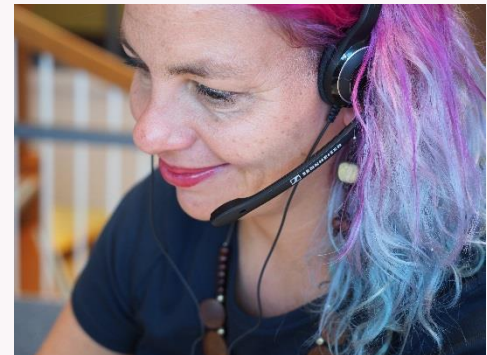
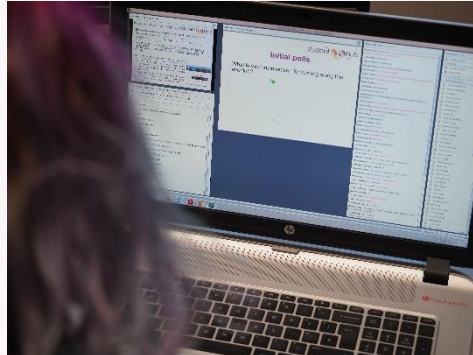
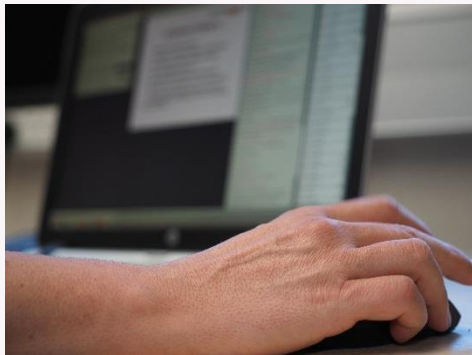


Essay planning: Advanced

What are student hub live online sessions?

- All student hub live sessions are non modular and focus on skills relevant to study at university level
- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments during the live session.
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website.
- Slides are available to download during the session (*not accessible on mobile devices*) and from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>.



student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community



Karen is the academic lead of student hub live and chairs of Y032. She is also an AL.



Lucy is an AL and is moderating the chat



Zoe works in learning systems at the OU and is a technical genius!

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you get thinking
- We'll look at what is meant by essay planning, including some different styles and methods, as well as key points for what needs to be included
- Then we'll give some tutor advice
- You'll also get the chance to discuss things with others in a small group

Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Covering essay planning for people who have planned before
- Give some guidance about ways to plan effectively
- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Telling you what you HAVE to do
- Providing any module specific advice

Please be aware

- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon



This was our advert...

This essay planning workshop focuses on formulating the best argument to address a set question. Aimed at students on Level 2 or 3 modules, it will focus on how to structure your argument and set out your points coherently. We will discuss the elevation of introductions, framing arguments and exploring effective conclusions that reveal how all the points you have made address the question. The workshop will also look at how to tackle more complex essays, such as comparisons and critical evaluations.

First thoughts

What part of the planning process do you most want to improve?

- Please use the short answer poll provided to say your ideas

Possible themes

- Planning the introduction and conclusion as well as the main body
- Structuring the paragraphs effectively
- Establishing a clear focus for each paragraph
- Understanding weight and that all weights are not equal
- Actually planning (not just pretending)!

Planning introductions

- Not just restating the question and instructions
- Start with a brief account of the main issue
- Make it clear HOW you plan to answer the question
- Be clear about what is in (and perhaps out of) scope – give some details about what's included
- Consider if there are any key terms/definitions that will be required
- Don't be afraid to give away key clues, you want your reader to have a clear idea about what is coming. This is not the same as repeating details

Planning conclusions

- Not just restating content but summing it up and relating back to the topic
- Making it clear **how** the content you have covered has been relevant in answering the question and the contribution that each paragraph has added
- Not covering new information or suggesting future ideas (*unless specifically asked to*)
- This is not an opportunity to be profound or overly dismissive as you launch into another tangent

Length

- This may come within the plan itself but it is important to think carefully about how you will allocate words within the essay
- The word count you have will affect how much you can include, and this will shape the breadth vs depth you can consider
- Broadly speaking the allocation is as follows:
 - Introduction is ~10-15% of words
 - Content (body) is ~75-80%
 - Conclusion is ~10-15%

Paragraph structure ideas

- PEE
 - Point – make it
 - Evidence – support it with facts
 - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant

Or

- PESELS
 - Point - make the point for this paragraph
 - Explain - what do you mean by this point
 - Support - provide evidence from studies and research
 - Evaluate - what is there about this point that is for/against
 - Link - to the essay task
 - Signpost - to the next paragraph

Weighting

- Not all paragraphs are of equal importance
- Not all sources of evidence are of equal proportion
- For your reader to interact with these things you can prepare them for the lift!



Focus for each paragraph

- Each paragraph should have a clear focus and include one key topic
- There could be a variety of sources of evidence but the theme should be singular
- The beginning line of each paragraph, if read alone, should be the spine of the essay. The beginning sentence should be a point which is about what will be covered and why that is important in answering the question
- Paragraphs need to contain different voices: the theorist/evidence source, perhaps the author of the text and your own objective interpretation of the value of that evidence in answering the question

Remember

- Essay writing is objective and not personalized so the plan may be ‘your’ plan but needs to make it clear how the essay will be objectively written with the required evidence
- This is why referencing is important and it is good to be clear about who owns which opinion – but do not write in the first person (unless explicitly asked to)

Another way to look at planning

- A plan is like a map of what you intend to do
- If you are taking someone on a journey with you (your reader) they may benefit from knowing your plan
- They can then prepare well and allocate their attention for the best bits forthcoming journey including where you are going, what you may meet along the way, the highlights, the "do not miss" bits, and some parts may require a little additional context
- You can also think of it as a recipe which makes it clear what is going to go into the essay and the order

A journey



- A river starts somewhere
- It goes somewhere
- It has a journey which may be different along the way

Poll time

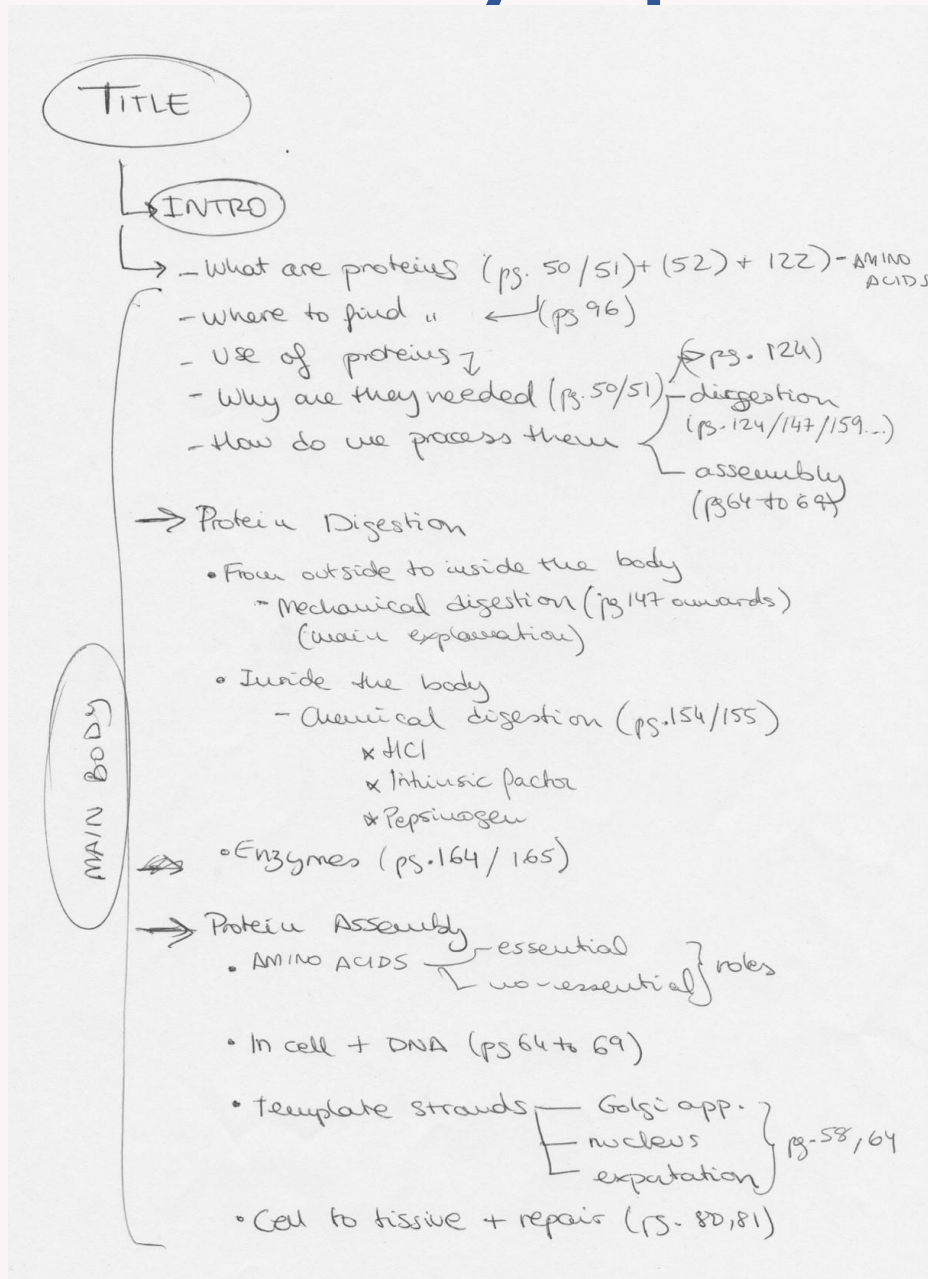
- Please suggest in the short answer poll pod available what type of plans you can think of. (here think about the style of plans you might be aware of – don't worry if you don't know but do look at other suggestions)

Types of plan

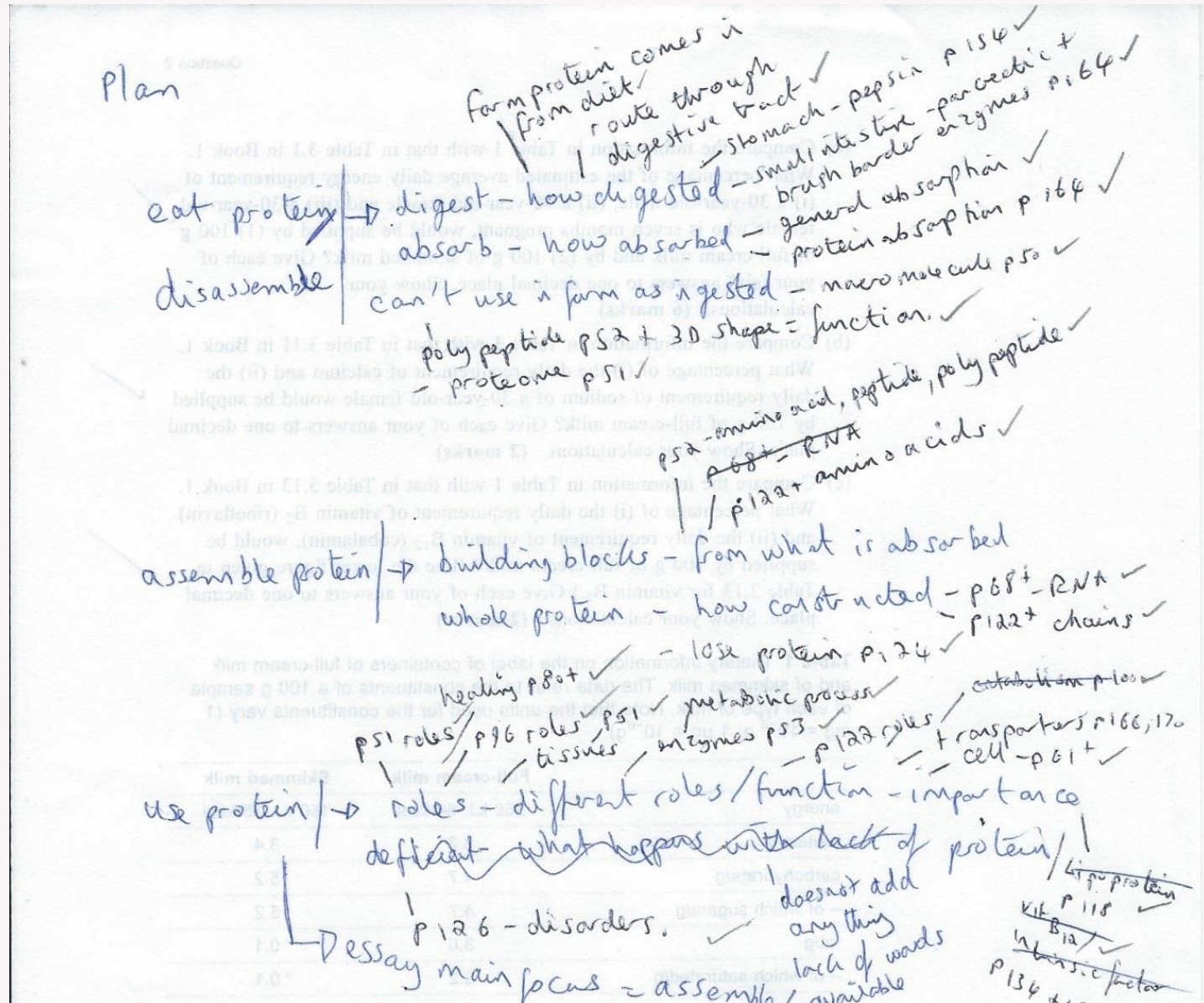
- Simple list
- Series of relevant page numbers / topics
- Mind map
- Spider diagram
- Post it on a whiteboard

(selected examples to follow)

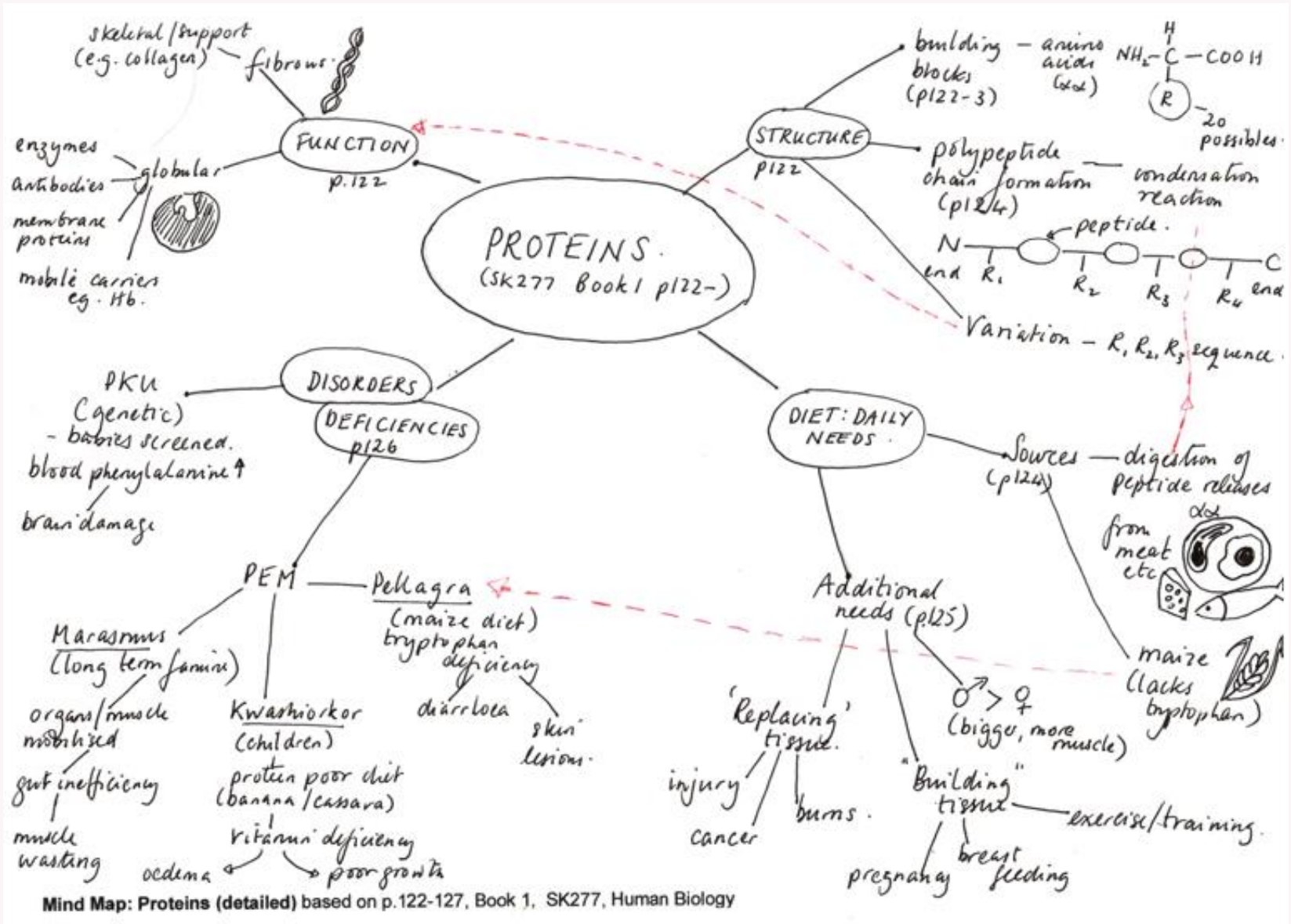
List style plan



List style plan

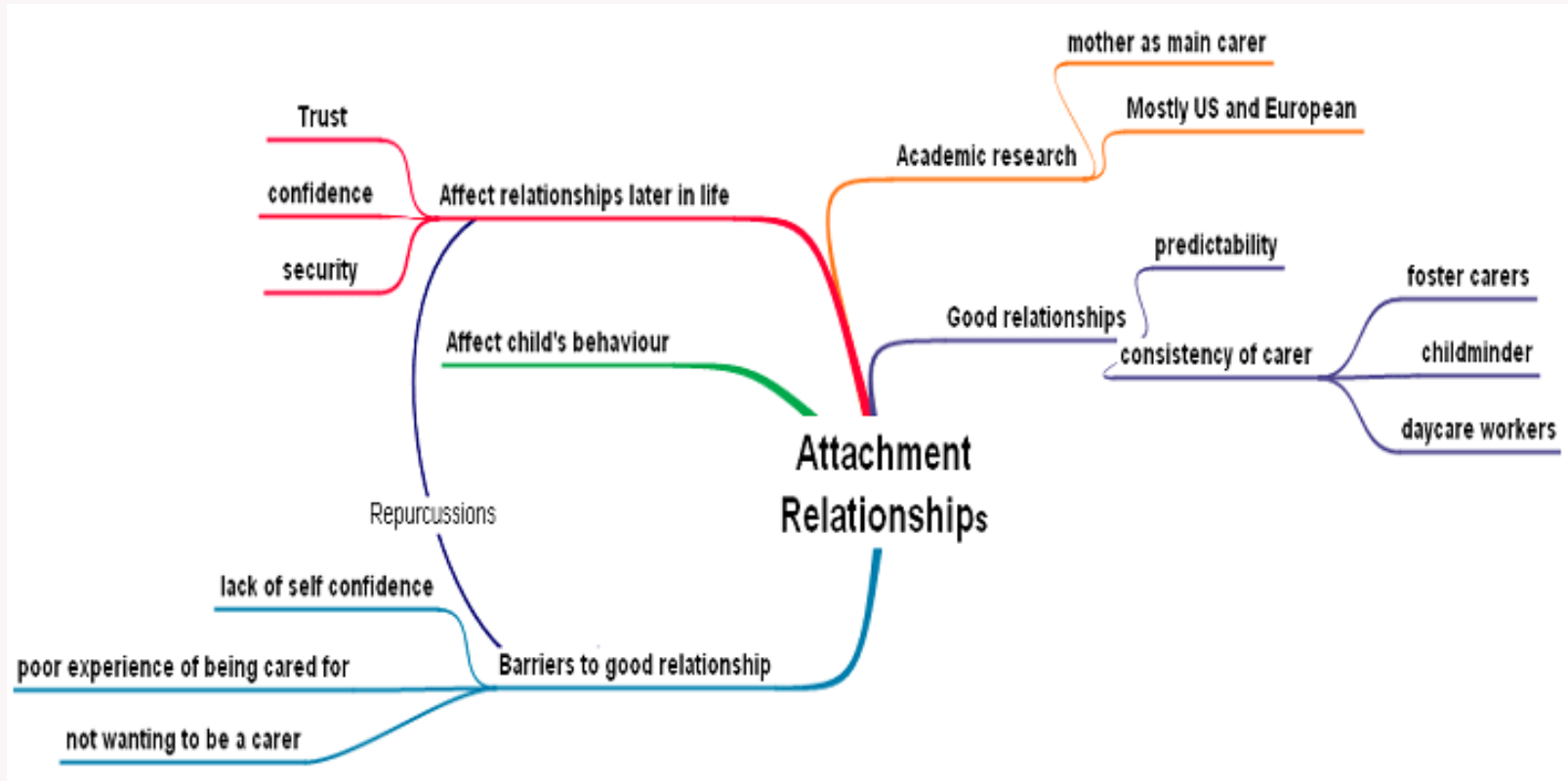


Hand drawn mind map



Mind Map: Proteins (detailed) based on p.122-127, Book 1, SK277, Human Biology

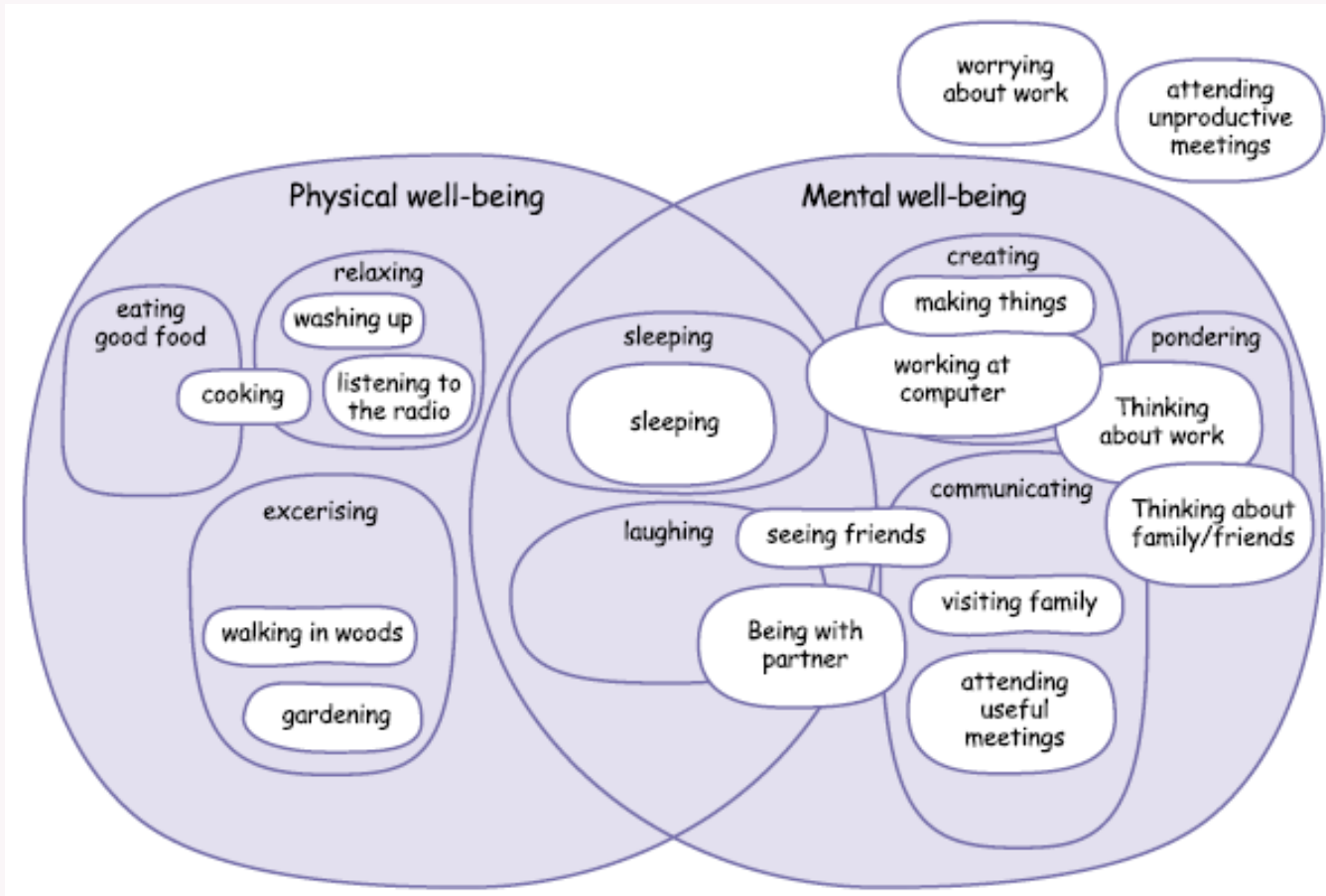
Computer generated mind map



Using structures to help plan

- Visual and structural things like grids and diagrams can help you think about the information in a different way. Identifying the bits that are missing, the things that may not neatly fit offers the potential for a more critical approach
- Tables are very good for comparisons, separating out specific parts of a theory for example
- Flow chart can show how things may impact on other things
- Concentric circles and venn diagrams can show connections and overlaps
- Grouping concepts can identify relationships between things

Grouping concepts together



More help

- <https://help.open.ac.uk/planning-and-writing-your-answers>
- The studenthome help centre has lots of great ideas

Get active!

Planning involves 'movement' e.g. action & a plan has to be active:

- HOW will you answer the question?
- What is the AIM of your essay?
- How does the information you are including relate to the topic – not just because a word search or the suggested areas to look has revealed it as relevant – WHY is it relevant?

Discussion activity

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.
- *The best thing I do when planning an essay is...*
- *To improve my essay planning I am going to...*
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them.
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

Take home message

- Effective essays are planned so that you have a clear idea of what you are going to do and can then know how to achieve that
- Any plan needs to have enough information for you or someone else with a reasonable grasp of the content to pick up and be clear on what is intended

Final poll

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this session?



Details and booking
information from
<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions [here](#)

Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/> and subscribe for events as they are announced. Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk

