

How do I cater for different learning styles?

Module focus

- individual learning styles

Module outcomes

- you will be more familiar with the commonly recognised different learning styles
- you will be better placed to understand how you might cater for different learning styles in your teaching

'I notice in class that some students write down everything I show on the screen, yet others just seem to sit there and don't write anything. How can they expect to remember everything for the exam? Some of my students are willing to contribute to our discussions, but not many. I realise that people learn in different ways, but I'm not sure many of my students are learning much. I noticed a colleague's class last week in which all the students seem to be involved in the activities. It doesn't seem to happen in mine.'

Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching?

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Possible solutions

1. A learning style inventory in your first or an early class.
2. Use a mix of media for conveying your content in class.
3. Plan learning activities which involve a range of verbal, visual, 'hands-on' and movement elements.
4. Explain to your students that you are using a range of media and approaches so as to both acknowledge and encourage different learning styles.

Example:

In class, use a combination of verbal communication of content and instructions and visual representations of the same things. If you are explaining a concept, have students construct or fill in a flow chart or table or diagram as you are doing so. Then, by asking the students to compare and discuss their completed charts/tables/diagrams, you have responded to several learning styles in one situation.

More help

Here are some resources from which you may seek further advice. They are all annotated so as to assist you in making judgements about what might be useful advice for your particular teaching context. By exploring some or all of these resources, you may well be able to generate strategies to suit your particular circumstances.

1. <http://tip.psychology.org/styles.html> - provides a brief overview of several known learning styles, plus some links to further reading.
2. <http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/ILSdir/styles.htm> - based on the Felder-Silverman model of learning styles, this site looks at learning styles from the point of view of the student, by offering suggestions about strategies to use to develop a balanced approach to learning if their preferred style is not catered for by their lecturer.

3. http://www.ncsu.edu/effective_teaching/Learning_Styles.html - this site includes a brief discussion and several links to articles with an engineering and science education emphasis.
4. <http://www.wvabe.org/CITE/cite.pdf> - this site contains an extensive discussion of different learning styles and offers suggestions for appropriate teaching techniques to cater for each different style, as well as a learning styles measurement instrument.
5. <http://ctl.unc.edu/tfi1.html> - touches on a range of techniques to address all learning styles.
6. <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=advice> - downloadable learning styles inventory.
7. <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/pgr/resources/teaching/theories/theories> - a collection of resources on learning styles and learning theorists.

Alert !

You cannot expect to cater for all learning styles all of the time.

Related topics

How do I motivate my students to learn?