Note Taking: Go Digital.

At university, note taking is an essential skill that is used in lectures, tutorials and to study. However, far too often students find themselves in a mess of handwritten, illegible notes or have their notes spread across various notebooks. To overcome this, try to:

- **Using a laptop or tablet device**: This will enhance the amount of notes you can take. In addition to that you have all your data saved at your computer and you do not have a jumble of notes spread around various sheets of paper. Additionally, take into consideration that there might be useful free apps such as Penultimate and Evernote available to you which can support your note taking.

- **Rewriting your notes digitally:** If you prefer taking notes on a sheet of paper, but you are unable to read your handwriting when revising for an exam, rewrite your notes in digital format. This allows you to revise the content of your class, helps you to memorise it and enables you to reprint notes in case they get lost or are needed throughout your studies again.

- **Starting a filing system**: Make a folder on your computer with the title of your module. Over the course of your study you can cluster these folders in accordance to your years of study (e.g., First Semester, Second Semester or First Year, Second Year). This helps you to keep track of your notes and allows you to go back to them. Moreover, you can include texts you have to read for your lecture and all the assignments/essays you have to write for a particular class in this folder.*

- **Labelling your notes**: In addition to a well thought-through filing system it is crucial to give your notes appropriate titles. Including for example the session number (1,2,3), module number, and date of the lecture taking place. Example: 1Session_POI7777_12.03.2015. By assigning each session a number it will allow to order your notes in accordance to their actual sequence. Include this information in a header or footnote of your document as well. If you print your notes they are then concise and easy to organise.

- **Using a Dictaphone**: Consider using your phone or invest money in a Dictaphone to audio-tape lectures. This can help you to revise your notes by listening to the content again and enables you to add information which you might not have picked up at the first place when taking notes in the course.**

Consider storing your data in clouds such as Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft SkyDrive, iCloud and your QDrive to access it from various places and save your data regularly and on multiple sources so it will not get lost.

**Due to data protection issues you are asked to inform your lecturer about your intention to use a Dictaphone. He/she has to give you permission to audio-tape the class. If your lecturer is uncomfortable with the idea to be audio-taped you have to accept his/her decision.*

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- **Include PowerPoint/Presentation slides (before lecture):** Most lecturers provide PowerPoint slides on Queen's Online. Download them before the class starts, and integrate them in your word document when writing your notes. This allows you to keep track of the lecture but at the same time enables you to focus on the relevant aspects of the lecture while extending the bullet points.

- **Include PowerPoint/Presentation slides (after lecture):** Not all lecturers upload their material before class starts. If this is the case, then take notes during class, but integrate the PowerPoint slides after the lecture has taken place. This enables you to merge all the material, focus on the core content and you can extend the bullet points with your own notes.

- **Include graphs and pictures:** Sometimes PowerPoint slides do not only contain text. If graphs or comprehensive tables are provided which you cannot copy appropriately use the screenshot-function (CTRL + Print). This will basically make a picture of your desktop. Copy the picture in your Word document and use the crop tool to adjust the size of it.
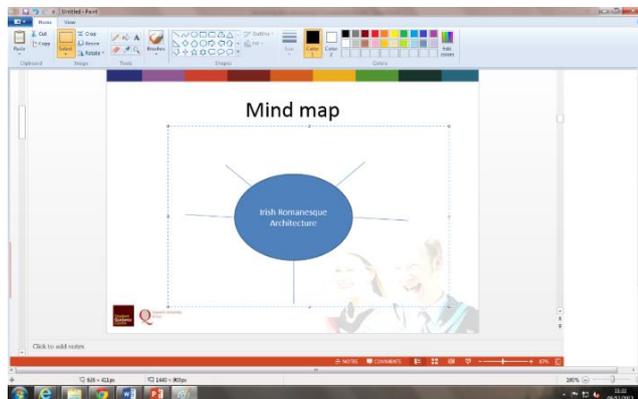
  Alternatively, include the screenshot into *Paint* or a similar software to cut out aspects of a picture. You can include the same procedure when your lecturer explains e.g., how to use a software. If you make screenshots of each step you have a record of how to do it step-by-step.

- **Using headings:** Follow the structure of the PowerPoint slides provided by your lecturer if possible. This already offers you with a good structure to make sense of your notes and will clarify the content and highlight the most important aspects of your class.

- **Use bullet points:** This makes your document more structured and clear and allows you to skim it easy and quickly.

- **Use arrows and other signs:** Sometimes it is not necessary to fully write a sentence. Make concepts clearer by using arrows → or symbols such as ⅓, 🗎 etc.

- **Use different sizes:** Even if you only have a black-and-white printer, use different size, fonts and shades of grey to highlight various aspects of your document and put an emphasis on certain sections.

In summary: Use the tools available to you to make your notes clear and studying easier!

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