
Developing the expert learner

Learning how to learn

About the concept

The goal of learning how to learn is to promote learner autonomy so that learners take responsibility for their learning and develop the ability to learn on their own or with others throughout their lives.

Autonomous learners act:

- consciously (rather than without thought)
- independently (rather than compliantly)
- imaginatively (rather than routinely)
- with commitment (rather than without effort).

Putting it into practice

The Campaign for Learning (www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk) suggests that learning how to learn is about learners being aware of:

- how they prefer to learn and what their strengths are as learners
- how they can motivate themselves and develop their self-confidence
- the conditions (such as water, rest, nutritious food, an environment conducive to learning) that help them stay alert and able to learn
- specific strategies that help their memory or enable them to make sense of complex information
- helpful habits such as reflecting on their learning and how it could be more effective in the future.

Developing the habit of reflection can have a profound impact on learning how to learn. It is a meta-cognitive skill that highlights **how** learning happens and complements the more common focus on **what** is being learned. With support and practice, learners will be able to assess where they have reached in their learning, and decide what they need to do to make progress. Armed with these insights, they will also learn to take deliberate steps to get to where they want to be, and to take greater responsibility for their learning.

Supporting learners in doing this requires teachers to adopt a range of learner-centred teaching strategies. To explore these further go to the Developing Teaching and Learning section of the website <http://excellence.qia.uk>. There you will find the guide to 10 pedagogical approaches. There is also a related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity that you might like to do with your colleagues.

Learning how to learn is for teachers too. If they can demonstrate that they themselves are enthusiastic, skilled, autonomous learners, then they will be inspirational models for the learners they teach.