Teaching, learning and assessment approaches

This handout will cover:

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Teaching and learning approaches

These are the different methods and activities you can use to ensure teaching and learning is effective. They will depend upon the *subject* you are teaching, the *context* and *environment* you are teaching in and the *length* of each session. They can be formal i.e. instruction, or informal i.e. a discussion. It's not about what *you* will teach, but how *your learners* will learn.

Try and use approaches which focus on the learner being *actively engaged* during the session and not just *passively listening* to you. Approaches should always be fit for purpose and not just used for the sake of it or because the teacher likes it that way.

Table: Strengths and limitations, meeting individual needs

Approach	Strengths	Limitations	Meeting individual needs
Demonstrations	Can be supported with handouts and activities to cover all learning preferences Can increase attention and confidence Can clearly show a skill	Equipment may not be available or in working order Larger groups may not be able to see the demonstration or have enough resources Individuals may not pay attention, get bored or miss something if it's demonstrated too quickly	Learners with a visual or hearing impairment can be nearer to the demonstration Can be paced to suit the learners Repetition and reinforcement can be carried out to emphasise key aspects Questioning can be used to check understanding

Group work	Allows interaction between learners Learners learn from each other's experiences and knowledge Encourages participation and variety Rotating group members enables all learners to work with each other	Careful management by the teacher is required regarding time limits, progress, and ensuring all group members are clear with the requirements Potential for personality clashes One person may dominate Learners might get left out or be too shy to contribute Ground rules might be needed to keep the group on track Time is needed for a thorough de-brief and feedback	Learners who are shy can help improve their confidence by getting involved and working with others Self-assessment can help individual learners see how they are progressing
Instruction	If one to one, a good method of pacing learning to suit the individual Learners can hear and/or see what they should do, and try this out immediately for themselves	If to a group, some learners may get left behind or forget what to do Needs supporting with a handout or further information/activities Appropriate positioning is required, e.g. for left handed learners of right handed teachers	Can be carried out at a pace which is appropriate, for example, if a learner needs more time to carry out a task

Facilitating learning

When commencing a session, if you are unsure what to say to gather your learners' attention, start with *'welcome to the session, today we will …'* in a louder than normal but assertive voice.

To settle your learners and focus their attention towards learning, you could use a *starter activity*. This could be a quiz to test knowledge gained so far, a discussion to open up thinking about the current topic, or an energiser activity focussing upon the session content.

You can then recap the previous session and state your aim and the objectives of the current session. Always check if your learners have any prior knowledge and/or experience by asking them, you can then draw upon this during the session. Never assume your learners know, or don't know something.

When planning break times, make sure you inform your learners when these will be and for how long, otherwise they may be thinking about when they can get refreshments, which will distract them from learning. If there is a break, when your learners return, ask if they have any questions. Sometimes they will have been thinking about what they learnt before the break, and would like an opportunity to clarify aspects or ask to questions.

If possible, walk around the room regularly to ensure your learners are not using electronic devices to communicate with their friends. If your learners are using ICT equipment as part of the session (or to make notes rather than using pen and paper), make sure you agree the boundaries of what sites can or cannot be accessed, and whether they can use social networking or e-mail. Always recap the ground rules, keeping them on display is a good reminder.

As your session progresses, allow time for questioning, repeating and summarising important points, if you can, give relevant anecdotes to bring the subject to life. Try not to use the word *obvious*, as things are only obvious to *you*.

Try and show interest, passion and enthusiasm for your subject and encourage your learners to take pride in their work. Use tone and inflection to emphasise key points and don't be afraid of silent pauses; they will give you time to refocus and your learners time to consider what you have said.

If you make a mistake, don't draw attention to it, but continue professionally, your learners probably won't know any different. If they do notice, make sure you accept your mistake, don't bluff your way through it or you may lose respect.

If you feel you are overrunning, don't be afraid to carry something over to the next session, or give it as homework.

While teaching, notice the reactions of your learners; you might need to change your pace of delivery or introduce something practical to energise them.

If you are demonstrating something in front of your learners, always check if they are left or right handed as this could change the way they see things. When they look at you, your right hand will be on their left. If you are demonstrating one-to-one, try and stand next to your learner rather than facing them. It's helpful to show a *completed item* if you are demonstrating how to make something, for example, a pipe weld or an iced cake.

If you are teaching a session with a colleague you will need to plan in advance which aspects will be covered by whom, and who will deal with any questions or behaviour issues. You will also need to plan who will introduce and close the session. Team teaching takes practice as personalities and teaching styles may differ. However, it is

useful where a complex subject is being taught as different techniques of delivery can be utilised, and the experience and knowledge of the teachers drawn upon.

If you finish earlier than planned, make sure you have some extra activities you could use, for example, worksheets or a quiz, or ask each person the 'one thing' that was most significant for them from this session. If particular learners finish earlier than others you could give them an extension activity to stretch and challenge their learning further.

When you end the session, summarise the content, relate it to your aim and the objectives and explain what will be covered in the next session (if applicable).

You should plan time at the end for learner questions and clearing up; you don't want to be rushed. If you are setting any homework, be clear about your requirements and hand in dates.

If you are unsure what to say to formally end your session, simply say *'thank you'*. If you are due to see your learners again for another session, you could say *'thank you, I look forward to seeing you all again on ....'*.

Assessment approaches

These are the different methods and activities you can use to check that learning has taken place. Assessment should not be in isolation from the teaching and learning process. You can assess that learning is taking place each time you are with your learners. This can be informally by watching what they are doing and/or asking questions. If your learners are working towards a qualification, there will be formal methods of assessment you will need to use such as an assignment.

Table: Strengths and limitations, meeting individual needs

Assessment method	Strengths	Limitations	Meeting individual needs
Assignments	Consolidates learning. Several aspects of a qualification can be assessed. Some assignments are set by the awarding organisation who will give clear marking criteria.	Everything must have been taught beforehand or be known by the learner. Questions can be misinterpreted. Can be time consuming for learners to complete. Must be individually assessed and written feedback given. Assessor might be biased when marking.	Ideal for learners who like to progress at their own pace. Learners might be able to add to their work if they don't meet all the requirements first time.

Case studies	Can make topics more realistic. Can be carried out individually or in a group situation.	If carried out as a group activity, roles should be defined and individual contributions assessed. Time should be allowed for a de-brief. Must have clear outcomes. Can be time consuming to prepare and assess.	They can enhance motivation and interest. Builds on the current knowledge and experience of individual learners.
Essays	Useful for academic subjects. Can check a learner's English skills at specific levels. Enhances a learner's knowledge by using research and reading.	Not suitable for lower level learners. Marking can be time consuming. Plagiarism can be an issue. Doesn't usually have a right or wrong answer therefore difficult to grade. Learners need good writing skills.	A learner with dyslexia could complete it using a word processor with a spell check facility.

Providing constructive feedback to learners

Feedback is information given to learners regarding progress and achievement. All learners need to know how they are progressing, and what they have achieved. Feedback regarding their progress and achievements will help encourage and motivate them. This can be given formally after an assessment, for example, in writing, or informally by talking to your learner. Constructive feedback is about being helpful and supportive, not demoralising a learner in any way.

The advantages of giving feedback are:

- it creates opportunities for clarification, discussion and progression
- it emphasises progress rather than failure
- it can boost your learner's confidence and motivation
- it identifies further learning opportunities or actions required
- your learner knows what they have achieved
- your learner knows what they need to improve or change.

Feedback should always be adapted to the level of learner i.e. don't use higher level words or jargon when their level of understanding is lower. Be aware of noisy environments and distractions when giving feedback.

Hints when giving constructive feedback:

- Be honest, unambiguous, factual, constructive and detailed

- Directly state what was good and/or what needs to be changed
- Identify strengths and limitations
- Be positive and developmental focussing on how your learner can improve
- Ask questions to check learners understand what you are saying
- Be clear and genuine
- Be helpful and supportive
- Don't base it on opinions
- Be specific towards the requirements
- Keep focussed on the activity not the person
- Document it – keep records

Resources

Resources are all the aids, books, handouts, items of equipment, objects and people that you can use to deliver and assess your subject. Depending upon your subject and what is available, you may need to create your own or adapt someone else's resources. This could be a handout of useful information, an exercise, activity or worksheet or it could be a complex working model used to demonstrate a topic. If you can search the internet, you might find resources for your subject area are freely available.

Putting posters on the wall of a room will help to reinforce points. Learners may not always look at them consciously, but subconsciously will glance at them, taking in the information. You need to consider the location, cost, challenges and benefits of using certain resources. If you are photocopying from a book you will need to check you are not in breach of any copyright restrictions.

You may have to deal with unexpected situations which relate to resources. It is useful to have a contingency plan just in case i.e. hard copies of an electronic presentation. You also need to make sure the resources are available and accessible, as they might need to be reserved in advance.

Table: Meeting individual needs

Resource	Meeting individual needs
Handout to summarise a topic; hard copy and/or electronic	In a font, colour and style to suit a learner who has dyslexia. Rather than single a particular learner out, the same could be given to all learners. Electronic versions can be adapted by individual learners to suit their needs.
Physical resource such as a working model	To arouse the interest of a learner with a kinaesthetic learning preference. To encourage those with other learning preferences to try something out of their comfort zone.

Visiting speaker	To impart relevant information regarding a particular topic, which is pertinent to individual learners.
	To answer specific questions from learners which relate to their interest in the topic and their career aspirations.

Reading list

Curzon LB & Tummons J (2013) *Teaching in Further Education: An Outline of Principles and Practice* London Bloomsbury

Faraday S Overton C and Cooper S (2011) *Effective teaching and learning in vocational education* London LSN

Fawbert F (2008) *Teaching in Post-Compulsory Education* London Continuum Publishing Ltd

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2014) *The Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Race P and Pickford R (2007) *Making Teaching Work* London SAGE Publishing Ltd

Wallace S (2011) *Teaching, Tutoring and Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (4th Edn) Exeter Learning Matters

Website list

Ann Gravells – videos to support teaching, learning and assessment - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEQQRbP7x4L7NAy4wsQi7jA

Learning theories – www.learning-theories.com

Motivation - http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/motivation.html