Hints and tips for inclusive learning and teaching

Learning Styles
We all learn differently; influenced by the combination of our past educational experiences, study practices and personal approach to specific tasks. This can be described as our learning style, defined as ‘particular ways of gathering, processing and storing information and experiences’ (Cuthbert, P.F., 2005). It is reasonable to assume that students will perform better in tasks that reflect their particular style of learning, so knowledge of your students’ learning styles, and including a variety of tasks will make your teaching more inclusive.

How do we know which learning styles our students have?
- At the start of a course explain ideas about learning styles to your students.
- A learning style questionnaire should be handed out at the start of a course to encourage students to explore their own learning style and to inform you about the learning styles of your students.

The Compass website, developed by The Institute for Lifelong Learning (TILL), contains information, tests and resources about learning styles. See: http://compass.group.shef.ac.uk/section_l/l4.html

The Careers Service introduce learning styles and provide links to learning style tests at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/pslearning.html

How can we address these different learning styles?
Students learn better when presented with information that is conveyed in a way that best suits their learning style. To address these different learning styles:
- Convey information in different ways e.g. diagrams, speech, text, discussion, practical tasks etc.
- Use multimedia technologies such as videos, podcasts and screencasts in lectures and make them available on MOLE. Learning and Teaching Services (LeTS) offer information, advice and a space for you to try these technologies. See: http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/techno/media/diy-suite.html

Set activities that enable students with different learning styles to engage and progress such as:
- Encouraging subject-related discussions in small groups or across a lecture theatre. The discussions may also highlight areas students find difficult.
- Formative or summative assessments that promote group work can: create a safe environment for students to integrate and participate, help students get to know each other, build a group – not an audience, allow different styles of contribution to be valued.

References

For more information go to: www.shef.ac.uk/lets/inclusive