**Ideas for Differentiated Activity**

Produced by the Centre for Learning & Teaching

In order for all of your students (who may have different levels of understanding and ability) to absorb and process learning material and content, it can be necessary to adopt a more differentiated approach to the learning process. This approach focuses on i)*individualising* your students learning experience, or ii) *differentiating*activities depending on your students’ needs. (Anderson, 2007).

This should contribute to students having a more lasting and deeper acquisition of knowledge, build their self-esteem and autonomy as learners. (Tulbure, 2011)

It is recommended to design focussed, personalised activity into your course from the outset/beginning. Think about it with your course or module team as you design and teach the course through each academic level. (Kratochvílová and Havel, [2013](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603116.2020.1813450))

This might be i) identifying various options for directed reading in module guides and teaching sessions, ii) activities and questioning to enhance higher order thinking, iii) embedded staged activities to support your students' preparation for their assessment, iv) visible differentiated activities in practical classes.

All these interventions are located within a wider context of you understanding and reviewing all your students' abilities, potential and progress. (Tuner at al, 2017).

For more information about the principles of differentiated learning visit the Teach Learn webpage <https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/the-learning-pathway/challenging-your-students/challenging-curriculum/personalised-learning/>

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## Consider trying these….

## 1. Reading

Include clear, signposted differentiated reading in your module handbooks, course schedules.

For example:

“If you struggled with XXX…. Read XXXX.”

“If you are interested in this and want to take it further look at/or read XXXX.” TeachLearn (<https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/mybeckett/add-an-online-reading-list/#5---editing-and-organising-a-reading-list>)

## 2. Critical thinking

Offer a robust and exciting approach to critical thinking at all levels using questions that consistently and actively facilitate higher order thinking.

## 3. Extension Activities

Plan extension activities for all your sessions – they can take time to set up and students need to be encouraged to do them. Articulate the benefits to your students.

You need to be clear about how the activities relate to the higher grades in the mark scheme.

For example

“Demonstrating extra reading to augment additional critical thinking and evaluation are the best ways to obtain the top marks on the assignment. To assist you in this we have provided some further reading necessary for critical engagement”.

Build assessment and questions in taught sessions and use aspects of our Taxonomy and the module mark scheme. The Taxonomy of Assessment domains can be [viewed here.](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/assessment/#taxonomy-of-assessment)

## 4. Assessment

Differentiated assessment: assessments that offer choice (and clear criteria - and marking across the full range of marks to allow students, who are good enough, to get as many marks as they can) and allow students to work to a high level to demonstrate critique and curiosity. Offer choices in assessment so you can foster your students’ interest and enthusiasm and thus allow them to demonstrate their optimum capability to tight assessment criteria. Use our Taxonomy to help with this. <https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/assessment/>

For Example:

This is a bare pass question/ task (describe and compare…). “Try this as a starter…”

This is a slightly more advanced one: e.g. (evaluate…). “You can stretch yourself with this”

This one is tricky…and you will need to consider a range of theories/ perspectives…see if you can tackle this with a friend (synthesis). “This is challenging…”

## 5. Provide feedback

Give clear, timely feedback on assessment that specifically suggests opportunities for development for the individual student.

Feedback does not always have to be written. You may want to consider incorporating audio feedback or even video feedback.

See [Teach Learn: Giving feedback to students](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/feedback/) for more about alternative methods of providing feedback.

## 6. Peer and self-assessment

Develop peer and self-assessment strategies and approaches allowing students more rapid feedback from peers of a similar age experiencing similar challenges and may be more approachable. (Topping and Ehly, 1998) – For example

Encouraging your bright students to teach other members of the class who may be struggling.

Encouraging peer feedback on formative assessment may be helpful.

In small groups, students can teach a new theory to the whole class. (Topping and Ehly, 1998)

## 7. Build on existing interests

Consider both how you can build on what bright students are interested in and already know and do outside the classroom. You can then build on what all your students are interested in. Use a full range of case study examples that will empower/encourage your students to think in different ways about different things.

## 8. Enrichment Weeks

Add some enrichment weeks and design them into your timetable such as job placements, visits from alumni, or a journal club.

Those that want to attend, will.

You could also create an online space for enrichment (for example in MyBeckett or MS Teams), to share the above, incorporating recordings of guest lectures, information from the careers service and other opportunities.

## 9. Masterclasses

Think about providing masterclasses - which stretch and challenge your students further. These can be open to all. For example, you could get experts from industry or practice to demonstrate a particular tool or piece of software to a level beyond that required for the course.

## 10. Monitor progress

Monitoring your students’ progress will allow you to identify changes in behaviour or engagement early and offer support or guidance before issues become critical, this can help with retention and progression. Active engagement in your students’ progress shows you care about them as an individual and individual attainment giving the student a sense of belonging. (Sclater, Peasgood, Mullan, 2016)

For example:

Are you able to identify and nurture those who would/ should go on to Master’s degrees/ or PhD study?

Do you regularly meet with your academic advisors and module colleagues to review the results and progress of your students? Do you regularly check MyProgress?

[Based on contributions from the School of Sport Awayday Workshop 23 January 2018 - Kevin Deighton, Susan Smith, Oliver Wilson and Santangelo and Tomlinson (2009).

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