

Vocational Learning
Support Programme: 16–19



meeting individual learners' needs: improving engagement and attainment

Dr Cheryl A Jones,
Ian Duckett
and Dr Jill Hardman



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1. Introduction

Aim of the book

The importance of an education system that is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual learner is a common theme running through government policies and strategies for reform. A central question is how can the needs of individuals and those of an organisation, or society as a whole, be met effectively?

At an organisational level and to varying degrees, schools, colleges and other providers in the learning and skills sector are already developing and implementing procedures to identify and address individual learning needs within their overall provision. Established as core principles of good practice in the Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted/ALI 2005), teachers and trainers have also been working to develop appropriate skills and approaches in the design and delivery of learning programmes.

The aim of this book is to pull together aspects of those current developments that enable providers to meet individual learning needs most effectively.

Policy context and issues

‘Personalised’ learning and meeting individual needs

‘Greater personalisation and choice with the wishes and needs of children, parents and learners centre stage’ is the first of the five key principles of reform set out in the Department for Education and Skills’ (DfES’) *Five year strategy for children and learners* (DfES 2004a).

The government’s policies for educational reform are part of a wider agenda to organise public sector services so that they become more ‘user-centred’, by taking personal needs into account, and deliver better outcomes for the individuals who use them. The aim is to fit the system to the individual rather than the individual into the system.

Broadly speaking, three approaches to shaping public service delivery more closely to users’ needs have emerged:

- **Increasing flexibility and responsiveness on the supply/provider side** In education this is typified by new approaches to qualification routes, increasing local autonomy and a general move away from centrally determined teaching and learning methods.

- **Increasing the influence of market forces by increasing consumer choice and moving power and influence towards the demand side** For example, education vouchers could turn learners / parents into purchasers of education services which compete for their custom.
- **Increasing participation at all levels in the design and delivery of services through real engagement with customers, professionals and stakeholders** Implementing this policy in the context of education, as in other public service areas, requires clarification of what 'personalisation' means. The DfES identifies five components of personalised learning, which are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Personalised learning : the five components

Assessment for learning	<p>Evidence and dialogue to identify where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there</p> <hr/> <p>Clear evidence about how to drive up individual attainment; feedback for and from learners ; links between student learning and lesson planning</p>
Effective teaching and learning	<p>Teachers – focus on teaching skills, subject specialisms, management of the learning experience ; the range of the whole class, group and individual teaching, learning and information and communications technology (ICT) strategies</p> <hr/> <p>Development of learning skills and strategies – systematic and explicit across the curriculum</p> <hr/> <p>Learners – focus on learning skills and capability to progress own learning. Learners actively engaged and stretched</p>
Curriculum entitlement and choice	<p>To deliver breadth of study and personal relevance; flexible learning pathways for 14+ and a guaranteed core curriculum including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ enrichment and enquiry – high-quality opportunities to extend learning experiences, eg through sports and languages ■ a change in the balance between entitlement and choice over school career ■ support and information to make choices ■ flexibility leading to relevant qualifications for all, eg new vocational and other qualifications

Organising the school/college

A radical and creative approach to introducing and maintaining a positive culture and ethos with: **ICT; workforce** remodelling; **learner interviews** – all learners have regular, individual, data-informed interviews focusing on their achievement and often involving parents; **learning from students' views on teaching and learning**, eg surveys and conferences; full **learner involvement** and contribution to whole-school life and work of the school; **learner focused** – focused on inclusion and learners' needs; **positive school environment**, eg 'behaviour for learning' policy; **physical environment service standards** – guaranteed minimum standards for every learner

Beyond the classroom

Guidance and universal support; effective pastoral care; tackling additional needs with targeted or specialist support if necessary; **extended learning provision**, eg outside school hours; **home-school partnerships**, eg family literacy and numeracy programmes and opening up the school's facilities to the community; **community partnerships; multi-agency support** for the whole child

(DfES 2005a)

The 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper (DfES 2005b) emphasises the importance of a system that is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual learner. It is driven by concerns which also informed the Tomlinson report (Working Group on 14–19 Reform 2004): that too many pupils fail to continue in education post-16 and that young people are not being equipped with the core skills they need to function effectively at work and as part of their communities. In the White Paper, the focus for providers is on meeting the needs of business and tailoring courses to give all learners, regardless of their background, the best chance of achieving their full potential – with a better grounding in the basics and more choices at age 14 (DfES 2005b).

At an institutional level, developments in a number of the above areas have already taken, or are taking, shape. However, there remain to be tackled significant structural barriers such as qualification and funding systems, which limit progress towards more radical system change.

Excellence and equity

At the heart of this whole approach to public sector and educational provision is a concern to balance excellence and fairness in the system. David Miliband MP, when Minister of State for School Standards, expressed his belief that personalised learning that meets the needs of all learners can promote equality and social justice.

The present minister, R Kelly, has subsequently expressed her own concerns that:

...the most disadvantaged children in our schools are not benefiting as much from the improvements in attainment as the rest. I believe that the solution must include tailoring learning to meet the needs of every child ... I cannot legislate for this personalised learning. But I want to create the conditions and incentives to ensure that it is a reality for every pupil in every school.

(R Kelly 2005)

Policies which are informed by this approach and which aim to address the needs of disaffected, disabled and socially excluded people, by, for example, tackling drop-out and self-exclusion and building motivation to learn and develop self-esteem, should support providers at an organisational level who are already trying to find ways to widen access and participation in education and training and enable all learners to achieve.

However, as Charles Leadbeater has pointed out, one of the biggest challenges to the personalised learning agenda is its implications for inequality. Where personalised learning promotes the 'self-provisioning' of learning resources, requires more time and capacity to make choices about education and depends on users making an investment of time and effort, it will favour those who are already relatively well educated, less vulnerable and better served. 'Young people coming from backgrounds which make being well-educated, informed and ambitious more challenging will need additional help to exploit the opportunities personalisation makes available to them' (Leadbeater 2004).

This is also true for those who want to work in 'non-traditional' areas, for example with regard to their gender or culture. How far will simply offering **more** academic or vocational choices enable young people to make **different** choices? Research by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) suggests that teachers, parents and employers are not well equipped to give the kind of advice and support learners and trainees need. One result in this case is that too many girls are steered into low-paid work with poor prospects (EOC 2005).

The drive for a more inclusive education service, which ensures that all individuals of different abilities, genders and ethnic backgrounds receive an education that meets their individual learning needs, presents providers and policy-makers with tough challenges.

The e-learning strategy

Developing and extending the use of ICT is key to implementing the government's education policies across the whole of the sector. In *Harnessing technology: transforming learning and children's services* (DfES 2005c), six priorities form the centrepiece of the DfES' e-learning strategy. These are outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2. DfES' e-learning strategy, 2005

Priority	Development priorities
An integrated online information service for all citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrated online services, including information, advice and guidance, via Directgov. 'Our ambition is to reach everyone' (DfES 2005c, para 64).
Integrated online personal support for children and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A common approach to learner records of achievement ■ The unique learner identifier across all sectors
A collaborative approach to personalised learning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wider use of existing resources ■ Innovative e-learning approaches ■ Curriculum modernisation using e-technology
A good-quality ICT training and support package for practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and support front line staff
A leadership and development package for organisational capability in ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaders properly equipped with the skills and resources to lead change
A common digital infrastructure to support transformation and reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accessible, coherent broadband services for every institution ■ Best value approaches to ICT infrastructure and services ■ A common systems framework

(DfES 2005c)

In terms of widening participation and meeting individual learning needs, extending the use of ICT and e-learning clearly has much to contribute to the equality agenda. The strategy document notes it can be useful for: re-engaging the unmotivated learner, encouraging independent learning, supporting teachers, helping people to engage better with public services, providing more effective support mechanisms and making educational institutions more accessible.

On the other hand, the majority (77%) of those responding to the Social Exclusion Unit's assessment of how the use of ICT can promote equality of opportunity and improve service delivery for disadvantaged groups agreed that current trends in ICT are likely to widen the digital divide and increase levels of inequality faced by socially excluded groups.

The main reasons were :

- the costs of ICT equipment and internet connection
- lack of access to ICT
- lack of training in the use of technology and poor basic skills
- market issues, eg the tendency for ICT developers to focus more on the needs of more profitable mainstream markets than disadvantaged groups.

(SEU/ODPM 2005)

So, while enjoying the benefits arising from the government's e-learning strategy, education providers must continue to ask how they can ensure all individual learning needs are met effectively. For example, by developing and providing:

- support to remove financial and physical barriers to ICT access (and increasing access to technology at home)
- increased training and support in ICT, allied to basic skills development
- greater access to education and training through the internet, online learning and mobile phones, and by targeting provision to meet individual needs
- more effective electronic information-sharing and coordination between different agencies supporting individual learners
- support for staff to engage in training and to work to the (Lifelong Learning UK) e-learning standards
- dissemination of good practice in the use of ICT to address the needs of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups.

Learners shaping and managing their own learning

The government's agenda for public services could have some far-reaching implications for both users and service providers, requiring the latter to become more flexible and responsive and the former to play a more active and formative role in shaping the services themselves. Debates about implementing 'personalisation', therefore, centre on how far this might be desirable and can be achieved.

In education, student voice, a concept that goes beyond formal representation on student councils, is being increasingly offered as one approach to engaging learners in the design and delivery of their own learning experiences. What does this mean in practice, and how meaningful are the choices individual learners can make?

Running through the personalised learning approach there is an expectation that learners should be continually engaged in choosing their own pathways and ways to learn, setting their own goals and devising their own learning plans. Indeed, there are already numerous examples of negotiated learning to be found within adult provision. The challenge lies in how far such approaches can be extended to other and younger learners.

At a collective level, while providers have been steadily developing ways to gather learners' views about their learning experiences, there are still questions about how far the providers do (and can) respond. How far can individual learners shape their own learning provision? How far can they impact on the shape of the learning provision as a whole? What skills and what conditions are required to enable them to do so?

Skills for learning and independence

Personalised learning is not independent learning, but the means of achieving it.

Personalised learning does this in part through the systematic and explicit development of learning skills and strategies across the curriculum. It enables pupils to understand themselves better as learners and so take greater control of and responsibility for their learning, transferring and applying a widening repertoire of learning approaches in different subjects. Giving explicit attention to learning in this way equips pupils to transfer their learning to different contexts and helps to ensure that each pupil develops the self esteem and confidence for active participation in learning within and beyond the school.

(DfES 2005a)

In order to maximise the opportunities offered through new public sector policies for exercising some choice and direction over their experiences, individuals need the same skills and qualities such as self-management, self-awareness, self-confidence and communication skills as they need to be effective, self-organised learners in any context.

In much the same vein, employers have also been drawing attention to the significance of the so-called 'soft skills' for success at work. These include appropriate personal values, self-management and interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to solve problems, communicate and work well with others. Such skills and qualities are required to enable individuals to adapt flexibly to new technologies and working environments. They largely constitute the area known as 'personal effectiveness' and are seen as a central part of an individual's overall learning capability.

Helping individuals develop their overall learning capability and paying attention to their skills for learning is now firmly placed at the centre of the curriculum. It is also a main theme of this book. This is because, regardless of the topic or the subject matter, if any educational strategies and approaches are to meet individual learning needs effectively, they must recognise and address those skills and qualities that are core components of the 'learning individual'. What are these core components? A much simplified model is introduced in the next chapter and is used to inform what follows.

The focus on learners and learning

David Miliband was concerned that personalised learning should not be confused with individual learning which, when associated with individuals learning alone, can habitually serve to promote low aspirations and contribute to low self-esteem. Since individuals generally like and respond well to the collective experience of learning, he felt there is a need to guard against using the mantra of personalised learning to promote isolation and create isolated learners.

There are continuing debates about what 'personalisation' means, but not about the importance of maintaining the emphasis on learners and their learning in order to help them realise their full potential. This, rather than the concept of 'personalisation', is therefore the focus of this book.

2. A framework for meeting individual learning needs in the curriculum

There are two main questions that need to be tackled before the overall topic of meeting individual learning needs can be properly discussed:

- What **kinds** of learning needs have to be addressed?
- At what points in the provision – how, where and when – should we address them?

In this chapter we set out, first, a model which helps us identify the main skills learners require in order to learn anything effectively (see Figure 3 on page 10) and, next, a curriculum development framework with the individual learner placed at its centre (see Figure 4 on page 15). Using the framework from this perspective enables us to focus on those particular aspects that, at each 'stage' of the learning cycle, appear most relevant to the task of addressing the kinds of individual learning needs identified.

What kinds of learning needs have to be addressed?

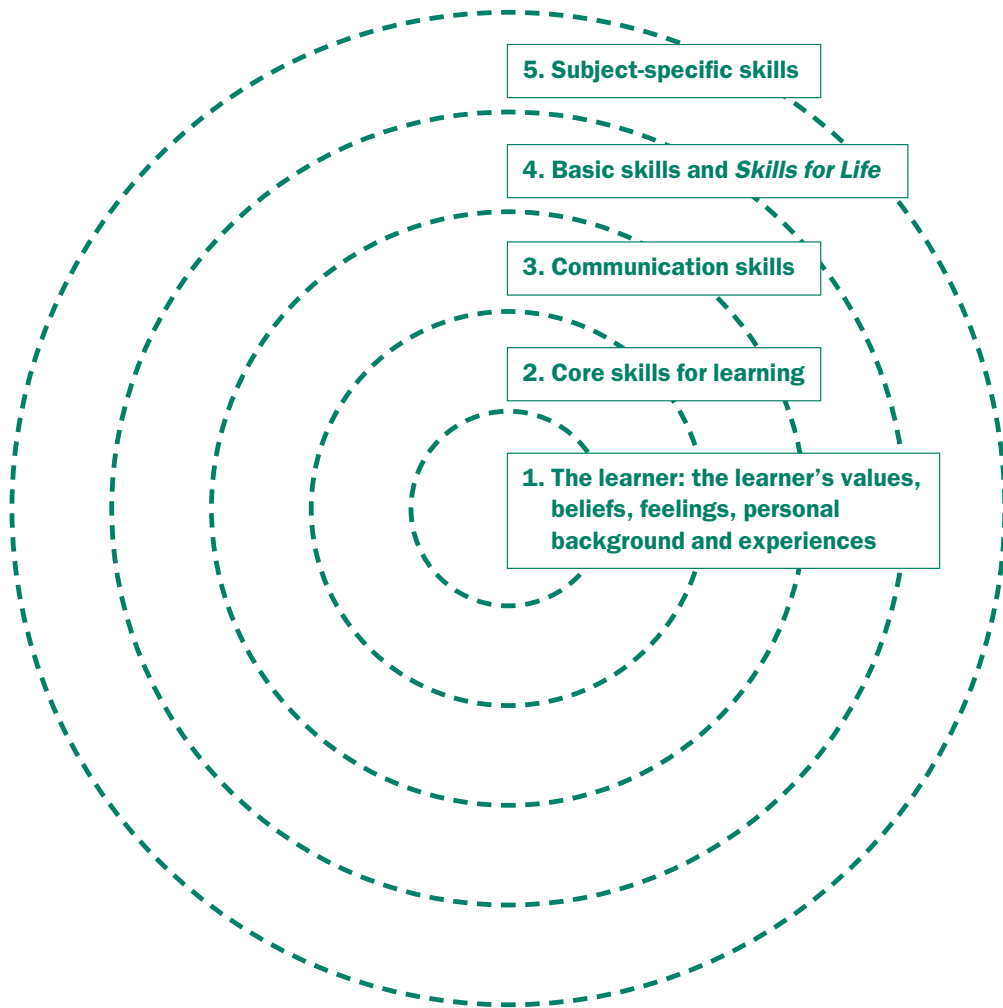
In 1999, the Opening Minds report by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts identified a mismatch between the aims of the national curriculum and the best form of education for the new century. They launched a pilot programme in six schools, testing a curriculum that was constructed around competency skills under the five headings of learning, managing information, relating to people, managing situations and citizenship. All the schools involved reported 'stunning' results both in terms of teacher and student motivation, and in actual results.

(Leadbeater 2004, p19)

The learning individual

Teachers and support staff need to be able to assess individual learners' strengths and learning needs effectively in order to design and implement appropriate development strategies.

At an individual level the range and variety of learners' strengths and learning needs seem almost infinite! To simplify matters and gain an overview it is useful to use a model to illustrate the main elements, which together make up a learner's overall learning capability (see Figure 3). This should enable teachers and learners to identify and also differentiate between some of the main skills which impact on overall learning effectiveness. Since some of these skills underpin the effective acquisition of others, they can be shown at different levels or layers, as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The learning individual : learning skills model

1. **The learner.** The learner's values, beliefs, feelings, personal background and experiences
2. **Core skills for learning include:**
 - the skills of reflection; cognitive skills such as analysing, evaluating and making links; the ability to re-evaluate, solve problems and handle contradiction and uncertainty
 - research skills such as questioning and finding information; personal effectiveness skills such as self-organisation and self-management, the ability to take the initiative, take risks and take on challenges; the skills of concentration and persistence, especially in the face of apparent set backs
3. **Communication skills.** The range of communication and personal effectiveness skills impacting on learning capability include, self-awareness and interpersonal skills, self-presentation skills and social and team working skills
4. **Basic skills and *Skills for Life*.** Literacy, numeracy, language and ICT skills underpin all areas of learning to a greater or lesser degree
5. **Subject-specific skills** include the ability to acquire and apply the clusters of knowledge, skills, qualities and aptitudes required in specific academic, vocational and social contexts. Effective learning in this area may well depend on the prior development and application of other underpinning skills and qualities.

The learning skills model (Figure 3) identifies five core elements of learning capability. Although it is a very simplified view, it serves to highlight major areas for assessment when identifying individual learners' strengths and learning needs.

Clearly, if those skills and attributes which lie in the inner rings are significant for the learner acquiring others, they should not be ignored by teachers designing and delivering learning programmes. So, effective teaching, even when focused on a particular subject, has to encompass the development of every aspect of the learner's capability.

The approach requires teachers and learners to develop an awareness of how, for example, their personal values and beliefs ('I'm no good at maths'), self-management and independence skills and their abilities to analyse and reflect, persist and communicate effectively impact on their overall learning capability.

As with any other skills, the 'core skills for learning' can be worked on, developed and strengthened once they have been identified and teachers and learners are given the 'tools' to do so.

A version of the learning skills model was used by staff at Solihull College when they were revising the approach used in teaching and tutorials in order to place greater emphasis on skills for self-organised learning (Harri-Augstein and Webb 1995). It was introduced at a time when many programmes were being modularised and unitised, to enable learners to develop the skills they needed to successfully pursue more individual pathways.

A breakdown of the learning skills model

The learning skills model (Figure 3) features five rings numbered from 1 to 5.

Subject-specific skills

In the outer ring (5) lie the particular clusters of knowledge, skills, qualities and aptitudes required in specific academic, vocational and social contexts. To a very large extent, these clusters also include the application of skills, knowledge and aptitudes depicted in the other rings.

In addition to this, the learner's ability to acquire the subject knowledge and skills in the first place may well depend on the prior development and application of other underpinning skills and qualities. In other words, the inner rings are the key to learning effectiveness and govern the learner's overall capability.

Basic skills and *Skills for Life*

The government and employers are concerned about the relatively under-qualified status of the workforce and the persistence of skills gaps in certain areas of the economy. The government's prioritisation of the *Skills for Life* agenda illustrates an increasing awareness of how basic skills proficiency essentially underpins success and progression in academic and vocational areas of learning.

Communication skills

All teaching and learning is essentially about communication in some form or another. Because we need to communicate to learn, proficiency across the very wide range of skills encompassed in this area has a significant impact on our learning effectiveness. For many subjects in the post-16 phase, the approach to teaching and learning is predominantly discussion based and teachers have found that they need, consciously, to help learners develop the skills to use group discussions effectively.

Since most learning takes place in some kind of social context, effective interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others is also core to productive learning.

Core skills for learning

Tutors at Solihull College identified four qualities that are fundamental to effective learning:

- the ability to make connections between areas of knowledge that already exist
- the ability to build this knowledge into a meaningful framework
- the ability to make sense of new information by incorporating it into this framework
- the willingness to be flexible, ie to be able to change the framework in order to integrate any new information that cannot otherwise be absorbed into the existing framework (Solihull College 2003).

The skills required here include :

- the skills of reflection
- cognitive skills such as analysing, evaluating and making links ; the ability to re-evaluate, solve problems and handle contradiction and uncertainty
- research skills such as questioning and finding information
- personal effectiveness skills such as self-organisation and self-management ; the ability to take the initiative, take risks and take on challenges ; the skills of concentration and persistence, especially in the face of apparent set backs.

The learner

Our values and beliefs about ourselves, our abilities and about learning itself lie at the centre of the model. These, along with our levels of confidence and self-esteem, feelings and emotional responses, either to learning in general or in particular areas, significantly impact on our learning effectiveness. Experienced teachers and learners recognise this, and also how individual past experiences can form such a helpful or unhelpful legacy when approaching new areas of learning.

Developing the skills for learning effectiveness involves continuously addressing the obstacles which may lie at the centre of the learning skills model and building on the strengths. Arguably, it is better to be a good learner than simply good at something but, very often, believing we are good at something certainly helps! The interplay between all of the 'layers' in the model is complex, not linear – although all need to be recognised, and those that may be key to others identified.

The learning skills model is useful for informing differentiation in every aspect of an organisation's provision. We therefore move on to look at a whole curriculum development framework for meeting individual needs, with the learner at the centre of each stage of the planning cycle (see Figure 4 on page 15).

How can individual learning needs be met ?

Developing the curriculum to meet individual learning needs

The curriculum development framework outlined in Figure 4 (page 15) puts the learner at the centre of the key stages of the planning cycle. In this book we pick up at each stage some of the main elements of education provision that are particularly significant in meeting individual learning needs. These are identified, examined in more detail and action points are outlined. The discussion and action points are mostly addressed to teachers and trainers, but not exclusively because the delivery of a curriculum designed or tailored to meet individual learning needs effectively requires a whole-organisation approach.

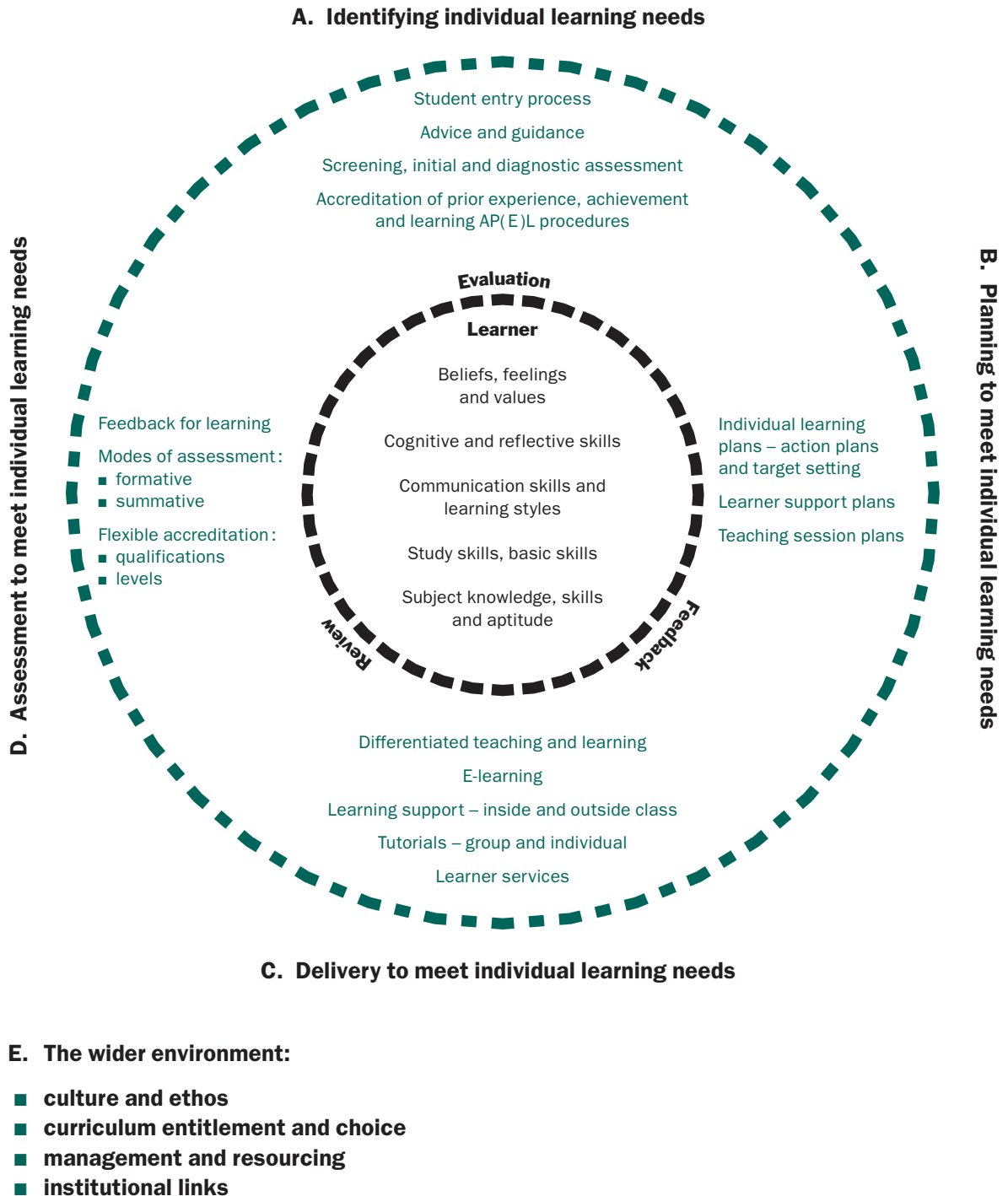
In this approach all the various elements involved in curriculum delivery have a common purpose, which is to help people become independent learners who are able to understand and manage their own learning. This is regardless of the different types of content and the wide range of procedures that may be entailed. As a result the curriculum becomes truly empowering, because each stage of curriculum delivery (outlined in Figure 4 on page 15) contributes towards the development of the skills and qualities that learners need to become independent and self-managing (those given in Figure 3 on page 10). These skills and qualities are vital to enabling people to realise their full potential, no matter what field they choose.

Learner-centred evaluation – how can our provision be improved ?

While most education and training providers may implement some, or perhaps all, of the aspects of good practice that are outlined below (labelled A–E) and further discussed in the chapters that follow, it is useful to evaluate such practices and procedures regularly and with the following questions in mind:

- To what extent do the practices and procedures enable learners to manage their own learning or to develop the skills to do so ?
- How coherent is the overall outcome from the learner's point of view ?
Are there effective links between the different stages and processes ?
- Do the practices and procedures enable staff to meet individual learning needs effectively ?
- How effectively are the practices and procedures evaluated and also shaped by learners ?

Figure 4. The curriculum development framework : putting the learner at the centre of the planning cycle



The curriculum development framework and an outline of the topics covered at each stage

Figure 4 (page 15) illustrates the curriculum development framework mentioned in previous paragraphs. Here is a summary of the topics covered at each stage.

A. Identifying individual learning needs

This curriculum stage is where starting points are established for the learner's next phases of learning. This does not necessarily entail learners moving between institutions, as the move might simply be in the form of a progression to another level or a change in the subject matter.

The discussion in chapter 3 is supported by a diagram of the student entry process, which is presented as an 'example framework' (Figure 5, page 20). Its purpose is to map the various entry phases and the kinds of activities that might be useful and appropriate within them.

It is helpful to look at the entry process as a whole because often responsibility for and management of each of the different phases is divided up within an organisation. For the organisation, this can result in the loss of an overall view of the process and its effectiveness; for the learner, it can result in a fragmented and incoherent experience – which is less than empowering.

Chapter 3 covers:

- learner transitions and the student entry process, including the pre-entry phase and the entry phase
- initial assessment and identification of need, including:
 - screening and diagnostic testing
 - learning support
 - learning styles
 - different ways of learning.

B. Planning to meet individual learning needs

This curriculum stage focuses on learners action planning to meet their own individual needs on the one hand and teachers planning to address their learners' needs on the other.

The planning task for the teacher is complex because the schemes of work and the session plans which are structured around the subject need to accommodate the development of skills and knowledge required by **all** of the students – who have different needs and starting points – together with a range of particular kinds of skills and knowledge required by some of them; and all the while ensuring that each of the learners is challenged at an appropriate level.

Crucial for learners to develop their 'learning to learn' skills is for them to plan to meet their own learning needs. This is exemplified in the 'self-organised learner' approach (Harri-Augstein and Webb 1995) where the learners frequently revisit a cycle of identifying their purposes, planning and then implementing their strategies to achieve them. Each occasion the process is revisited becomes a point of reflection, with a review of the actual outcomes against those that were expected.

The learner needs to develop skills to use this kind of process in the first place and then develops other skills, along with increasing autonomy, as a consequence of using them. Teachers also need to develop their skills to use the approach effectively with learners.

Chapter 4 covers:

- differentiation in teaching and learning
- learners action planning to meet their individual learning needs :
 - individual learning plans (ILPs) and target setting.

C. Delivery to meet individual learning needs

The themes of meeting individual learning needs and developing learner independence are continued in chapter 5 through a discussion that mainly focuses on two modes of delivery: e-learning and tutorials. Both of these offer opportunities outside traditional classroom or workshop delivery for customising teaching and learning to suit the individual.

The quality of both the design and the delivery of whole-class or workshop-based sessions does have a crucial impact on individuals' learning. A reason it is given less attention here is because it is very well covered elsewhere.

Good classroom practice in general **must** include teachers addressing individual learning needs effectively. Indeed, as the principles and criteria set out in the inspection handbook demonstrate, it is central to it (Ofsted 2005).

Chapter 5 covers:

- learning to learn
- group and individual tutorials
- engaging learners in classroom / workshop activities
- e-learning and the role of ICT in delivery to meet individual learning needs.

D. Assessment to meet individual learning needs

Assessment and the results of assessment are used for a multitude of purposes, all of which have an impact on individuals' learning experience in some way; for example, learners using league tables or subject area grades to inform their applications or setting their goals in order to reach the entry requirements needed for the next stage of their progression.

The aspects of assessment we focus on here are those that have a direct impact on :

- the process of learning itself
- the degree to which learners themselves can meet their own needs
- the extent to which organisations can accommodate individual learners' requirements.

Chapter 6 covers:

- formative assessment and Assessment for Learning
- feedback for learning
- helping learners use feedback effectively
- summative assessment:
 - flexible accreditation
 - support and guidance.

E. The wider learning environment

The whole economic, political and social context at national and local level within which the education and training providers work impacts on an organisation's ability to meet individual learning needs. And the nature of each organisational context – an organisation's culture and values, its mission and overriding goals, its leadership and management – impacts on the extent to which teachers, trainers and learners are able to meet individual learning needs.

These aspects enlarge the subject matter beyond the scope of this book. We therefore stay close to the more immediate needs of the learner and also address some of the issues arising from the qualifications structure.

Chapter 7 covers:

- curriculum entitlement and choice.

3. Identifying individual learning needs

Learner transitions and the student entry process

In the context of policies to widen participation, involve 'hard-to-reach' groups and re-engage reluctant learners in education and training, an effective and coherent student entry process is becoming increasingly important for education providers.

From the perspective of each individual institution, the stages of the student entry process can clearly be seen as 'pre-entry' through to 'entry'. The process is generally considered to end at enrolment, although induction can also be designed and incorporated into it, as illustrated in the example in Figure 5 on page 20.

From the point of view of the learner or potential learner, however, the whole process is essentially one of transition. The design of each institution's entry procedures, their working relationships with other agencies and with each other will impact on how effectively individuals are able to meet their own needs and manage what these transitions involve for themselves at a personal level.

An effective student entry process should:

- inform and inspire learners
- match learners to programmes appropriately
- prevent early drop-out and improve retention
- enable effective differentiation in planning and delivery
- increase learner satisfaction
- support successful completion and achievement.

To meet individual learning needs and achieve these outcomes, the student entry process needs to be well designed, especially as time on the programme itself tends to be so restricted. How can the increasing amount of information required at the start by staff and individual learners alike be gathered and shared effectively? What kinds of information do potential learners or those advising them need, and at what points in time?


Pre-entry			Entry		On-programme	
Enquiry	Application	Interview (group and individual)		Enrolment	Induction	
Pre-enquiry – marketing and publicity College and course information Self-assessment activities	College procedure Self-assessment activities School references	Face-to-face information given: ■ by the tutor about the course and ■ by the learner about themselves	Pre-enrolment activities Tasters (preview of content) Initial screening and Identification of need (ION)	Pre-induction activities: ■ tasters (preview of content) ■ initial screening and ION Accreditation of prior experience, learning and achievement	Tasters (preview of content) Initial assessment activities/ assignments: ■ skill scan ■ learning styles Diagnostic testing ION	Up and running!
Learner self-assessment + Tutor assessment + Individual learning plan						
						

Figure 5. An example framework for the student entry process

The pre-entry phase

In providing earlier access to programme information, assessment, advice and guidance – and with more information to be gathered and shared – school and college staff need to make better use of the transition or pre-entry stages. These can be designed to provide opportunities for imaginative initial screening and self-assessment activities for learners as well as information, advice and guidance.

Individual applicants need realistic assessments of their own strengths and learning needs in relation to both the subject area and themselves as learners **before** embarking on a learning programme, but too often work on these areas takes place afterwards, if at all. Teachers need this information as well, of course, and while some might be gathered through initial assessment procedures at induction, this might not include all learners or be as timely, well targeted or useful as it could be.

In addition to factual course and programme information and to enable them to make realistic choices, potential applicants need to see, hear and experience something of what the learning programme and assessments demand of learners. Talking to current students as well as staff at open days, tasters and exhibitions of students' work can help dispel misconceptions. Apprentices at a Midlands engineering firm organise presentations in local schools as part of their own key skills programme.

Is the brief and valuable time for one-to-one dialogue in interviews taken up giving course information or gleaning more from (frequently) uninformative references? Perhaps this information could be provided in other ways, creating more opportunity for staff to explore with individual learners their personal dreams, enthusiasms and learning skills as well as their aptitudes for a particular subject. Staff may need to develop appropriate strategies and skills to do this effectively, especially with younger learners. However, learners also need the opportunity to articulate their ideas, views and feelings.

The entry phase

It is important for an induction to take place for a learner joining a new educational establishment or entering a new course. After enrolment, the learner is usually considered to be on-course and might then take part in an induction programme. Some inductions can be quite perfunctory, launching straight into the content.

A well-designed induction programme should include familiarisation and group-building activities as well as materials which introduce the learner to the subject matter and simultaneously provide further opportunities for subject-specific skill scans, aptitude tests and other forms of self-assessment. It therefore makes sense to design programme inductions as part of the whole entry process and ensure that opportunities remain open for learners to review their choices and to receive further advice and guidance during the entry phase.

Indeed, inductions might usefully incorporate two phases, with an initial opportunity for learners to either engage in a series of 'tasters' in relation to the main subject or to sample a variety of different options before making their final choices.

A carefully managed induction programme will need to include a thorough introduction to the core skills for learning. Learners will need to be encouraged to reflect on and also to share the following information with their teacher so that provision can be tailored to meet individual needs and that learners can develop their own self-awareness :

- aptitudes and strengths
- learning support needs
- preferred approaches to and styles of learning
- personal goals, interests and hobbies
- career aspirations.

Initial assessment

Initial assessment encompasses a range of procedures that are used for a variety of different and, on occasion, quite specific purposes. Some of the main types which are used to identify individual learning needs up to the point where learners might require specialist help are outlined below.

All learners travel with 'learning histories' and the majority will have some gaps or weaknesses in some essential area of their learning skills (outlined in Figure 3 on page 10) and, therefore, find learning challenging, to a greater or lesser extent. For many learners, there may be gaps or weaknesses which were previously unproblematic but then emerge as a significant barrier at some later stage. These might be due to a missed period of schooling or some particular life experiences, but whatever their roots such difficulties may have been hidden, simply gone undetected or are just now manifesting themselves as impediments to learning and further progress.

If teachers are going to be successful in planning and managing learning to meet the needs of individuals, they need to know what those learning needs are, so that they can be appropriately addressed.

Teachers need to know:

- how difficulties manifest themselves ; they should receive training in appropriate intervention techniques
- what specialist support is available for learners in schools and colleges, and when gaps and more serious learning difficulties have been identified
- which learners are accessing additional or specialist support.

Unfortunately many approaches to initial assessment adopt a 'deficit model'. Instead of being an exciting voyage of discovery, they appear threatening to learners because they focus on searching out and revealing weaknesses to be remedied. Moreover learners are often quite passive in the process and not necessarily helped to recognise and manage their own learning needs.

Most learners can enjoy the process of self-discovery whether it is in the form of a quiz in *Cosmopolitan* magazine or a learning styles questionnaire, and everyone needs a balanced view of their strengths as well as their weaknesses in order to move forward. It is important that all types of assessment processes have learners at the centre and promote their independence, in the way they are designed, conducted and the results used.

Identification of need

The identification of need (ION) process is a flagging-up exercise to highlight significant gaps in core skills for learning or any other kinds of learning difficulties that may impede progress on a particular course.

Some learners have an educational statement that details any specific or general learning difficulties they have. Others, the vast majority, without such a statement may still have learning difficulties or find new learning challenging.

An ION assessment is undertaken to help the learning support specialist recognise if an individual has a difficulty. It is a series of tests, but once you mention 'test' to learners, they may think the results of the test will be used to exclude them from their chosen course of study. Learners need to be reassured that the ION process is to identify support needed.

It is also advisable to:

- give the ION a curriculum focus and make it relevant and interesting for the learner to complete
- tailor ION assessments to take into account learners' interests and career aspirations
- share the results with the learner as soon as possible.

Screening and diagnostic testing

An initial screening process is often used, particularly at the start of a new phase, as a quick way of checking key aspects of a learner's (or potential learner's) skills and attributes. Screening activities can be designed to check generic or specific skill-sets. Where these have a particular vocational or academic focus, such activities can also give learners a useful overview of a subject's demands or requirements.

The most commonly used screening tools are employed to assess the basic skills or *Skills for Life*. Learners with gaps or weaknesses in literacy, numeracy or language skills may need additional help, with the opportunity to access this inside and outside the classroom. Indeed all learners benefit from programmes which are designed to develop their basic skills while they are learning their subject.

If a college or school has a specialist curriculum support department, it is recommended that a member of staff from that department compiles an ION. It is usual for a learning support specialist to mark the completed ION assessments with a view to identifying if an individual has a difficulty, as these specialists have the necessary training, qualifications and experience to recognise early warning signs.

Once the ION assessment has indicated areas of need or difficulty, the learner may be offered further investigation, often referred to as diagnostic testing, to identify and address it.

Diagnostic testing is a process used to identify the precise learning difficulty that a learner may be experiencing and, in turn, it helps the learning support specialist, in conjunction with the teacher, to plan suitable learning support. The learning support is designed to :

- meet an individual's needs
- help the individual achieve the learning objectives of a particular course
- promote attainment in sessions and achievement of a qualification.

The results of ION and diagnostic assessment can be used to inform the teacher when designing learning and teaching material and vehicles for learning, such as assignments.

Learning support

Having identified that the individual has a support need, it is advisable to compile a learning support action plan. The ION and diagnostic assessment results are used to inform the action-planning process. The learner, curriculum support specialist and subject teacher should be required to sign the action plan to reaffirm their commitment to the proposed support programme. Wherever possible, efforts should be made to make the learning support material relevant to a particular learner, based on his or her personal interests and aspirations.

Where needs dictate, the learner is often provided with weekly one-to-one support ; the timetabling of one-to-one sessions should be compatible with a learner's course commitments. The support programme should be tailored to meet the curriculum needs of individual learners, to help them develop strategies that promote learners achieving to their full potential.

What activities may be included in the ION process ?

Free writing exercises focusing on spelling, phrasing and punctuation

This test would assess learners' positioning of letters and words and, although it does not tell you the precise difficulty a learner may be experiencing, it is a reliable method of indicating that there is a literacy problem. The topic of free writing may require the learner to discuss his or her hobbies, interests and career aspirations, which could be used by the subject teacher to design appropriate learning activities.

Close paragraphs

For this test, learners are required to insert simple connecting words into the space provided in order to make sense of the paragraph. Consulting with the subject teachers to ensure the topic of the paragraph matches academic or vocational interests can help in keeping learners interested and motivated to complete the test.

Mathematics tests

Such tests could comprise two sections. The first section may have simple addition, subtraction, division and multiplication in various formats to test the learner's understanding of basic mathematical functions. It could also include problems, for example converting words into figures. The second section might focus on simple algebra, geometry and the interpretation of graphs. Mathematics is often a real turn-off for many learners and any opportunity to make it relevant to a particular learner's chosen subject should be grasped.

IT questionnaire

This questionnaire is presented in order to discover if the learner is having any difficulty using a computer screen. Information obtained from this test is very important as many sessions include the use of ICT.

Reading and writing questionnaire

This questionnaire is presented to ascertain whether the learner, when reading, is conscious of word movement, shadowing or grouping of words to form rivers on the page, whether the young person is able to read out aloud comfortably and to identify any issues contributing to concentration difficulties. It is also worth pointing out that a learner may have the knowledge and ability to undertake a Level 3 course, but his or her reading level may be Level 2. This difficulty should not exclude a learner from the Level 3 course but may result in teachers and support staff needing to adapt learning and teaching materials to meet a particular learner's need.

What activities may be included in diagnostic testing?

DAST This Dyslexic Adult Screening Test (DAST), developed by Angela Fawcett and Rod Nicholson in 1997, is widely used in Britain by a range of professionals.

WRAT The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) aids diagnosis of reading, writing and mathematical difficulties.

Hearing This test gives an indication as to whether the learner has a hearing difficulty. If a difficulty is detected, it is suggested to the young person that he or she visits a GP and requests a full hearing assessment.

Irlen This reading perceptual test, developed by Helen Irlen of the Perceptual Development Corporation of the USA, tests the effect of light and colour on a young person's vision of the world around them, including written material and two-dimensional imagery.

Whatever kind of diagnostic test is being used, it is probably worth bearing in mind some general principles set out by the DfES in relation to dyslexia:

Methods for diagnosing dyslexia in adults vary and the appropriateness and validity of many tests is contentious. It is most important to ensure that the diagnosis is constructive in helping the learners to make sense of past failure and understand both their difficulties and strengths more clearly. The diagnosis will then provide the basis for a successful learning experience and appropriate support in achieving stated goals.

(DfES 2002)

Educational establishments need to conduct ION and diagnostic assessments as soon as possible, preferably during the induction period, so that results can be obtained and, where appropriate, learning support designed to meet the individual need. Learning support needs to commence as soon as the results have been analysed, so that learners have the best opportunities to achieve on their chosen course of study.

DAST, WRAT, hearing and Irlen assessments are often carried out within colleges and schools by trained, qualified and experienced learning/ curriculum support staff. Once the testing has been completed, the learner may be referred to an educational psychologist for further assessment. The learner will need to give his or her permission in writing for the DAST, WRAT, hearing and Irlen test results to be shared with an educational psychologist and teachers delivering his or her chosen course of study.

Some learners may refuse to take part in initial and diagnostic assessments of need or to be interviewed by an educational psychologist. It is, of course, their right to refuse. If, after explaining to learners how the learning difficulty may impede their learning, they remain adamant that they do not wish to receive learning support, this has to be accepted. If consent is withheld, it is recommended that the learners sign a disclaimer against the institution to ensure that they do not claim at a later date that the educational establishment failed to recognise their need or provide them with the appropriate help they required.

Teachers need to:

- design an appropriate induction programme
- undertake ION assessment
- where applicable, undertake diagnostic assessment
- obtain written permission from individual learners to share the results of ION and diagnostic assessments, if applicable
- if necessary, refer learners to an educational psychologist
- design learning support to meet the needs of individual learners
- liaise regularly with the learning support specialist who is attached to each learner
- seek the help of learning support specialists when tailoring learning and teaching materials including assignments, handouts and workbooks
- monitor the effects of learning support on the learner's work and amend where required.

Learning styles

The learning styles idea is unhelpful when used to limit pupils' scope as learners, but it can be a helpful reminder to teachers to ensure that pupils are fully engaged in their learning by providing a range of different learning experiences and opportunities in which all pupils are emotionally, physically and intellectually involved.

(DfES 2005d)

It has become common practice for teachers to encourage learners to identify their preferred learning styles during course induction. While many learners enjoy the exercise, its purposes and value have become open to debate (Coffield *et al.* 2004).

It is clearly important to avoid the labelling inherent in applying different typologies such as, 'I'm a pragmatist, so I can't do theory' and to bear in mind that numerous versions of diagnostic assessment are sold as commercial products which lack any sound conceptual or theoretical basis.

From the teachers' point of view, one of the main purposes of initial assessment is to provide information that can be used in planning and delivery in order to maximise opportunities for **all** individuals to learn and reach their full potential. According to the research referred to above, there is as much evidence to show that simply matching teaching and learning styles does not work, as to show that it does!

In a well-planned and structured session, teachers need to use an awareness of an individual's preferences, learning needs, talents, aptitudes, personal interests, dreams and career aspirations. Such rounded awareness can usefully inform learning and teaching strategies as well as the design and compilation of assignments which engage learners.

An analysis of learning styles draws attention to the fact that in any group of learners, teachers will have individuals who learn in different ways. There will be visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. 29% of the population learn best by storing images in the right side of their brain (visual learners); 34% of the population prefer to learn by storing sounds in their brain (auditory learners) and 37% of the population prefer to learn by movement or touch (kinaesthetic learners).

Recently published Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate inspection reports bear witness to the quality of learning and teaching, which varies enormously, from outstanding to extremely poor. What is particularly striking is the difficulty that some teachers have in adapting their teaching to take account of individual learners. Comments like 'little attention is paid to learners' individual learning needs' or 'learners are expected to work at the same pace regardless of their starting point' are typical. The challenge is to stretch **all** learners to excel and reach their full potential, so teachers need to understand each learner's starting point in respect of the subject matter and their learning skills and plan in order to accommodate their individual learning journeys both within the session and, where appropriate, outside it.

Different ways of learning

Different parts of the brain allow us to learn in different ways. The brain has a right side and a left side – each side allows us to do different things and some people use one side of their brain more than the other. By tailoring, adapting and providing a range of different teaching strategies and materials used as the vehicle for learning, the teacher is maximising learning opportunities for all, because ultimately the most effective learning is multi-sensory.

The left side of our brain allows us to manage :

- words – language
- numbers
- logic
- sequencing
- writing skills
- reading skills
- mathematics
- detail.

The right side of our brain allows us to manage :

- creativity
- visualisation
- pattern
- pictures
- spatial awareness
- music and rhythm.

Our brain processes information in three different ways :

- visually
- auditory
- kinaesthetically.

Some people learn best when they see :

- pictures
- diagrams
- moving images
- colour.

Teachers might also bear in mind the seven multiple intelligences as defined by Howard Gardner. In understanding these intelligences, teachers can encourage the learners in their group to reflect on how they learn and to learn in new and creative ways.

The seven intelligences are :

1. **verbal-linguistic**: sensitive to the meaning and order of words
2. **musical**: sensitive to pitch, melody, rhythm and tone
3. **logical-mathematical**: able to handle chains of reasoning and to recognise patterns and order
4. **spatial**: able to perceive the world accurately and to recreate or transform aspects of it
5. **bodily-kinaesthetic**: able to use the body skilfully and handle objects adroitly
6. **interpersonal**: able to understand people and relationships
7. **intrapersonal**: have access to one's emotional life as a means to understand oneself and others.

(Gardner 1993)

There are different views about the value of working with the 'learning styles' approach. But perhaps regardless of which method or assessment tools are used, the main purpose for teachers should be to help learners to explore their own personal approaches to learning, their strengths and preferences as a means of promoting reflection and greater self-awareness.

Such tools should therefore be used in a way which helps put learners back into the driving seat as far as their own learning is concerned ; for example, to help them work on their 'less preferred' ways of learning, to deepen their learning by using a multi-sensory approach and to develop their learning skills all round. It is, of course, also useful for learners to appreciate for themselves how others learn and approach their learning differently.

4. Planning to meet individual learning needs

Differentiation in teaching and learning

What is differentiation ?

Differentiation is about identifying and addressing the different needs, interests and abilities of all learners to give them the best possible chance of achieving their learning goals.

(DfES 2004b)

The topic of differentiation is still being debated and there are a range of definitions offering different interpretations of what it means, especially what it means to put it into practice.

The ultimate aim is to optimise the learning opportunities available for all learners by recognising that individuals have different needs, interests, experiences and abilities and also learn in different ways. Therefore, learning events, resources, methods and approaches should focus on :

- maximising opportunities for all individuals to articulate their ideas, questions and experiences, first as a means of enabling each to probe and deepen their own thinking and, second, as a means of expanding the overall range of ideas, questions and experiences available to the whole group
- maximising individuals' abilities by addressing their different strengths and learning needs.

Although often discussed in relation to teaching those with significant learning needs or difficulties, differentiation in practice applies to all levels of learners – it is not a deficit model. All learners have particular needs, interests and abilities, and all learners need to be challenged and stretched.

The process of implementing differentiation in teaching and learning is clearly complex and many discussions outline the mass of detail teachers need to consider in their planning and delivery. If implementing differentiation is seen solely in terms of teacher activity, and there is no view of the learners also having an active role in the process, this can make the task seem almost impossible, especially with large and varied groups.

In fact the process should be one of ongoing dialogue with learners. Learners, individually and as a group, should take an active role in it as far as they are able (and enabled) to. Learners need, therefore, to learn the skills of self-assessment and also to have an environment in which they can talk about their needs, strengths and weaknesses. They need to be involved in planning, for example discussing programme content and timing, and deciding when they are ready to be stretched or need to consolidate their learning. Learner choice is crucial to learners' engagement.

Effective differentiation requires a culture and learning environment, delivery methods and approaches that develop the skills of learner self-management, promote teacher and learner dialogue and have transparency, in order to maximise the information revealed to both the teacher and the learner.

Clearly learners also differ widely in their ability or desire to take an active role in, or responsibility for, their own learning. Thus, in planning and delivery, teachers need to apply the principles of differentiation in this as in any other aspect of their learners' knowledge and skills development.

Teachers should ask themselves:

- How can learning and teaching styles move a learner from where they are now to where the learner has the potential to be?
- How can session planning accommodate learners' different preferred ways of moving from where they are now to where they have the potential to be?
- What sources of information are available to support my planning and preparation? (eg attendance records, ION and diagnostic assessment results, tutorial records)
- How can I ensure that learners have an effective voice in the planning and management of their learning?
- How can I create and maintain a learning environment that helps learners to develop self-organised skills? (eg to set and work to their own deadlines, access sources of information for themselves, take initiatives, review, revise and redirect their efforts)

Teachers planning to meet individual learning needs

What are the likely differences between learners' :

- prior knowledge
- prior experiences
- prior attitudes, expectations, assumptions and perceptions
- preferred ways of learning
- study and communication skills?

These differences again relate to the learning skills model set out in Figure 3 on page 10, which outlines in the inner rings (4 to 1) some of the essential skills and qualities that are likely to be required for effective subject learning. In their planning, teachers will therefore need to take into account differences in their learners' skills in :

- listening for different purposes, eg ability to follow instructions, understand technical terms or pick out key issues and implications
- writing for different purposes, eg essay writing, report writing, note taking, summarising and revising
- speaking and the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas, eg talking one to one, to the whole class and to the teacher
- reading for different purposes, eg ability to identify key concepts and ideas, to read and understand, to skim and scan
- ability to transfer learning to different contexts, eg to apply skills or knowledge learnt outside the classroom, or in one part of the programme, to another
- motivations :
 - extrinsic, eg career aspirations, qualifications, need for validation and praise
 - intrinsic, eg love of a subject, improved self-esteem and self-concept
- social and cultural heritage. Learners have very different backgrounds that have informed ways in which they think and perceive things now. Teachers need to acknowledge that background and understand how learners interpret and attach different meanings to what they are learning. Our backgrounds are shaped by such factors as age, gender, ethnicity, class, disability and learning difficulties.

Within any group of learners there will be a wide variation in :

- the amount and quality of work individual learners complete in the classroom or workshop
- the amount and quality of work individual learners can complete independently, either in the classroom /workshop or outside it
- the amount and quality of work individual learners can complete in groups.

Learners learning at their own pace (and that does not mean coasting along and wasting time!), with able learners being stretched and weaker learners supported, is a theme of the final report of the Working Group on 14–19 Reform (2004). The amount of work learners can complete within a given period varies from individual to individual. Therefore, classroom and workshop activities need to build in the facility to extend the more able, who may be capable of working at an increased pace.

The ability for learners to work independently will be influenced by the amount of support individuals may need and the facilities required to support their learning. The flexible deployment of support staff is crucial to providing such support. Teachers need to have the training, scope and authority to work with staff employed in a range of other roles to best meet the diverse needs of learners.

Differentiation can be addressed through:

Tasks

- Graduate tasks from easy tasks to hard tasks on a worksheet (Bloom 1956).
- Include 'mastery' and 'developmental' tasks.
- Consider the tasks set for different groups of learners and individuals.
- Try using:
 - ability groups
 - help sheets or 'how to' voice boxes
 - extension exercises.

Outcomes

- When setting tasks or assignments, allow work to be presented in the form of different outcomes, eg a research assignment may result in a talk, poster, case study or report.

Time allowances

- Consider the length of time allowed for group learning, independent learning, distance learning, resource-based learning and mastery learning.

Materials and resources

- Preparing learning and teaching materials that provide the right stimulus to motivate and engage learners requires teachers to use their knowledge of the individual learners in the group, including their social and cultural backgrounds, communication and study skills.
- When producing differentiated learning and teaching material, remember to check the reading abilities of individual learners and ensure that handouts, tasks and assignments are written in a language that is fit for purpose.
- Learners vary in their preferences and abilities to access material through electronic media. Have you assessed this? Remember to offer them a choice of media if possible.

- Creative and responsive teachers provide individuals with opportunities to generate work through assignments that are geared towards their abilities and strengths. They know their learners well and try to use individuals' personal interests to create assignments that are relevant to each learner.
- Teachers benefit from collaboration in the development of appropriate learning materials and resources. For example, staff at Exeter College worked with local schools to develop a range of differentiated methods and materials for younger learners studying vocational A-levels (Jones and Duckett 2005).

Learners action planning to meet their individual learning needs

Individual learning plans

What is an individual learning plan ?

An ILP is an action plan which includes :

- a statement of an individual's learning goals for a specified period of time
- a statement of the steps by which the goals will be achieved
- a record of progress made at regular reviews.

Why should we have individual learning plans ?

The ILP helps learners know what they are aiming to achieve and the timescale. Working out this action plan with their teachers or trainers should always be a two-way process, which increases the learners' motivation and gives them a sense of ownership and commitment to their own learning.

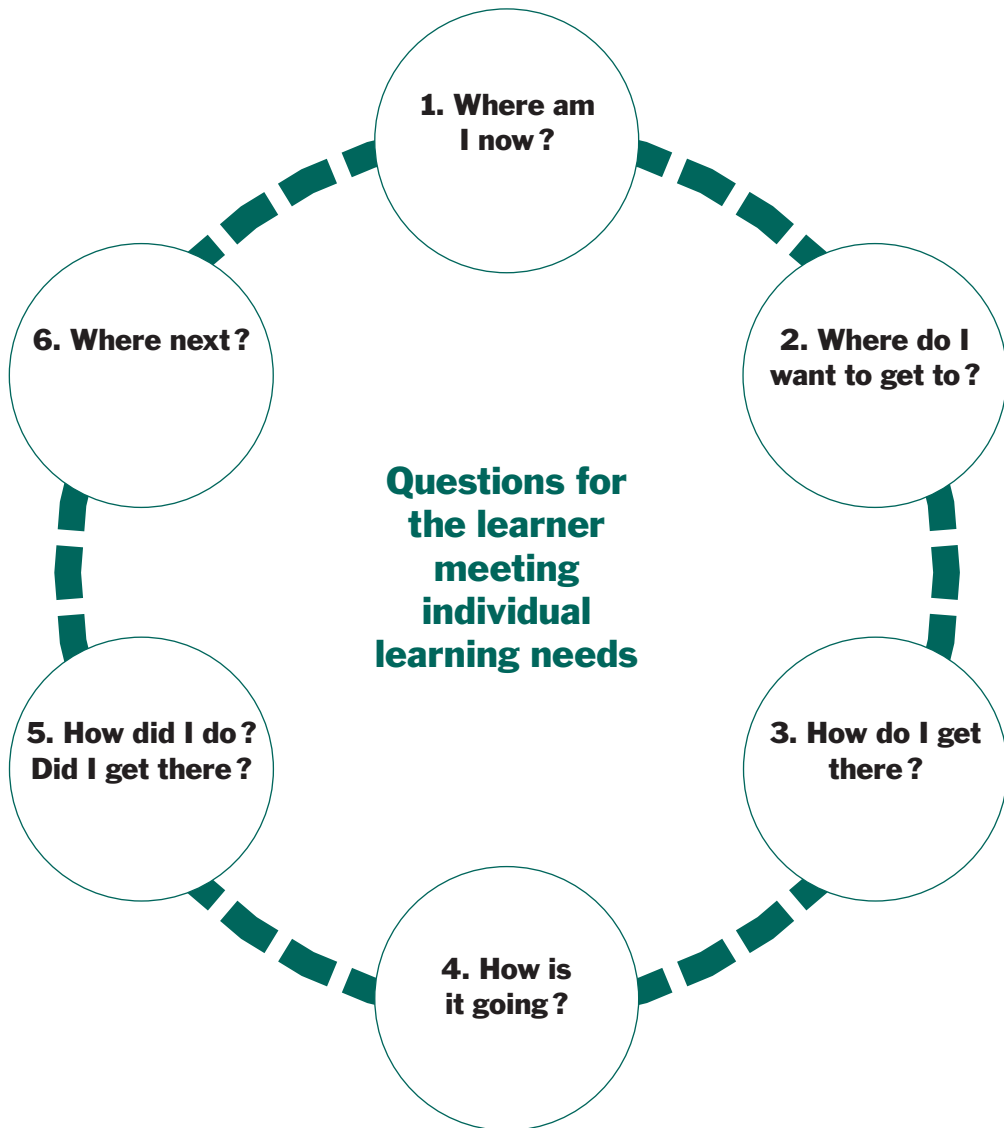
The ILP can be used to provide a structure for one-to-one tutorials, enabling both the tutor and learners to focus on meeting individual learning needs. It should also be used by :

- teachers preparing for differentiated teaching and learning
- the provider to ensure that it is monitoring performance, responding to and matching delivery to learners' needs.

An outline of the process of drawing up an individual learning plan and the kinds of questions that might aid reflection and forward planning is given in Figure 6 (page 38). The aim is to enable learners to talk about their progress in different areas of their learning programme, what they have learnt and what they need to learn, and to plan their next steps forward. Explicit opportunities to develop 'learning to learn' and self-assessment skills, and the provision of good formative feedback throughout a learner's programme, will help to strengthen the ILP process.

Ensure :

- the whole ILP process takes place within a positive learning environment
- all learners are included, not just those who are underperforming or have particular needs
- an ILP is clearly understood by and relevant to every learner, paying particular attention to this in relation to learners with language learning needs (eg ESOL students) or learning difficulties
- sufficient time is given to the process and building the teacher /trainer–learner relationship; avoid it being a form-filling exercise
- attention is paid to developing **all** aspects of a learner's learning and study skills, eg *Skills for Life* and personal effectiveness (see Figure 3 on page 10)
- development time is available for staff using the approach and skills, eg a learning conversation (see page 46)
- all teachers, trainers and support staff involved in the learner's programme actively contribute and have access to the ILP
- every opportunity is taken to reassure and celebrate learners' strengths, progress and achievements
- all ILPs are action plans that contain SMART targets (see page 39).

Figure 6. An outline of the ILP process

Target setting

Target setting is the key to effective action planning and progress review.

The benefits of setting targets

Through target setting:

- learners gain knowledge, skills, confidence and self-awareness to help them manage their own learning and deal with the challenges they face; longer-term goals help learners make decisions about their future and career options
- schools and colleges benefit from more confident and motivated learners who are willing to stay in education post-16
- together with review procedures, the use of value-added measures and the recording of progress and achievement in relation to non-accredited learning are supported.

Targets in action plans need to be SMART:

- **S**pecific: The targets say exactly what the learner needs to do.
- **M**easurable: The learner can demonstrate they have reached them.
- **A**chievable: The learner has the potential to achieve them within a reasonable timescale.
- **R**ealistic: They are about action that can be taken.
- **T**ime-related: They establish time frames and specify deadlines.

Setting SMART targets in action plans can be a challenge for both tutors and learners, especially if the latter are not able to talk easily about themselves or their learning, or are not motivated to improve.

Using SMART targets in action plans is a vehicle for raising achievement and adding value through:

- meaningful dialogue between tutor and learner and setting goals which challenge and stretch the individual
- setting realistic targets for improvement through negotiation (eg rationalising hours spent in part-time employment)
- enhancing learner motivation, building confidence and raising expectations – progress is made by taking manageable steps and, most importantly, this progress is made ‘visible’
- developing and improving learners’ reflection, self-awareness and self-management skills, which impacts on their overall learning effectiveness

- staff identifying and reviewing intervention ; working with study support teams and monitoring progress to ensure interventions are effective. Learning support plans should be reviewed and revised as part of the ILP process and properly informed by the SMART targets.

Minimum target grades

This method is only one of many versions of target setting but it has been widely used throughout the sector. The purpose is twofold :

- to involve learners in setting themselves realistic but demanding targets for their own achievement
- to provide a means by which teachers can judge the value they are adding to the learners' achievement when the final results are known.

The wider target review process

Tutors talk through the pro forma, aims and method then give the learners time to complete them, supporting the process. When complete, the pro forma are attached to learners' ILPs, so that they can be referred to in one-to-one discussions during the programme.

In addition to the pro forma, tutors are provided with background information and prompts to support their involvement in the target review process. For example, a learner's :

- prior experience of the vocational area
- punctuality
- attendance
- level of commitment
- ability to take responsibility for his or her own learning
- ability to complete work on time
- positive attitude towards the subject
- volume of part-time work.

Teachers need to know that :

- good communication between quality managers and information managers helps to ensure that information systems provide evidence for self-assessment, development planning and target setting
- targets are supported by defined data collection, information provision and monitoring processes
- colleges and providers use a range of 'other' targets as appropriate to their priorities.

5. Delivery to meet individual learning needs

Good practice in whole-class delivery should ensure that both group and individual learning needs are met as a matter of course. Here we focus on particular aspects which are key to ensuring that, overall, delivery is designed so that every individual has the chance to succeed.

Learning to learn

Despite the fact that teachers and trainers often assume that individuals know how to learn, learners need to develop skills and knowledge about how to learn effectively and how to assess their own learning skills and abilities. This 'finding out about themselves' process should be a standard component of induction programmes and tutorials. The development of 'learning to learn' skills should be integrated within the curriculum and followed up with individuals throughout the training or study period. Teachers and trainers need to use the information gained during initial assessment, induction and subsequent teaching and learning encounters to work with individuals and groups in order to maximise their opportunities to develop 'learning to learn' skills.

The task of meeting individual learning needs can only be successfully achieved when learners themselves play an active part in understanding and managing their own learning. All learners need the opportunity to develop their skills to do this and also to communicate their needs to those who are best placed to meet them.

Learners will vary in their starting points regarding the 'learning to learn' or self-organised learning skills, and there may be other limits to the extent they can develop independence. However, it is important that teachers and trainers do not put up barriers themselves. Working with self-confident and assertive learners offers challenges as well as rewards, and helping learners to develop independence may demand new skills, a different approach to teaching and a different teacher–learner relationship. Teachers and trainers may well, therefore, have learning needs of their own, and these also have to be recognised and addressed.

The learning skills framework sets out some of the core skills that underpin effective learning in any context (see Figure 3 on page 10). Learners need to recognise for themselves where their strengths and weaknesses lie and work with teachers and trainers to address anything that may be holding them back.

Some communication or basic skills needs may be identified through initial assessment at an early stage ; other, perhaps more significant, obstacles might take longer to emerge and longer to address. These are likely to be located in the more central areas of Figure 3 and small shifts could have a big impact on overall learning effectiveness.

Four steps to learning

Step 1: Preferred approaches to learning

Learners need to understand when and under what conditions they learn best, to be able to communicate this to others and to manage conditions for themselves where possible.

They need to :

- identify if they prefer to study quietly on their own or in groups
- find out what works best for them in terms of study habits
- use their preferred learning styles to learn in the classroom, undertake homework and revision and complete coursework
- judge how much time they need for study and to manage conflicting demands on their time effectively
- understand the strengths and limitations of their preferred approaches to learning.

Step 2: The process of learning

Learners need to know how to :

- reflect
- summarise
- ask questions
- use answers to improve their work
- review and evaluate their work and that of others
- learn from their mistakes
- access information from a variety of sources
- work with and learn from others
- work on their own and use personal strategies to maintain concentration and interest
- take risks and move beyond their comfort zone
- persist.

Teachers need to be able to help learners to :

- make links
- abstract and generalise
- question and evaluate material
- handle uncertainty and contradictory ideas
- use research skills
- solve problems
- self-assess.

Teachers and learners themselves need to explore :

- what detracts from learners learning
- what competes with individuals' attention while they are supposed to be completing a piece of work
- what distractions can be minimised.

Step 3: Handling study matter

Individually learners need to ask themselves the following questions :

- What is the heading or title of the assignment, task or activity?
- Are there any key words that jump out from reading the heading or title?
- What do the key words mean? (It may be worth encouraging the learner to compile a glossary of terms independently, or use flip charts to compile a glossary of terms for each unit or assignment as a group activity.)
- What do I know about the topic or related subject?
- What resources will I need to support successful completion of the assignment, task or activity?
- Are there any additional sources of information or support?

While studying, learners should be encouraged to consider :

- if they understand what they are doing and why they are doing it this way
- if there is a better way of doing something that may work to their strengths or preferred learning style
- whether they should stop and summarise what they are doing
- whether to stop and review if they are proceeding in a logical way
- reviewing and evaluating what they are doing against what has been required of them
- if they need time to think through what they are doing and return to a given piece of work later
- if they need to discuss the assignment, task or activity with other learners in order to process the information
- if they need to ask for help from a teacher, learning support assistant, specialist support tutor, librarian or subject expert.

Step 4: Self-assessment and review

Encourage learners to reflect, self-assess, review and evaluate their performance. This self-assessment may take place in the context of specific subject matter such as a project or assignment. It is important to encourage learners also to focus on **how** they have tackled the subject matter; that is, how they went about it, the process they went through and the strategies and learning skills that they used.

In a review of how well they are managing their own learning, encourage learners to :

- identify what they are doing well
- decide what they could do better
- evaluate whether they are working to their strengths and are developing the learning skills that they need
- review whether they have adhered to their agreed ILP (does this contain skills for learning ?)
- evaluate how far they have created the required conditions in which to learn and achieve
- decide if they have successfully achieved the learning goals against the published assessment criteria
- identify new aims and strategies to improve their self-organised learning skills and overall learning effectiveness
- celebrate success !

To help individual learners improve their learning effectiveness, include activities that will assist them in developing the skills to :

- manage time
- use the library and resource centres to best effect
- undertake research using a range of methods
- use feedback from the Assessment for Learning model to promote improved learning
- take notes
- use spider diagrams and mind maps
- identify key words
- develop and use effective revision strategies
- set targets and use an ILP effectively
- access learning support
- use learning support to promote achievement.

Include activities to develop individual self-awareness. Design questions to help learners to :

- identify personal strengths and weaknesses
- identify strategies for working to their strengths
- analyse the learning environment and what impedes learning
- identify strategies for eliminating distractions
- use appropriate study skills and strategies to overcome weaknesses
- identify how they would benefit from achieving the learning goals and ultimately the qualification and to use this information to maintain their own motivation
- understand the requirements of learning independently
- identify and use strategies for managing projects and assignments
- understand how to use their ILP to promote their achievement
- understand how to access resources and obtain the required information
- analyse the key factors that promote and maintain their own self-confidence and aid study.

Group and individual tutorials

No one can persuade another to change. Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be opened from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal.

(Covey 1989)

Group and individual tutorials are increasingly used to ensure that learners derive maximum benefit from the delivery of their subject and their learning experience as a whole. These occasions provide opportunities for activities that engage individuals in the management of their learning, such as those outlined above.

At Solihull College, for example, tutors were trained to use the 'learning conversation' approach, outlined in Figure 7 (Hardman 1997).

Figure 7. Solihull College's 'learning conversation' approach

Purpose	What is my purpose? What do I want to achieve?
Strategy	What methods will I use?
Outcomes	What difference will using (each of) these strategies make?
Outcome measures	How will I know if they have worked?
Review	What did I do and how well did it work? What will I do differently next time? What do I need to work on now?

Tutorial time

The amount of time allocated to tutorials determines what tutors and learners can do. The challenge is to use the limited time and appropriate skills to help the learner identify if, where and how changes need to be made. Where time is short and occasions are few, both will feel under pressure. Tutors will tend to resort to telling learners where and how progress should be made.

A survey in 2001 (Green 2002) found that out of a two-hour per group per week time allocation for full-time learners, many colleges gave at least half to individual support. Overall, the average individual time allocated per year for a full-time learner was 120 minutes.

This ignores the considerable amount of unofficial time given by personal tutors and subject teachers / trainers who recognise the significance of giving individual support in terms of learners' progress and achievement. Where, as is frequently the case for part-time learners, there is little or no individual time officially allocated, the amount of unofficial time given is unaccounted for and probably extremely significant.

Tutors need to give time and attention to :

Preparation:

- shared understanding of purpose
- helping learners prepare
- collecting and using performance data
- building from subject reviews
- the agenda – framework for discussion.

Setting the climate:

- building relationships
- the meeting place
- positive affirmation.

The dialogue:

- listening
- asking questions
- knowing when to refer on
- setting targets
- long-term goals
- short-term SMART targets and action points.

Closure:

- summarising
- leaving learners feeling good
- record keeping.

(Green 2001)

Group tutorials offer important opportunities to address learners' personal and social skills, attitudes and behaviour.

Individual learners' needs which lie towards the centre of the core skills for learning diagram (see Figure 3 on page 10) can have a significant impact on their ability to manage their own learning and to learn effectively. Individual learners' confidence, self-esteem and beliefs about their abilities can be dramatically lifted, for example, through the acquisition of new communication or study skills, or *Skills for Life*.

It is also important to address aspects of learners' wider context that also impact on their self-confidence and self-management. Younger learners, for example, benefit from and also enjoy visits that enable them to gain wider experience of the world. Learning more about their rights and responsibilities can help young people feel more confident dealing with agencies and officials. Understanding issues such as sexual health and financial management can address areas which might otherwise block a learner's progress.

Group tutorials can be used to help develop an individual learner's:

- awareness of their rights and responsibilities as:
 - learners (in the classroom / workshop and while on placement)
 - employees
 - professional practitioners
 - citizens
- communication skills
- learning and study skills
- skills in managing personal health, time, finances and relationships
- awareness of diversity and equality issues and their attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others.

It is important to ensure that:

- the learners themselves feel the subject matter is important and relevant for them at the time
- the learning environment feels safe
- ground rules to establish trust and cooperation are understood and put into practice
- attention is paid to building good group relationships
- active learner participation is promoted.

To carry out their role effectively, tutors need:

- skills and confidence
- information
- training
- support.

Engaging learners in classroom/workshop activities

The diversity of learners provides, for the skilled teacher, a rich resource from which to develop the learning process. As teachers we can value our learners by inviting their contributions. Learners are more likely to engage in learning experiences that invite them to share their own perspectives, experiences, assumptions and expectations in relation to the learning. In such contexts the teacher needs to encourage and support them in making individual contributions.

(Crowley 2002)

Learners often feel they need to remember what the book or the teacher actually said. In fact what they need to remember is their own understanding of the material.

Understanding is gained through each learner:

- making sense of something in their own way, making links to what they already know
- talking, writing and asking questions about something
- doing something
- explaining something to others.

Ensure that you :

- provide short introductions to sessions, linking to previous sessions and building on previous learning
- set high expectations
- believe every learner can achieve and communicate this to all individuals
- build in opportunities for every learner to contribute, to demonstrate their strengths to the group and to improve self-esteem
- provide clear instructions on what is required and check all learners' understanding
- compile appropriate, differentiated support material, so that learners can refer to this resource for additional instructions
- brief learning support assistants on the aims of the session and requirements of an activity, so that they can provide appropriate support as and when required
- provide extension activities to challenge the more able learner
- summarise a session, review learning objectives and provide feedback to learners on their performance
- always end a session on a positive note.

Learner motivation

Much is spoken about the importance of motivation in learning; this really means 'wanting to learn'. We can increase our own motivation by finding ways to ensure we are interested.

It is helpful to learners when teachers :

- consider their interests, hobbies and aspirations and decide how involved they are in a particular topic
- link material to their interests
- concentrate on understanding rather than memorising ; in any case memorising is easier if material is understood
- work with material that is challenging ; what has already been learned may become boring through repetition, although 'over learning' can help the memory.

It helps teachers to know :

- how interested a learner is in a given topic
- what the learner's concentration span is
- what promotes a particular learner's dedication to learn
- how to create a suitable learning environment for an individual to minimise distractions and promote motivation.

E-learning and the role of ICT in delivery to meet individual learning needs

E-learning is learning that is supported or enhanced through the use of ICT. In this context ICT includes the use of computers, the internet and virtual learning environments (VLEs); electronic communication tools such as e-mail, videoconferencing and chat facilities ; and equipment such as interactive whiteboards, digital cameras and mobile phones.

Given this impressive technological array, it is useful to bear in mind that : 'e-learning is fundamentally about learning and not about technology. Strategic development of e-learning should be based on the needs and demands of learners and the quality of their educational experience' (Joint Information Systems Committee 2004).

How can ICT contribute to delivery which meets learners' individual needs and enhances their learning experience ?

Drawing on a variety of sources, it seems clear that ICT can increase learners' motivation through greater engagement and increased control over their own learning processes.

- ICT puts new tools in the hands of learners, allowing them to try out different approaches, form and test hypotheses, and grasp abstract ideas by constructing models.
- Content sources and resources can be individually tailored in line with the learner's needs and preferences through the use of ICT.
- ICT can provide 'authentic' experiences, giving learners immediate access to richer, engaging primary source material.
- ICT offers simulations of environments that learners cannot access directly for themselves, perhaps because of disability, distance or for health and safety reasons.
- Collaborative tools enable people to work together, take part in joint problem solving and access expertise at the point when it is of most value to them.
- Collaborative tools facilitate mentoring, coaching and peer networking by enabling people to give each other feedback in and outside the class or training room.
- Mobile technologies (eg 'smart phones') can rekindle interest in learning, especially among hard-to-reach groups.
- Effective assessment for learning is supported by offering learners new ways to demonstrate what they have achieved and to self-assess. It also helps teachers 'know' their learners better.
- ICT offers a non-stigmatised learning environment and privacy to learners who need this to practise and test their skills.
- Flexible, powerful reporting tools allow for a detailed tracking and understanding of the progress being made by individuals and groups while making minimal bureaucratic demands on teaching and non-teaching staff. At-risk learners can be picked up in the early stages.
- ICT enables distance and flexible learning (not all distance learning is e-learning, of course). The availability of online materials, peer and teacher communication allows learners remote access to learning resources at times they choose.
- The use of adaptive technology and software can make materials accessible to learners with disabilities.

E-learning = enhanced learning ?

It should not automatically be assumed that e-learning enhances the learning experience! A survey of learners' opinions revealed the following likes and dislikes.

Learners like e-learning because :

- it allows them to learn at their own pace
- they can choose when and for how long they learn
- it puts learners in the driving seat and in control of their own learning
- they can fit learning around other things they are doing.

Some dislike e-learning because :

- they find waiting for access to computers irritating
- they find banners (such as adverts) and junk mail distracting
- it fails to help with the acquisition of complex interpersonal skills
- working through packaged programs can be time consuming
- it requires more self-motivation, which can be difficult in the face of conflicting demands
- the technology often lets them down.

(Honey 2001)

Good practice with e-learning

Blended learning

E-learning is learning which just happens to use technology to produce the best learning experience rather than a thing in itself, so e-learning should really be thought of as blended learning. Effective practice with e-learning involves combining it with traditional approaches such as classroom-based or individual teaching and discussion, or study using printed material, as well as online tutorials and group work.

Blended learning involves teachers finding and working with the most appropriate mixture of technology and human resources for their learners.

Teachers need:

- readily accessible, appropriate and reliable technological equipment and resources to work with (ditto in terms of technical support)
- training and support to work with new media
- time to prepare new materials and plan for blended learning
- understanding and expertise in applying the key principles of teaching and learning; a weak teacher plus e-learning does not mean a transformation to good teaching and learning!

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) points out that judgements about effective practice with e-learning can be based on the same criteria as judgements about effective practice in teaching and learning generally – that the practice should:

- engage learners in the learning process
- encourage independent learning skills
- develop learners' skills and knowledge
- motivate further learning.

In the broadest sense, effective learning is likely to occur when opportunities to learn involve:

- the right resources
- the right mode (or blend of modes) of delivery
- the right context
- the right learners...

with the right level of support.

Case study

E-Me is a multimedia 'portfolio' of student learning and achievement which is being developed at Wolsingham School and Community College in County Durham. The E-Me will function as the students' individual learning plan and their Progress File / Record of Achievement. It will also contain, in digital format, a portfolio of their work for each subject that they study. The authoring language allows students to customise their E-Me. Once introduced to the language they can add or delete items from the basic template and create something that uses the most appropriate multimedia evidence to describe their individual learning and achievements. The project will give students a significant opportunity to develop their ICT skills. If they wish, they can at any stage write their E-Me as a specialist program onto a CD or DVD. This can then be run on any PC platform.

(McNeill and Pallister 2004)

Key points for ensuring effective practice with e-learning include :

- a committed management with a clear, properly resourced strategy that accommodates updating and the procurement of appropriate licences
- supportive technical infrastructure
- time for curriculum development and staff training (plus practice !)
- internal and external collaboration between teachers, learners and technical staff, including links to national organisations and networks (eg the National Learning Network) ; do some research, the resources you want might already exist
- an easy-to-use VLE that is simple and intuitive
- appropriate and timely technical and learning support for learners.

Research shows that :

- learners who take part in e-learning improve their technical ability to use ICT and improve their generic skills
- using technology can help to raise young people's motivations and self-esteem, but they may not engage in any great depth with the material being studied
- e-learning materials vary considerably in quality ; the use of exciting technology such as that found in computer games is rare
- e-learning can reduce marking time for staff, but in some cases it is linked to there being inadequate attention to feedback for learners
- peer support via conferencing and discussion groups is often mentioned but rarely used
- the use of graphics and animation can be problematic for learners with impaired vision
- it is rare to find teachers who plan e-learning with learners who have disabilities in mind
- e-learning often promotes partnerships with community organisations and links with employers
- in the best providers, leaders concentrate on the impact of e-learning on learners rather than the technical capabilities of resources.

The main message is that what we need are technologies, resources and tools that can promote 'the development of dispositions to learning across contexts and time, with embedded technologies used to foster the development of deep conceptual understanding and the skills to learn in the 21st century' (Davies *et al.* 2005).

6. Assessment to meet individual learning needs

Assessment for Learning is the first of the five key components of the government's strategy to ensure education meets the needs of all learners and enables them to reach their full potential. The effective use of assessment needs to take place at every stage of the teaching and learning cycle, with:

- initial assessment – to identify learning needs, establish starting points and develop ILPs
- formative assessment during the process of learning – the key to effective learning and skills development
- summative assessment at the end of any particular stage of learning – to establish what the learner has achieved.

The first aspect has been covered in chapter 3 (see page 19). Now we focus on the use of formative and summative assessment to meet individual learning needs.

Formative assessment and Assessment for Learning

How to use an 'Assessment for Learning' approach in delivery has been a focus for some of the most exciting research and development work on teachers' classroom practice in recent times, not least because the approach has a noticeable impact on learners' ability to learn effectively.

What is Assessment for Learning?

The Assessment for Learning approach is underpinned by a number of principles, the most important one being that while assessment is used for a range of different purposes – for example, to rank students or providers (league tables), or to provide certification – the purpose here is to use it to develop learning.

*An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes **formative assessment** when the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs.*

Individual learners need:

- to be actively involved in their own learning
- to be able to assess themselves
- to receive effective feedback that helps them to understand where they are, what they are doing and how to improve.

Teachers and trainers need:

- to recognise the profound influence that assessment has on learners' motivation and self-esteem and understand how both have a crucial impact on learning
- to adjust teaching to take account of assessment outcomes
- to have high expectations of every learner and show confidence they can improve.

Putting Assessment for Learning into practice

A key integrating feature of all the changes [teachers made] is their focus on identifying and addressing learning needs.

(Black *et al.* 2003)

Questioning

The starting point for many teachers who aim to put Assessment for Learning into practice is to work on the effective use of questioning: using questions that encourage learners to think, and which draw out answers that reveal the nature and level of their understanding. Increasing the 'wait-time' and allowing more space for learners both to respond and then also add to or refine their answers, for example, encourages richer answers and deeper questions.

Implementing this technique, along with others teachers can use, requires careful planning and practice. The main steps to applying the approach can be set out fairly simply, but each of them may require some skills development for the teacher and good preparation before they are put into practice.

Teachers need to:

- understand the subject thoroughly and know which aspects cause their learners difficulties
- design and use appropriate tasks, activities, examples and questions to help learners understand and learn
- use learners' responses to assess their learning

- analyse how learners are thinking about a topic and find further ways to explore this if necessary
- adjust teaching appropriately.

Designing assignments and activities for learning and assessment

Assignments and activities to develop each individual's learning should be designed with the following features in mind. They need to :

- **build self-confidence and a sense of achievement**
 - Build in opportunities for learners to work to their strengths.
 - Enable some assessment of personal qualities (such as initiative).
- **encourage learner autonomy**
 - Help learners identify their learning needs.
 - Help learners to learn the skills of self-assessment.
 - Encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning.
 - Encourage negotiated learning procedures.
- **progress each individual's learning**
 - Provide challenge and stretch for all learners.
 - Include opportunities for differentiated outcomes.
 - Build in the necessary learning support at key stages.
 - Enable learners to access specialist support.
 - Draw on differentiated handouts and workbooks.
 - Provide opportunities for learners to write their own scenarios influenced by their personal interests and career aspirations.
 - Provide opportunities for learners to make improvements during teaching time rather than consigning this for homework.
- **support the process of feedback and review**
 - Incorporate regular reviews and feedback opportunities – this is particularly important for long assignments to help learners maintain focus and momentum.
 - Enable checks on the achievement of specific tasks.
 - Enable focus on whether or not objectives are being achieved.
 - Assess non-academic achievements (in and out of school or college).
 - Enable assessment of learning skills.

Developing learners' skills in Assessment for Learning

In order for learners to take responsibility for their own learning and develop autonomy, they need to know **what** they have to learn, **why** it is required (ie how and where it fits in the programme) and **how** it is to be assessed. Then they need to know what is required of them next.

The skills of self-assessment are crucial to learner self-management, and teachers need to design ways to help learners understand the assessment criteria and apply the criteria appropriately to their work. Learners particularly need to understand what counts as good work and why, so that they can not only assess what they have done but also see where and how it needs to be improved. How can this important individual learning need be addressed?

■ **Build self- and peer assessment into learning activities**

Working in small groups creates more opportunities for individuals to articulate their understanding, and research shows that those who give help to others generally benefit most.

Clearly, peer assessment has to be carefully planned and managed. Used effectively, teachers have found that when learners consider the work of their peers it constantly triggers reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of their own work.

■ **Plan and structure sessions aimed at enabling learners to:**

- understand and apply the required criteria
- make judgements on their own and others' work and give reasons, ie justify their judgements
- identify what they would need to change in order to go up a level.

Activities to help learners to use assessment criteria effectively include : showing and explaining marking schemes, with examples of how they are applied ; getting learners to apply criteria to their own and others' work, put criteria into their own words, or create their own ; and getting learners to devise exam questions with a marking scheme and then discussing how examiners might assess the questions, or to devise tasks for each other with criteria which they will later have to explain.

Teachers have found that even when the criteria they worked with were not particularly precise learners were able to make enough sense of them to make specific comments to each other, which helped them to learn. Here, the learners' ability to help each other improve was far more important than the accuracy of their grading. Teachers have also found that asking learners to review their experience of marking or applying assessment criteria can often reveal that the act of assessing is, in itself, a productive way of learning about a subject.

- **Develop the use of comment-only marking to focus attention on learning and improvement**

Teachers using comment-only marking have found that it encourages learners to prioritise how to improve a piece of work rather than comparing their performance against others.

- **Develop own and learners' feedback skills**

Teachers have found that when they successfully developed effective feedback strategies with their learners, self- and peer assessment were enhanced.

Feedback for learning

Assessment activities provide opportunities for teachers and learners not only to measure and make judgements about the level of understanding or performance, but also for giving and receiving feedback; that is, information essential for further progress.

Being given feedback is a way of learning more about ourselves, what we are doing and with what effect. We gain this information through all of our senses – observation, touch and feel, taste, smell and hearing. We don't necessarily need other people to give us useful feedback. When practising hitting a tennis ball against a wall, for example, we can see, hear and feel the quality of the stroke. But as learners we do need to know how to use this information in order to change, modify and ultimately progress.

Constructive feedback from others increases self-awareness, offers options, guides and encourages development. It is not entirely about giving the good news. Since our mistakes usually contain a great deal more information that is useful for us to learn from, we do need to be able to receive 'the bad news' – despite our emotional response!

This means that the process of giving and receiving feedback for learning requires skills and self-awareness on the part of teachers and learners. And since learning with others also offers valuable opportunities to access feedback from peers, learners need to acquire the skills for giving useful feedback to each other.

It is also important to understand the difference between verbal and written feedback in terms of their impact and effectiveness.

Verbal feedback has the advantage of being timely and can be discussed and further explored. Encourage learners to take notes so that the main points can be remembered, and take care to ensure they are in a good position to learn from it (ie not flustered or frustrated).

Written feedback has the advantage of allowing the writer and the reader time to reflect on what is being said. Ensure that learners receive written feedback promptly and have an opportunity to respond to it.

Giving constructive feedback

When giving feedback to another:

- always try to check that you do it at a good time for them, ie that they are ready to engage in the discussion
- always try to start with finding out what the other person thinks or feels about their attempts first, eg ask What do you think about this? How do you feel it went?

This will give you a good guide as to how the other person is feeling, what kind of feedback they are ready for and the main points you should address.

Then try to:

- **start with the positive.** Always start by feeding back on those things that you think went well. Most people need appreciation and encouragement. If you start with the positives, any points for improvement are more likely to be listened to and acted on.
- **be specific.** If feedback is to provide a good personal learning opportunity your feedback should be as specific as possible. Try to avoid general comments, which are not very useful when it comes to developing skills. It is nice to hear 'This is very good', but it doesn't give the recipient enough information to work with. What is good? And why is it?
- **keep it simple.** Where there are a great number of weaknesses, it is important not to overwhelm the learner with a long catalogue of woe. Try to deal with only one or two of the most important issues, so that the person can focus the work on their development and manage the changes required.

- **provide the feedback as soon as possible.** Your feedback stands the best chance of being understood and accepted if it is given as soon as possible after work has been completed. It is useful to give some brief feedback immediately and then arrange a mutually convenient meeting time in the near future for a more detailed discussion.
- **refer to behaviour that can be changed.** There is little point feeding back on something that the learner has no ability to change.
- **offer alternatives.** Where there are areas for improvement, try to encourage the learner to suggest ways things might be changed, and be prepared to suggest alternatives yourself – if possible, building on their own initial ideas for improvement. Even good work can be improved, so look for ways to stretch able learners.
- **focus on the behaviour rather than the person.** This means referring to what they have actually done rather than your assumptions or inferences about the learner. For example: ‘This part is written in note form and so your argument is not very clear’ rather than ‘You are very slapdash’ or ‘You don’t spend enough time on your work’.
- **recognise that the feedback is yours and invite the sharing of ideas.** It is useful to keep in mind that, although you might be right, you are often only offering your opinion. Beginning the feedback with ‘I thought’, ‘I felt’ or ‘In my opinion’ acknowledges this and, when followed by an invitation such as ‘What do you think?’ allows more scope for the learner to engage in the discussion than if they have to deal with the world’s judgement! Even in cases where there is a correct answer, research has shown that mere presentation of the correct view does not alter learners’ beliefs.
- **leave the recipient with a choice.** Feedback that *demand*s change or is imposed heavily on the other person will almost certainly invite resistance, and in any case shows a lack of respect. Use phrases that help the learner to explore the options open to them, such as ‘Have you ever thought of doing X?’ or ‘How do you think it would be if you tried...?’.

Helping learners use feedback effectively

As has been emphasised throughout this book, learners have an active role to play in the process of meeting their individual learning needs. This role requires effective self-management and communication skills, and helping learners to develop and use the former enables them to feel positive and in control.

Since feedback from others is so essential, learners need to be able to make the most of the opportunities offered. So, teachers need to help learners to develop the skills to encourage whoever gives feedback to be constructive. 'As one student said to the teacher, when given a mark of 4 out of 10 for a piece of work: "How is that going to help me get better?"' (Black *et al.* 2003).

As noted above, empowering learners can present teachers and trainers with new challenges and opportunities to develop their practice further.

Learners need to develop skills to:

- listen to the feedback completely and objectively before reacting. Encourage learners to:
 - try not to become defensive or to concentrate on the negatives
 - really **listen** and **hear** what the person giving feedback is trying to tell them.

- be clear about what is being said. Encourage learners to:
 - persist if they do not understand what they are being told, and to explore the issue with the person who gave the feedback, until they do
 - ask for examples.

- actively seek feedback on each aspect of your teaching. Encourage learners to ask for feedback on areas of their learning which are not mentioned. **If you don't get it, ask for it!**

- decide what to do as a result of the feedback. Encourage learners to:
 - spend time on an action plan when they have ideas for improvement
 - plan experiments and ways to try out possible changes.

- thank the person giving the feedback. Encourage learners to recognise that giving feedback will have required thought, time and skill from the teacher, trainer or their peers. It is helpful for the latter to know in what ways they have been helpful.
- think positively about what they have heard and see it as an opportunity! Encourage learners to:
 - give themselves time to allow any initial feelings of frustration or disappointment to subside
 - be excited about the opportunity to try new methods and evaluate their effectiveness.

Summative assessment

The ultimate purpose of any summative assessment procedure is to provide a valid benchmark that indicates a learner's level of attainment in acquiring knowledge and skills at a specific point in time.

When considering how individual learning needs can be met most effectively in relation to the above, it is useful to consider:

- the mode or process of summative assessment – how it is carried out (eg through sitting an examination, continuous assessment or assessor observation)
- what kind of **flexibility** and **choice** is available regarding accreditation (eg the qualification or award):
 - **level**
 - **type** (eg vocational or academic)
 - **structure** (eg unitised, credit rated and cumulative).

The Working Group on 14–19 Reform was asked to address the current confusing array of qualifications and awards which no longer serve effectively to meet employers' or individual learners' needs. The proposals put forward are still being discussed alongside the government's 14–19 White Paper (DfES 2005b), and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is working to rationalise and update the National Qualifications Framework.

Flexible accreditation

Providers need to keep abreast of current developments and to pay attention to their curriculum offer to ensure there are sufficient and suitable 'rungs' on the ladder to enable learners to progress – both through the levels and across the provision. For example, although many providers have established useful entry points for those with particular learning needs through access and foundation programmes, the curriculum in many areas of learning frequently lacks provision at lower levels.

Curriculum development to meet individual learning needs, addressed in terms of delivery alone, has limited impact without attention to the structure of assessment and accreditation as well. As Exeter College found when evaluating the impact of using a differentiated approach to teaching and learning with pre-16 students :

One very important lesson was learnt from the evaluation: the need to individualise teaching and learning outcomes ... Where possible, a system of differentiated qualification outcomes was introduced. Students were taught the same content but offered accreditation in varying forms and at varying levels. Such arrangements were found to be relatively simple to instigate and would easily transfer to many post-16 situations.

(Jones and Duckett 2005)

The modularisation of the learning programmes combined with unitised assessment and accreditation within a coherent credit framework, which accommodates a range of different modes of assessment, are the main underpinning principles of a flexible and accessible curriculum that is designed to meet individual learning needs. This can result in a more complex structure of provision to administer, especially when it is not accompanied by a supportive funding and reporting system. It also means that learners require good information, advice and guidance simply in order to utilise this complex structure comprising different modes of assessment and delivery to their best advantage.

A route with many roads and some diversions

As QCA points out, the phase of 14–19 education and training is changing rapidly to create more flexibility and choice for learners. For example : 'The new, more flexible curriculum available for Key stage 4 learners from September 2004 means that option choices in Year 9 must be made in the context of opportunities available after Year 11 and even beyond' (QCA 2005).

At 16, learners can exert more choices extending across schools, sixth form colleges, further education and work-based learning, with their programmes increasingly combining elements of provision from more than one collaborating partner and distance learning as well.

Support and guidance

A high quality of impartial support and guidance available to all learners together with regular reviews of their progress and learning goals are essential requirements for all learners to navigate this emerging landscape successfully. And 'a supported process of individual planning and review – in partnership with learners' parents / carers – is especially important for those who have previously had difficulties in engaging with the full curriculum' (QCA 2005).

The availability of suitable qualifications and awards that offer accreditation in an appropriate variety of forms and levels is clearly an important prerequisite for 'a route with many roads and some diversions'. The Open College Networks have made an important contribution to broadening the range of learning and skills which can be accredited and the modes of assessment which can be used, and there is still more work to be done.

The Learning and Skills Council's major project, *Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning*, establishes the approach for quality assuring non-accredited provision such as that often found in:

- part-time adult learning in both formal and informal contexts
- provision for people with learning difficulties and / or disabilities, where primary learning goals may not be accredited outcomes
- provision with outcomes focused on personal and social development (such as Entry to Employment).

This project is now a cornerstone of the new measures of success that are being developed. These will allow judgements to be made that are more sensitive to different rates of learner development and recognise the significance of programmes (eg those funded as 'other provision') which widen participation and support the lifelong learning agenda. The new measures will enable a broader spectrum of learners' achievements to be properly recognised and celebrated. They include distance-travelled measures (for non-graded qualifications) and value-added measures (for all graded Level 3 qualifications) (DfES 2004c).

7. The wider learning environment : meeting individual learning needs

Curriculum entitlement and choice

This is the third of the five key components of the DfES' personalised learning model and, in a literal sense, it is the one that lies at its centre.

As the discussion regarding accreditation and the qualifications framework in chapter 6 suggests, the scope for organisations developing curriculum entitlement and choice to meet individual learning needs is, to some extent, limited by the overall national context and the sector they are in (eg compulsory / post-compulsory).

Within these boundaries, however, organisations can still seek to design their curriculum and overall provision to expand the choices available, as the following examples from a range of different contexts show.

Brighouse High School provides an example of how a school can provide a guaranteed core curriculum with flexibility.

Children in Year 10 have five curriculum routes that they can follow, each of which has a different element of choice. Regular meetings prepare pupils and their parents for these choices during Key stage 3, using a variety of data within the Assessment for Learning framework. Around 50% of the cohort take Route 3, which is made up of the core subjects plus five options, leading to traditional or applied GCSE qualifications. Children who have additional learning needs take Route 5, which includes the core subjects supplemented by vocational and life skills courses and options. Vocational courses in Business and Health and Social Care are the basis of Route 4. Route 2 developed with the freeing up of Key stage 3, which led to the inclusion of BTEC Design, replacing a full GNVQ in Manufacturing. Route 1 contains a combination of two full GNVQs, one of which must be ICT.

(Stokes 2004)

Newham College provides an example of how a college can redesign the curriculum and credit framework to remove ‘system’ barriers to access and progression.

In 1998 Newham College in east London developed the Newham College Access Diploma (NewCAD). This is a credit framework that supports more than 900 units of assessment across six levels of attainment from Entry levels 1, 2 and 3 through to Level 1 Foundation, Level 2 Intermediate and Level 3 Advanced. It removes the glass ceiling preventing success and progression for many foundation learners and provides vocational and specialist learning opportunities.

(Prabhudas 2005)

The London East scheme provides an example of school/college collaboration in 14–19 provision designed to broaden access to vocational specialisms and opportunities for progression to higher education.

The London East scheme extends opportunities akin to those offered by the Increased Flexibility Programme to 14–16 year olds to those aged 19. Colleges and schools are combining to provide tuition in employment sector specialisms, with a bus service organised to enable students to attend part-time courses away from their main place of study. Havering College, working with Havering Sixth Form College, is providing programmes in Construction up to Level 2, and Level 1 in Performing Arts, Art, Design and Media, in a separate building. And schools in Havering are providing placements, as well as releasing 500 pupils to study part time under the scheme. In Havering Borough alone, pupils are attending the courses from nine schools with £750,000 of funding over two years.

(Hook 2005)

Beyond the content, what these examples illustrate is openness to new ideas and willingness to innovate and make changes in order to meet learning needs effectively.

Such changes require :

- clear vision, shared values and sense of purpose, and actions congruent with these on the part of leaders, managers and staff
- resource allocation and management to support strategic and policy initiatives
- the full engagement of learners and staff within the organisation and the involvement of key stakeholders, parents, other educational institutions, employers and other agencies in the community.

Developing this kind of openness and engagement demands a high degree of listening and responsiveness together with a clear sense of purpose, all of which are the hallmark of the learning organisation.

8. Conclusions

How effective and efficient are the provision and related services in meeting the full range of learners' needs and why?

(Ofsted/ALI 2005)

In this book we have explored some of the main issues for providers working to meet individual learning needs. We have used a curriculum development framework that places the individual learner at its centre and we have mainly focused on the role of the teacher and the learner. But it is clear that the effectiveness of their efforts and the extent to which they can actually meet individual learning needs is greatly determined by the nature of the organisational, economic, social and political context that surrounds them.

The most immediate context that has such an impact on the individual teacher's and the individual learner's ability and scope to shape provision to meet individual learning needs is the organisation's leadership and management; its overall aims, style and resourcing strategies; its culture and ethos and the nature of its external links and relationships.

Indeed, the conditions for delivering the DfES' five components of personalised learning, set out in Figure 1 (on page 2), flow from a base established beyond an organisation's boundaries. At the next level, the organisational context itself is significant because of the way this supports and shapes what teachers and learners can do to deliver the vision.

To what extent or how far is the organisation a 'learning organisation'? For example, how open is the organisation to feedback and critical review by those inside and outside it? How far is it committed to continuous improvement in ways that have a real impact on learners' experiences?

In conclusion, we return to the concept of the 'learners' voice' and some of the questions organisations may need to address: How much do they want to hear the learners' voice? How far are they able or willing to respond to it?

The learning organisation and listening to the learner

Consultation is also difficult because it challenges traditional power relationships and assumptions. Both teachers and pupils can feel uneasy with it at first.

(Pollard and James 2004)

Researchers looking at the impact of consultation on pupils, teachers and schools, and what kinds of things learners had to say about their schools, explored some of the difficulties faced by the teachers and the learners. They found that while younger pupils' reluctance to express their views on the school or what the teacher does sprang from a view of the classroom as the teacher's territory, so it was not their 'place' to comment: 'in secondary schools, wariness was more a reflection of pupils' anxiety about retaliation. Teachers might shout at them, give them a detention, or "won't ever let you forget it".'

Overall, the research showed that where schools have established a more trusting and open relationship, what pupils say can make a difference to perceptions and practices at the level of the classroom and the organisation as a whole.

The two most important issues the research identified were authenticity and equity, and each contains a key message for teachers and managers.

Authenticity

Researchers noted that pupils are very quick to detect when consultation is tokenistic. Are teachers really interested and do they respond? Does anything happen after the consultation has been completed? Does the agenda for consultation consist of questions that teachers think are important or questions that pupils think are important? Is the school limiting consultation to topics that do not challenge managers or teachers personally, such as uniforms, or is it prepared to open up issues central to teaching and learning and the whole organisation?

Equity

Consultation assumes social confidence and linguistic competence. More self-assured middle class students who talk the language of the school tend to dominate conversations and teachers tend to privilege them in consultation. But one of the strengths of consultation is the opportunity it provides to hear from the silent – or silenced – pupils and to understand why some disengage and what would help them get back on track.

(Pollard and James 2004)

In conclusion

In meeting individual learning needs an inclusive and responsive organisation has to have equality of opportunity in its ears, in its eyes, in its nose and in its mouth – and, most of all, at its heart.

Appendix. Checklists

Throughout all the checklists you are invited to evaluate practice as follows :

A: well-developed practice

B: practice which has some strengths but needs further development

C: practice which needs much development and support

1. Induction

Have all your learners :

undertaken an initial induction ?	A	B	C
been given the opportunity to undertake identification of need (ION) assessments ?			
had the results of ION assessments promptly communicated to them ?	A	B	C
undertaken diagnostic testing, if applicable ?	A	B	C
had the results of diagnostic tests, if applicable, promptly communicated to them ?	A	B	C
given written permission for the results of ION and diagnostic assessments to be shared with the course teaching team ?	A	B	C
been given the opportunity to contribute to the compilation of a support plan, if required ?	A	B	C
signed a disclaimer to say they have been made aware of their learning difficulty but do not wish to participate in support, if required and applicable? (<i>Teachers need to ensure that they 'leave the door open' for individual learners to reconsider their decision at a later date.</i>)	A	B	C

Was the identification of need assessment :

written at an appropriate level ?	A	B	C
contextualised to make it more interesting and relevant for learners to complete ?	A	B	C
used as a vehicle to obtain information (eg via free-writing exercises) about a learner's personal interests, hobbies and career aspirations that he or she wants to share ? (<i>to be updated regularly throughout the course</i>)	A	B	C

Have you :

undertaken appropriate activities to identify learners' learning skills, preferred approaches and styles ?	A	B	C
provided opportunities for learners to plan and undertake activities to develop the learning skills and approaches they need ?	A	B	C
provided opportunities for learners to develop the skills to talk about their learning ?	A	B	C

2. One-to-one tutorials

Preparation

Do learners and tutors have a clear and shared understanding of the purpose of one-to-one tutorials ?	A	B	C
Are systems in place to provide tutors with relevant and up-to-date information about attendance and progress across the individual's learning programme ?	A	B	C
Do tutors use group tutorial time effectively to build professional relationships and to prepare learners to achieve maximum benefit from one-to-one tutorials ?	A	B	C
Do tutors prepare in advance for each one-to-one tutorial ?	A	B	C
Do learners engage in self-assessment in their preparation for one-to-one tutorials ?	A	B	C
Do group tutorial sessions offer support for the development of the skills needed by learners to self-assess ?	A	B	C

Building a positive climate

Are learners encouraged to start their review by sharing information or evidence of a learning achievement ?	A	B	C
Do discussions take place free from interruption ?	A	B	C
Is furniture arranged to support a private discussion and a shared interest in the learner's progress without encroaching on personal space ?	A	B	C
Is there a clear agenda for the discussion ?	A	B	C

The dialogue

Do learners talk, tutors listen ?	A	B	C
Are learners invited to respond to open questions ?	A	B	C
Are learners invited to expand on, or clarify, points in response to direct questions ?	A	B	C
Are learners invited to identify and celebrate success ?	A	B	C
Do learners identify areas for development with suggestions from tutors ?	A	B	C
Long-term goals and short-term targets	A	B	C
Do learners have clear long-term goals that are reviewed through one-to-one tutorials ?	A	B	C
Do learners set short-term SMART targets that focus on specific aspects of their learning ?	A	B	C
Do learners record SMART targets and action points ?	A	B	C
Do learners understand that the achievement of their SMART targets will take them nearer to their goal ?	A	B	C

2. One-to-one tutorials – continued

Closure

Are learners invited to summarise discussion points and targets?	A	B	C
Are learners clear about what they need to do to improve?	A	B	C
Do learners feel positive about the progress they have made and are they motivated to progress their learning?	A	B	C
Do learners and tutors keep a written record of achievements made towards the overall learning goal and the SMART targets and action points set to move the learner forward?	A	B	C
Do learners feel good about the process?	A	B	C

3. Learning and teaching

Have you :

identified a designated link support tutor from each department / faculty to act as a conduit to keep curriculum area staff fully informed of individuals' progress and attendance at designated support sessions ?	A	B	C
sought the help of specialist learning support staff to assist in tailoring the learning and teaching material to meet individual learners' needs ?	A	B	C

Learning to learn. Have you provided opportunities for learners to know how to :

summarise ?	A	B	C
ask questions ?	A	B	C
use answers to improve their work ?	A	B	C
review and evaluate their work and that of others ?	A	B	C
identify if they prefer to study quietly on their own or in groups ?	A	B	C
find out what works best for them in terms of study habits ?	A	B	C
manage time ?	A	B	C
take notes ?	A	B	C
compile and use spider diagrams and mind maps ?	A	B	C
identify key words ?	A	B	C
identify reasons why they would benefit from achieving the learning goals and ultimately the qualification ?	A	B	C
set targets and use individual learning plans to promote achievement ?	A	B	C
access learning support ?	A	B	C
identify personal strengths and weaknesses ?	A	B	C
identify strategies so that they can work to their strengths ?	A	B	C
analyse the learning environment and what impedes learning for them ?	A	B	C
identify strategies for eliminating distractions ?	A	B	C
identify the requirements of learning independently ?	A	B	C
use appropriate study skills and strategies to overcome weaknesses ?	A	B	C
identify strategies for project / assignment management ?	A	B	C
use their knowledge and self-awareness of their learning skills and approaches to improve their learning effectiveness, eg in learning and teaching sessions, undertaking homework and revision and completing coursework ?	A	B	C
analyse the key factors that promote their self-confidence and aid study ?	A	B	C

4. Learner engagement

To guard against learner disengagement, here is a set of questions that address some common 'turn offs'. Teachers may wish to ask themselves as part of a session evaluation:

Did I have an enthusiastic teaching style?	A	B	C
Did I have a negative approach to my session delivery?	A	B	C
Did I have a negative approach to some of my learners?	A	B	C
Did I have the right resources to support session delivery?	A	B	C
Did I try to give answers when I wasn't sure of my facts – possibly providing misleading information?	A	B	C
Do I sometimes put on a performance to the detriment of getting to know my learners?	A	B	C
Did I consistently endeavour to build productive relations with every learner to promote learning?	A	B	C
Do I know my learners as well as I need to?	A	B	C
Do I know the strengths and weaknesses of each of my learners regarding their learning skills, preferred styles and approaches?	A	B	C
Did I plan the session to enable all of my learners to develop effective learning skills, styles and approaches to their learning?	A	B	C
Did I encourage my learners to reflect on their learning skills, styles and approaches to their learning and to develop their self-awareness?	A	B	C
Did I endeavour to build on the learners' existing knowledge and skills base?	A	B	C
Did I use jargon in session delivery without explaining it?	A	B	C
Did I encourage each learner to participate in the session?	A	B	C
Did I succeed in actively involving every learner?	A	B	C
Did I set and communicate high expectations for each learner?	A	B	C
Do I really believe every learner can achieve and communicate this to all individuals?	A	B	C
Did I provide prompt and constructive feedback to each of the learners on their performance?	A	B	C

5. Engaging learners in learning and teaching sessions

Do you:

provide short introductions to sessions, linking the previous session and building on previous learning?	A	B	C
set and communicate high expectations for all learners?	A	B	C
believe every learner can achieve and communicate this to all individuals?	A	B	C
actively involve every learner?	A	B	C
build in opportunities for every learner to contribute in class or the workshop, to demonstrate their strengths to the group and to build self-esteem?	A	B	C
provide clear instructions on what is required and check all learners' understanding?	A	B	C
compile appropriate, differentiated support material so that learners can refer to this resource for additional instructions?	A	B	C
brief learning support assistants on the requirements of an activity so that they can provide appropriate support as and when required?	A	B	C
ensure each learner is stretched and provide extension activities to challenge the more able learner?	A	B	C
summarise the session?	A	B	C
review learning objectives at the conclusion of every session?	A	B	C
provide feedback to learners on their performance?	A	B	C
always end a session on a positive note?	A	B	C

6. Planning for differentiation within learning and teaching sessions

Does your session plan :

include information about your learners' skills for learning (including basic skills assessments), preferred approaches and learning styles, and references to their individual learning plans?	A	B	C
demonstrate an inclusive approach?	A	B	C
provide details on activities and where they help learners develop their <i>Skills for Life</i> in terms of teaching strategies?	A	B	C
provide details on activities and where they help learners develop independence (including self-management, self-confidence and communication skills) in terms of teaching strategies?	A	B	C
provide details on activities and where they cater for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning in terms of teaching strategies?	A	B	C

7. Audit tool for differentiated support materials (handouts/workbooks) for *visual* learning

Do your learning resources feature :

pictures?	A	B	C
mind maps?	A	B	C
diagrams?	A	B	C
flow charts?	A	B	C
key words?	A	B	C
colours that help the brain remember?	A	B	C
information in bullet-point format expanding on key words?	A	B	C

8. Audit tool for differentiated support materials for *auditory* learning

Do your learning resources feature :

audio-tape recordings as well as, or as an alternative to, notes and handouts?	A	B	C
music to be played when learners study?	A	B	C
use of multimedia materials, eg CD-ROMs?	A	B	C

9. Assignments, tasks and activities

Have you built in:

activities that allow learners to experience things for themselves?	A	B	C
activities that allow learners to work at their own pace?	A	B	C
opportunities for independent learning?	A	B	C
opportunities for distance learning with support material, eg e-learning and workbooks?	A	B	C
opportunities for resource-based learning with appropriate support provided?	A	B	C
opportunities for mastery learning to take place?	A	B	C

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Useful websites

Basic Skills Agency

www.basic-skills.co.uk

The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit's website, Read Write Plus: for information on literacy, numeracy and language skills of adults in England

www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

Institute for Learning and Research Technology, University of Bristol: work on multiple aspects of technologies in the five main themes

www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk

Resource Discovery Network: internet resources for main areas of learning in further and higher education

www.rdn.ac.uk

Skills for Life Network

www.skillsforlifenet.com

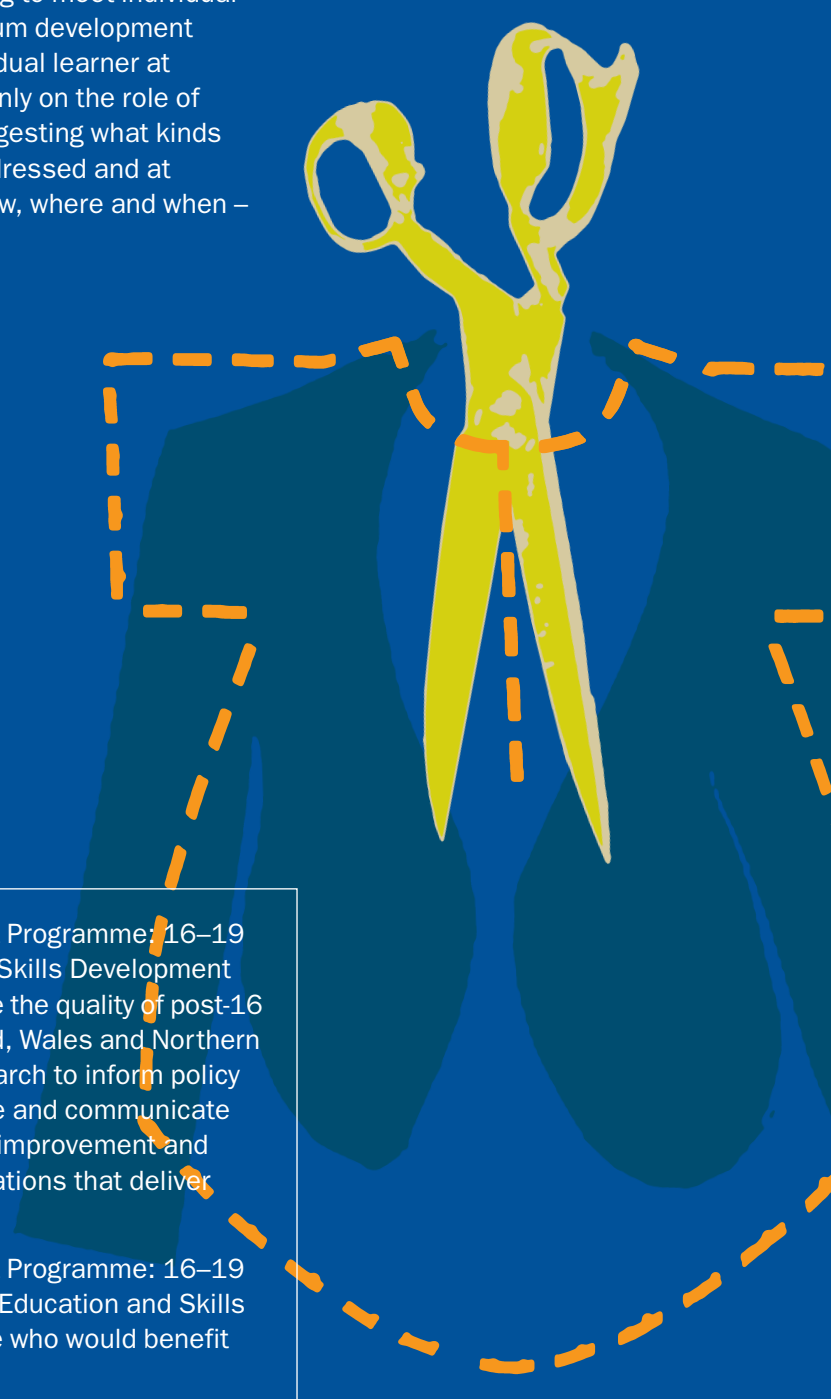
Virtual Training Suite: free online tutorials in many areas of learning

www.vts.rdn.ac.uk

Vocational Learning Support Programme: 16–19

The 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper emphasises the importance of a system that is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual learner. This book explores some of the main issues for providers working to meet individual learning needs. Using a curriculum development framework that places the individual learner at its centre, the book focuses mainly on the role of the teacher and the learner, suggesting what kinds of learning needs have to be addressed and at what points in the provision – how, where and when – providers should address them.

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