Teaching and Learning:
Differentiation in Teaching Methods Policy
(Related to the Curriculum Policy)

Applies to:
- The whole college along with all activities provided by the college, including those outside of the normal college hours;
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching), the directors and volunteers working in the college.

Related Documents:
- Curriculum Policy
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy
- Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Marking Policy
- Planning Policy
- Homework Policy
- Special educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy

Availability
This Policy is made available to parents, staff and students in the following ways: via the college Website, within the Parent Policies Folder in the reception area, and on request a copy may be obtained from the College Office.

Monitoring and Review:
- We are aware of the need to review the Differentiation Policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of Collingham College.
- The Board of Directors undertakes an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed: Dr Sally Powell
Principal

Date: August 2015

Robert Marsden
For the Board of Directors
• Differentiation at Collingham College takes place in all lessons in order to ensure that each and every one of our students is able to access the curriculum to their full potential and to feel confident in their success as a learner. Effective differentiation helps students to realise excellence through perseverance, two of the core values held at the very heart of the college’s ethos, which is to Celebrate Every Individual. For this reason, our ultimate aim is that differentiation should be personalised, such that each child is able to work to secure maximum learning and engagement. Our Differentiation policy and procedures take into consideration the implications of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Differentiation at Collingham College takes five distinct forms:

• **By task** – where students of differing abilities and/or learning styles are given tailored activities to enable them to achieve the Learning Objective to the best of their abilities.

• **By outcome** – where all students are given the same, open-ended tasks to complete allowing for student response at different levels. This can be demonstrated through the use of ‘All, Most, Some’ structure for Learning Outcomes, within an all-encompassing Objective. This should not be relied on regularly as the sole means of differentiation, however, since it can inhibit the attainment of students at the lower-performing end of the class.

• **By support** – where more support is given to some students than others. It should not be assumed that more support will necessarily be given to one particular student demographic, since it will vary by task – in some situations, for example, those students with SEND may need personalised support, whilst in others EPP students may need help to reach the next level of understanding.

• **By choice** – Where more than one method or strategy may be deployed in order to achieve the same Learning Outcome, students are allowed to select the style/method that will work for them, and that they enjoy. This is most effectively used when accompanied by student metacognitive reflection upon how each child learns best.

• **By resource** – Where a different array of resources may be provided based on attainment and understanding, since some resources may be more or less suitable dependent upon literacy, speed of working, need for stretch and challenge, etc.

A truly effective lesson makes use of multiple types of differentiation. At Collingham College, differentiation is central to teaching and learning and ensures that all learners can access the learning provided. Our students have a wide ability and age range and for some students English may be their second language.

A curriculum that is differentiated for every student will:

• build on past achievements;

• present challenges to allow for more achievements;

• provide opportunities for success;

• remove barriers to participation

Students learn at different rates, have different areas of interest and different levels of motivation. It is unlikely that all students in the same class will be at the same level in particular attainment targets. Similarly, it is unlikely that any one student will be at the same level in all parts of a programme of study.

All classes will require an element of differentiation if the students are to meet all the learning outcomes. The following is a guide to how we attempt to achieve this, and to make tasks accessible to the whole range of students within a class.

**Differences in ‘learning styles’**

Teachers should be aware that whilst ‘learning styles’ are not fixed, and should not be seen as a restriction on students’ ability to learn in different ways, nonetheless students have ‘habitual’ or ‘preferred’ learning styles (Sternberg, 1997: 134). The differences in learning styles are often linked with personality and emotional factors. Teachers should be aware of this wealth of individual differences within their teaching groups, and maintain a flexible approach to teaching methods. A wide range of audio, kinaesthetic and visual resources is encouraged in order to create a greater variety within each lesson.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

To differentiate effectively, teachers must recognise the differences in learners and create learning opportunities for all these students. This requires activities in which students can learn at different rates, to different levels and employ a range of strategies.

There are obvious ways in which the curriculum does need differentiation for some individuals. Students with visual impairment will require enlarged texts in addition to the presentation of the lesson through a variety of media. Hearing impaired students will need to sit in the best possible position to make use of residual hearing and see the teacher in order to lip-read. Precise advice on this should be obtained from the SEND register, and further information can be obtained from the SENDCO if required.

Differentiation can be tackled from several standpoints, for example by presenting and setting tasks at various levels of complexity. It can also be addressed by the way in which the children are expected to carry out tasks, the groupings, resources,
and mechanisms for feedback by teachers and students. It is difficult to differentiate in terms of outcome as students on A Level, and Foundation programmes must take the same assessments at the end of the course. However, in some subjects at GCSE level, students can take assessments at different levels.

**Electus Programme (EPP)**
Within the context of Collingham College meeting the requirements of those who would be designated able, gifted or talented, is applied through our Electus Programme. EPP students may suffer from a decline in focus and motivation without some attention to differentiation. This can be addressed, to some extent, by extending the existing curriculum and setting more challenging homework assignments for these students. It is recommended that ‘challenge’ work be provided in all lessons and homework tasks wherever possible. This should not be ‘more of the same’, but rather should prompt higher-level thought or skill usage in as engaging a manner as possible.

**Learning environment:**
The aim is to create a learning environment which encourages children to engage their abilities to the greatest extent possible, including taking risks and building knowledge and skills in what they perceive as a safe environment. It should be:

- **encouraging independence** - tolerating and encouraging child initiative;
- **accepting** - encouraging acceptance of others' ideas and opinions before evaluating them;
- **complex** - including a rich variety of resources, media, ideas, methods and tasks.

**Process modification:**
The aim is to promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills, and to encourage productive use and management of the knowledge the children have mastered. This can be facilitated by encouraging:

- **higher levels of thinking** – setting tasks which involve logical problems, critical thinking and problem solving;
- **open-endedness** - encouraging risk-taking and the response that is right for the student by stressing there is no one right answer;
- **group interaction** - with highly able and motivated students sparking each other in the task, with this sometimes being on a competitive and sometimes on a cooperative basis (depending on the task and its objectives);
- **variable pacing** - allowing students to move through lower order thinking more rapidly but allowing more time for children to respond fully on higher order thinking tasks;
- **variety of learning processes** - accommodating different student’s ‘learning styles’;
- **debriefing** - encouraging students to be aware of and able to articulate their reasoning or conclusion to a problem or question;
- **freedom of choice** - involving students in evaluation of choices of topics, methods, products and environments;
- **grouping strategies** - facilitating students to work with "like minds", in some situations, or deliberately using ‘mixed-ability’ grouping where interaction and differentiated roles may benefit all participants.

**Language Considerations**
It can be misleading to assume that the language used by a teacher will be understood by all the class. Some students have very weak linguistic abilities with both receptive and expressive language problems. They may miscomprehend simple commands and appear to be lazy or stubborn, when in reality they just do not understand the instructions. Bearing this in mind, the teacher needs to differentiate the language used, keeping it simple, again highlighting key words, and ask students to repeat the instructions of a given task in their own words.

**Good Teaching Practices**
Teachers should get to know the students well, becoming aware of any factors which may affect their learning, e.g. minor hearing problems. Moving around the class will let students feel they have had the teacher’s individual attention. An ethos should be established whereby a contribution from students is valued, with all achievements being celebrated and students being encouraged to become involved and to take risks with the articulation of ideas and suggestions.

Constructive feedback should be given to students orally and in the marking of their work. Records of assessment, which indicate what each student has already achieved and their individual levels of understanding, are also kept.

**Useful strategies to use in the Classroom**

**Readiness / Ability**
Varying the level of questioning (and consequent thinking skills) is a useful strategy for accommodating differences in ability or readiness.

**Adjusting Questions**
During large group discussion activities, teachers direct the higher level questions to students who can handle them and adjust questions accordingly for students with greater needs. All students are answering important questions that require them to think but the questions are targeted towards the student’s ability or readiness level.
Summary
Even within ‘similar’ groupings there will be a wide range of learning styles, and the lesson structures require breaking down into various sub-tasks which are multi-sensory and clearly defined. Teachers need to know what the Learning Outcomes are, and assess whether these have been reached.¹