



'Mapping the subject'

This activity will ...

- Encourage students to plan before writing
- Develop organisational skills
- Develop exam writing skills

Initially, it might be a good idea to model this note-taking/outlining practice but in subsequent supervisions the students can do it for themselves.

1. If you are going to discuss a particular text or topic, have a sample essay question in mind. This may or may not be the one that you intend the students to write for the next supervision.
2. Have a piece of paper in front of you as you discuss the text/topic. As points are raised in the discussion make a note of them in a very brief form. Ideally, stick to single words or short phrases and avoid long notes. Some people may feel comfortable writing a list, others may prefer to mind-map the ideas.
3. When you feel you have sufficiently covered the topic, draw the discussion to a close. You will need to leave at least ten to fifteen minutes at the end of the session for this activity.
4. Introduce students to the sample question that you have prepared on the topic and ask them to use your mind-map/list and any notes that they have made, to write an outline for the essay question. Students can do this individually or in small groups. This is intended to be a quick activity, not a long, drawn-out planning process, so encourage the students to move quickly to organise the materials into a logical order to answer the question.
5. Once they have finished, you might point out any logical errors or problems with the organisation of the outline, if they exist.
6. Students may go on to write this essay for the next supervision or use the technique for planning the next required essay.

This activity can be adapted to encourage students to note ideas raised in discussion of a topic they have just written on. Maps or notes can later be used as a revision tool for the topic as a whole in addition to their essay with its more specific focus.