LECTURES, TUTORIALS, SEMINARS, LABS & STUDY GROUPS

During your career as a student, you will probably be required to attend and participate in lectures, tutorials, seminars, labs and study groups. This brochure will give you information on what the difference is between these learning environments, and what is expected of you.

AFTER THE LAB

- Go over your notes the same way as you do after lectures
- Integrate your tutorial notes, lecture notes and lab results
- Make summary notes for the section of work.

SEMINARS

Seminars are usually conducted to give students an opportunity to make a presentation on a researched topic to the rest of the class. For information on giving a presentation, consult the brochure: MAKING A PRESENTATION.

BEFORE THE SEMINAR

- Thoroughly research your topic
- Develop your presentation
- Create visual aids (eg PowerPoint presentations) to be used during your presentation
- Check that the seminar room has the technology to support your visual aids.

STUDY GROUPS

A study group is a number of people who study together and share resources, skills and knowledge to reach a common goal. The group should be limited to a maximum of 4/5 people.

WHY FORM A STUDY GROUP?

Members of a study group can support each other in a number of ways:

- Share resources, information and study notes
- Share and distribute the workload
- Discuss assignment and exam strategies
- Motivate each other
- Test and correct one another
- Peer support and encouragement.

STARTING A STUDY GROUP

- It is important to study with a group of friends you work well with and set regular times throughout the week when you can get together to study
- Make sure that the members of the group are committed to the study group - if they are not, find someone else
- Always set ground rules
- Set your goals for each session with a time limit in which to achieve them
- Everyone must be an active participant in the group
- Don't depend entirely on study groups - there is a time and purpose for them but much of your concentrated learning will take place during your own personal study times.

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Parts of this brochure have been taken from Paul Fenton’s brochure: MAKING THE MOST OF TUTORIALS AND LABS.
INTRODUCTION
When you first come to university, you get your timetable and find a bewildering variety of classes you are required to attend. Some are lectures, some are tutorials, some are seminars, some are labs and some are study groups.

What is the difference between these, and what is required from you?

LECTURES
Lectures are formal lessons, in which you usually sit and take notes while the lecturer talks. You are generally not required to actively participate, other than ask questions when invited to do so.

Lectures generally are directed at large numbers of students. Sometimes there are hundreds of students in a single lecture.

BEFORE LECTURES
Always try and do the recommended reading before a lecture, and make notes. This will enable you to contextualise the information given in the lecture. In other words, you will have some background information about the topic and will have a fairly good idea of what the lecturer is talking about.

Read through the notes you took in the last lecture. Most courses are incremental, with each lecture building on what has gone before.

AFTER LECTURES
- After the lecture you should consolidate your lecture notes with the notes you made in your pre-reading of the recommended texts
- Compile your SUMMARY NOTES. (See brochure “TAKING NOTES IN LECTURES”)
- Ensure that you make your Summary Notes as soon after the lecture as possible.

TUTORIALS
Tutorials (commonly called “tutes”) are less formal than lectures and provide an excellent opportunity for students and their tutors to discuss key topics, ideas and concepts.

The size of the tutorial group is usually much smaller than that of a lecture. This allows students to actively participate in the discussion. This is valuable to students who want clarification, extra help or to ask questions that are not addressed in lectures.

Tutorials are source of intellectual stimulation and a great learning tool through discussion with other students under the guidance of the tutor. Talking about topics is a very good way to clarify your own understanding of the topic. This makes learning easier because the more you understand the easier it is to remember the work.

While tutorials may be voluntary or compulsory, it is strongly advised that you attend.

BEFORE TUTORIALS
- Always make sure if there is any preparation to be done before a tutorial. There may be some pre-reading which is required. Do the reading or you will not be able to participate
- Go through your lecture notes and identify any questions you may have that need clarification so that you are prepared.

ADVANTAGES
Besides getting the opportunity to discuss course work, tutorials give you a great opportunity to meet other students, swap phone numbers, resources and talk about assignments, tests and exams.

TUTORS
Make sure you know who your tutor is, and what his/her office hours are. Tutors can help with assignments!

LABORATORIES
Laboratories (“labs”) are like tutorials except that there is usually a practical component or task that must be completed during the lab. Labs are run by either a lab supervisor or a tutor.

Because the main purpose of a lab is to complete a certain task, you will have the opportunity during the lab to discuss problems and ask questions.

You are usually required to complete a lab report, based on the lab attended

BEFORE LABORATORIES
- Pre-read about the question or activity you have been set
- Work through the questions of problems for the lab
- Note areas which require clarification or difficulties you have with the text
- Anticipate questions that may need to be answered in your lab report.

DURING LABS
- Work through the tasks which have been set, working with other students to discuss possible solutions or ideas
- Make sure any questions you bring with you to the lab are answered before you leave
- Make an oral presentation to the group and get feedback
- Get to know other students so that you can organise study groups - get phone numbers!