

More Able and Talented (MAT) Strategy

Delivering the AUR Programme

Aiming for
Unrivalled
Results

1. Introduction

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai is committed to providing a learning environment in which all individuals are given the opportunity and encouragement to achieve their full learning potential. The aim of this strategy is to enable all learners who show aptitude to achieve exceptionally high standards to fulfil their promise by achieving excellent outcomes. This strategy needs to be placed within the overall drive within the Grŵp to improve standards of all learners, as research has shown that schools and colleges which focus on the needs of more able and talented students create an upward drift and raise standards of achievement for all. The Grŵp will implement the AUR Programme to support identified MAT learners.

2. Definition

The term 'more able and talented' is used to describe those learners who show potential to achieve at very high levels, whether it be in academic subjects, vocational arts or sports courses. These are learners who are achieving, or who have the potential to achieve, at a level significantly beyond the rest of their peer group. They often show drive and determination to succeed and are highly motivated to reach the highest standards. They will require enriched and extended opportunities within their learning experiences in order to develop their abilities in the areas in which they can potentially excel. They will need greater breadth and depth of learning activities than is normally provided for the usual cohort of learners in order to fully develop their academic or vocational skills.

This strategy will be implemented within the context of the Grŵp's Equality and Diversity Policy which commits the organisation to ensuring that all learners are given opportunities to fulfil their potential, regardless of background. Staff should, therefore, be mindful that MAT learners can come from all socio-economic groups and can achieve at exceptionally high

levels regardless of gender, ethnicity, physical ability or other protected characteristics as defined in the 2010 Equality Act.

3. Identification

In order to appropriately target support, the Grŵp needs to have effective mechanisms for early identification of MAT learners who will be placed on the AUR programme. Sources of information may include any or all of the following:

- Information exchange from feeder schools, some of which may be operating their own MAT programmes and will already have identified such pupils
- Evidence gathered at college from 14-16 provision
- Information provided by parents
- GCSE results
- ALIS scores
- Skills or practical tests
- Results of initial/diagnostic tests
- Differentiated assessments which provide opportunities to demonstrate high level performance
- Classroom observation
- Specialist assessments

However, different Programme Areas may need to work out their own criteria for identification as these can vary according to the skills or attributes being developed.

Although early identification enables support strategies to be put in place, in order to have maximum impact identification also needs to be a continuous process as some potential AUR learners are not easily identified. They may be “coasting” or display disruptive traits due to lack of stretch and challenge which could mark them out as “challenging” or “at risk” learners rather than MAT.

4. Organisation-level support

In order to ensure that this MAT Strategy is effective in meeting its objectives, commitment to its implementation will be driven by the Executive Team (Tim Polisi) and cascaded throughout the organisation. Such commitment will include investment in the strategy in the form of support for the following:

- Appointment of a Co-ordinator for the Grŵp’s AUR Programme
- Training and development opportunities for relevant managers, curriculum co-ordinators and programme leaders

- Access to relevant learning materials, including on-line learning resources which provide enhanced opportunities for independent learning
- A Grŵp wide Scholarships Programme which is aimed at attracting potential MAT learners
- Sports Academies to encourage outstanding achievement in sports
- Opportunities for staff to link with external agencies e.g. HE institutions, arts, business etc.
- Provision for additional time to support AUR learners
- Access to extra-curricular activities e.g. educational visits
- Opportunities for programme managers and leaders to share best practice in making provision for MAT learners within and outside the organisation

5. Action Planning

Effective planning is crucial in meeting the needs of gifted and talented learners. In addition to the setting of challenging targets or grades, action plans should specify how appropriately challenging activities will be built into learning sessions, assignments and homework. These will provide opportunities for students to perform beyond the level expected of their peer group. These action plans should be ambitious but achievable and involve learners in their own target setting. They also need to take account of the learner's preferred individual learning style, recognising that gifted and talented students have considerable strengths, but may also have areas of weakness or difficulty. Effective MAT provision involves seeing beyond the norm and planning to address individual needs in a way that stimulates achievement by engaging, motivating and inspiring the learner.

6. Teaching and learning

Effective differentiation is central to a successful MAT strategy. Where teachers are providing for the needs of AUR learners, differentiation which provides opportunities for high level achievement must be built into all schemes of work, individual session planning and assessment strategies. These should encourage the development of a greater depth of learning through opportunities for e.g.

- greater reflection
- exploration of diverse viewpoints
- consideration of difficult questions or concepts
- formulation of opinions
- problem solving and enquiry
- connections between past and present learning

- regular use of higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation)
- use of more complex practical or technical skills
- development of greater proficiency in the use of specialist tools or equipment
- achievement of higher level outcomes whether academic or practical

There are numerous methods of differentiation which are appropriate to different teaching and learning settings and teachers will need to find the best methods which work for their subject area and learner cohort. However, some examples of ways in which teaching and learning strategies can be adapted to challenge and extend AUR learners are as follows:

- setting a common task that invites different responses and outcomes
- setting tasks that vary in difficulty (as in graded exercises) so that able learners can begin at an appropriate level and progress further
- setting a variety of tasks of different standards linked to a common theme
- providing opportunities for AUR learners to design tasks for themselves
- providing opportunities for more able learners to follow through on tasks to a higher level through differentiated/additional homework
- setting team or project work which requires a range of skills and abilities at different levels
- providing opportunities for leading/planning group activities
- use of challenging probing questioning

However, in planning differentiated activities, staff need to be sensitive to the needs of their AUR learners. High achievers can stand out, and young people may not welcome such attention, especially at a time in their lives when being accepted by their peer group is very important to them.

7. Learning Resources

High quality, resource materials and equipment can considerably enhance learning opportunities for AUR learners. They facilitate effective differentiation inside and outside the learning environment and can play a crucial role in enabling AUR learners to reach the highest levels of attainment. Such resources could include multimedia equipment and software, e-learning resources, specialist tools and equipment, art materials, musical instruments, sports equipment etc.

Wherever possible, Programme Managers should plan for the provision of such resources as part of the budgeting process. However, where the Programme Area budget does not allow for such additional expenditure, managers may, where appropriate, apply for financial support from the central Grŵp budget.

8. Additional and Enrichment Activities

Gifted and talented learners enjoy and benefit from working with others of similar ability and learning alongside other more able learners can provide them with greater stretch and motivation to succeed at higher levels. Such opportunities will be facilitated wherever possible e.g. through specific tutorial groups bringing together AUR learners, within the Welsh Bacallaureate, skills competitions and within after-college activities.

A programme of cross-Grŵp activities will be provided for those learners on the AUR Programme, giving opportunities for gifted learners to participate in relevant challenging activities linked to learning areas e.g. STEM subjects, skilled crafts, creative arts, literature etc.

The Grŵp's HE staff will be used to provide additional challenging activities providing a bridge into Higher Education for those learners applying to top Universities or where exceptionally high UCAS points are required.

All learners, particularly those who are on the AUR Programme, can benefit from participation in actual or virtual lectures, demonstrations and other enrichment activities and these should be encouraged wherever possible. Also extra-curricular activities such as educational visits to e.g. museums, galleries, workplaces, exhibitions etc. should be planned into learning programmes wherever appropriate.

AUR learners should be encouraged to participate in relevant competitions in order to provide them with high levels goals for which to aim. For vocational students these could be regional and UK Skills competitions which may require additional coaching input from teaching staff. Competitions encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills may be suited to other AUR learners, whereas academic learners should be encouraged to apply for university scholarships. Teaching staff should provide advice and support in preparation for such competitions, entrance exams or interviews.

9. Progression

Learners on the AUR programme should be encouraged to have high aspirations and should progress from their courses into the next level of their education career at the highest possible level. Learner Services staff will provide advice and guidance to identified AUR learners as to the appropriate steps which need to be taken as regards such progression e.g. applications, entrance exams, skills tests, access to Higher Apprenticeships etc.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of this strategy will be monitored by means of the following indicators:

- Numbers of learners identified as MAT
- Numbers of learners participating in the AUR programme
- Achievement of top grades (A*/Distinction)
- Number of learners meeting or exceeding their target/ALIS grades
- Number of learners winning national competitions
- Number of learners progressing to top universities
- Number of learners winning university scholarships
- Number of learners progressing to Higher Apprenticeships

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