

Standards Unit

IMPROVING DIFFERENTIATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

TOPIC 1: WHAT IS DIFFERENTIATION?

Topic overview

Topic 1 introduces the idea of differentiation. It explores what we mean by the term differentiation, and identifies which approaches to teaching and learning are most effective in supporting differentiation in the group room or workshop.

‘What is differentiation?’ underpins all the topics in this section of the manual, and we strongly advise you to complete this topic before moving on to the other aspects of differentiation covered in Topics 2-4.

‘What is differentiation?’ is in three parts, each containing one activity. The activities are described below, with approximate timings. The activities are designed to make up a coherent CPD programme, which could be delivered as a series of half-day or one-day programmes, or split into a series of shorter sessions.

Activity 1: Defining differentiation (1 hr, 15 mins)

This is a preparatory activity that asks participants to explore their understanding of differentiation and agree a definition. If time is short, or if participants are more experienced, you may prefer simply to use the PowerPoint slides provided on the ‘CPD resource’ and ‘Supporting materials’ CD-ROM to set the scene and offer some definitions for discussion. Participants also have an opportunity to identify obstacles to differentiation and explore solutions.

Activity 2: Which methods differentiate best? (1 hr – 1 hr, 5 mins)

This is a ‘card-sort’ activity that asks participants to review a range of teaching methods and to discuss and assess their effectiveness in meeting individual learners’ needs. Participants then discuss how they might adapt some of these methods to make them differentiate better. These cards have been developed to be generic and can be used as part of an organisation’s CPD programmes for all areas of learning.

Activity 3: Differentiation in practice (30 mins – 1 hr)

In this activity participants are asked to work on their own session plans, in order to introduce into their work more teaching methods and activities that differentiate well.

Each activity has facilitator guidance and participants’ briefing sheets, also available on the ‘CPD resource’ CD-ROM. The facilitator guidance includes details of the resources you will need and PowerPoint slides to use. It also offers suggestions about how you might use and follow up the activity.