Student Learning Support Service

Study Starters

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Introduction and welcome

Welcome to Victoria! Study Starters aim to help you build your confidence as you prepare for university study and raiser your awareness of the support on campus. Learning how to study effectively is a key skill that will help you reach your potential. Academic success is not just about how much you know but how well you can show what you know in your coursework assessments and exams.

Successful learning involves wanting to learn, needing to learn, learning by doing, learning from feedback and making sense of what's being learned. You need to attend lectures and tutorials but you will also be required to read widely and think critically to help you understand. At university you will not only be learning new information but also developing important skills that will be valued in the workplace. So go for it and remember to ask for advice if you are not sure!

To get you started, this session focuses on

- Time management
- Effective reading
- Note taking

Find out more about the services and workshops that SLSS offers in ***Campus Connections****: Your guide to workshops and activities on campus*.

Being a Successful Student

A brief guide for first year students

What's different about university

University requires a more proactive and independent attitude to attendance, study and interaction with academic staff.

Independent learning environment

- lectures and tutorial format
- lectures can have up to 300 students
- only 12 to 15 contact hours per week, the rest of the time students are expected to do background reading, researching or writing on their own
- minimal contact with teaching staff – students are expected to approach them if they need to ask anything

Independent learning style

- lectures are just the beginning – students need to read, research, discuss and revise material outside contact times
- students should expect to spend two hours working independently for every one hour of lecture time – which adds up to between 36-45 hours a week for most first years.
- no-one checks up or reminds students of due dates or tells them where to find information. Students need to keep track of assignment dates and lecture and tutorial times and locations

Student survival

Develop **independent learning skills**. To succeed at university, it will help if you're well organised and know how to work independently. Study skills workshops are offered by SLSS – so take advantage of these.

Motivation and focus will help to keep you on track. Know why you're at university, and understand your long-term goals, both career and personal.

Ask for help. There are many people employed here to help you succeed, including your lecturers and tutors. Learning to ask when you're not sure will help you both academically and when seeking information of a more personal nature, eg. financial advice or career counselling. Learn about and take advantage of the services the University provides.

Be resourceful and open to new ideas, concepts, people and change. University is your opportunity to get involved with different people and different activities, new subjects and challenging ideas.

Keep your life in balance. Don't forget to enjoy university. Join a club, get involved with student activities, keep up your physical fitness, eat well, and keep happy! We recommend no more than 15 hours a week of paid work, so you can balance your social life, employment and study commitments to stay healthy and on top of things.

Get Organised

Being able to manage your time and set your own goals is another key skill you need to develop. Your success at university depends on your ability to be in control of your own learning so making time to do the readings, hand in your assignments on the due date and revising for exams is very important.

Time management ideas:

What are the challenges

Strategies

Suggested Study Routine

Some preparation before the lecture will improve your understanding of what the lecture is about.

Preparation time will vary from week to week and for each subject. While the following method is recommended, you will need to try these ideas for yourself and see what works for you. Time spent reviewing your notes **within 24 hours** of the lecture will assist your understanding and memory.

Before the lecture

- Find out your next lecture topic
- Read or skim text to help understand what the lecture will be about. Use your Course Outline to find out about this
- Look for new terms and concepts
- Ask questions

During the lecture

- Start new page, and add heading -topic, name, date
- Use your listening skills: **Listen** for phrases such as 'The **main** point ...
- Brief notes -main ideas: use your own words except definitions, facts, formulae
- Write down major/minor points; use abbreviations
- Understand lecturers: are they summarising/showing relationships/giving examples?
- Differentiate fact from opinion
- Note vocabulary/ concepts you are unsure of
- Leave blank spaces to add to later. Use margins for questions, comments

After the lecture

- Review your notes within 24 hours to clarify ideas. Spend time understanding and thinking about the information.
- Re-organise information in own words using key ideas, colour, charts, diagrams or mindmaps
- Find any information you don't understand - clarify gaps. Raise questions in your tutorial or with the lecturer.
- Discuss ideas in a study group
- Link to previous lectures, research and your assignment ideas

Week Planner

Use this to plan your week

	TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1. Most Important	7 am							
	8 am							
	9 am							
2. Important	10 am							
	11 am							
	12 pm							
3. Less Important	1 pm							
	2 pm							
	3 pm							
After I've completed my work I will reward myself by	4 pm							
	5 pm							
	6 pm							
	7 pm							
	8 pm							
	9 pm							

Typical first-year experience

Reality of 1st year - new expectations, experiences and some ups and downs.

Preparation and help seeking will see you succeed.

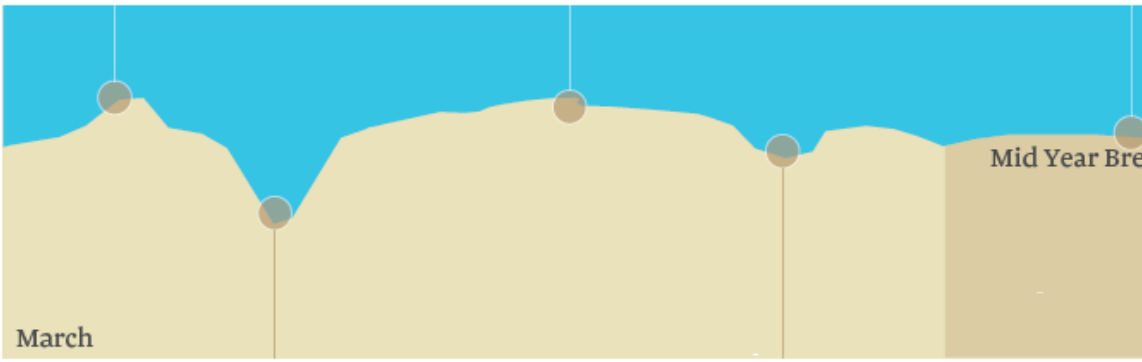
New Challenges, experiences
- Away from home
- Being independent
- New people, new subjects
- Uni expectations

New Student Orientation
- Campus Coaches, clubs
- Find your way
- Meet faculty staff
- Get organised - library tours, workshops

Engagement
- Getting more organised, meeting deadlines, planned study
- Excitement about uni - social & academic life
- Join leadership programmes, clubs

Trimest
- Celebrat
- Confirm
- Seek cou
- Upskill -

Before you come, have you...
- Enroled on time
- Applied for loans/allowances
- Discussed career & course planning
- Registered for Campus Coaches
- Learned how to budget and live independently



Reality: 6-week dip
- Course doubts? Can I do this?
- Workload, assignments
- Do I need to upskill? IT?
- Relationships, homesickness, living situation?
- Check course, career directions
- Campus Connections - free study workshops
- Study groups?
- Advice - budgeting, learning, personal

Exams
- Crunch time doubts?
- Check exam details with course lecture
- Set up study groups
- Exam preparation workshops (Campus Connections)
- Eat, sleep, exercise

ester 1 Results
rate & reflect
rm T2 courses
course advice, adjust programme
ill - see Campus Connections for workshops

Exams again
⊞Lessons from 1st exams
⊞Preparation & study
⊞Study groups
⊞Review old exam papers
⊞Exam preparation workshops (see Campus Connections)
⊞Eat, sleep, exercise

End of year
⊞Celebration
⊞Summer work/holiday planning
⊞Year 2 accommodation
⊞Course/career advice
⊞2012 enrolment by (date)
⊞Keep connected to friends
⊞$$$

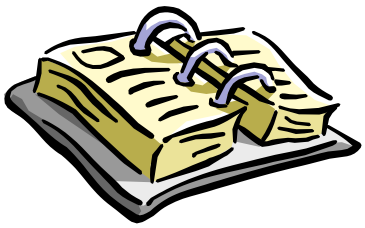
re

6-week dip
⊞High workload
⊞Pressures?
⊞Health issues?

Use student services
⊞Student Counselling Service
⊞SLSS
⊞Student Health Service

Study Plan Guide

A brief guide for first year students



DAILY DIARY

Know the day in ADVANCE

Which tasks and when?

Note the areas to explore further

WEEKLY PLAN

Fixed and flexible

Specific study tasks noted

Regular revision and preparation

Short, effective study blocks

Trade, don't steal time

YEARLY PLAN

Mark in all commitments from course outlines

Acts as an overview of course and year

Anticipates bottlenecks and times when preparation is needed

Reveals breathing spaces!

Effective Reading

Reading is a key part of study at university. You will be expected to develop your understanding of your subject beyond what is given in lectures and tutorials. The readings we are given at university are challenging because they are long, they contain difficult vocabulary and grammar as well as complex ideas and arguments. However, reading is essential for finding out what other thinkers and experts have to say about a subject, for gathering information and for shaping our own thinking. This session includes some strategies for developing effective reading skills.

Notetaking

The notes you take in lectures, tutorials and labs are important resources while you are studying. They will form a record of what you have learnt and help you to remember the key points. Your notes are there to help keep you actively engaged with your learning. You can make them interesting and memorable by using colour and diagrams, especially if you are a visual learner. Remember to review them within 24 hours .

- Smart notes for note taking
- Note taking tips

Effective Reading

How to use the SQ3R System and preview text

SQ3R > Survey > Question > Read > Recall > Review

Survey

Skim read and look for **signposts.**

Signposts in a book chapter or journal article might include:

- The abstract and/or introduction;
- The conclusion or summary;
- Subheadings (usually in **bold** or *italic)*
- If there are no subheadings, look for topic sentences in paragraphs (often the first sentence.)

Signposts in a book might include:

- The preface and/or introduction;
- The table of contents;
- The index (look for key words from lectures or essay topics);
- Charts, tables, figures and photographs and their captions.

Question

Samples of general questions:

- Why am I reading this text?
- Where do I expect to find the information I need?
- Which parts interest me?
- Which parts do I expect will be different?

Ways to generate specific questions include:

- Using essay or assignment questions;
- Paying attention to questions the author generates (you may have come across these in your survey of the text);
- Looking for definitions,
- Rephrasing titles, chapter headings and subheadings as questions by adding question words – who, what, where, when, why and how – or even "so what?" Write all your questions down before you move on to the next stage.

Read

1. Read the text at your own speed, pausing to think when a concept is difficult or when you recognise the answers to one of your questions.
2. It's best not to take notes at this stage – concentrate on reading and thinking. If you must take notes, use key words – don't copy out screeds of text.

Recall

1. This is where the note taking begins. Close the book and, using your own words, try to answer the questions you posed earlier, or, if none of your questions were answered, try to recall the MAIN POINTS of what you have just read. You can do this in writing, of course, but recitation – saying it out loud or talking it over with a fellow student – is also effective.
2. When to pause from reading and start recalling depends on the difficulty of the text. Very difficult reading or material that is entirely new to you may require a recall session after every paragraph.

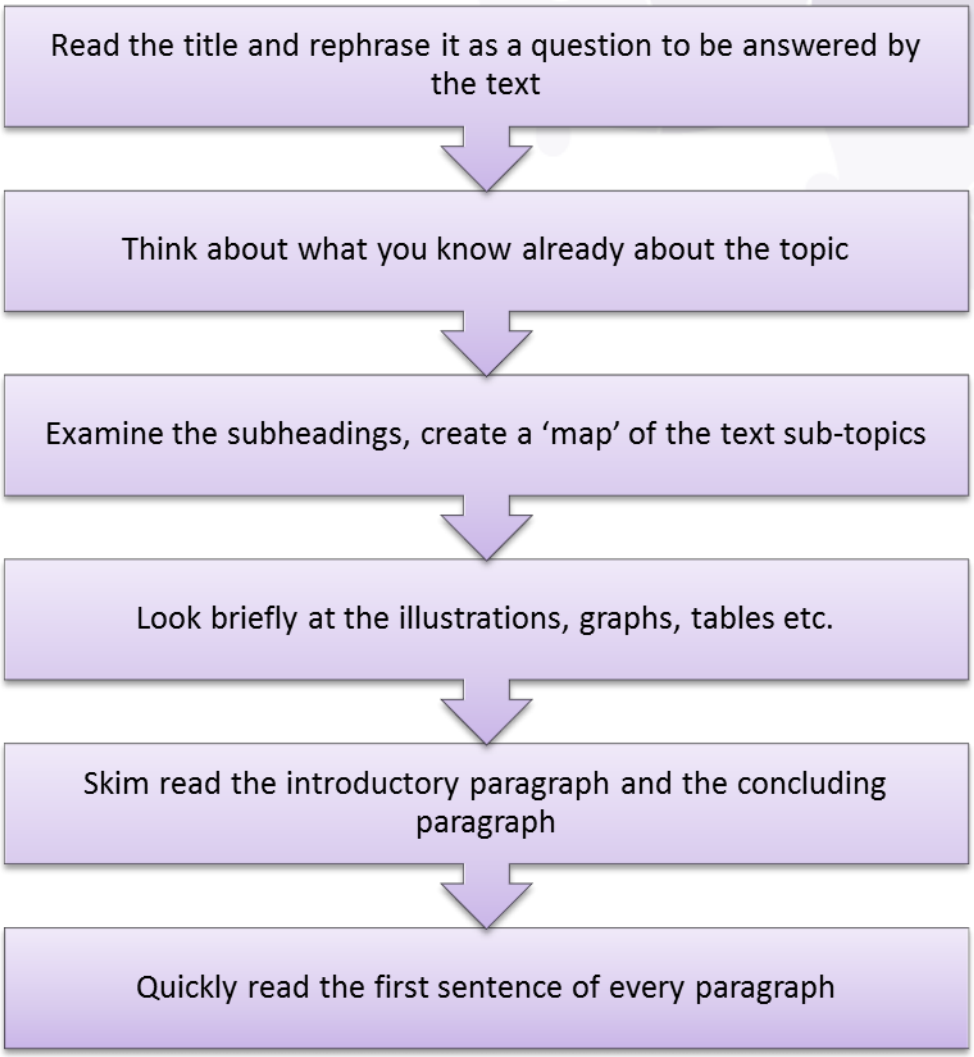
Review

Go back to the text to check whether your recall was accurate and complete:

- Add to or correct your notes as necessary;
- Do this as many times as you need to, to recall and understand the relevant information

Previewing Text

This is another activity you can do before you start reading:



Now decide if it is relevant to your purpose. If yes, use the critical reading tips on the next page.

Critical Reading and Thinking

Critical thinking and reading is a key skill because it helps you explore alternative approaches and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in arguments and ideas. It also develops your own critical skills and helps you learn and understand at a deeper level.

Step 1

Know and understand the article or reading

What are the main points? Key arguments?

Who is writing it?

Who is the audience?

What evidence is there to support the main argument? (eg stats; examples; research; case studies etc)

Step 2

Take a critical approach

Is the author an expert? What is their background? What is their purpose?

What perspective do they come from?

Is the author's argument clear and well put?

Is there a bias?

What is the source of evidence? How reliable is it?

If research is used how reliable are the research methods?

Are there gaps in the research?

How does the author use information from other sources?

Are materials sourced?

How well does the author support their thesis, conclusions, recommendations? Balance? Logic?

Do ideas flow clearly?

Is there information left out?

Are there other authors/ research/ articles to compare with?

How do these ideas link to lectures, own experience?

Note Taking

Why take notes?

Ideas for taking lecture notes

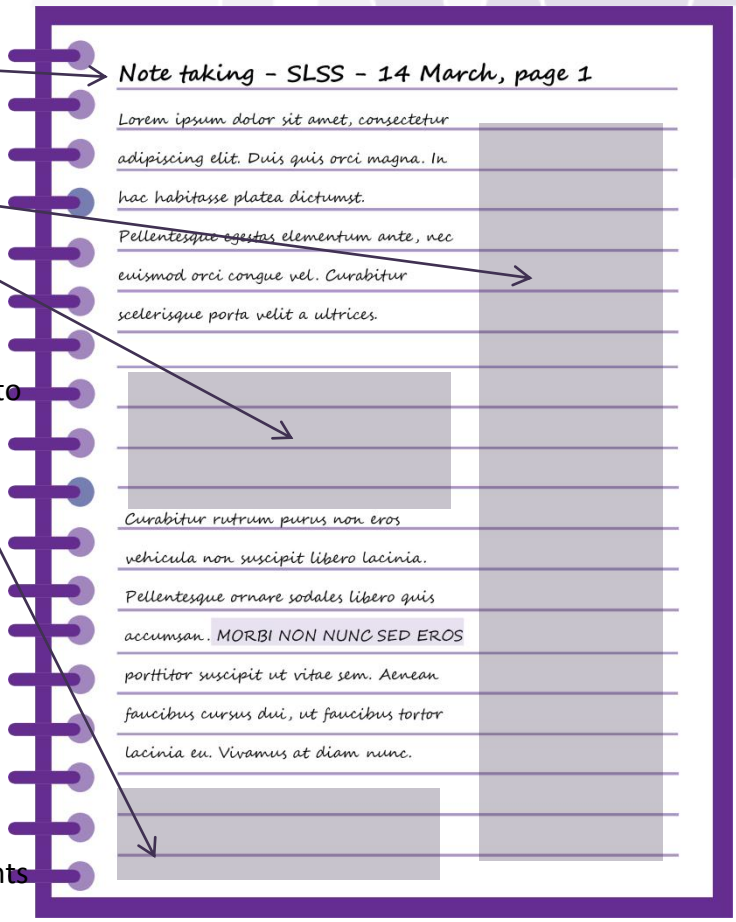
Using your notes

Other tips:

- Write the name of the lecturer, date and topic at the top of your notes
- Keep your notes organised in a folder or book
- Review your notes within 24 hours. Do it! Review it!
- Practise ten-minute brainstorms with television and radio programmes
- It gets easier with practice!

Note Taking Tips

Clearly **LABEL** your notes



Use white space within your notes at the top/sides/bottom and in between chunks.

SPACE enables you to learn from and process information later. An ideal white space is a margin to add…

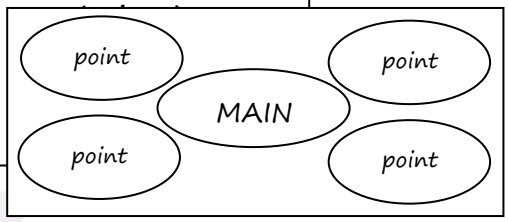
- content in appropriate places
- extra notes later, during revision
- supplementary points or meanings or examples
- references
- notices e.g. exam hints/ clues

Leaving blanks helps you find and fill in missing points later and/ or a chance to draw diagrams, visuals etc.

STRUCTURE the information
Work out a numbering/ lettering system that identifies main headings, sub-headings, and points related to each idea.

A. (Main)

1. (Intermediate)
   a. (minor)
      i. (point)
      ii. (point)
   b. (minor)
      i. (point)



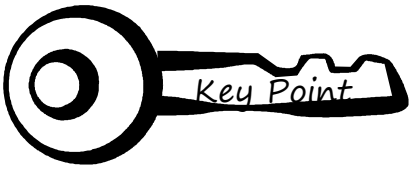
LISTEN and expect these in any lecture :

- Preamble
- Key points
- Extensions
- Examples/ Definitions/ References
- Asides
- Questions/ Answers
- Observations
- Summaries/ Conclusions

Follow consistent symbols or structure. Note that you may not be able to structure your lecture till the conclusion of the class - often the margin (white space) can be useful for this.

Vary the **FORMAT** within the structure, but try to be consistent across all your notes.

- Underline
- circle the important points
- box definitions
- Use CAPITALS to clarify points
- Highlight/ colour
- Symbols e.g.



CONVENTIONS

- Start a new line for each new point
- Delete mistakes with a single line
- Use common abbreviations, and your own shorthand (but remember to be consistent)
- Use examples and diagrams whenever possible

RE-WORK YOUR NOTES

Preferably within 24 hours - this will establish a sound recall and help develop your thinking and understanding of the topics and issues discussed.

What to do?

∗ Fill in any gaps

∗ Clarify definitions, terms etc.

∗ Finish diagrams

∗ Raise questions, seek answers!

∗ Find areas that you don't understand and need to follow-up in tutorials

∗ Impose a structure or format on notes that don't make clear sense as they are!

Effective Listening

Effective note makers spend the bulk of lecture time *listening* and *thinking.* The quality of your listening will affect the quality of your notes.

Aids to effective Listening

✓ Prepare BEFORE the lecture

- Skim read recommended texts on the topic.
- Check course outline; know lecture topic.
- Revise notes from previous lectures - note ideas relating to current lecture topic.
- Be familiar with vocabulary - look up unfamiliar words from your readings or previous lecture.
- Decide on helpful abbreviations.
- Actively think about the lecturer's questions.
- Raise 3 or 4 questions of your own on the lecture topic. These "tune" you into the lecture - actively seek answers

✓ Act like a LISTENER

- Sit near the front of the room.
- Concentrate on listening.
- Make eye contact with the lecturer.
- Ask questions if permitted.

✓ Focus on KEY ideas and structure.

- What are the main ideas of the lecture? (Clues to these come from your pre-reading and the lecturer's verbal and non-verbal cues).
- Distinguish principles from examples and identify primary ideas

✓ Use your mind

- Question and evaluate (make judgements about) material presented. Do you agree with it? Does it relate to the pre-reading you did? Is it difficult to understand?
- Does it relate to something you have learned in another class or elsewhere?
- Attempt to answer the lecturer's questions (even if it's only to yourself).
- Identify issues that can be raised in tutorials. Note down your thoughts

✓ Know the lecturer

- Work out your lecturer's format.
- How does the lecture begin?
- Are there diagrams to copy?
- Does the lecturer reiterate key points?
- Does the lecturer summarise at the end?

Barriers to effective Listening

Insufficient PREPARATION

- Don't go into lectures 'cold'.

Distraction

- Deal with the distraction and return to the task at hand
- When your mind begins to wander back to Saturday night acknowledge that thought and return your attention to active listening.

Missing non-verbal cues

- Non-verbal cues, such as hammering the desk to emphasise a point or looking away on less relevant points can help you to identify the crucial material.

Trying to get down every word

- Concentrate on listening, think about what you hear and note down only the key points.

Stress and worry

- Manage your study time effectively.
- Attend lectures and tutorials.
- Share your worries with other students (many will have the same worries).
- If stress, whether from studies or other issues becomes chronic consider visiting the University Counselling service. Counselling services are private and free to students.

Not enough food, or sleep

- It's a good idea to have a drink of water and a nutritious snack (such as a banana, yoghurt, sandwich or muesli bar before a lecture).

Getting support with your study

Starting uni is often difficult because you do not know what is expected of you. Students can face challenges adjusting to academic life. If you have not studied for a long time, it may be hard to know how you are progressing. Personal issues (health, housing, social relationships etc.) can also have an impact on your studies.

If you want to know more about…

- ⇨ Plagiarism
- ⇨ Referencing
- ⇨ Essay writing
- ⇨ Exam skills
- ⇨ Grammar
- ⇨ Note taking
- ⇨ Reading
- ⇨ Learning Strategies
- ⇨ Maths and Statistics
- ⇨ Group work
- ⇨ PASS
- ⇨ Peer Writers
- ⇨ Postgraduate support

  - Have a look in ***Campus Connections*** for a guide to our workshops

Join a PASS (Peer Assisted Study Support) study group. These study sessions are led by successful students in 100-level courses such as ACCY, CHIN, ENGL, FCOM, FREN, INTP, ITAL, JAPA, LAWS, MARK, MDIA, MGMT, PASI, POLS, PSYC, RELI, SOSC, SPAN, SPOL/PUBL and THEA. PASS leaders will not give you the answers, but they can help you reinforce subject knowledge and develop learning strategies in an informal environment. Research shows that students who attend PASS regularly have a better than 93% pass rate in their exams.

- Look for 'sign-up' information in lectures and on Blackboard.
- Sign up in Week 2.
- PASS groups begin in Week 3 of the trimester.

For further information,

Email : deborah.laurs@vuw.ac.nz

Web : www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/slss/whats-on/pass.aspx