

Factsheet: Inclusive teaching, learning and assessment Learners who have an intellectual disability

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Definition

Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability refers to substantial limitations in functioning and is characterised by significantly lower intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with limitations in adaptive skill areas such as self care and social skills.

Intellectual disability ranges in degree from borderline, average to profound, requiring a range of different support strategies.

Impact on training and assessment

A learner who has an intellectual disability may have difficulty with:

- verbal expression
- thought processing and working out a plan of action
- ability to perform fine motor activities, impacting on areas such as handwriting, drawing and typing
- ability to learn new and complex skills
- memory
- attention to tasks
- transference of skills (i.e. transference of skills learnt in one environment into another).

Delivery strategies

These strategies are suggestions only. Customisation for individuals is necessary.

Consult with the student about strategies that work for them. Maintain confidentiality as required by the DET privacy standards.

Presenting and communicating information:

- **Attention**
 - provide work which is appropriate to ability
 - break activities into small steps
 - focus on the key features of an item or situation
 - provide a quiet area for work
 - give frequent and specific feedback on performance.

- **Thought processing**
 - give short, clear directions and requests
 - give the learner enough time to process information
 - use objects or pictures to focus on the concrete rather than the abstract
 - use direct instruction such as modelling, prompting or feedback.

- **Memory**
 - provide more prolonged experiences to learn new information or skills, to the point of 'over learning'.
 - provide opportunities for repetition and review of tasks
 - give ample opportunity to practice or use the information or skills and use different modes, e.g. use of computers to reinforce learning
 - use visual supports, such as pictorial timetables or self-management charts
 - use verbal and gestured prompts
 - clarify to make sure the learner understands and recalls the task.

- **Transference of skills**
 - practice skills in a number of environments and with various people i.e. teach for generalisation
 - use role-play
 - plan contingencies for potential errors.

Support personnel and technology in delivery:

- a Disability Coach or Disability Support Worker can assist learner's with writing and language difficulties and with planning and organising study
- audio recording of training delivery or note takers (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) may assist learners with writing difficulties and memory deficits
- literacy software e.g. Texthelp Read and Write Gold or Freedom Scientific WYNN can assist with reading and writing. Spelling and grammar checkers that are part of word processing programs may also be of assistance
- voice recognition software e.g. Dragon Naturally Speaking can assist the learner to convert ideas to electronic text in real time. A small amount of time is required to 'train' the software to the user's voice.

Assessment strategies

These strategies are suggestions only. Customisation for individuals is necessary.

All the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment.

- Identify and discuss assessment options with the learner such as taped orals or practical demonstrations of competency.
- Provide time to peruse instructions and structure of questions before an assessment so that any confusion can be addressed.
- Provide additional time to complete assessments / tests.
- Arrange a separate room to reduce distractions and allow the learner to communicate with a scribe (if used) without disturbing others.

References

- Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training Team 2003, Information and Orientation Guidelines for Disability Support Workers in Post Secondary Education and Training, Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training, viewed 26 October 2007.
- The State of Queensland (Department of Education, Training and the Arts) 2006, Intellectual Impairment, Queensland Government, viewed 26 October 2007, <<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/learning/disability/general-info/intellectual/index.html>>
- The Physical Disability Council of NSW <http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/>

Further Resources

- Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training <http://www.adcet.edu.au/>
- The State of Queensland (Department of Education and Training) <http://education.qld.gov.au/>