



LSE Study Toolkit

Setting up and making the most of study groups

LSE Teaching and Learning Centre

with thanks to students in the
Department of Social Psychology

Everybody knows that studying at LSE can be challenging as well as rewarding. You may be coping with a foreign language and a different culture at the same time as trying to keep to deadlines and prepare for classes or exams. Or you may be returning to education after some years in the workplace and having to refamiliarise yourself with self directed study routines.

Tackling some of your work in the company of fellow students alleviates a lot of the pressure and increases motivation. This is why it is a good idea to get some classmates together (4 or 5 is a good number) and form a study group! Study groups not only work together towards the same target but they can also relieve stress and pressure.

There are many different ways of going about setting up and making the most of study groups. Here are some tips from students in the Department of Social Psychology:

- **Develop a routine:** It is useful for the group to meet every week, for around two hours. Also important is to find a quiet place where discussion and concentration is possible. A good idea may be to reserve one of the library spaces designed for group work.
- **Discuss your ideas:** In the study group you can discuss your ideas about the many new things you will be learning in classes. The group should provide a friendly space for raising the questions you do not feel like asking in the classroom! Additionally, the group can be used for dividing up readings and summaries. If all of the members agree to share out summaries of the main readings and present them, at the end you will realise that you may well have covered the entire syllabus! For this, organise the group as soon as possible, prepare every topic and, most importantly, leave time in the study group for deep discussion.
- **Have a support group for the peak production moments:** Study groups can be of great help in terms of understanding the questions or having second opinions for the way you are structuring your essays. A study group can also help for designing and conducting your dissertation. Even more, they can be of great help in coping with the stress you may experience! For that, think about special sessions during these peak moments.
- **Use study groups for exam preparation:** In our group, everybody chose a past exam question and each of us then spent one hour trying to answer it. Formulating arguments while sitting in silence next to colleagues felt like a proper dress rehearsal! After we had finished, we would pass on the answers to another person who then read the essay, corrected it and - most importantly - added ideas of their own. Next, we spent about 20 minutes on each essay: summarizing the main argument, commenting on the writing style and the format of the essay and adding any relevant ideas to the topic at hand. This part of our meeting was actually the most beneficial as it often prompted insightful connections about the topic. As a matter of fact, it was quite fascinating how much we all learned about the other persons' topics - passively - without actually having been involved in the writing or correcting of that specific answer!
- **Change the format:** Sometimes, we were a little bit bored from writing practice exams and then we opted for a general – and many times heated – discussion about a topic that we were particularly interested in. Other times we would try to figure out how aspects of the course were connected by drawing mind maps on the blackboard together. Mostly though we shared ideas, encouragement, and (very important!) food.

- Last but not least, make the most of the diversity: You will meet in your studies people from different backgrounds in terms of nationalities, languages, previous studies or work experiences. This diversity can make others have ways of understanding the texts that differ radically from your own understanding, which may let you see things from a very different perspective.