

## *IncludeAll* - Core Concepts: Understanding how students learn

As we know, students learn in different ways. This is likely to be influenced by a number of different factors such as their particular learning styles, their own preferences based on experience, and their current needs. We cannot, therefore, assume that how we like to teach will necessarily be the way our students want to learn.

Clearly, it would be impossible either to cater for the needs of every single student in every teaching session, but by using a variety of different approaches, it is likely that we will meet the needs and preferences of the majority in the group and lessen the need for individual adjustments. This will also help students to feel accepted, boosting their self-esteem and confidence in learning.

**What our students say:**

*'The lecturer used different ways to suit all students e.g. group-tasks, presentations, mind-maps, videos and visual aids.'*

(Level 4 BA Early Childhood Studies)

In its broadest sense effective learning is likely to occur when opportunities to learn involve (JISC, 2004; p11):

- The right resources
- The right mode of delivery
- The right context and right learners
- With the right level of support.

This lies at the heart of an '*IncludeAll*' approach to teaching in which we should be aiming to not disadvantage anyone. Indeed it is important to remember that some students will have particular challenges if all of our teaching was predominantly using one approach.

Anticipating that in your groups you have will have students who might show a preference for Visual, Auditory, Read/Write or Kinaesthetic learning, the following table gives some ideas of what strategies they may favour.

### **Visual –**

learning through seeing



- Annotating power-point presentations
- Underlining key words
- Colour-coding/highlighting
- Mind-mapping
- Converting words into symbols
- Converting hand-outs into diagrams

### **Auditory –**

learning through listening



- Discussing in groups
- Lecture-capture through audio-recordings
- Reading notes out aloud
- Gaining comprehension or coming to a conclusion by talking it

### **Read/Write –**

learning through reading and writing



- Taking notes in class
- Re-writing notes
- Writing and prioritising lists
- Reading material prior to the class
- Annotating tables and diagrams

### **Kinaesthetic - learning**

through touching, moving and doing



- Being actively engaged in group-work
- Hands-on projects
- Problem solving by experimentation
- Moving about the room to think

Use of a learning styles inventory might be a useful way to explore the learning preferences of students. This can sometimes be a purposeful induction activity in which approaches to learning can be examined and discussed. An easy to use and accessible learning styles questionnaire can be found at:

- <http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm>
- <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm>



### Checklist for reflection: learning styles

Having explored learning styles with your students in your planning you may wish to reflect on the following questions:

<p>In a typical teaching session, what percentage of my content is aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual learners?</li> <li>• Auditory learners?</li> <li>• Learners who prefer reading and writing?</li> <li>• Kinaesthetic learners?</li> </ul>	
<p>What percentage of my teaching session is aligned to the needs of each of the following learning preferences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who reflect first rather than readily join in (reflectors)</li> <li>• Students who 'jump straight in' rather than reflect first (activists)</li> <li>• Students who prefer theoretical underpinnings to arguments (theorists)</li> <li>• Students who like to work out how something could be implemented in practice (pragmatists)</li> </ul>	
<p>What simple changes could I make to my teaching methods in order to meet a wider variety of learning preferences?</p>	
<p>What changes to my assessments (either formative or summative) might meet the learning preferences of a wider group of students?</p>	
<p>How can I further integrate technology to ensure that students can access my teaching content in different ways?</p>	

## Reflection into action



Having reflected on the above, my key priorities are:

Changes to be introduced	By when	Indicators that it has made my practice more inclusive

**Reference:** JISC (2004) *Effective Practice in e-Learning*. Bristol: Hefce.

This document is part of an inclusive practice 'toolkit' - *IncludeAll*. The whole Toolkit, as one complete document or as separate documents, can be found on the University website at [www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice).

It is split into four sections: Core Concepts; Inclusive by Design; Enhancing Practice; Checklists for Self-reflection.

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