If you need help in understanding what to do and what not to do, drop in to the KLS Skills Hub and ask! It's better to be safe than sorry!

KLS Skills Hub Opening Times are published [here](#).

**What is a seminar?**
Seminars provide an opportunity for students to explore topics in a relatively small group, typically 10-15 people, in order to clarify their knowledge and understanding.

**What is the purpose of seminars?**
Seminars are an opportunity to explore topics in depth, and address any issues. You need to be actively involved in the seminar process if you are going to learn from it! Seminars and lectures go together: you need to put your seminars into context by relating them to the parallel lectures. This means that lecture attendance is as crucial as being present in seminars.

**What you should get out of the seminar?**
At the end of an effective seminar engagement the seminar participant should have developed their understanding by a three-way process: learning from the seminar leader; learning from other participants; contributing to the general discussion themselves. As a consequence of this, it's difficult – perhaps impossible – to gain much from a seminar unless you are actively involved. Attending a seminar means more than just sitting in the room! Effective participation will, therefore, play an effective role in developing your speaking and listening skills.

**How to prepare for seminars?**
The first crucial point is that you must leave time for this! You need to plan your seminar preparation along with all the other things you need to do that week. It's no good doing a bit of hasty reading half an hour before; equally, it may be unrealistic to try and read everything on the reading list for that week carefully...work out what you think you can do, using your other commitments, personal interests and the demands of any assignments you are working on as a guide.

As minimum you should ensure that you have read the recommended reading for the week. This inevitably will also mean taking a few notes on your reading material so that you retain what you have read. If you feel as though your reading and note-taking skills are in need of work then remember to visit the Skills Hub! If you have time then try and tackle some of the further reading too – this may come in particularly useful when it comes to assessments.

Remember to try and put each seminar into context by reviewing its relationship to the lecture(s) for the module. In addition, it's a good idea to review (briefly) your notes from the previous week's seminar when you are attending a sequence of seminars. Finally, it's a good idea to make a note of any points you want to clarify or discuss within the seminar.

**During the seminar**
It is important that you do try and join in! It’s an obvious point, but the more you contribute the better it will be for all. Bad seminars have a leaden feel in which everyone stares at the table, expectant pauses lengthen into embarrassing silences and the seminar leader eventually talks all the time...often because s/he feels they are the only person willing to say anything!

Good seminars feel lively and engaging. Without interrupting one another, people are always wanting to say something. Time passes quickly; students really learn something and there’s even time to
develop a collective sense of humour. Part of achieving ‘seminar nirvana’ involves you DOING THE READING! If you do not then you will find that you cannot contribute effectively to the discussion. Remember that seminars are for exploring topics in depth, NOT for being taught what has already been covered in lectures! Be that as it may, if you have done the reading and are unsure on something, have a go! You are bound to feel a little awkward sometimes, especially in Stage 1 or in a new module with a new group, but the only silly question is the one that you don’t ask. Quite often you will be seen as a hero(ine) for asking the question that everyone needed answering!

Remember – when you aren’t speaking – LISTEN! The more you concentrate on listening to others, the more effective you will be in retaining information. A corollary of this is to avoid being ‘the student who talks ALL the time’ – saying something just to fill a void is not helpful, nor is preventing other people from contributing to the seminar. Try and endeavour to offer constructive, insightful comment that is based on the material that you have digested.

How to speak
This is not meant to sound patronising – there are certain techniques that can dramatically help to improve your delivery. Remember that part of being persuasive is not just about what you say; but also how you say it.

Firstly – Look up when you want to say anything, and do look around…one of the simplest things you can do to make sure you can be heard is simply to look up! If someone mumbles, or looks down, then what they say sometimes just fades away. To keep people’s interest, and to encourage them to listen to you, keep eye contact across the room.

Secondly – You must learn to be aware of three key elements of your speech: speed, volume and tone. Learn to monitor and control these. Most importantly, don’t rush in whenever you talk! Pause, briefly, before you start speaking and continue to use constructive pauses throughout.

After the seminar
When it comes to the end of the seminar, this does not mean that it is also the end of the learning process – the seminar material you collect will help you prepare for assignments and exams…but ONLY if you can make sense of your notes later on, and access your seminar material in an orderly way. Here are a few tips:

- Date and entitle all your seminar material/notes so that it’s clear what seminar they relate to.
- Spend a couple of minutes going over any notes you took during the seminar to make sure they are tidy and legible and make sense later on!
- Review your notes at the end of the day/week.
- Review your notes at the end of the module/term.
- As you head towards exams, and prepare revision material, you might like to think about combining resources to make revision subject packs; i.e. bringing together seminar notes, lecture notes, photocopies of journal articles, reading material, etc.

Summary
1. The best initial preparation for a seminar is good lecture attendance.
2. This means more than just sitting in the lecture theatre…it means active involvement in, and processing of, the lecture.
3. It’s a good idea to briefly but systematically review your lecture notes before the seminar.
4. You should deliberately think of issues you want to ‘take forward’ from the lecture for clarification during the seminar.