

Understanding Lectures

Lectures

The teaching styles used at university contrast with those in secondary school where, generally, students are told precisely what they need to do to pass the subject and only that material is presented in class. At university, lectures are used to present new material, ideas and concepts and to give an overview of a particular topic area, which is chosen and organised by a lecturer. You're given a wider range of resources and technologies to explore your studies independently. Lectures may be delivered face-to-face in-person, via live online sessions, or as a pre-recorded material for you to engage with in your own time.

Face-to-Face

Face-to-face contact is valuable for building a shared understanding with staff and among your peers about core concepts, expectations, and approaches to learning. Attending lectures also helps create social connections and a sense of belonging within your course community.

While lecture material is often uploaded to Moodle—sometimes in a shortened form—lecturers may provide additional insights, examples, or tips in the live session. For this reason, attending lectures remains important. Moodle is designed to support, rather than replace, the lecture series. It includes unit materials, assessment dates, useful links, announcements, and contact details for teaching staff. You can also access Moodle remotely to view video clips, podcasts, and other digital resources. The platform's forums offer further opportunities to connect with your peers, tutors, and lecturers.

Not all lectures follow a traditional format. Some incorporate seminars, small-group activities, or other interactive approaches that encourage discussion and self-reflection. These strategies aim to enhance your learning experience and help you develop strong study skills by offering diverse learning options.

Online/E-Learning

Advances in technology have expanded the way students engage with learning. Tools such as video-conferencing platforms allow your lecture group to interact with experts who may be presenting from another city—or even another country. You might be handed a microphone to ask a question, see the guest speaker respond on-screen, or be shown documents and presentations shared in real time. These online interactions bring diverse perspectives directly into the classroom.

In a **'flipped classroom'** model, the usual order of teaching is reversed: content that would traditionally be delivered in a lecture is instead provided online for you to engage with before class. Class time is then focused on activities that deepen understanding—such as discussion, problem-solving, or collaborative tasks—rather than passive listening. This model encourages more active participation and allows you to apply concepts with the support of your peers and teaching staff.



Find this helpsheet online
studyskills.federation.edu.au

Beyond the lecture

Taking responsibility for your own learning

At university, you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning progress. You are expected to actively enrich your understanding using library and web research from academic sources relevant to your field of study. The material provided in lectures and tutorials should not be regarded as the only source of information necessary for understanding the topic. You are expected to supplement lecture material through active learning in your own time. The unit materials should provide clues to sourcing relevant material. Consider the following:

- What books and websites are recommended by your lecturers?
- Your lecturers are marking your work - what materials do they specify in the unit outline?
- What resources can you access using the Federation University library?

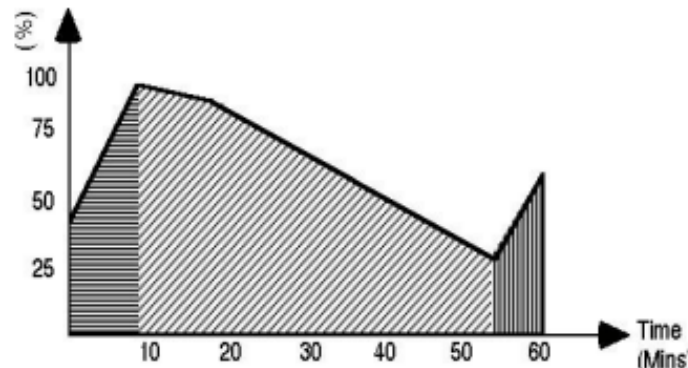
In lectures and tutorials

During a lecture, listen *actively*. It is also important to listen and take notes. Note-taking can:

- help you identify the main points of a presentation
- jog your memory when you revise and help you to recall the lecture content
- focus on examples the lecturer/tutor provides that help you to understand key concepts
- identify key words used by the lecturer, and use them to research the topic further

Fatigue

There is a definite relationship describing learner attentiveness (concentration) as a function of time during a lecture. The graph to the right illustrates the distribution of concentration in a one-hour lecture.



The three phases of concentration are



1. Orientation: Concentration gradually increases as the focus shifts from arriving and settling to the lecturer's voice and the content of the lecture.



2. Maintenance: Concentration is gradually eroded as mental fatigue sets in. Concentration may be lost at a faster rate if the student is unfamiliar with the material or if there are other sources of distraction (such as other students talking).



3. Termination: Concentration increases slightly as the lecturer summarises material and talks about readings, class assessments or upcoming topics. Organise your final notes while content is still in short-term memory.

Related Helpsheets

- Time Management
- Note-taking
- Reading and Writing Critically



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