Getting the Most Out of Lectures

Student Learning Advisory Service
Objectives for the Workshop

- To understand why lectures are used in HE
- To help develop techniques for using lectures effectively
- To introduce further sources of advice
Activity 1

- What does the word ‘lecture’ mean to you?
- What do you think is the purpose of lectures?
- In your experience, what are the strengths and weaknesses of lectures?
- What do you think you need to do to get the most out of lectures?
What are lectures?

Lectures are:

- A particularly efficient way of reaching large numbers of students
- Particularly good at providing a theoretical overview of the subject
- BUT a problem if students are *passive*
  - to benefit, you need to be actively engaged
  - this means taking notes, discussing, etc.
What are lectures?

Lectures provide:

- An introductory overview of topics
- A sequenced approached to subject
- A forum for discussion of key:
  - ideas
  - theories
  - subject experts
- An opportunity to discuss and question
What are lectures?

Lectures prepare students for:

- Parallel seminars or tutorials
- An initial evaluation of academic evidence
- Consideration of alternative theories
- Reflection on new scholarship
Making the Most of Lectures

- Be on time!
- Don’t miss them!
- Be physically fit and alert
- Map lectures across your programme of study
- Put them in context against
  - Seminar topics
  - Laboratory sessions
  - Course outline
  - Reading for the module/subject
  - Assessment targets
Preparation for Lectures

- Think about them in advance
  - Think especially about links to assignments
- Carry out essential preparatory tasks
  - Preliminary reading
  - Check previous lecture notes
- Make sure you have necessary equipment
  - Pens, paper, clipboard, etc.
‘Traditional’ Lectures

- 3 part structure – main stages of lectures
  - Introduction/overview
  - Development of ‘argument’ in stages
  - Conclusion: drawing together the threads
- Try and anticipate what will be covered in each stage
Sketch out a map of links between main themes & sub-themes:

Learning theory & Behavioural Psychology

- Conditioning = Classical (Pavlov)
- Operant (Skinner)
Active Participation

To benefit fully from lectures, be active....

- Practice concentration skills (focus, interest)
  - keep asking: what is the main point here?
- Practice/think about your note taking skills
  - actively track key points made by lecturer
- Learn to listen and write at the same time
- Record some lectures?
  - With permission
    - Streamed: KLS

Work with the material!
Active Listening Skills

- Listen for ‘clues’ to significant material:
  - Pace
    - May speed up towards key stages/closure
  - Volume
    - Used for emphasis
    - Used for key junctions/stages
  - Tone
    - Affirmative
    - Ironic/comical
    - Sceptical etc
  - Repetition of key words, concepts, theories
    - As necessary, check on these soon afterwards
    - Check comprehension – if in doubt, ask!
Active Listening Skills

Check Lecturer’s Non-verbal communication

- Gestures/body language
- Voice emphasis

Position

- At the front of the lecture
- Around the dais/lectern
Active Listening Skills

- Listen for key stages of a lecture
  - Summary statements
  - Links between sub-topics
  - Signpost statements
  - Where the lecturer departs from a prepared script
  - Closure/conclusions
Active Questions

- Don’t be shy!
- Formulate questions in advance
- Re-phrase for clarification
- Ask and **listen**
- Confirm you have heard the reply to your question
- Keep making notes
- Question peers afterwards
Active Notetaking

Why take notes in lectures?

1. To be actively engaged in listening
2. To record *key* ideas, theories
3. To note topic ‘clues’ left by lecturer
4. To note points for follow up
5. To feed into coursework & revision
# Cornell Note System

1. **Course Lecturer**  
   **Date**  

2. During lecture make notes here

3. After lecture write key concepts or questions

4. Finally, summarise page
Active Notetaking

- Develop own technique/short-hand
- But once you have found a process that works, stick to it!
- Focus to get information down quickly and accurately
- Adapt your techniques as you develop
Working with Notes

After each lecture....

- Tidy up notes
- Summarise of the main points
- Identify key words
  - underline
  - highlight
- File carefully – you’ll need them later...
- Revisit material later (essays, revision)
Working with Notes

- Notes template?
  - May aid concentration
  - Gives overall structure & summary
  - Aids processing
  - Gives a focus to follow-on work
  - Aids record-keeping/filing
Good Practice After Lectures

- Make sure lecture notes are referenced
  - Date
  - Number
  - Cross-reference
  - Title
  - Module links