

Group Project Guide

Building Our Course Study Notes (“Sebenta”)

*Microbial Communities and Interactions — MSc in Applied Microbiology,
FCUL*

1. What This Project Is About

Each group will be responsible for producing a written summary of one lecture from this course. All five summaries will then be compiled into a single set of course study notes (a “sebenta”) that the whole class can use for revision. Each group will also present its summary briefly in the final presentation session, held at the end of the full semester (14 December).

This is not just a writing exercise: summarising a lecture well requires you to genuinely understand it, identify what matters most, and explain it clearly to someone else. Treat this as an opportunity to consolidate your own learning, not only to produce a document for others.

Note on Groups: With approximately 20 students enrolled and groups of 4, this gives exactly 5 groups — one per lecture. Every lecture, including the final one, will be summarised by a student group.

2. Timeline

Stage	When
Lecture 1	Groups are formed and lectures are assigned
Draft	2 weeks after your group's own lecture
Class-wide peer review window	The week immediately after your draft is submitted (see Section 4)
Instructor (Teresa Dias) feedback	Within 1 week after the peer review window closes
Revision	Whenever your group needs, based on peer and instructor comments
Final version	A fixed number of weeks before the final presentation session, confirmed by the instructor
Final presentation session	End of the full semester (after the co-taught block), giving every group — including those with lectures late in the course — enough time to complete the process

Note on scheduling: This course is co-taught, and the second half of the semester is taught by another instructor (Prof Inês Bártolo) before this course's own final session — reserved for group presentations — takes place. Because each stage above is scheduled relative to your own group's lecture date rather than to a single fixed calendar date, every group gets the same amount of time to draft, receive peer feedback, and revise, regardless of whether their lecture happens early or late in the semester.

2.1 Concrete Dates for This Semester

Classes begin on Monday, 21 September 2026. Note that 5 October is a public holiday, so there is no class that week — the schedule simply resumes the following Monday. Applying the relative timeline above to this semester's actual dates gives the following schedule:

Lec.	Topic	Lecture Date	Draft Due	Peer Review Window	Instructor Feedback By
1	Key Concepts in Microbial Ecology	Mon 21 Sep 2026	Mon 5 Oct	6 – 12 Oct	20 Oct
2	Microbial Symbioses & Interaction Typologies	Mon 28 Sep 2026	Mon 12 Oct	13 – 19 Oct	26 Oct
3	Ecological and Evolutionary Impact of Interactions	Mon 12 Oct 2026	Mon 26 Oct	27 Oct – 2 Nov	9 Nov
4	Quorum Sensing, Biofilms & Adaptive Mechanisms	Mon 19 Oct 2026	Mon 2 Nov	3 – 9 Nov	16 Nov
5	Tools, Modelling & One Health: From Data to Critical Thinking	Mon 26 Oct 2026	Mon 9 Nov	10 – 16 Nov	23 Nov

During the co-taught block, it is easy to lose track of this project while focused on other content. Expect one or two short check-in reminders from the instructor during that period (e.g., confirming your draft has been submitted) — these do not require any extra work beyond what is already outlined above.

3. Required Structure of Your Summary

To keep the final sebenta consistent across all five lectures, every group must follow this same structure and section order:

3.1 Learning Objectives

3–5 bullet points stating what a student should know or be able to do after this lecture. Base these directly on the lecture's stated objective — do not invent new ones.

3.2 Concept Summary (main body)

The core of the document, written in your own words and in continuous text (not just bullet points). This should cover the key content of the lecture in a logical order, roughly mirroring how it was taught. Aim for clarity over exhaustiveness — a good summary helps a student who missed the lecture understand the essentials, not replace the need to study the original sources.

3.3 Key Terms Glossary

A short list of key terms introduced in the lecture, each with a one- to two-sentence definition. This is one of the most useful parts of the sebenta for exam revision, so take care to make definitions precise and not just copied from a textbook.

3.4 Reference Figures

Include 2–3 figures or graphs that were used (or could have been used) in the in-class graph/figure exercise for your lecture. For each figure:

- Write your own explanatory caption — do not copy the original caption from the source
- Briefly state what the figure shows and why it matters for the concept being discussed
- See Section 5 below for important rules on how to include figures

3.5 Links to Other Lectures

A short paragraph (3–5 sentences) explaining how this lecture connects to at least one other lecture in the course, or another Curricular Unit. This helps keep the sebenta feeling like one coherent course rather than five disconnected documents.

3.6 What Surprised Us (Personal Reflection)

A short, informal paragraph (3–5 sentences, written in the first person) from your group about what stood out to you personally while working on this lecture — not a summary of content, but a moment of genuine reflection. For example: something you found surprising or counter-intuitive, an idea you had never connected before, a concept that changed how you think about something in daily life, or a question it left you with.

This section doesn't need to be polished or profound, and it isn't graded on scientific rigor the way Section 3.2 is — its purpose is to make the sebenta feel like it was written by students, for students. Future classmates reading it should get a sense of your group's actual experience learning the material, not just the facts.

This section is excluded from the 1,500–2,000 word count, along with references and figure captions.

3.7 References

A full reference list in a single consistent citation style (APA is suggested; Vancouver is also acceptable — confirm with the instructor which one applies to the whole sebenta). Every source cited or used for a figure must appear here.

4. Class-Wide Peer Review

Although each group is responsible for one lecture, the sebenta belongs to the whole class. Before the instructor (Teresa Dias) reviews your draft, every group's draft goes through a class-wide review window (about one week), where classmates read and comment on it. This step matters for two reasons: it gives you feedback from a genuine “student audience” before the instructor's review, and it means everyone engages with the content of all five lectures, not only their own.

4.1 Who reviews what

Each group reviews the drafts of two other lectures, following a fixed rule so every lecture ends up with exactly two groups of reviewers: the group responsible for Lecture N reviews Lectures $N+1$ and $N+2$ (wrapping around after Lecture 5). You're also welcome to comment on any other draft if you have time.

Your Lecture You Review

1	2 and 3
2	3 and 4
3	4 and 5
4	5 and 1
5	1 and 2

This guarantees every draft gets read carefully by two groups outside the group that wrote it.

4.2 What a good review looks like

Please avoid leaving only general comments such as “looks good.” For each draft you are assigned, answer these three questions directly in the shared document (as comments):

- Is there anything that was unclear or hard to follow?
- Is theres anything missing?
- Is there anything that seems scientifically inaccurate or imprecise?
- Do you notice a connection to another lecture that the group did not mention?

4.3 How this is factored into your grade

The quality of your group's own summary is graded on the criteria in Section 8. Separately, a small part of your individual grade (10%) reflects the usefulness of the comments you give as a reviewer of other groups' drafts — not whether you agreed or disagreed, but whether your feedback was specific and constructive.

Note: The goal of this stage is constructive improvement, not grading each other. Keep comments respectful and specific, and remember that the group receiving feedback still has the final say on how to revise their own summary before the instructor's review.

5. Using Figures — Important Rules

Since the sebenta will be a document used and stored beyond the classroom, please follow these rules when including any figure from an external source:

- Preferred option: redraw the figure yourself in simplified form (even a basic diagram made in PowerPoint, Word, or by hand and scanned/photographed is fine). This also tends to deepen your understanding of what the figure is actually showing.
- If you do reproduce a figure directly from a paper, always include a full citation immediately below it (authors, year, journal, and DOI if available)
- Do not copy figures from sources without any citation, and do not present a redrawn figure as if it were your own original data or model

6. Formatting Guidelines

Item	Guideline
Length	1,500–2,000 words (excluding references and figure captions)
File format	Shared Google Doc during drafting; final version submitted as Word (.docx)
Headings	Use the exact section names and order from Section 3 above
Citation style	Consistent within your document and matching the style agreed for the whole sebenta
Language	English
File naming	Lecture[number]_GroupProject.docx

7. Collaboration Platform

Use a shared platform agreed by the whole class for drafting, so both classmates (during peer review) and the instructor can leave comments directly, and all groups end up in a consistent format before final compilation. A shared Google Docs folder is the simplest option, since its native commenting feature works well for the peer review stage in Section 4.

8. How This Will Be Assessed

Assessment will be based on two separate dimensions (see also Section 4.3 for the small additional component tied to the quality of your peer review comments):

8.1 Scientific Accuracy and Clarity (main weight)

- Is the content correct?
- Are concepts explained clearly and in your own words?
- Is the level of detail appropriate — enough to be useful, not so much that it becomes unreadable?

8.2 Usefulness as a Study Tool

- Could a student who missed the lecture understand the essential content from your summary alone?
- Are the glossary and figures genuinely helpful for revision?
- Is the document well organised and consistent with the required structure?

Peer feedback from other groups may also be incorporated as part of this second dimension — you may be asked to read and briefly comment on another group's draft.

9. Final Presentation (End-of-Semester Session)

Each group presents their summary in approximately 8–10 minutes, followed by 3 minutes of questions. Focus your presentation on:

- The 2–3 most important concepts from your lecture
- One figure you found particularly useful for understanding the topic, and why
- Any point that was especially tricky to summarise clearly, and how your group approached it

This is not a repeat of the full lecture — assume your classmates already attended it. **The goal is to highlight what your group learned in the process of creating the summary.**

10. Quick Checklist Before Submitting

- All seven required sections are present, in the correct order
- Word count is within the 1,500–2,000 word range (excluding sections 3.6 and 3.7)
- Every figure has an original caption and a full citation
- Glossary terms are defined in your own words
- Reference list is complete and in the agreed citation style

- A group member has proofread the final version
- Your group has reviewed and left constructive comments on the draft(s) assigned to you in Section 4