

ABERDEEN COLLEGE

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Aberdeen College recognises that the relationship between learning and teaching is not straightforward. Effective learning does not depend wholly on effective teaching, and good teaching does not necessarily ensure good learning. Nevertheless it is obvious that good teaching will promote effective learning.
- 1.2 Aberdeen College is committed to providing opportunities for effective learning for a wide cross-section of the community, within the limitations of available resources and within the constraints of governmental policy and statutory obligations.
- 1.3 The College creates an effective learning environment, by carefully planning the College's curriculum and by providing good guidance, support for individual learning and personal needs of learners, the recruitment and selection of the best staff available, continuous professional development for all staff, high quality learning resources and high quality teaching.
- 1.4 The overall aim of the College's learning and teaching strategy is to enable learners to reach their full potential with maximum achievement of new skills and knowledge, and the attainment of certificated qualifications.
- 1.3 Aberdeen College recognises that different individuals and groups have different learning styles and – that effective learning for any individual is likely to be best achieved by a variety of approaches to refresh and renew the commitment and level of interest and to reinforce learning. As such the College is committed to providing a range of teaching approaches adjusted to meet the needs of client groups and individuals – with in particular a commitment to a variety of stimulating and dynamic approaches that cover the range of learning styles.
- 1.4 Aberdeen College recognises that learning is not restricted to the formal contexts of taught programmes, but that individuals are continually learning in informal contexts as they participate in the life and work of the College. As such the College is concerned to draw upon and contribute to the wider educational experience of learners beyond the formal "syllabus", including the development of the four capacities underpinning Curriculum for Excellence.
- 1.5 The College's strategy for learning and teaching is focused on the development of the essential skills for learning, life and work so that learners are equipped to progress from College to employment or to degree level study.
- 1.6 Aberdeen College is committed to the use of appropriate technologies in the delivery of College programmes, and in particular the developing role of information and learning technologies. The College values these technologies not in isolation, but as tools and media that can lend enrichment, variety and strength to the delivery of taught activity and improve the effectiveness of learning. Such tools enhance the potential for the curriculum to be delivered flexibly and efficiently and in ways that meet the diverse needs of learners and local economic circumstances.
- 1.7 Aberdeen College recognises the importance of working with those in the secondary education and university sectors to develop improved learning experiences and in particular to smooth transitions, in accordance with the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

2.0 Context

As with any complex human activity, there is a range of theories of learning and of related approaches to teaching.

The applicable paradigm for learning in any group or individual situation depends on a complex range of factors – psychological, sociological, historical, geographic, cultural, technical and financial/economic.

The College through its own CPD services and through the support of the University of Aberdeen, School of Education familiarises staff with a wide range of aspects of learning theory and of teaching approaches.

While the College does not promote a single approach – or set of approaches – to teaching as being the only approved ones, the College does in general terms expect that the approach of each teacher will display a number of generic characteristic features that underlie effective teaching.

3.0 Underlying principles of effective teaching at Aberdeen College.

- (i) Flexibility and adaptability – to reflect differing learning styles
- (ii) Variety of medium and activity – to provide maximum stimulus and reinforcement and to fully engage learners.
- (iii) Effective programme and lesson tautology planning and review
- (iv) Active involvement of learners – to engage interest and receptiveness
- (v) Interactivity – to promote supportive group activity
- (vi) Opportunity for learners to proceed at their own pace – to ensure each person's learning is optimised in the available time
- (vii) Study support – to provide learners with additional customised teaching or re-teaching for specific aspects which have particularly challenged them
- (viii) Systematic approach – to cover the content of the programme in a logical and coherent way
- (ix) Reinforcement – to make sure that the key concepts are properly embedded
- (x) Appropriate learning materials, involving a mix of verbal, visual and audio material as relevant to the particular programme
- (xi) Appropriate technical resources – to use the power of relevant available technologies to explain concepts, illustrate them, embed them and facilitate learner engagement
- (xii) Respect and equality – to promote relationships between staff and learners, and between learners that provide the appropriate emotional climate within which effective learning can take place
- (xiii) Access and inclusion – to establish as an integral part of all delivery that the programme is made accessible to all those who could benefit from it with appropriate support and reasonable adjustments
- (xiv) Encouraging independence and self-reflection – so that individual learners are able to understand how they best learn, can manage their own learning, and supplement taught classes with their own managed self-teaching
- (xv) Appropriate role for assessment – to ensure that formative assessment plays a supportive role in learning and that summative assessment does not unavoidably impede the process of learning.
- (xvi) Recognise and disseminate good practice approaches across all curriculum areas.

4.0 Strategy

4.1 The main strands of the strategy are to:

- (i) Ensure staff have an understanding of different teaching approaches, and the ability to use them as appropriate pro a to the needs of the group and individuals within the group
- (ii) Ensure staff have the skills needed to, and regularly and routinely undertake to, collect evidence on the effectiveness of particular approaches in the teaching of different groups, involving both quantitative measures of achievement and qualitative measures of satisfaction
- (iii) Maintain a comprehensive range of up-to-date electronic technologies and applications relevant to the College's curriculum offer – including both generic computing applications, but also relevant bespoke or customised technologies relevant to each specific vocational area
- (iv) Provide training for staff in the relevant technologies and applications -- including training in the functioning of the technologies and the way in which they can be integrated into the delivery of the curriculum
- (v) Ensure that the available and relevant technologies are integrated into programmes as relevant to enrich the learning experience, promote effective learning, encourage independence in the learner and increase learner satisfaction
- (vi) Manage course provision within the curriculum cycle that ensures effective planning, development, delivery and review (see Curriculum Cycle and Quality Assurance for Course Provision Policy)
- (vii) Assist staff in the identification of teaching and learning approaches and resources that are congruent with the appropriate teaching methodologies for their programmes – and where necessary direct and assist them to develop additional approaches and resources
- (viii) Undertake lesson observation to ensure that good practice in teaching is implemented in relation to each group and in accordance with the needs of individuals within the group
- (ix) Undertake audits of learning resources to ensure that they reflect good practice relevant to the needs of different groups and individuals in terms of:
 - The range and balance of different types of activity

- The relationships between staff and learners
 - The extent to which dynamic teaching approaches that fully engage learners are being applied
 - The accessibility of the materials for those with additional needs
 - The effectiveness of the materials in terms of how they are structured
 - The use of technology
 - Evidence of interactive activities that engage the learner
 - Awareness of the need to involve a range of sensory substance for learners in undertaking their study
 - The avoidance of any stereotype
 - Consistent application of Programme Delivery Guidelines
 - Embedding the principles of Curriculum for Excellence across the curriculum
- (x) Assist learners in developing effective essential skills for learning, life and work so that they can increasingly become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors
- (xi) Provide learners with support for their learning that takes account of both general and specific learning difficulties, and for different paces of learning
- (xii) Ensure staff are aware of and adjust their teaching approaches to take account of the different learning styles of groups and individuals
- (xiii) Take account of the teaching approaches that learners have encountered in the past, and build on them, and help learners to develop their learning styles and study skills to prepare for future learning within the College, in other types of institutions and in less formal learning contexts
- (xiv) Support learners to develop the essential skills for learning, life and work
- (xv) Work with universities with which the College has articulation agreements to exchange good practice in learning and teaching and to develop jointly new approaches that foster learner engagement.

5.0 Responsibilities

- 5.1 *Principal and Director (Curriculum and Learning)*, and other members of *Senior Management Team*
- Providing an overall vision of learning and teaching in the College, and developing an understanding across the College of the vision and how it is to be achieved
 - Developing overall strategy in relation to learning and teaching, applying appropriate resources to ensure the availability of effective staffing and appropriate physical resources.
- 5.2 *Vice Principal (Director of Human Resource Management and Development)*
- Developing and implementing a Quality Improvement Strategy which includes such activities as:
 - Advising managers and staff on awarding body requirements
 - Supporting the induction of new lecturers and PN Visiting Lecturers
 - Acting as mentors for new lecturers and lecturers undertaking development programmes
 - Providing training and support in relation to the assessment process
 - Carrying out audits of curriculum areas on agreed themes
 - Carrying out lesson observations of lecturers, instructors and PN visiting lecturers against agreed standards and identifying good practice and areas for intervention
 - Conducting student focus groups and identifying good practice and themes for further investigation.
- 5.3 Staff Development (responsible to Vice Principal (Director of Human Resource Management and Development))
- Training in teaching approaches – through
 - in-house provision
 - tailored courses
 - arranging attendance at short courses outwith the College
 - arranging attendance on TQFE
 - Training in the recognition of different learning styles and how teaching strategies can respond to them
 - Training in the diagnosis of learning difficulty and in how they may be supported for relevant staff
 - Delivering a range accredited training including PDA Advanced Diploma-Teaching in Further Education, Assessor and Verifier Awards and New to FE
 - Deliver training on learning and teaching topics, behaviour management, quality improvement and equality and diversity.
- 5.4 *Director (Curriculum and Learning)*
- Establishing the basic framework of provision within the Sectors/Teams

- Allocating resources as required to support the delivery of the curriculum in those areas
- Monitoring outcomes and taking remedial action where required
- Overseeing the processes of performance management in those areas.
- Ensuring staff are up-to-date with Curriculum for Excellence developments.

5.5 *Sector Managers and Department Managers* (responsible to Director (Curriculum and Learning))

- Planning the framework of provision within the Sector/Department.

5.6 *Team Managers* (responsible to Sector/Department Managers)

- Ensuring allocated resources are used to best impact in the delivery of the curriculum
- Conducting performance management and ensuring that issues of performance (including delivery of teaching) are addressed quickly and effectively.
- Ensuring Programme Delivery Guidelines are customised for the curriculum area they manage.

5.7 *Curriculum Leaders* (responsible to Team Managers)

- Delivering the curriculum in a particular area
- Developing new provision
- Using allocated resources to greatest impact
- Ensuring the currency of teaching materials
- Ensuring the coherence and excellence of teaching approaches across the area.

5.8 *Senior Lecturers (ILT) and Senior Lecturer (Inclusiveness)*

- Providing mentoring, guidance and support for teaching staff in specific curriculum areas and showing leadership in developing effective and varied teaching approaches through, e.g.
 - providing support for new staff, to familiarise them with available learning resources and College expectations, and helping them adjust to the teaching role
 - providing support for staff experiencing difficulties (e.g. as identified through lesson observation) to help them develop new and appropriate teaching approaches
 - researching new learning resources and teaching approaches relevant to the curriculum area and communicating them to colleagues
 - providing opportunities for other staff to observe their teaching approaches
 - acting as a role model of effective professional practice and behaviours for other staff
 - providing leadership in the use of the VLE and other aspects of information and learning technologies
 - providing "master-classes" for groups of other staff.

6.0 Related documents

6.1 Strategies and Policies:

- (i) Learning Resources Strategy (defines the College's approach to the deployment of resources – materials, equipment, facilities – to promote effective learning and teaching)
- (ii) Information Technology Strategy (defines the College's overall approach to the acquisition and deployment of information and communication technologies for use both in the management of the College and in the delivery of services, including learning and teaching, to learners and other clients)
- (iii) Curriculum Development Strategy (defines the College's overall approach to developing a curriculum portfolio to meet the needs of diverse groups of clients)
- (iv) Criteria to Govern Course Provision Policy (defines the basic criteria that are applied in determining whether a given course should be introduced or continued)
- (v) Learning Materials Policy (defines the standards required of all College materials for teaching and assessment)
- (vi) Quality Assurance for Course Provision Policy (defines the overall basis for the management of College course provision)
- (vii) Flexible Assessment Policy (defines the College's overall approach to carrying out assessment flexibility through traditional (i.e. paper-based) and computer-based approaches)
- (viii) Retention, Achievement and Attainment Strategy (defines the College's overall approach to ensuring that the way services are delivered to learners maximise their retention and achievement)
- (ix) Inclusiveness Strategy (defines the College's overall approach to ensuring it is inclusive in its approach to both learners and staff)
- (x) Inclusiveness Policy (defines specific roles and responsibilities in relation to providing inclusive services to learners).

6.2 Guidelines and Support Materials:

- (i) Curriculum Cycle (defines the process by which courses are approved for development, developed, delivered, monitored, reviewed and, where appropriate, withdrawn)
- (ii) Code of Professional Practice and Conduct – Lecturing Staff (defines the overall expectations of lecturing staff in terms of professional behaviour)
- (iii) Clients Charter (defines the College's general commitments to learners and other clients in terms of quality of service)
- (iv) Teaching – Best Practice Guidelines and Lesson Observation Checklist (defines the basic standards that are expected in all College lessons)
- (v) Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour (defines the expected approach to dealing with learners who behave in a disruptive way)
- (vi) Quality Standards for VLE-based Learning (defines the standards expected in terms of materials on the VLE and how they are used)
- (vii) Programme Delivery Guidelines for each curriculum area.

6.3 Standards and Quality in Scottish Further Education

- (i) Education Scotland's arrangements for quality assurance in Scotland's colleges
- (ii) Curriculum for Excellence – Building the Curriculum 3, 4 and 5.

7.0 This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the College's Assessment, and Retention, Achievement and Attainment Strategies.