Module 1: Academic Reading Strategies

Aims of this module:
- To introduce three reading strategies: skimming, scanning and detailed reading
- To identify critical questions you should ask while reading
- To apply a step-by-step procedure for efficient academic reading

Many students struggle with the demands of academic reading for their courses. Here are a few practical and useful ideas to help you learn how to read with purpose and efficiency.

Reading strategies

Firstly, you should ask yourself a question:

**What is my purpose for reading this text?**

You may be reading for any or all of the following reasons:
- as input for a particular assessment task
- to give you more background or more detail for material covered in lectures and tutorials
- to prepare for examinations

Your answer will determine how you should read and what to focus on while you are reading.

There are three types of reading strategies you can use:

Skimming – running your eyes over the entire text quickly without reading in detail

Scanning – reading the text and looking for particular information such as key words

Detailed reading – reading each word in a section of the text for understanding and then making notes.

Four steps to efficient reading

To be an efficient reader, follow these four steps:

1. **Skim the entire text.**

Move your eyes over the entire text but do not read anything in detail. Ask yourself these questions as you read:
- How many pages are in this text / section / chapter?
- What is the layout like? Are there diagrams, pictures, text boxes?
- Are there headings or other ways of organising this text?
• Is there an abstract or conclusion which will tell me the main point?

2. **Scan headings and subheadings**

Locate, read then write down the headings and subheadings. These show the structure of the text.

3. **Scan important paragraphs and sentences**

Look for key words related to your topic or an important author. Highlight them.

Then ask yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Is it worth reading in detail some / all of the text?</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which parts are most relevant to my purpose?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will reading that part get me more marks?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I have enough time, taking into account my other priorities (assignments, exams)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes the answer is no. It may not be worthwhile reading any of this in more detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often the answer is yes. It is worth reading some of the text in detail (e.g. introduction, conclusion, methodology or discussion). Sometimes, the whole chapter or article is worth reading in detail</td>
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4. **Read in detail important paragraphs and sentences.**

The most important paragraphs may include the introduction, conclusion and abstract, or any paragraph closely related to your assignment or key words. Highlight and make notes on the text. Then make notes in your workbook to summarise the most important ideas and any quotes.