

Access to Teaching

Permeating theme



Mentor note: This will be an important session to support trainees to better understand their own learning needs, known and previously unknown, as well as advice on seeking support to teach whilst appropriately managing a disability.

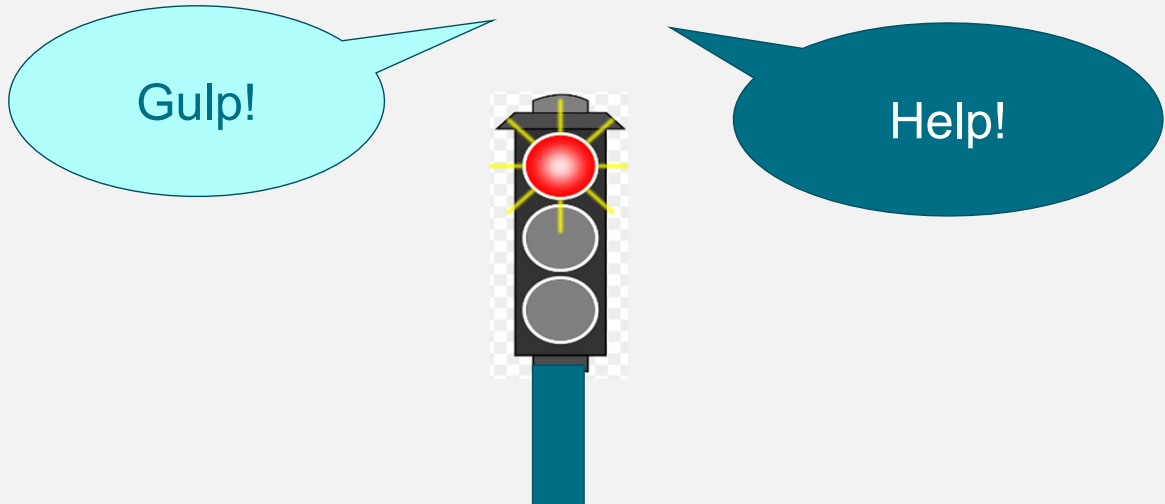
How effective is your own learning?



Mentor notes: What are the trainee's strengths in their own learning? How do they know their learning is effective? Is it related to attainment or achievement?

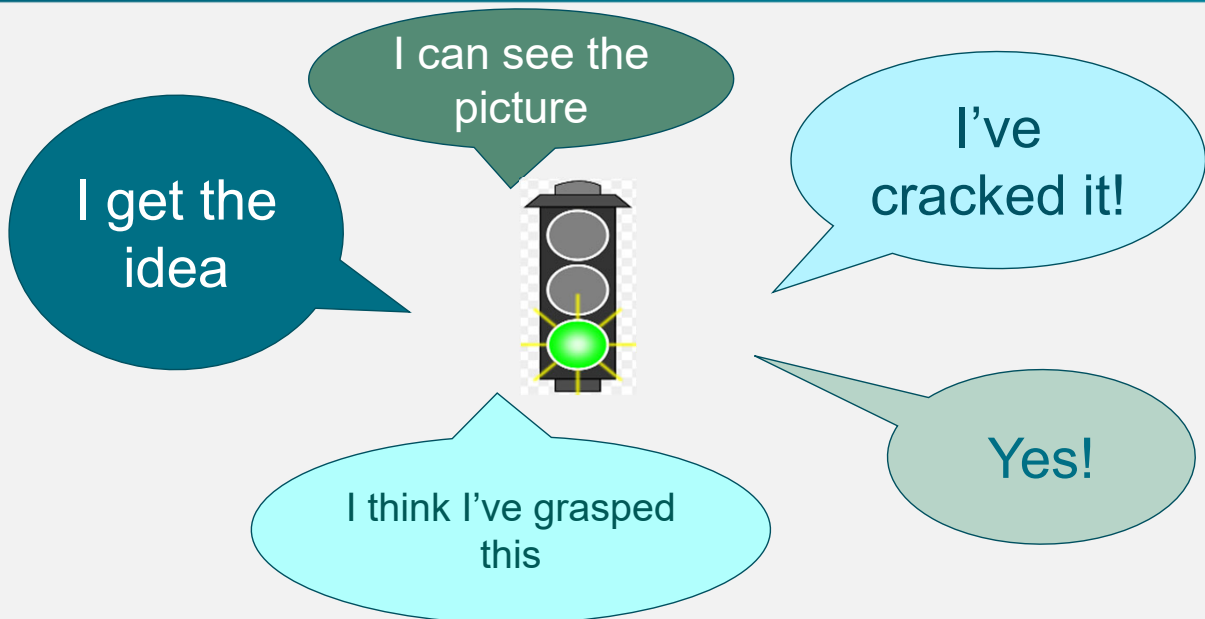
How often do you recognise you've understood?

Sometimes we get stuck at all the red lights of misunderstanding and incomprehension!



Mentor notes: How do trainees become aware that they are getting stuck? Is it their own self observations or do they reflect others' views of them that affect their perceptions?

Take time to notice the green lights of understanding



Mentor notes: Ask trainees: Describe a 'light bulb' moment when you understood you had understood a concept. Was this a moment in your own school days? Was it in adulthood? Describe the conditions that enabled you to understand.

Camouflage or coping?

- Frequent misunderstanding can affect our self esteem, as well as our effectiveness in our studying, our teaching and other aspects of our lives.
- Many people have developed camouflage strategies to shield their difficulties with learning from other people (and sometimes from themselves too).
- Sadly, there can still be a level of shame in talking about learning needs as adults, particularly if you are trying to operate in an environment in which you feel everyone else has the answers, or is capable.
- Talking about our own learning needs can be important, but addressing these needs is essential to your long term wellbeing.



Mentor notes: Can camouflage be an effective coping strategy?

Does resilience ever mean 'I just get on with it'?

'Knowing I have a better understanding of my own needs means my difficulties have a less negative impact on myself and others. By definition, learning is still difficult, but I can plan better and stay calmer when I know I'm about to hit a hurdle.' Is this a more useful way of thinking about resilience in this context?

Taking ownership of your learning

If you have a recognised or diagnosed disability you will be protected in law, but for many adults, their learning difficulties have never been understood or acknowledged, either by others or themselves.

Sometimes adults with diagnosed disabilities can mask other learning needs, or attribute them to their disability.

These slides will empower you to better understand your own needs and make a plan for reducing their impact, whether they constitute a disability or not.

Case study

A trainee with Autism attributed their high levels of anxiety to their disability and didn't recognise how much this was affecting their emotional behaviour on their placement. They were exhausted and had had a couple of days absence.

Taking time with their mentor to talk through the possible reasons for their heightened anxiety, they realised this was particularly related to times they thought they would be observed. Making a plan together to reduce their anxiety when being observed, made a big difference to their effectiveness in class and enabled them to feel some control over an aspect over which they had felt out of control.

One strategy was for the trainee to film their own lessons regularly and share with the mentor, keeping control of the sections to discuss, until the trainee was ready for the mentor to choose the section for discussion. This built up quickly to the trainee feeling less anxious about 'live' observation. This might work for anyone with anxiety, regardless of other needs or disabilities.

Signposting

Where could you seek support for better understanding your own learning needs, or the impact of those needs on your teaching role?

Education professional e.g.

Tutor
Mentor
Class mentor
Headteacher
SENCO

Emotional Support e.g.

Friends and family
Education Support helpline



Health and psychology e.g.

Educational psychologist
Clinical psychologist
Medical specialist
Occupational health (in workplace)
Student support (in University)
Access to work

Assisted technologies e.g.

Software
Computer programmes and apps

Mentor notes: In what ways could each of these people or things support you? What experience have trainees or mentors had of seeking support for their learning or emotions? Can any trainees share experiences of advocating on behalf of a friend or family member or having someone advocate for them? How is this different to being a friend in professional meetings?

Assistive technologies

- YouTube video featuring ['ADHD and Dyslexia Strategies: How to Turn on Text to Speech on Your Mobile Device'](#)
- AbilityNet has a range of downloadable fact sheets and information on assistive technology. Click here for advice on [free resources](#).
- Open University online course on [Assistive Technology and Online Learning](#)

Signposting web resources

An example of one university's approach to student support.

<https://www.chichester.ac.uk/college-life/student-services/additional-learning-support/lolas-blog>

For those in work, Access to Work will give you information about managing your disability in the work place.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers>

How can you advocate for yourself?

In areas you may feel less confident in, you may feel ill at ease when wanting to speak up for your rights, your needs and your wellbeing. Factor in that you may feel more nervous and anxious and prepare carefully.

- Be informed
- Have key information to hand – perhaps on cue cards or notes. Just mention that you want to look at your notes as you are talking, to help you.
- Rehearse what you want to say, with a friend or in a mirror.
- Practice strategies for self regulation, that others wouldn't be aware of you doing; such as pausing, focusing on a 'safe' point in the room, stroking the inside of your palm with your other thumb etc.
- Keep your voice calm – be aware of rising tone or faster speech and try to moderate.
- Suggest a follow up meeting if you feel there are points that you would like the other person to take time to consider or find out about.

Equalities duty and how it relates to you



2014, @Saskatoon Health Region

Reasonable adjustments for those with a disability

- Your employer might have to make adjustments to help you do your job as well as someone without a disability. The Equality Act 2010 calls these 'reasonable adjustments'. They can be changes to policies, working practices or physical layouts, or providing extra equipment or support.
- The adjustments have to be 'reasonable'. What's reasonable for your employer to do depends on your situation - like the size of the organisation you work for.
- Your employer should pay for any adjustments - they shouldn't ask you to pay.
- If your employer doesn't make the adjustments they have a duty to make, it could be discrimination. You might be able to complain or take them to an employment tribunal to get what you need.
- You can also complain if you realised there were adjustments your former employer could have made which might have helped you stay in the job.

Citizensadvice.org.uk

Disability or difficulty?

Whether you have a diagnosed disability or recognise that you have difficulties that impact on your ability to learn well and to teach well, it is your responsibility to find ways to be the best teacher you want to be, but it is okay to ask for help along the way.

Case study

A trainee was feeling low in her final term. She had recently received a diagnosis of fibromyalgia and was getting used to new medication. Her sickness absence was high relative to other trainees. She spoke with her tutor about her feelings and how difficult she was finding the work, the deadlines and her lack of stamina. The tutor listened sympathetically and then asked one simple question; 'Are you a good teacher?'

The trainee considered the question and replied, 'Yes, I am.'

'That's great! There are difficulties to overcome, but we can help you find strategies to be the good teacher you know you are. Always keep your identity as a good teacher in your mind and it will help your motivation to jump the hurdles you know of and spot those you don't yet know are in your way too. You can do this!'

Mentor notes: Reflect on the case study. Is the tutor's response too simplistic?

What does the tutor mean by 'the hurdles you don't yet know are in your way'? What might these be?

Good mentoring should never be 'Tea and Tears'. Sympathy can be a bit like a felt raincoat – useful for a very short period of time! Do you agree with this statement?

Organisations that can offer more information or support

- Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia

<https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Search?q=student%20support>

- Difficulties with sight loss that impact on your life and learning

Explore our e-book and video library and learn about everything from products and technology, to our useful Life Hacks. www.henshaws.org.uk/knowledge-village

- Hard of hearing and hearing loss

<https://www.hear-it.org/Hearing-impaired-in-the-workplace->

- Managing symptoms of hyperactivity and ADHD. A US site with useful information.

<https://chadd.org/for-adults/workplace-issues/>

- A blog on being a teacher with ADHD

<https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/news-events/blogs-and-articles/blogs/how-i-manage-my-adhd-as-a-teacher/>

Personal Construct Theory

PCP is a theory and associated methods (see notes) which enable research participants to have a more 'democratic' relationship with the research design and to contribute an authentic voice.

'...it attends to the constructive processes giving rise to our experience and its methods are specifically designed to attend to the nature of subjectivity', (Burr et al. 2012, p.2).

Methods for PCP can be a useful tool for better understanding children's response to learning and the school environment and can support information gathering or action research projects within school. Methods such as the Salmon Line (see next slide) can be used successfully to consider pupil impressions of bullying or racism for example.

PCP was devised by George Kelly, who was working as a clinical psychologist in the USA during the Great Depression of the 1930s. He saw PCP as an alternative to the mainstream psychologies of the day, behaviourism and psychoanalysis, with which he became dissatisfied. PCP focuses on subjective experience. It asserts that events may be interpreted by people in a potentially infinite variety of ways, and Kelly (1955) called this 'constructive alternativism'. The meanings with which a person endows events, how they 'construe' them, are seen as key to understanding their thoughts, emotions and conduct. Events are construed through a system of meaning that each individual builds for themselves. This 'construct system' is a lens through which the world is perceived, and consists of a set of bipolar dimensions or 'constructs', such as friendly vs. hostile, interesting vs. dull, etc., which the person uses to interpret their experience (although this process often lies outside of immediate awareness).

Burr, V, King, N & Butt, T (2012): Personal construct psychology methods for qualitative research, International Journal of Social Research Methodology, DOI:10.1080/13645579.2012.73070
(8) (PDF) Personal construct psychology methods for qualitative research. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262809949 Personal construct psychology methods for qualitative research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262809949_Personal_construct_psychology_methods_for_qualitative_research) [accessed Apr 18 2021].

Introducing a Salmon Line:

A Salmon Line, designed by Phyllida Salmon as a method for PCP, is now widely used in qualitative research to enable participants to gauge where they consider themselves to be, in response to a statement, in relation to two opposite constructs, e.g. 'When I meet new people, I feel anxious'.

The least anxious
I could feel

The most anxious
I could feel



Used in the following slides, the Salmon Line may enable you to explore your own responses to questions about how you learn. Used outside of a research frame, (with no comparisons to others) your subjective responses on the line will help you to take ownership of your next steps towards better access to skills and knowledge, in those areas you find difficult.

Remember, that most people have to reread a passage of text if their concentration sometimes wavers, and many people find the information in an academic text more difficult to process than a novel. It would be unusual for anyone to write a good essay without several drafts, or to acquire a new skill without practice.

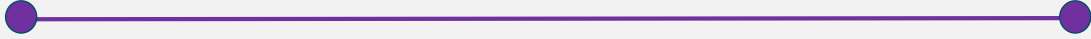
The intention of these questions is not to 'diagnose' anything, but to help you have a better understanding of your own learning strengths and how to use them to offset the areas you find more difficult. As with any framework, you may not find this useful, but it may prompt you to find another way of understanding your own learning profile.

Place yourself on the line in response to the following questions

I can always make sense of information when someone is speaking to me

Never

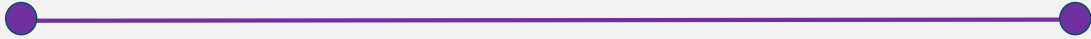
Always



I can always make sense of information when I am reading

Never

Always

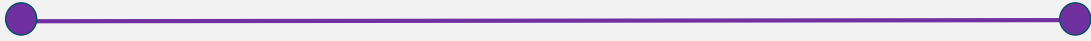


Mentor notes: Encourage trainees to use the following slides. What other questions could trainees devise that relate to areas of learning that others may find difficult? Can these be shared?

I have to reread a passage of text multiple times before I understand it

Never

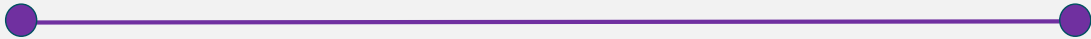
Always



I can read a whole page of text and realise I haven't retained one word

This happens
to me all the
time

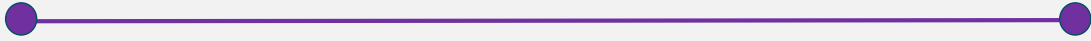
This never
happens to me



I always have a lot of energy when I am working

Never

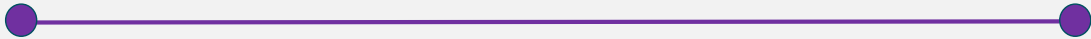
Always



I find it difficult to be on my feet all day

This happens
to me all the
time

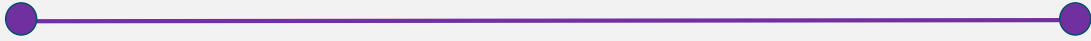
This never
happens to me



I am rarely distracted by noise

Never

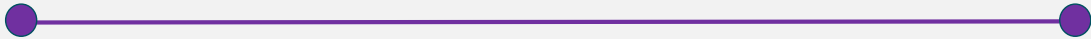
Always



I often have to ask people to repeat what they have said

This happens
to me all the
time

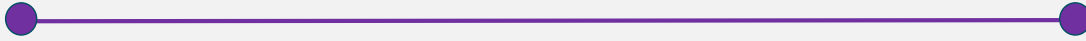
This never
happens to me



Adapt the blank Salmon Lines to capture an aspect of learning that is personal to you

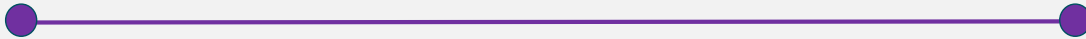
Never

Always



This happens
to me all the
time

This never
happens to me



Notes: Be wary of comparisons with others, as each person is making a subjective response, but you may find it useful to use the lines to engage in discussion with your peers or mentor. Be careful not to allow how others see themselves as a base line against which you poorly compare yourself. This is not used here as a mathematical or scientific model, but it can be helpful to acknowledge your own needs.

Better managing your learning difficulties and a link to habits

Acquiring a skill can take considerable initial effort and willingness to take risks. But the skill, if acquired at all, seems to 'kick in' at some point – you go from inept to not bad over a short span of time. Anyone who has learned to do the butterfly stroke, or skate backwards, will remember that magic moment when it felt right. Almost in a blink you seemed to acquire the basic skill, after which it could be honed to any desired level by practice... Contrast learning to swim with the habit of swimming an hour every day. The ability to do a thing is different from the inclination to do it routinely, out of habit.

Leamson, R, 1999, Thinking about Teaching and Learning: Developing Habits of Learning with First Year College and University Students, VA: Stylus Publishing LLC

Developing good habits to improve your own learning

Habits that can support and improve your ability to learn and retain information

e.g. I'm good at writing notes when I'm reading academic texts

Bad habits you need to break, as they keep you stuck in the learning mud

e.g. Pretending I have heard and understood because I don't like to ask people to repeat things.

[Link to habits on website.](#)

Mentor notes: Encourage trainees to add to the lists on both sides. Can their good habits be further developed into the learning plan on the next slide?

An example of a learning support plan for a trainee teacher

A downloadable version is available at the bottom of this webpage. Adapt it to meet your particular needs, or ask your mentor or provider if they have a support plan proforma that you could use, if this one doesn't work for you. Making a plan through a reflective discussion with another person is always helpful, but remember, it is your plan!

The image shows two versions of a Self-assessment of Needs and Reasonable Adjustment Plan (SNAP) form. The left version is a detailed proforma with sections for 'What specific aspects of learning do I find difficult to manage?', 'What specific aspects of my own learning do I find difficult to manage?', and 'What specific aspects of my own learning do I find difficult to manage?'. The right version is a simplified version with sections for 'What specific aspects of my own learning do I find difficult to manage?' and 'What specific aspects of my own learning do I find difficult to manage?'.

Mentor notes: This Self-assessment of Needs and Reasonable Adjustment Plan (SNAP) is designed to be completed by the trainee in advance of any discussion so that they can familiarise themselves with the layout (forms can often be overwhelming for anyone). It will usually be effective for the plan to be discussed and written between trainee and mentor, but it is not intended to be a 'tick box' exercise. This really is a task that exemplifies the value of the process over the product and should be approached with sensitivity and calm. It is not statutory – it doesn't have to be done – but it can make a difference. The following points may be helpful:

- Share the form with the trainee in advance of any discussion so that they can familiarise themselves with the layout (forms can often be overwhelming for anyone)
- Suggest the trainee keeps a simple record of 'what I found difficult today' for a week or so before completing the form. This reflective journal (audio, drawings or written) can help the trainee to notice the red lights of their learning. It is important that the trainee is prepared for the potential to feel overwhelmed if they are keeping a diary of experiences that may have been less positive for them, but in naming them the intention is that they will be working towards 'owning' the difficulties and finding some solutions.
- You may want to think of a task to help the trainee prioritise which of their 'red lights' are the difficulties that will impact most on their teaching – For example, it may be that food intolerances are a major problem for the trainee, but this may not need to be on the plan as it shouldn't affect the trainees ability to teach well, providing they

address this need within their own regime; whereas poor handwriting may impact on esteem and efficacy and so a plan will make all the difference to the children the trainee will teach.

- Make a time when you have enough time to meet without distraction, if possible.
- Help to make the meeting positive and enabling, even if the trainee is feeling nervous and unsure.
- Remember anxious behaviours in others can create a reaction in you, so be prepared and understanding; manage any frustration or desire to rush the process. If you reach a block, suggest you take a break, or make another time to meet – there are no timescales for completion.
- Consider that you are role modelling a process that you want the trainee to use with learners who will need them to be adaptive when they are teaching.
- It is okay to use your experience to recognise possible solutions, but remember that you may hold more power in this meeting – you may even be the one holding the pen (or keyboard). If you make a suggestion, reiterate that this is a working document and if this is something that the trainee isn't comfortable with, or wants to change, then that is not only fine, but an important way in which the trainee can own the plan.
- Build in termly reviews and make sure you are prepared for the meetings. Ask the trainee to email you a copy of the plan prior to the review and have a copy of the plan ready in the meeting. Difficulties with organisation may mean that the trainee forgets to bring the plan, whilst this may look like it is only you who is 'bothering', remember it is the process that is important and the trainee has valued the time and the discussion and this meeting can help the trainee to reflect and plan next steps.
- You are skilled at supporting your trainees; think of this planning process as a building a piece of Scandinavian furniture together from a diagram, where only the trainee can read Swedish; i.e. you can see what you want the finished product to look like; you can see all the component parts; but you can't complete it unless the trainee takes an active and most important role – and besides the finished chair will be for the trainee's room, not yours!

More resources

A project by Strathclyde University (2000-2006) which promoted an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities remains an important resource

- <http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/>

All providers are required to have information on reasonable adjustments. Here is an example from University of Southampton. It would be good to see more of these sites with the option to have audio of the text, or an option for larger print for example.

- <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/reasonable-adjustments/index.page>

This version from University of Plymouth has forms at the end of the document to support a pre placement assessment of a students requirements and practice placement support agreement.

- https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/13/13493/FHHS_Guidance_for_supporting_students_requiring_resonable_adjustments_in_practice_placements.pdf

More resources cont.

Information from Citizens' Advice on the classification of disability in the workplace and advice on discrimination

- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work/checking-if-its-discrimination/check-if-youre-disabled-under-the-equality-act/>

Government information on supported internships for young people with disabilities. This won't be directly relevant for someone already training to be a teacher, but knowledge of schemes like this may make all the difference to young people with disabilities you will teach in the future, or whom you know in other areas of your life.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-internships-for-young-people-with-learning-difficulties>

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