quicker and you can modify them freely without format constraints.
• Some of us use a new poster-size map of all the maps created and referring to Week One (Module One) – put up where we can see them every day or several times a day. We can do the same with all the concept maps for each Week or Module when studying for exams. Being able to see the same information often, may help a lot in retaining the information.