Reading for academic purposes with students: questions and activities

1) What kinds of reading did you have to do prior to studying at university? How does this compare with the kinds of reading you are having to do now?

2) How much time would you say you were spending on reading for your degree? How does this compare with what you were expecting?

3) How do your approaches to reading change depending on your purposes for reading (e.g. for revision, coursework assignments, literature reviews, deepening knowledge and understanding)?

4) How do your approaches to reading change depending on the type of source it is (e.g. a textbook, a book chapter, a journal article)?

5) Let’s look at one of the journal articles/books/chapters you have been reading. Can you talk me through how you read this (and made notes from it)?

6) Can you show me an example of some notes you have made from your reading? What’s your approach to making notes? Is it one you used before coming to university or have you developed these approaches since coming to university?

Activity: Approaches to reading different texts for different purposes

Ask groups of students to discuss their approaches to reading and note-making based on different texts and different purposes, for example:

- A text book chapter to help revise for a forthcoming exam
- A chapter in a specialist academic book to help research a key concept for an assignment
- A journal article to develop and support a specific argument for an assignment

If possible, ask the students to share examples of their notes in relation to these different texts and purposes.

Close the exercise by asking groups to come up with short lists of tips on how to approach reading for different purposes.