Area of Activity 4: Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance

A4 is made up of two elements: the learning environment and student support/guidance. It, therefore, includes both academic and also pastoral aspects of your work.

Student support can include student supervision, one-to-one advice, developing practice to meet the learning implications of widening access, supporting learners with disabilities such as adapting resources and other support and guidance provided. Recognition of inclusive practice (how you support the needs of the diverse range of students within our institution) is, therefore, embedded within A4 (meaning that A4 is closely linked to V1 and V2).

Understanding A4:

The 'learning environment' is a multi-layered concept that can be interpreted in diverse ways. It might incorporate, one, two or all three of the following elements:

- the physical environment, e.g. the classroom, lecture theatre, laboratory, studio or work place, spatial and specialist environments, field trips
- the virtual learning environment, e.g. Blackboard or other VLE, or other distance/virtual learning applications such as live or pre-recorded webinars
- the psychological environment, e.g. the learning culture that is developed through an ethos which promotes independent learning as well as appropriate support

Relevant examples of student support for A4 include:

- student supervision
- one-to-one advice
- developing your practice to meet the learning implications of widening access, for example by doing some reading, or attending a workshop
- supporting learners with disabilities such as adapting resources
- using language which is culturally inclusive
- annotating a TALIS reading list to help students engage with required and additional reading
- examples of how you create a positive classroom dynamic

Recognition of inclusive practice (how you support the needs of the diverse range of students within our institution) is embedded within A4 (meaning that A4 is closely linked to V1 and V2).

What literature might you look at for Area of Activity 4?

(Please note, there might be some overlap with other Areas of Activity)

- Literature on learning spaces
- Developing a positive learning culture
- Developing a 'community of learners'
- internationalisation

- Social learning
- Technology enhanced learning (TEL)
- Diversity & inclusion
- Widening participation

Useful questions to answer when writing Area of Activity 4 of your PAT

Student support

- What methods do you use to support your students?

- How do you support different kinds of learners (e.g. international students, Part One students, students with specific learning needs, students who are part-time)?

- How do you create a positive relationship with students to underpin their learning?

- In what ways do you help students to access/engage with wider support services within the institution (e.g. by signposting to Student Support services where appropriate)?

The learning environment

- How do you help to create a 'community of learners'?

- How do you help to create an atmosphere of trust so that students feel confident about asking questions or seeking help?

- What different media and technologies do you use (both physical, e.g. innovative use of learning spaces, and virtual, e.g. Blackboard)?

- What different modes of learning are part of your practice (e.g. distance-based, blended, work-based or practice-based, etc)?

- Do your learners understand and recognise the value of the different learning environments you provide and how they can utilise these to promote learning?

- How do the different environments impact on the student learning experience?