

# Participating in Tutorials

## Writing Centre Learning Guide

*Most courses have a combination of lectures and tutorials (sometimes called 'tutes'). Lectures are formal and have large numbers of students – usually everyone doing a particular course (often 100+ students). Tutorials divide the students into smaller groups (20-40 students) and have a much more interactive format.*

### Why have tutorials?

Tutorials are an opportunity for discussion and interaction with other students and with your tutor. Lectures are often formal presentations that are lecturer directed with very little discussion (although some lecturers do use techniques to make them more interactive). Lectures are used to present the central information for the week's study, outlining the main theories and principles of the topic under consideration.

Tutorials, on the other hand, allow students to discuss the central issues and ask questions for clarification. Often there will be an activity planned during the session. In many courses, students will also be responsible for presenting at one of the tutorial sessions as part of the assessment process.

It is important that you make the most of these more interactive sessions and participate fully in order to broaden your knowledge and experience with the course material.

### Preparing for the tutorial

The more prepared you are for the tutorial, the more you will be able to take part in and contribute to the learning experience.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Check your course information guide or course homepage to see what you are expected to read prior to each session. Preliminary reading is often the basis for the tutorial discussion or activity in the class.
- Complete any activities you have been asked to do in preparation for the session.
- Review your notes from the week's lecture. Write down any questions or comments you have on the material.

### Advice about participating in the tutorial

Tutorials are an important part of your learning for a course. Often the tutor will have a number of techniques to encourage students to become involved in the activities and discussion. To ensure you receive maximum benefit, you must be an active participant.

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Here are some helpful hints:

- Most tutorials are compulsory and in some courses a portion of the final assessment grade includes attendance and participation in the tutorials. Often this mark will be improved if you take an active part in the class.
- Ask any questions you have at the beginning of the tutorial in relation to this week's lecture or reading material. Chances are you will not be the only person who needs the answer to these questions.
- Ask any questions you have regarding the assessment process or tasks.
- Be actively involved in any of the activities in the tutorial. This may include written activities, responding verbally to a question, contributing to the discussion or working as part of a group on an activity or assessment task.
- Take an active part in the discussion. It is useful to have different opinions expressed on a particular topic and this adds to everybody's understanding of the issue under discussion. If you have done the reading before the tutorial, you will have some background knowledge and will more readily be able to add some constructive comments to the discussion. You will also find that talking about a topic increases your understanding of it.
- Aim to say at least one thing in every tutorial. You could begin by asking a question for clarification. The longer you sit and say nothing the harder it will be to contribute. It is a good strategy to come with some comments already prepared.
- Listen respectfully when the tutor or other students are speaking.
- Make sure that you do not dominate the tutorial. You must allow others to have a turn at giving their input. A dominator in the group can be just as problematic in a tutorial as someone who sits in silence every week and makes no contribution.
- Take notes during the tutorial. Comments and discussion could be useful for your next assignment or for the exam.

## Useful phrases for tutorial discussion

<p><b>Phrases to use when starting the tutorial discussion and for asking someone's opinion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Could I ask...?</li> <li>▪ Could you tell me...?</li> <li>▪ I am interested in...</li> <li>▪ I would like to know...</li> <li>▪ Perhaps you could tell...?</li> <li>▪ What do you think of...?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases to use for politely interrupting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can I add something?</li> <li>▪ Excuse me for interrupting, but...</li> <li>▪ I would like to say something, if I may...?</li> <li>▪ May I ask a question?</li> <li>▪ May I interrupt for a moment?</li> <li>▪ Sorry, but...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phrases to use when you are explaining your opinion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Another reason is...</li> <li>▪ Besides that...</li> <li>▪ First of all...</li> <li>▪ Secondly...</li> <li>▪ The main reason is...</li> <li>▪ The main thing is...</li> <li>▪ The most important thing is...</li> <li>▪ The other reason is...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases to use when you want to refer to a point in someone's argument:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't forget that...</li> <li>▪ The point is...</li> <li>▪ The problem is...</li> <li>▪ The problem with...</li> <li>▪ The trouble is...</li> <li>▪ The trouble with...</li> </ul>

<p><b>Phrases to use when you are certain of your opinion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am certain that...</li> <li>▪ I am convinced that...</li> <li>▪ I am positive...</li> <li>▪ I am sure that...</li> <li>▪ I honestly believe that...</li> <li>▪ I strongly believe that...</li> <li>▪ It is my opinion that...</li> <li>▪ Without a doubt...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases to use when you are conveying your own opinion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ From my point of view...</li> <li>▪ I personally believe...</li> <li>▪ I personally feel...</li> <li>▪ I personally think...</li> <li>▪ In my case...</li> <li>▪ In my opinion...</li> <li>▪ In my opinion...</li> <li>▪ Not everyone will agree with me, but...</li> <li>▪ Personally...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phrases to use when you want to say something you think is 'new' information:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you realise that...</li> <li>▪ It may sound strange, but...</li> <li>▪ Surprisingly...</li> <li>▪ The surprising thing is...</li> <li>▪ You may not believe it, but...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases to use when what you are going to say may surprise others:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actually...</li> <li>▪ Frankly...</li> <li>▪ The only thing is...</li> <li>▪ To be honest...</li> <li>▪ To tell you the truth...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phrases to use when you want to change the subject:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Before I forget...</li> <li>▪ By the way...</li> <li>▪ Talking of...</li> <li>▪ That reminds me...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases to use when giving your opinion, but you are not entirely certain:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am fairly certain that...</li> <li>▪ I am pretty sure that...</li> <li>▪ I suppose...</li> <li>▪ I suspect that...</li> <li>▪ I think...</li> <li>▪ I wonder if...</li> </ul>

Adapted from: [http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~peterr-s/zemi/kiso\\_seminar\\_phrases.html](http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~peterr-s/zemi/kiso_seminar_phrases.html) [Accessed: 18 November 2008]

## Other useful resources

### *Counselling Service*

If you are anxious about participating in tutorials or giving a presentation you can seek assistance. If stress becomes overwhelming there are a number of strategies you can explore. The University of Adelaide Counselling Service runs workshops on stress management and relaxation or you can make a personal consultation time with one of the counsellors by ringing 8313 5663.

### *Printable information on tutorials*

[http://www.acu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/51828/ptutorials2007.pdf](http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/51828/ptutorials2007.pdf)

[http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/20631/tutorials.pdf](http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/20631/tutorials.pdf)

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/disc.pdf>

### *Printable information on group work*

See the Writing Centre learning guide on [Group Work](#)

<http://www.eng.monash.edu.au/current-students/download/groupwork.pdf>

<http://www2.hull.ac.uk/student/PDF/Group%20Work2.pdf>

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/quickrefs/24-groupwork.pdf>

<http://www.virtualteacher.com.au/group.pdf>

*Online questionnaire*

[http://courseworks.unimelb.edu.au/scholarly\\_life/seminar\\_and\\_tutorial\\_participation](http://courseworks.unimelb.edu.au/scholarly_life/seminar_and_tutorial_participation)

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