



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

More Able and Talented Learners

Guidance for the further education
sector in Wales



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Minister's foreword

This guidance is the result of two reviews which looked at how Wales's brightest young people are supported to achieve their full potential. In 2014 the Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales, Paul Murphy MP (now Baron Murphy of Torfaen) published his report on the decline in Oxbridge applications and admissions by Welsh students. His recommendations led to the establishment of the network of Seren hubs: 11 partnerships between local authorities, schools and colleges, designed to ensure that the most academically able young people across Wales have access to a structured programme of learning, support and advice that will help them to succeed in their chosen career path.

We also commissioned a detailed review of provision for more able and talented learners across schools and further education in Wales, which reported in January 2016. Like the Oxbridge Ambassador's review, this identified many examples of good practice, and highlighted the commitment of educational leaders and teachers to achieving the best for their learners. It also showed that there was an appetite for a more consistent approach to supporting MAT learners in further education. This guidance has been developed with and for the sector as a direct result of this feedback.

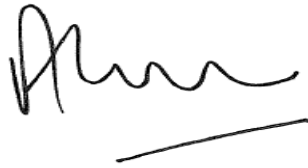
Further education institutions work with a hugely diverse range of learners, subjects, levels and courses. Their curriculum ranges from entry level to higher education; most deliver academic as well as vocational programmes. This diversity can make it more challenging to identify potential, but it also offers many opportunities to offer learners rich and satisfying experiences.

The work of the Oxbridge Ambassador, and the subsequent establishment of the Seren network, have as their main focus progression to the 'Sutton Trust 30' – Britain's most selective higher education institutions. There are good reasons for this. Preparing young people for applying to good universities involves developing their study and research skills, their ability to work independently, their confidence and their determination. It means helping them to choose subjects which give them the best chance of progression, and which enable them to pursue their passions. These are all principles which are not restricted to learners pursuing academic routes, but which apply equally to those whose goals are vocational, sporting, artistic or entrepreneurial.

[Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021](#) sets out our Government's priorities for the next five years. It makes a commitment to *promote and enhance both academic and vocational routes into and through further and higher education, and the national, international and civic roles of our educational institutions*. A comprehensive strategy for supporting MAT learners will help to fulfil this commitment; it means giving equal attention and value to all forms of ability, and developing learners as fully rounded, responsible citizens ready to engage with the world. This guidance aims to provide practical techniques which every institution can use to identify and nurture potential in its learners.

I would like to express my thanks to the further education sector representatives who have helped to shape this guidance, and who have provided case studies to illustrate the good practice which already exists. We welcome feedback on the guidance and continuing discussion

on further support may be needed to ensure that every learner in Wales is supported to achieve their aspirations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Alun Davies AM

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language

Introduction

“The Welsh pupils and students I have met over the course of my study are as bright as any anywhere. Whatever path they choose in life, our job is to equip them to aim for the stars.”

- [Oxbridge Ambassador's final report](#), June 2014

The [review of More Able and Talented \(MAT\) provision in Wales](#) published in January 2016 provided an overview of the current situation in the further education (FE) sector, and confirmed the sector's commitment to ensuring that MAT learners are supported to meet their potential. Further Education Institutions (FEIs) told us that they wanted guidance to ensure consistency across the sector, and to help them build on existing good practice. Subsequent discussions with institutions confirmed the areas where further development is needed.

What FE is generally doing well now

- Identification, tracking and support for 'academic MAT' learners
- Partnerships with Higher Education (HE) institutions to enrich learning and support progression, including through the establishment of the Seren network
- Planning and delivery of some differentiated learning and extension activities
- Use of skills competitions to develop excellence in vocational learners (in some institutions)
- Monitoring and tracking of learners who have been identified as MAT
- Providing financial support to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

What needs further development

- Whole-institution strategies for MAT provision
- Multi-faceted identification methods that don't rely solely on prior attainment, including cognitive testing to indicate potential
- A comprehensive approach to identifying and supporting 'vocational MAT' learners
- Use of social media and digital learning technologies
- Further training for practitioners, possibly through designated 'champions' in each FEI
- Partnership working between schools and colleges to ensure smooth transition for all MAT learners
- Clear data transfer protocols for learner performance data and support needs

Following the review, we have worked closely with the sector and with Estyn to help ensure that this guidance addresses these needs and provides practical advice on how to improve. We anticipate that this guidance will continue to evolve over time, and welcome feedback from FEIs to help with this process.

There is a great deal of research, information and guidance on MAT (or 'gifted') pupils in schools, but much less on good practice in supporting MAT learners in the post-16 sector, and almost none on exceptional ability in vocational learning. Consequently, much of the advice in this guidance is adapted from sources which are either designed for schools, or which relate to post-16 learning but not specifically to MAT learners. We will work with the FE sector to consider how we could start to fill some of these gaps through action research and practitioner development.

Estyn's [guidance handbook on inspecting further education](#) notes that inspectors do not have any preferred approach in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. The focus should be on the impact of teaching and assessment on learning and the progress learners make, and not on the use of a particular process in isolation from its impact. Estyn's [supplementary guidance](#) on MAT learners has been updated to support the new inspection arrangements for many sectors from September 2017.

Defining MAT in FE

For the purposes of this guidance we define MAT as:

‘Learners who demonstrate, or have the potential to demonstrate, exceptional ability and/or talent, in one or more aspects of their learning.’

This definition differs from that used for MAT in schools¹. It has been developed with our working group, to reflect the context of the FE sector and the diversity of its learners. Reflecting feedback from the sector, we have deliberately avoided references to categorising a specific percentage of learners as MAT, or to comparing these learners against their peer group; and we have aimed for a definition which gives equal value to vocational, academic and other forms of ability and talent.

Some myths

“Having a MAT strategy is elitist and at odds with the inclusive nature of the FE sector”

It isn't 'inclusive' to overlook the specific needs of MAT learners, who need tailored teaching and support to achieve their potential. If a MAT learner is not identified or programmes in an institution are too narrow to meet their needs, this will affect their progress and outcomes.

MAT learners come from all backgrounds and may experience financial hardship, learning difficulties or other challenges, so there may be disadvantages which will hold them back if they are not supported by a comprehensive institutional strategy.

There is no reason for initiatives such as enrichment and extension activities, employer mentoring, summer schools, or extra help with university applications to be restricted only to MAT learners; on the contrary, participation may help learners with a much wider range of abilities, and provide rich opportunities for group working. Successful MAT learners and alumni can also act as inspirational role models for others. [Section 4](#) provides guidance on how enrichment activities can benefit MAT learners.

“MAT learners will be motivated by their own successes and don't need the same level of praise and encouragement as other learners”

This is partly true; MAT learners will be motivated by achievement in the same way as any learner. But their successes should be recognised and celebrated, not taken for granted or hidden for fear of upsetting others. Institutions should also consider how to enable their

¹ The definition used for schools in Wales is: 'pupils who require enriched and extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities in one or more areas'. See <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-meeting-the-challenge-en.pdf> for more information.

learners to take risks, make mistakes and learn from their failures in a safe environment – something that may be particularly difficult for some MAT learners.

“Ability or aptitude is manifested either in academic or vocational domains, and needs separate programmes in order to be adequately supported in an FE institution”

Separation of academic and vocational ability is a false dichotomy and could actually reinforce perceptions of vocational routes as ‘inferior’ to academic ones. Learners may have outstanding abilities in both the vocational and academic domains, and need to be able to ‘cross over’ between the two at different times, and in both directions.

“Exceptional ability will usually be apparent before a learner reaches FE, often when a child is very young”

Ability and talent may well be identified at a young age and manifested in concrete outcomes such as examination results, IQ tests, music exams and creative or sporting achievements. But not always. MAT young people may be bored, frustrated, afraid of standing out, or for a multitude of other reasons may not be identified at school. Alternatively, their abilities may lie in practical spheres which are not really demonstrated in school, but become apparent when they enter vocational learning.

“MAT learners can be identified on the basis of prior attainment or test scores”

This is certainly one way of identifying ability, and can work well for some MAT learners. But academic achievement alone will never provide the full picture. Learners may have underachieved at school for a variety of reasons (for example, because of learning difficulties, fear of stigma, emotional/behavioural problems or lack of recognition by teachers); or they may only find out what they are really good at once they reach FE, and are exposed to different opportunities and ways of learning. All of this means that exceptional ability may be ‘hidden’ and FEIs can’t rely on prior attainment alone; they need to find ways of assessing learners’ potential.

See [Section 2](#) for more advice on identification strategies.

“MAT learners are bright enough to work independently with less help than other learners”

MAT learners need and are entitled to support as much as any other learner. They are as likely to struggle with learning difficulties, motivation and personal problems, and are susceptible to boredom and frustration if they do not have sufficient challenge. They also need to interact socially with other learners from different backgrounds.

This does not mean that MAT learners should simply be placed in mixed ability groups with no separate provision. Ideally, institutions should use a combination of mixed, small group, paired and independent work to enable MAT individuals to develop as fully rounded, confident learners. They will certainly benefit from well-managed learning activities with their MAT peers, which can help with motivation and with in-depth exploration of concepts and challenges.

“MAT learners will usually stand out as eager to learn and motivated, the first to put their hand up when the teacher or lecturer asks a question”

While ability may be matched by aspiration for many learners, others may be reluctant to stand out. They may fear peer pressure, or simply not want to be given additional work (particularly if it is ‘more of the same’ rather than truly challenging and stimulating extension activities).

“‘Ability’ is generally associated with academic learners, while ‘talent’ is the equivalent for vocational learners”

This distinction is seen in various ‘official’ MAT guidance documents, and often adopted by FEIs. However, separating the term in this way can be divisive, indicating a fundamental difference in academic and vocational abilities and accomplishments. While learners may have particularly strong abilities in practical areas, these are distributed throughout the population, with many school pupils identified as MAT expressing preferences for practical and applied styles of learning.

In this guidance we have not made the distinction between ‘ability’ and ‘talent’ in this way, but have used the terms interchangeably, and applied them equally across academic and vocational pathways.

How to use this guidance

It’s important to note that what works for MAT learners works for all learners. Most of the techniques and ideas outlined in this guidance – differentiated learning, formative assessment, curriculum enrichment – are already being used effectively in many parts of the FE sector. This document is not, therefore, intended to give comprehensive guidance on these. Instead, it points out how FEIs can strengthen and tailor their approaches so that they are relevant to the specific needs of MAT learners.

Individual FEIs are starting from different points and, therefore, may find different aspects of the guidance more or less relevant to their organisations. We do, however, want every FEI to have a comprehensive and inclusive approach to supporting MAT learners. It is strongly recommended that every FEI develops its own whole-institution strategy. This will incorporate existing initiatives and best practice, within an overall framework that staff can use to help ensure consistency across programmes, departments and campuses.

We have provided a self-assessment template ([Annex B](#)) that each institution can use to carry out a ‘healthcheck’ of its approach to MAT provision against the standards set out in this guidance. This will identify strengths and weaknesses, as a baseline for action planning at institution level. It will also help the Welsh Government to ensure that future guidance, support and training are appropriate to the unique nature of the FE sector and its learners.

Learners’ views: feedback from the 2015 Learner Voice Wales survey

“I love how my college course pushes me to develop my artistic skills. This is very important for me, so I am ready for university. It’s highly equipped, allowing me to carry out different processes. ALL tutors are willing to help at any time and make the effort with all students. It’s a

pleasure to be taught by them. I'm treated like an adult. The advice and feedback is very clear which allows me to progress and earn high grades."

"The [MAT] group has way more information about university, for example I would like to study medicine in university, I have been to the careers office twice and not found it much help. The [MAT] group has multiple talks about university and recently talks on medicine courses in university, I think that those talks should be open for anyone to attend as I believe it has set me back in comparison to other students and I don't find that fair at all."

"As someone who completes their work as quick and as well as possible, I find a lot of time is wasted by students who can't really be bothered. I feel that I should not have to wait for students to pull their weight when I am ready to progress."

"It encourages you to build on skills you already have, I never feel I am being held back in any way and I am always challenged to improve my skills/work further which I feel is absolutely vital for self improvement and to increase my chances of succeeding in my chosen career path."

Section 1: A whole-institution approach

Standards

- 1.1 The institution has an overarching strategy for MAT, including defined aims and objectives with appropriate targets, not just a series of separate initiatives
- 1.2 MAT provision is led at the highest level within the institution, incorporated into its strategic plans, and regularly discussed at senior leadership team and Board levels
- 1.3 There is an integrated approach which encompasses learners with exceptional abilities in academic, vocational or other areas (such as artistic, sporting or entrepreneurial activities), and which values all of these areas equally
- 1.4 MAT programmes are part of an inclusive whole-institution strategy for maximising learners' opportunity and potential, which establishes a culture of high expectations across all learning areas
- 1.5 Governors are engaged with the MAT strategy and its accompanying programmes, and discuss regular, evidenced updates on their outcomes
- 1.6 The institution has strong partnerships with schools, HE institutions, employers, specialist MAT organisations and the third sector to ensure that it draws on a wide range of expertise to support the development and progression of its MAT learners
- 1.7 An infrastructure is in place to support MAT learners, including designated members of staff with responsibility for co-ordinating activities taking into account learners' linguistic preferences and strengths in English and Welsh
- 1.8 The MAT co-ordinator(s) have clearly defined roles, allocated time, continuing professional development (CPD), bilingual resources and authority to carry out their responsibilities
- 1.9 Staff across the institution have access to guidance, support and CPD to help them effectively identify, teach and support MAT learners

The Welsh Government [review of MAT provision in Wales](#) found that every FEI is committed to meeting the needs of its most able learners, adopting a range of approaches and programmes. Many of these are featured as case studies in [Annex C](#) of this guidance. However, most FEIs did not have a whole-institution strategy for MAT or a systematic way of identifying MAT individuals across the whole learner population. The size, diversity and geographic spread of most FEIs presents particular challenges. Further discussion with FEIs showed that while the introduction of the Seren network had helped them to start developing a more joined-up approach to promoting academic excellence, most felt that their arrangements for identifying and supporting exceptional vocational ability were underdeveloped.

Establishing an overall strategy for MAT has a number of benefits. It will ensure that staff understand how to identify MAT learners, are consistently able to give them targeted support in their preferred language, and have access to the right CPD. This will help to secure a systematic approach to monitoring and impact evaluation. Most importantly, it will help to ensure that the ability and potential of all learners is identified and developed – not just those who enter FE with a track record of educational success. This is crucially important to achieving real parity between vocational and academic learning, something which should be at the core of every FEI's mission.

Developing a whole-institution strategy

Every FEI is different in its structures, curriculum mix and areas of speciality, and is starting from a different baseline in terms of the maturity of its approach to meeting the needs of MAT learners. This guidance is not, therefore, designed to prescribe a specific format for a MAT strategy. However, we do believe that there are elements of good practice which should be incorporated into every MAT strategy, and key components which every FEI should have in place. These are summarised in Fig. 1 on the next page.

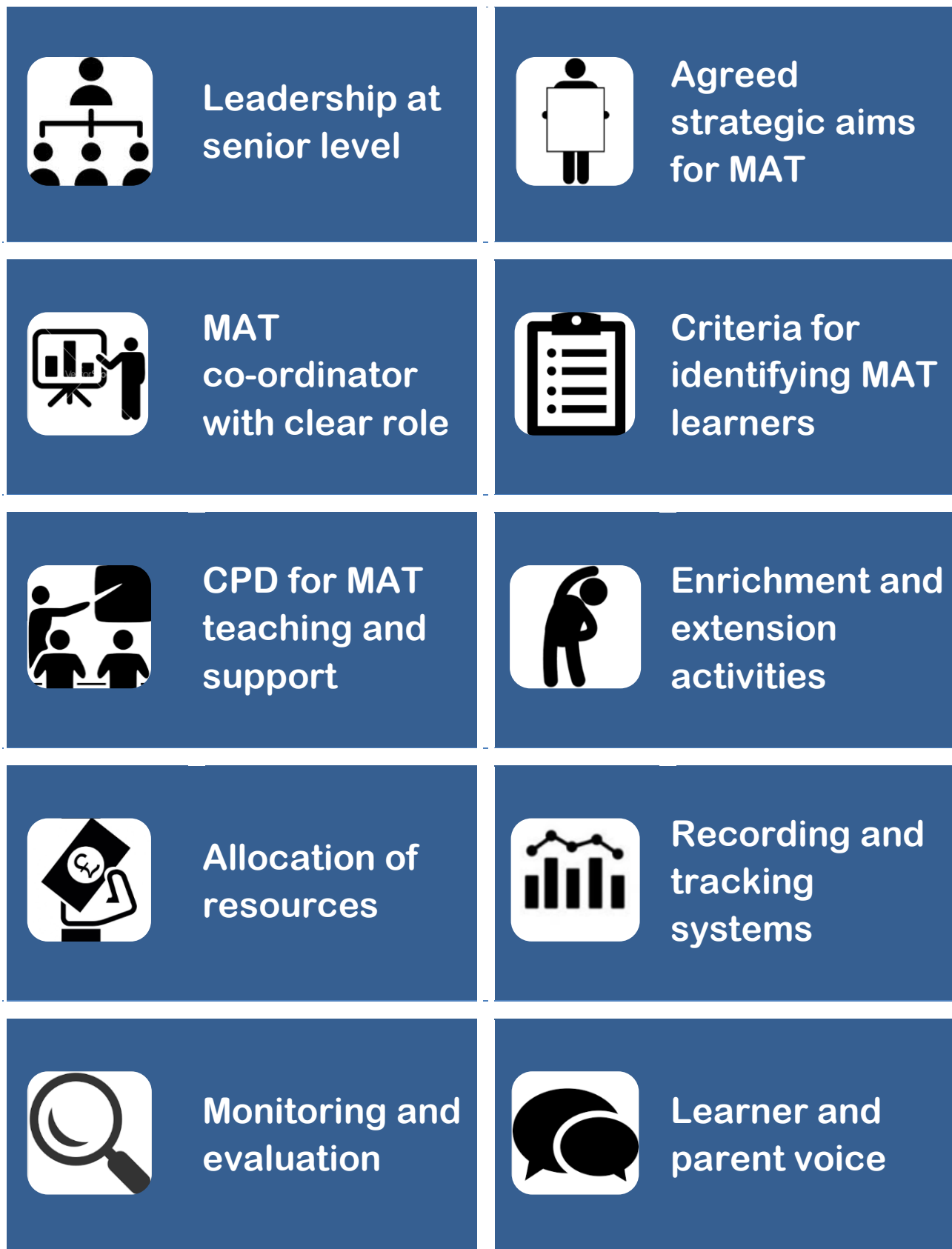
Concepts such as ‘achieving excellence’, ‘raising aspirations’ and ‘celebrating success’ are built into most FEIs’ mission statements or vision and values. Many also have documented policies for their own specific MAT-targeted initiatives, such as enrichment programmes or support for learners to apply to selective universities. But there may be a gap between this general ethos of success for all learners, and the interventions taking place with specific groups of learners (which are most often focused on academic ‘high fliers’ and those with artistic or sporting talents). Without clearly articulated strategic aims or targets for MAT, how can FEIs ensure that all learners with the potential to perform at exceptional levels, however this is manifested (or hidden), are identified and supported?

We therefore recommend that every institution, as part of its overall MAT strategy, defines specific aims and objectives as a framework for staff to follow in supporting their MAT learners, underpinned by personalised target setting. This does not detract from the ethos of ‘achievement for all’; on the contrary, it reinforces it, because ‘all learners’ includes MAT learners! As explained in [Section 6](#) of this guidance, exceptionally able individuals face their own challenges and barriers to success, which they can overcome with the understanding and support of their FEI.

Suggested examples of strategic objectives

- We will establish a comprehensive process and inclusive criteria for identifying every learner’s potential, and ensure that it is implemented consistently across the institution
- We will give equal value and recognition to learners’ potential in all areas, including practical, academic, creative, sporting, or leadership abilities
- We will work closely with exceptionally able learners and their families to ensure that learning opportunities are tailored to their needs, interests and aspirations taking account of their linguistic background and strengths
- We will work with partners to ensure that relevant and challenging progression pathways are available for high achieving learners in their chosen subject or industry, identifying pathways available in Welsh as necessary
- We will ensure that learners have access to diverse and inspirational models of success making every effort to identify Welsh speakers
- We will provide CPD and expert advice to ensure that all staff are confident in identifying and supporting MAT learners through English and/or Welsh to realise their potential
- We will encourage and support learners with exceptional abilities to achieve their potential, and raise their awareness of the opportunities and challenges they will encounter
- We will work to develop a collaborative approach to delivery of a range of enrichment activities providing practical, cultural and sporting experiences

Fig.1: Suggested components of a whole-institution MAT strategy



A good place to start is by reviewing current practice to identify strengths, weaknesses and inconsistencies in MAT provision. This guidance includes a 'healthcheck' template for this purpose ([Annex B](#)). In undertaking this exercise, consider:

- If the institution already has a MAT strategy or policy, is it up to date? Is it comprehensive? Is it actually understood and used by staff across the whole institution? How is any impact evidenced? How do you know?
- How to involve staff in undertaking the healthcheck. You may have a strategy and criteria in place, but do all staff feel confident in following them? Ideally, you should consider undertaking a healthcheck across all subject areas including medium of delivery, and draw them together into an overall institutional review – this will help to identify gaps in provision, as well as best practice that you can build on.
- Does your institution's approach to MAT give equal prominence to ability and talent in vocational, academic and other domains?
- How consistently are practices being followed across all departments and campuses? How do you know?
- How to involve learners and their parents/carers in the healthcheck. This will probably include analysing existing feedback from learner voice activities, and also specific surveys and/or focus groups. Consider how to include the views of 'non-MAT' learners too.
- What evidence is available to inform your review? Is it up to date?

Roles and responsibilities

The specific allocation of responsibilities will vary according to the institution's structure. For example, an FEI might have a single MAT co-ordinator, or may have more than one person to oversee different campuses or areas of activity. However, it is strongly recommended that:

- ➔ there is a commitment to ensuring that MAT learners achieve their potential at the highest level of the organisation, with the Board, principal and senior management providing clear leadership;
- ➔ the senior leadership team and Board review progress and outcomes for all MAT learners, not just those following academic routes;
- ➔ staff at all levels and in all areas of the institution are actively encouraged and supported to meet the needs of MAT learners; and
- ➔ responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating the MAT strategy is incorporated into at least one senior manager's job description, with clear underpinning objectives and the authority to carry out the role effectively.

Fig. 2 below outlines key responsibilities involved in successfully implementing a MAT strategy in an FEI.

Fig. 2: Institutional roles and responsibilities

Board	<p>Set the strategic direction for MAT provision, as part of an overall ethos of maximising the potential of all learners</p> <p>Set challenging targets for outcomes for MAT learners and review performance against them</p>
Principal and senior leadership team	<p>Ensure that there is a comprehensive MAT strategy and that it is consistently applied across the institution for Welsh and English speakers</p> <p>Ensure that MAT is built into other institutional policies where appropriate (such as workforce development plans and partnership agreements with other organisations)</p> <p>Make appropriate resources (human and financial) available to support MAT learners and to evaluate the outcomes of the MAT strategy</p>
MAT co-ordinator(s)	<p>Lead the implementation of the overall MAT strategy and report to the senior leadership team and Board on progress as evidenced against performance targets</p> <p>Provide support and advice to staff across the institution to ensure a consistent approach to MAT provision</p> <p>Act as a focal point for the co-ordination of MAT-related CPD, be a conduit for the sharing of best practice and take responsibility for evaluating and reporting on the impact of MAT initiatives</p> <p>Continually develop expertise and knowledge of MAT research and best practice</p>
Student services team	<p>Support the identification of MAT learners from application onwards, and help to ensure consistent recording of ability and progression</p> <p>Track learners throughout their application process from first contact to enrolment</p> <p>Work with partner schools to ensure seamless transition for both Welsh-medium and English-medium learners</p> <p>Collect and evaluate feedback from learners and their parents/carers on the effectiveness of MAT interventions</p> <p>Work with teaching staff to support learners' career progression, including applications for employment and university</p>
Faculty/subject area managers	<p>Work with course teams to develop subject-specific criteria</p> <p>Initiate and support the embedding of differentiated learning approaches</p> <p>Use course reviews and self-assessment to ensure a consistent approach to identifying, teaching and supporting MAT</p>
All teaching staff	<p>Know how to identify high potential and to refer learners on for additional support where appropriate</p> <p>Use assessment for learning to set challenging targets and goals for MAT learners and review progress with them regularly</p> <p>Use extension and enrichment activities to deepen learners' understanding and help them apply their learning to 'real world' problems</p>

Learner support team	Ensure that learners with additional challenges, such as learning difficulties or mental health problems, are given appropriate support in order to reach their full potential
Quality manager	<p>Ensure that specific targets are set for the achievement and progression of MAT learners</p> <p>Ensure that the impact of MAT initiatives, and the overall outcomes of the strategy, are evaluated as part of regular self-assessment</p>

Working in partnership

Partnerships are essential in ensuring a comprehensive support structure for MAT learners. Key partners for all FEIs will include:

- **Parents and carers of younger MAT learners**, to ensure that they are fully involved in decision-making and can support their child to achieve their potential, and to address any concerns (such as worries about the financial implications of progressing to HE).
- **Employers**, to offer tailored opportunities such as mentoring, enterprise projects, competitions, internships and guest speakers, in order to provide MAT learners with a detailed understanding of career possibilities and the skills they need for employment. Consideration must be given to the learner's language choice enabling them to make the most of the experiences.
- **HE institutions**, through the establishment of specific progression routes, support for applications, alumni programmes, summer schools, familiarisation visits, Seren network engagement, and outreach activities via Widening Access funds. Colleges should consider how to develop Welsh-medium and bilingual progression routes through Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's provision across Welsh universities.
- **Third sector organisations** such as the Sutton Trust, Villiers Park Educational Trust and Future First, to provide targeted support for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress into HE (see [Annex D](#) for more information).
- **Specialist organisations**, to develop learners with talents in particular areas such as arts or sports, through enrichment activities, sponsorship, competition, mentoring and entrepreneurship.

What to consider when working in partnership to support MAT learners

- Are MAT-related initiatives incorporated into joint strategic partnerships and plans, including those with 14-19 networks, HE institutions, key employers and voluntary organisations?
- Do partnership boards and networks include an appropriate focus on provision and outcomes for MAT learners?
- Do partnership activities have clear aims and objectives that enhance the learning process, and are these understood by all partners?
- Are the respective roles of the FEI and partner organisation(s) articulated and understood?
- Are opportunities promoted to all learners who would benefit (even if they are particularly targeted at MAT learners)?
- Do partnership arrangements support learner transition between different phases of

learning and into employment?

- Are there opportunities for joint CPD, so that the institution's staff can work with counterparts in partner organisations to develop a shared understanding of the needs of MAT learners and how they can be met?
- Is any personal or sensitive learner information shared securely within an agreed Information Sharing Protocol?

Case study – see Annex C

Coleg Sir Gâr: [The 14-19 MAT supplementary programme](#)

The Seren network

Launched in 2015, the Seren network of 11 regional hubs has been established to support academically high-achieving learners across Wales to realise their potential. The network is helping to strengthen partnerships between schools, colleges, universities and specialist organisations such as the Brilliant Club, Sutton Trust and Future First, to help ensure that learners in all settings can access high-quality support.

Seren hubs aim to:

- stretch and challenge students in the subjects they enjoy;
- link students with leading UK universities;
- create a peer group of high achieving, like-minded students who are passionate about their subject and want to know more;
- support teachers in providing the best information, advice and activities for their brightest students; and
- inspire students about future career aspirations.

These goals are clearly aligned with the strategies set out in this guidance for supporting MAT learners, and the Seren hubs provide a focal point for organising enrichment and extension activities which give learners opportunities to work with like-minded peers from other institutions. The network is still relatively new, with hubs across Wales at different stages of development, and a range of approaches being used in different areas. The Welsh Government is currently designing an evaluation framework for Seren, which will include an assessment of its impact as more learners progress through the programme; this offers opportunities to compare strategies used by the different hubs and share best practice. Meanwhile, hubs could consider using this guidance to help them plan, monitor and evaluate their own activities.

Case study – see Annex C

[Pembrokeshire College: Seren Hub](#)

Welsh language

In the *Consultation on a Welsh Government draft strategy: a million Welsh speakers by 2050*, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language has stipulated his clear vision “to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050.” To achieve this vision, six priorities have been identified for action:

- Planning and Language Policy;
- Normalisation;
- Education;
- People;
- Support; and
- Rights.

Planning programmes effectively at the outset enables Welsh speakers to receive the same services as English speakers and will make the language a normal part of everyday life. Education is key to increasing the number of Welsh speakers, and FEIs play a crucial role in providing linguistic continuity for learners progressing from schools into post-16 learning. Support for speakers is essential and developing a robust and modern infrastructure in all aspects will enable them to use their skills and become confident in their bilingual skills.

In all aspects of their MAT policy and procedures as described in this document, FEIs should incorporate provision for Welsh speakers and execute their policies so that they provide easy and equitable access to the support mechanisms adopted for all of their learners. Learners must be comfortable in whichever language they choose, or by using both, to allow them to benefit fully from the wide-ranging support that FEIs will provide for them.

Case study – see Annex C

[Coleg Gwent: Welsh Baccalaureate and bilingual learning](#)

Section 2: **Identifying MAT learners**

Standards

- 2.1 There is a whole-institution framework for identifying MAT learners, which is reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis
- 2.2 MAT learners are identified using a range of methods and criteria, recognising that exceptional ability may be manifested in different ways and at different times
- 2.3 The approach to identifying MAT learners focuses on potential and does not rely solely on prior attainment or other narrow definitions of 'ability'; it recognises that a MAT learner may not currently be high-achieving or motivated to succeed
- 2.4 Subject or faculty teams have developed their own criteria to consistently identify high-potential learners in their areas
- 2.5 Learners, parents and carers are involved in the identification process
- 2.6 Staff, including admissions teams, tutors, lecturers and mentors, are trained in identifying MAT and understand what they should do when a learner is identified as MAT, including support, referral and recording requirements
- 2.7 The institution adopts a culture of equality and inclusion in talking to and about MAT learners, so that they do not feel uncomfortably 'singled out' – and non-MAT learners do not feel inadequate or excluded

Identifying ability and talent is sometimes straightforward; some learners will arrive in an FEI with a track record of high performance, outstanding examination results, and a drive to succeed that makes them stand out from their peers. But in other cases, learners arrive with untapped potential which has never been identified. A comprehensive, whole-institution approach to identification is therefore essential.

Developing a systematic approach

Some points to bear in mind:

- Vocational and academic ability is distributed throughout the population – there is no such thing as a 'typical' MAT learner. In fact, relying on stereotypes will result in a narrow approach which misses many learners' outstanding potential.
- MAT learners may have disabilities, learning difficulties or social/emotional/behavioural difficulties which have overshadowed their learning careers and led to underachievement.
- Parents are likely to have a detailed knowledge of their children's abilities and character, and can provide a valuable source of insight – but they may also be nervous about the implications of having their child identified as MAT.
- Looked after children, care leavers and those progressing from education other than at school (EOTAS) settings may not have a strong parental advocate and are likely to need special consideration, to ensure that their abilities and aspirations are identified.

- Potential for high performance does not correlate with age or with past performance, and learners can peak and plateau at different times in their lives. Therefore identification needs to be an ongoing process, with an 'open door' throughout the learner's journey, rather than assuming that ability will be obvious at the point of entry/induction.
- A learner may not display high ability in one language but may be highly proficient when communicating in another language.

It is important that each FEI considers how to integrate its identification framework into its own processes (for example, initial assessment, induction, tutorials and reviews).

What does a MAT learner look like?

Every learner is different. However, there are some common attributes of MAT learners which are listed below, and which may be helpful to FE staff in considering whether a learner has the potential to perform at an outstanding level in any discipline (or in many).

MAT learners may...

- Be very fluent and articulate
- Prefer verbal or practical work to writing
- Read quickly and retain information well
- Show curiosity, ask searching questions and undertake independent research
- Be unconventional and resist pressure to conform
- Prefer new ideas and challenges to practising skills they have already mastered
- Become bored and impatient, especially when dealing with repetitive tasks or with topics which don't inspire their passion
- Be good at problem solving, seeing the connections between ideas, and grasping underlying principles with minimal explanation
- Be quick to see similarities and differences, and to identify general principles from specific examples
- Jump stages in learning, and may become frustrated at having to go back to fill in the gaps in a more linear fashion
- Not have English or Welsh as their first language for example, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners, which could frustrate their attempts to communicate and be understood
- Become deeply absorbed in subjects which interest them, but may also take on too much or find it difficult to 'let go' of a piece of work and move on
- Have a strong sense of justice and be sensitive to other peoples' feelings and motivations
- Set very high standards for themselves and others, and become frustrated at falling short
- Show an unusual degree of interest in more 'adult' topics such as current affairs, and be strongly critical of institutions and the status quo
- Have an original and sophisticated sense of humour, to the point of getting carried away with a joke
- Appreciate wordplay, satire and irony, 'read between the lines' and be quick to appreciate

hidden meanings

- Want to debate underlying reasons and influences, rather than accepting rules or authority at face value

Identification strategies

In this guidance, developed in consultation with the FE sector, we do not advocate a 'quota' approach to identifying MAT learners with an institution. This means that FEIs should not be aiming to identify the 'top 5%' or 'top 10%' of their learner population. Instead, we recommend a holistic approach which acknowledges that:

- every institution will have some MAT learners at any given time, and this may include high potential learners who have not yet been identified as MAT;
- ability is distributed throughout the population, so the 'MAT cohort' should be broadly representative in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background; and
- MAT learners may be following academic, vocational or mixed learning programmes and may exhibit outstanding ability in more than one area.

Of course, prior attainment is the most straightforward way of identifying MAT learners. An individual who has performed exceptionally well in examinations (or in other assessments such as music exams) can be flagged as soon as they apply to an FEI, and referred on to relevant support and enrichment programmes. But this approach, while valuable, has a number of limitations.

Problems with relying on prior attainment to identify MAT learners

A learner may:

- have other attributes which have prevented them from performing to the best of their abilities in the past; for example, a learning difficulty or disability;
- not have English or Welsh as their first language;
- have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties which have disrupted their learning;
- have had specific circumstances, such as long term illness, which affected their attainment;
- have 'covered up' their abilities in an effort to avoid appearing different;
- have aptitudes which have not been fully apparent in the school environment, such as practical, entrepreneurial, or leadership skills. This is particularly important in the FE sector; every practitioner will have encountered learners who have not achieved particularly well at school, but who suddenly begin to shine when they find something they are really good at;
- have been excluded from, or missed, school for any number of reasons; or
- have gained a limited range of qualifications as they were EOTAS and not all options may have been available to them.

Case study – see Annex C

[Merthyr Tydfil College: Using cognitive testing to identify potential](#)

Fig. 3: Summary of identification methods

Prior attainment	School identification
<p>A learner may enter FE with a track record of high prior attainment (most typically, an outstanding GCSE grade profile). This is the most straightforward way to identify MAT learners, but must be used as part of a broader approach to identification as there is not always a straightforward correlation between past performance and future potential. Learners may have underachieved at school for a variety of reasons or, conversely, may have achieved outstanding grades through a level of intense effort which is not sustainable in the long term. Consideration also needs to be given to the language of instruction and assessment, which may affect achievement.</p>	<p>The relationships between schools and FEIs, and the extent to which information is shared, still vary widely across Wales (and even within local authority areas). The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework sets the expectation that Information Sharing Protocols (ISPs) will be used across Wales to facilitate the secure sharing of data which can help FEIs to support young people; this is not restricted to 'vulnerable' groups but should include learners of all levels of ability. Where ISPs are working well, they will provide a valuable source of information which goes beyond examination results to identify individual learners' strengths, learning preferences and challenges.</p>
Cognitive testing	Teacher/tutor/mentor identification
<p>Verbal or non-verbal reasoning tests can be used to assess learners' potential, and may identify MAT learners who have previously under-achieved or whose abilities are not in traditional academic domains. Welsh and/or English tests should be used to enable the learner to be accurately assessed.</p>	<p>Teachers may see signs of exceptional ability at the start of, or during, the learning programme, through performance in tests, participation in learning activities and/or displays of particular aptitudes in practical areas.</p>
Self-identification	Peer identification
<p>Learners themselves should have opportunities to self-identify as MAT and to ask for the support and challenge they need. They may not use 'MAT' terminology but their ambitions, interests and mentions of extracurricular work all provide cues which trained teachers/tutors can follow up.</p>	<p>Other learners are often very aware of the abilities of their peers and may identify potential in others – either directly or indirectly (for example, by deferring to a peer who exhibits extensive knowledge or leadership abilities).</p>
Parent identification	Referral by other organisations
<p>Parents/carers are likely to have detailed knowledge of their child's abilities and what they need to help them learn.</p> <p>However, they may have concerns about being seen as a 'pushy parent', or about the financial or other implications of labelling their child as MAT.</p>	<p>In some cases specialist arts or sporting organisations, community organisations, educational psychologists or Careers Wales will already have had contact with a learner before they enter FE. Partnership working should provide opportunities to securely share information on MAT learners and their aspirations.</p>

Vocational giftedness

Annie Haight is one of very few academics to have studied the attributes of ‘vocational giftedness’ to any extent. Her [review](#) of studies of talented vocational learners and entrepreneurs showed that they tend to be characterised by:

- high levels of motivation and persistence;
- marked preferences for applied, practical and collaborative types of learning; and
- a notable degree of ‘creative-productive’ talent, sometimes at the expense of ‘schoolhouse giftedness’ [traditional academic ability].

Haight found extensive evidence of similarities between high ability in academic and vocational fields; but there are also some key differences, such as a marked preference for experiential or ‘real world’ learning that characterises the most able vocational learners. Of course, learners do not neatly divide into academic and vocational categories, and it follows that they may have exceptional ability in more than one area; a significant proportion of secondary school pupils identified as ‘gifted’ express preferences for practical, physical and expressive styles of [learning](#). As any FE practitioner knows, many learners in all subject areas prefer ‘doing’ to ‘writing about’.

Subject teams in FEIs should consider developing their own criteria for identifying exceptional ability in vocational learners, so that they have a consistent framework rather than relying on the subjective views of individual practitioners. See [Developing ‘real world skills’](#) in Section 5 for more information.

A different conception of ‘ability’

Using this broader set of identification methods should help to ensure a more inclusive approach to identifying learners’ potential. This needs to be matched with a holistic view of what ‘ability’ looks like, because – as noted above – we do not think it is helpful or appropriate to set up a dichotomy between ‘academic ability’ and ‘vocational talent’. Instead, FEIs should embrace a broader conception which recognises that a learner may have exceptional abilities in several areas – and will need a flexible programme to meet their needs, rather than being pigeonholed from the outset as either academic or vocational.

One approach worth considering is Howard Gardner’s ‘Multiple Intelligences Model’, summarised in Fig.4. Gardner, a professor at Harvard University, believes that everyone has a unique blend of the eight different types of intelligence. They do not operate independently, but are used in combination as people develop skills or solve problems.

Fig. 4: Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences model

Linguistic intelligence	Sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information.
Logical-mathematical intelligence	The capacity to analyse problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, detect patterns, and investigate issues scientifically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.
Musical intelligence	Skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.
Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence	Using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems; the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements.
Spatial intelligence	The potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.
Interpersonal intelligence	The capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders and counsellors all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence.
Intrapersonal intelligence	The capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations, and to use such information to regulate one's life.
Naturalist intelligence	The ability to recognise, categorise and draw upon certain features of the environment.

Adapted from Smith, Mark K. (2002, 2008) 'Howard Gardner and multiple intelligences', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, <http://www.infed.org/mobi/howard-gardner-multiple-intelligences-and-education>.

Gardner's model is not included here as just another way of categorising or stereotyping learners, but as a reminder that MAT individuals will have a blend of skills and abilities that work in combination. Looking at ability in this cross-cutting way can help to open up the discussion about how learners develop and how programmes can be designed to meet their needs, rather than limiting possibilities by restricting them to one fixed learning pathway.

More information: <https://howardgardner.com/multiple-intelligences/>

Section 3: Tracking, monitoring and evaluation

Standards

- 3.1 The institution has a systematic approach to evaluating the impact and outcomes of its MAT strategy, continually developing its approach to meet learners' needs
- 3.2 Qualitative and quantitative measures are used to evaluate the impact of MAT activities, tailored as appropriate to specific initiatives
- 3.3 The overall MAT strategy itself is regularly reviewed and updated, informed by reviews at departmental/subject/course level
- 3.4 Examples of learner success are evaluated and analysed to identify 'what worked' and 'lessons learned', with input from the learners and staff involved, so that best practice can be shared and extended
- 3.5 Consideration of MAT is built into peer observation, course reviews, self-assessment and action planning across the institution
- 3.6 Tracking systems are used to monitor the progress of MAT learners, including specific analysis of outcomes for disadvantaged and protected groups
- 3.7 Learners, parents and carers are closely involved in evaluating MAT strategies and activities and there is a 'feedback loop' to ensure that they are informed of actions taken in response to their views
- 3.8 Senior managers and governors review and consider the impact of MAT activities on a regular basis, in the context of the institution's overall MAT strategy rather than as separate initiatives

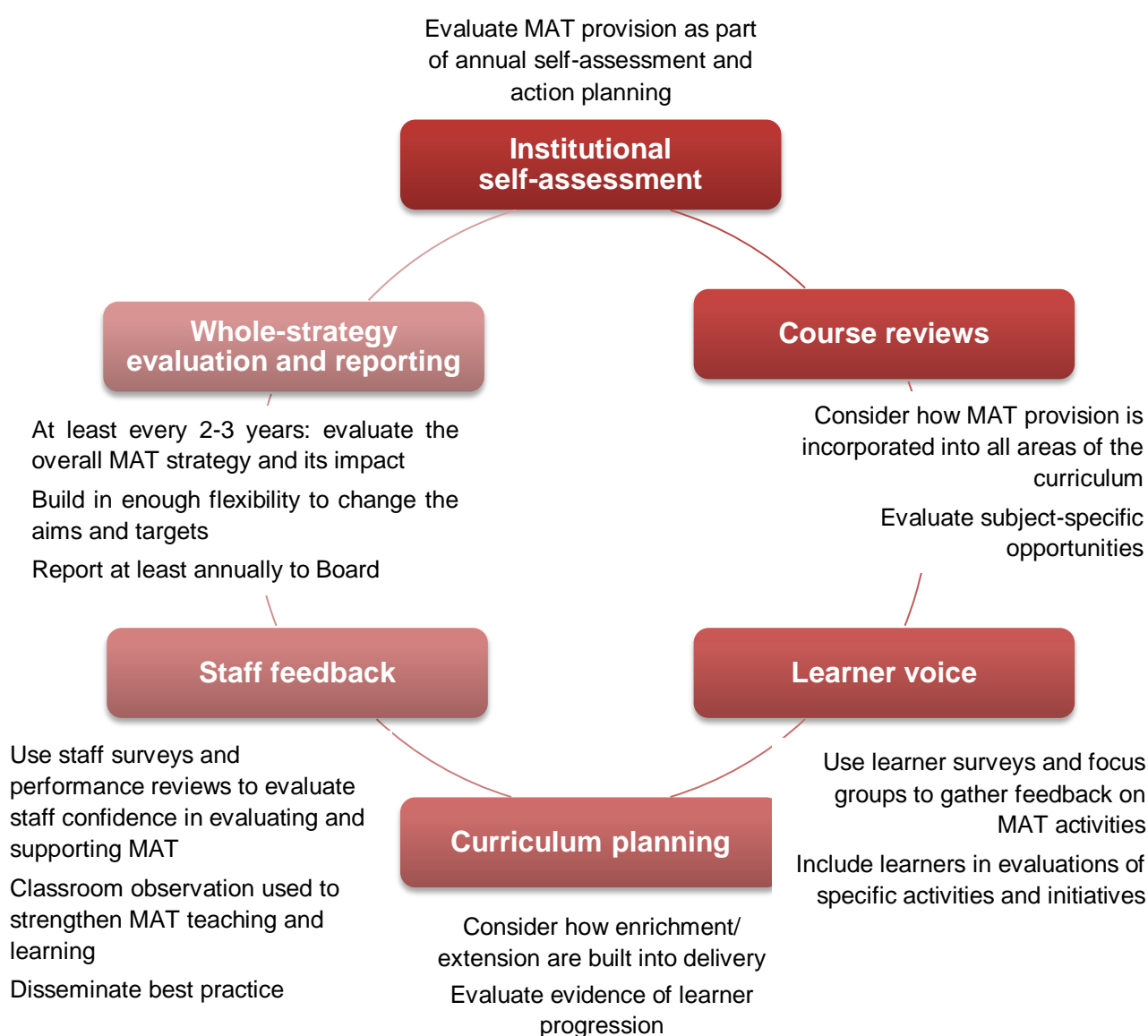
The lack of a whole-institution MAT strategy in most FEIs in Wales is reflected in arrangements for tracking, monitoring and evaluation. The [review of MAT provision in Wales](#) found that there was often a noticeable division of responsibilities: the MAT co-ordinator (or a senior manager responsible for MAT) would monitor the progress of 'academic' MAT learners, while course tutors tended to track vocational MAT learners. There are some obvious reasons for this split: 'academic' ability tends to be more easily defined, learners are generally easily identified on entry to FE, and they are seen as forming a more cohesive group with defined goals (usually progression to a selective university). As we have seen, vocational ability, by contrast, often emerges after a learner has enrolled, and most institutions do not have a clear set of criteria for identifying vocational MAT learners – so approaches are often more ad hoc.

Each FEI should consider how it can develop an integrated approach to tracking, monitoring and evaluation for MAT provision, aligned with its overall monitoring framework. Of course, systematic identification of MAT learners and an inclusive set of success indicators are prerequisites for this. Ideally, staff will be aware of MAT learners before they start their programmes, but this will not always be possible, so recording and tracking methods need to be flexible enough to accommodate identification during the learning programme.

Suggested planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle

Monitoring of MAT provision and outcomes does not necessarily need to be a separate process, but can be integrated into FEIs' annual self-assessment cycle. However, processes may need to be modified to ensure that they accurately capture the progress being made by MAT learners, recognising the fact that 'underachievement' for a MAT individual may well look very different to other learners. A learner cohort, course or department may be meeting overall targets and categorised as 'good' or 'excellent', but this could hide the fact that individual MAT learners are not achieving to the best of their ability. Effective tracking systems can ensure that signs of underachievement or disengagement are identified and acted on at an early stage, and this should not rely solely on numerical data but be informed by professional input from practitioners.

Fig. 5: Suggested annual cycle for monitoring and reviewing MAT provision



Within this overall cycle, it is recommended that each FEI:

- ➔ reviews how effectively the roles and responsibilities outlined in Fig. 2 are being fulfilled, and uses this information to identify any necessary CPD and/or adjustment of job descriptions or terms of reference;
- ➔ ensures that course teams set clear targets for MAT learners and that they have regular, in-depth discussions about learners' progress and any areas of underachievement, informed by monitoring data, teacher observations and learner feedback; and
- ➔ considers whether targets for MAT learners are personalised, sufficiently challenging, and used effectively as the basis for formative assessment and progress reviews. Peer observation can be an effective method of doing this and will facilitate professional dialogue about how best to support learners' progress.

Developing performance indicators

The box below suggests some indicators FEIs could use to monitor the effectiveness of their MAT strategy. In setting targets, indicators should not be used prescriptively (for example, by setting strict 'quotas' for the percentage of learners identified as MAT or the numbers progressing to a specific destination) as every learner and every cohort will be different.

Some suggested MAT indicators

Process indicators

- % of staff trained in identifying and supporting MAT, of which x are fully bilingual
- Staff levels of confidence in identifying and supporting MAT
- % of staff confirming awareness of the MAT strategy
- % of learners engaged in mentoring relationships of which x are fully bilingual
- % of vocational learners identified and recorded as MAT
- % of academic learners identified and recorded as MAT

Outcome indicators

- Attainment of outstanding grades (A*, A, Distinction* and equivalent)
- Value added scores
- Entrants/achievements in skills competitions
- Entrants/achievements in other competitions (sports, arts, debating, enterprise)
- % of learners progressing to 'Sutton Trust 30' universities, or to appropriate alternative routes for learners who wish to progress to Welsh-medium HE
- % of learners progressing to Higher Apprenticeships or to selective industry recruitment schemes
- Learner feedback on enrichment activities
- MAT learner and parent satisfaction levels

This is not intended as a comprehensive list, as each FEI should consider indicators which fit its own strategic aims and quality cycle. It is, however, strongly recommended that:

- ➔ indicators and targets are inclusive, reflecting the whole learner population and linguistic diversity (and therefore encompass academic, vocational and other types of ability);
- ➔ each FEI considers differentiated monitoring for learners from disadvantaged and protected groups, so that any gaps in achievement can be identified and appropriate actions put in place to address them; and
- ➔ wherever possible, the parents or carers of 16-19 year old learners have opportunities to be involved in the target setting process so that they understand what milestones their child is reaching, how their progress is monitored and how this progress relates to longer-term goals.

Evaluating impact

Most FEIs have well-established processes for self-assessment and for using data to evaluate outcomes. Evaluating impact can be more challenging and, in establishing their overall MAT strategies, FEIs need to:

- ➔ Consider how to evaluate the impact of the strategy as a whole, not just specific MAT initiatives or projects contained within it.
- ➔ Build in evaluation criteria and processes from the outset:
 - What baseline information do you have for comparative purposes?
 - When and how will you evaluate impact?
 - What evidence will you need?
 - How will you know if the strategy has been successful?
 - How will you learn from mistakes or failures?
 - What is the process for making changes if they are needed, and how long will this take?
- ➔ Incorporate feedback from learners, parents and carers into the evaluation cycle.

Impact measures could include:

- How much more confident do staff feel in identifying and supporting MAT learners?
- How well does the identified MAT population of the FEI represent its overall population in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and disadvantage?
- How have learners improved in terms of confidence, engagement, satisfaction with learning, aspiration, clarity on future goals?
- What proportion of learners identified as MAT are achieving or exceeding the targets in their individual learning plans?
- Where a learner has excelled, do staff know what they and the learner did to help achieve this?
- How do universities and employers rate your graduates?
- How do all of these outcomes compare with the position before your strategy was introduced?

More information:

<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/media/wlv/pdf/sed-res-ict-sowhat.PDF>
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/developing-an-impact-strategy/measuring-success/the-evaluation-process/>

Section 4: Curriculum design

Standards

- 4.1 The institution has undertaken an audit of its curriculum across vocational and academic areas (and language of instruction) to ensure that provision is aligned with the needs of MAT learners
- 4.2 Provision planning for MAT learners is integral to the institution's overall MAT strategy, and used to inform CPD planning and evaluation of delivery
- 4.3 Creativity, enterprise, questioning and problem-solving are encouraged and valued in all areas of the curriculum and at all levels of ability
- 4.4 The institution has a comprehensive approach to providing enrichment opportunities, including academic, vocational and other areas of ability and talent
- 4.5 Enrichment and extension are an integral part of the curriculum and are delivered in the classroom, workshop, tutorial or workplace, not just as 'bolt on' activities
- 4.6 Learning technologies are used effectively to broaden and deepen MAT learners' experiences, within a framework of clear learning aims
- 4.7 There is enough flexibility built into curriculum planning for teachers to adapt their delivery during the year in response to learners' progress
- 4.8 Processes are in place to ensure that new curriculum developments are evaluated against clear criteria

The curriculum planning process requires FEIs to consider their range of provision including language of learning, progression pathways and alignment with labour market information on an annual basis. Of course, planning has to consider and meet the needs of all learners, whatever their goals or abilities. It is recommended that FEIs plan using the overall principle of helping all learners to progress and achieve their potential, as is already generally the case. This wider principle lends itself to consideration of how the structure and delivery of the curriculum can offer particular opportunities for MAT learners. FEIs also need to build enough flexibility into their planning to adapt their delivery during the year in response to learners' progress; this can be particularly important for MAT learners whose knowledge and skills will develop rapidly in the right learning environment, and who will usually relish being challenged.

Part of this flexibility is about teaching skills, and [Section 5](#) sets out guidance on teaching and learning to bring out the best in MAT individuals. However, practitioners will be better equipped to do this well if they are working within an overall curriculum framework which builds in opportunities for MAT learners to flourish. Structured curriculum planning also needs to make efficient use of resources, partnerships and staff expertise across the whole institution. Staff hobbies, interests and passions could also be harnessed to support MAT learners' wider experiential learning.

Above all, MAT provision should be considered an integral part of continual planning, not a series of 'bolt-ons'; and FEIs should continually explore options to extend and enhance their provision.

Curriculum review

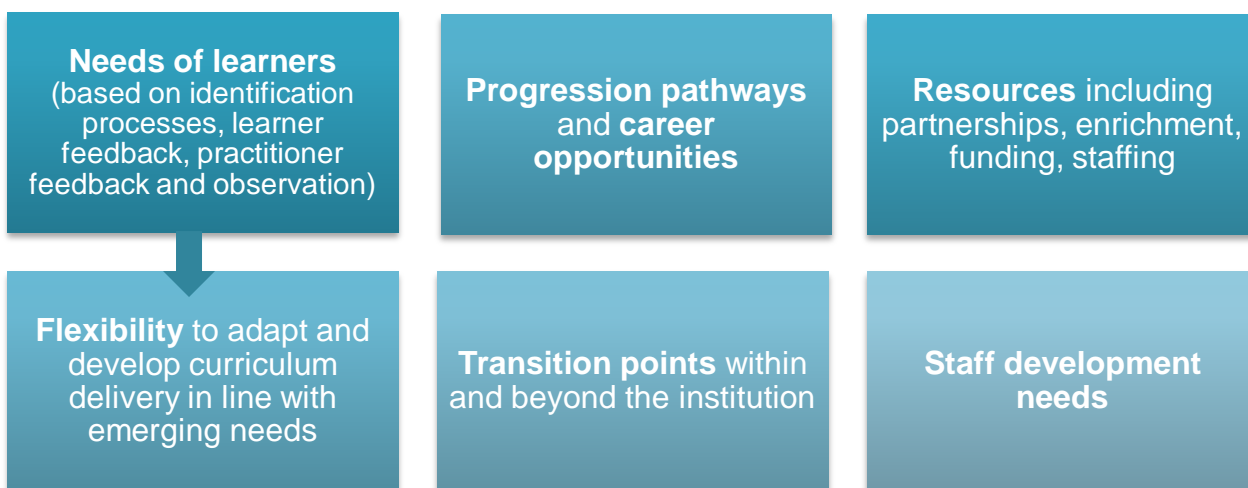
As part of developing an overall institutional MAT strategy, it is recommended that FEIs undertake a curriculum audit to identify opportunities for MAT learners. This is likely to highlight both strengths and gaps (for example, provision in FEIs tends to be well developed for 'academic' MAT learners but can be patchy for vocational learners). FEIs should consider how they can develop suitably challenging programmes for MAT learners, and incorporate discussion on this into their annual planning discussions with the Welsh Government's Post-16 Planning team and also share best practice with other providers.

It is important to consider how teaching, learning and assessment practices are aligned with the curriculum structure, and indeed with the institution's overall strategic aims for MAT provision.

[Tomlinson et al](#) (2015) point out that:

If we design our curriculum for example, to be engaging, result in understanding, and help students make critical connections, then assessments and instructions should be designed to promote those same ends... If we say we value student thinking and understanding but largely assess 'right answers' and spend most of our class time doing rote drills on information and skills, the goal of developing students who are engaged thinkers is merely a delusion.

Fig. 6: Undertaking a curriculum review: what to consider



[Research by Sandra L. Berger](#) suggests that an effective curriculum for MAT learners:

- allows time for in-depth exploration and to manipulate ideas;
- provides opportunities for learners to move through content at their own pace;
- provides thematic, broad-based content, rather than just single-subject areas, so that learners can use their skills to generalise and apply ideas;
- lets learners acquire an integrated understanding of knowledge, going across and beyond traditional subject categories or disciplines;
- challenges learners with questions that require advanced responses, or require them to undertake their own enquiries and explorations; and
- enables learners to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways, and to synthesise, rather than summarise, information.

Enrichment activities

Every FEI has an enrichment programme, usually encompassing a wide range of activities within and outside the institution. These are often very well-established and operate across subjects and levels of ability, with the introduction of Seren hubs offering more opportunities for partnership with schools. This section is not, therefore, intended to provide comprehensive guidance on enrichment, but focuses specifically on how enrichment activities should be used to support MAT learners to reach their potential. When planning their enrichment activities FEIs need to consider the linguistic profile of the learners targeted and whether the language of activities will deliver the expected or desired outcomes for all of their learners consistently.

Enrichment opportunities are important for all learners, to help them explore topics in more depth, work in groups to investigate 'real life' problems, and/or develop valuable links to their communities. For MAT learners there are other considerations, and other benefits. 'Intensive' activities such as summer schools, honours programmes, Saturday schools, twilight sessions, societies and competitions provide opportunities for MAT learners to work with like-minded peers, in an environment where excellence is accepted. In this climate, where there is both healthy competition and trust, learners can motivate and push one another to achieve more. The same principle can be used to help MAT learners to extend their practical, cultural and sporting horizons.

A review of research on gifted and talented initiatives by [NFER](#) noted the importance of ensuring that enrichment activities are not seen as add-ons, but integrated and reinforced through mainstream curriculum delivery. Learners need to practice the skills they have learned through enrichment in the classroom or workshop, and vice versa; MAT learners are often particularly good at making the connections between ideas, and at generalising from concrete examples to guiding principles. Practitioners can capitalise on these skills by setting tasks which enable learners to apply their knowledge to new situations, and to deepen their understanding of the links between concepts and their practical application. Activities can also be supported through the use of social media or online discussion groups, to help learners engage before, during and after the event.

For vocational learning, enrichment is not always easily defined. (Indeed, MAT resources for schools often depict 'work related experience' as an enrichment activity, when in FE it should be an integral part of learning.) Activities that are likely to be particularly relevant in vocational areas include employer mentoring, participation in skills competitions, Saturday schools, enterprise briefs, and any other opportunities which expose learners to excellence in their chosen skill or industry. FEIs should also consider how traditionally 'academic' tasks, modules

Enrichment

Enrichment activities are designed to provide experiential opportunities which extend and apply learning which takes place in the classroom or workshop, and/or to enable learners to explore topics of interest in more depth. In FE, the range of enrichment activities is extensive and could include summer schools, additional seminars, industry mentoring or community projects.

Enrichment does **not** include:

- any activities which are an integrated element of a programme (such as field trips or talks by guest speakers where attendance is mandatory);
- activities which are part of standard preparation for university or work, such as preparation of personal statements or CVs; or
- standard elements of the FEI's pastoral support programme.

or projects could be used to add richness and variety to vocational programmes, and vice versa; MAT learners' needs will not be best served by a rigid delineation of the two domains.

FEIs should seek detailed feedback from learners on enrichment activities, and use this not just to improve existing opportunities, but to seek ideas on other activities which could be introduced to reflect learners' interests and aspirations.

Case study – see Annex C

[Coleg Ceredigion: Professional standards in media production](#)

Fig. 7 lists some of the main enrichment activities currently used in FE, and summarises their potential benefits and weaknesses in relation to MAT learners.

Fig. 7: Examples of enrichment activities

Type of activity	Benefits	What to avoid
Summer schools, lunchtime, Saturday or twilight sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers an immersive experience which allows MAT learners to interact with like-minded peers Can help to build confidence as well as skills Can tap into learners' passions about a subject and give them the opportunity to experience learning at a higher level May be particularly beneficial to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly organised events Muddled or conflicting communication between the institution and partner organisations Placing all the emphasis on additional activities rather than ensuring that concepts and skills are reinforced through classroom/workshop-based enrichment activities
Mentoring (by other learners, tutors, employers or entrepreneurs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can build 'social capital' for learners who do not have graduate or professional role models in their families Can help to strengthen community links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generic mentoring relationships which are not tailored to the learner's particular interests and aspirations Counting time spent with mentors as an outcome in itself, rather than evaluating against specific aims
Guest speakers (eg alumni, employers, universities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can raise learners' aspirations by helping them to understand the range of possibilities and 'picture themselves' in a particular career Can provide practical suggestions and tips alongside inspirational ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive content (eg multiple talks about 'going to university') – every speaker should offer something new and distinctive Mandatory attendance, if learners are unclear what they will gain from participating
Optional visits (eg theatres, museums, sporting events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enriches and exemplifies theoretical material learnt in the classroom Can broaden learners' horizons by exposing them to new environments and experiences, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting opportunities to particular groups of learners 'Bolt on' activities which are not integrated and reinforced through learning delivery Activities which lack a clear learning purpose

International learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expands learners' world view and gives them opportunities to experience different cultures ▪ Can help to develop confidence and social skills ▪ Gives learners a broader idea of options for higher level study and careers abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visits which do not complement the main learning programme and which do not have clearly defined learning outcomes ▪ Putting too much pressure on learners who may have difficulties interacting with peers, mental health problems, or simply not be mature enough to handle being away from home
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Case study – see Annex C

[Grŵp Llandrillo Menai: Rhaglen AUR programme](#)

Skills competitions

Participating in skills competitions is a highly effective way for exceptionally able vocational learners to enhance their skills and employability. As well as accelerating the development of technical skills, competitions have been shown to increase learners' motivation, ambition, confidence and ability to work under pressure.

Skills Competition Wales consists of around 30 local competitions funded by the Welsh Government and run by a dedicated network of colleges, work based learning providers and employer led organisations.

More information:

<http://worldskillswales.org/>

The competition journey begins at a local level, with Skills Competition Wales. Competitors are encouraged to progress and take part in WorldSkills UK competitions. If successful, the competitor may be able to progress onto competitions at national level and international level (WorldSkills).

Skills competitions are inclusive with the opportunity for all learners to participate. For example, team skills competitions may include learners with a range of abilities providing the opportunity for individuals to learn from others, but they also provide the opportunity for MAT learners to act as role models.

The Welsh Government encourages FEIs to participate in skills competitions. FEIs should consider providing opportunities for learners to showcase their skills in competitive environments in a breadth of sectors, including those that are a priority to the economy of Wales.

Case study – see Annex C

[Inspiring Skills Excellence](#)

Developing vocational excellence through skills competitions

Benefits for learners

- Rapid development of technical skills through intense training, greater precision and more in-depth understanding of technical problems
- Soft skills including confidence, self-reflection, time management and communication
- Career progression and awareness of opportunities through networking
- Entrepreneurship skills

Benefits for providers

- Enhanced reputation and attracting more learners
- Improvements in teaching and learning
- Positive influences on the student body as a whole
- Career benefits for training managers including awareness of industry developments, and opportunities for collaboration

Benefits for employers

- Publicity and prestige
- Enhanced employee performance including better teamwork
- Improved recruitment
- Increases in the number and range of customers
- Introduction of new business processes and techniques

Considerations for providers

- Competitors may find it challenging to adjust to life post-competition and need to be supported in this
- Employers should be actively engaged during competitors' training, both in the workplace and off-site
- During training, clear expectations need to be set for both competitors and training managers
- Participation in competitions provides opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes by promoting female role models in male-dominated industries and vice versa
- Positive employer experiences can be used as a marketing tool to increase employer involvement across all skills areas

Adapted from [Benefits of Developing Vocational Excellence through Skills Competitions: Research Brief](#)
(University of Oxford, 2013)

Using learning technologies

Many learners arrive in FE already accustomed to undertaking their own research, seeking information, collaborating and sharing. For all learners, the use of learning technologies and social media offers significant opportunities to tailor, enrich and extend learning programmes, including extending their linguistic skills by using Welsh medium and bilingual resources. MAT learners in particular can benefit from this individualised learning environment.

More information: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/technology-and-tools-for-online-learning/social-networking-tools>

All modern practitioners are having to develop their own digital approaches, placing more value on collaborative working and opening up spaces for investigation and enquiry that extend far beyond traditional learning environments.

Learning technologies, social media and MAT learners

Benefits for learners ...

- Provides opportunities to break down traditional silos and hierarchies, by giving learners direct access to people with higher levels of knowledge such as teachers, industry experts, academics and social enterprises
- May be particularly beneficial to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing a 'level playing field' in terms of access to knowledge and expertise
- Opens up space for deep exploration of topics and access to multiple bodies of knowledge
- Enables learners to personalise their learning experience, work at their own pace (including 'out of hours' learning and collaboration) and move beyond the standard curriculum
- Allows learners to start creating an online presence and building professional networks, as well as developing evidence through blogging and online portfolios

Practitioners need to...

- ➔ Support their learners in engaging deeply with issues and ideas, rather than passively receiving and absorbing information or relying on a single source
- ➔ Help learners to discriminate and critically interpret information from a wide range of sources
- ➔ Encourage the use of collaborative work that pools information and effort
- ➔ Provide 'scaffolding'² so that learners have clear learning objectives, while encouraging them to make appropriate use of technology to record progress (for example, through video diaries or blogs)
- ➔ Use technology to actively gather feedback and responses from learners to inform planning and monitoring
- ➔ Participate in CPD to develop their own digital competence and confidence

Welsh Baccalaureate

The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (WBQ) aims to help learners develop more complex skills, attributes and behaviours and provide experiences which will enable learners to be better prepared for their future destination, whether university, further training or employment. It provides the opportunity for experiential learning which can support MAT learners to develop their skills through a process of planning, doing and reflecting.

The WBQ provides opportunities for independent learning and can be used to extend MAT learners and enable them to develop initiative, independence and resilience. FEIs are using the Skills Challenge Certificate, which comprises an Individual Project and three Challenges, to encourage MAT learners to be creative, broaden their experience, and to develop decision making skills.

Case study – see Annex C

[St David's Catholic College: Honours students and the Individual Project](#)

² 'Scaffolding' refers to the teaching techniques used to move learners towards greater levels of understanding and, ultimately, independence. Successive levels of support help learners reach higher levels of comprehension and skills acquisition, and like physical scaffolding, are incrementally removed when they are no longer needed. See <http://edglossary.org/scaffolding/> for more information.

Section 5: Teaching and learning strategies

Standards

- 5.1 Practitioners support one another, share good practice, and have access to specialist knowledge to ensure that they are able to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of MAT individuals
- 5.2 A range of teaching and learning methods, including seminars, tutorials, blended learning, work placements, enrichment opportunities and independent study, is used to give MAT learners experience of working in pairs, groups and alone
- 5.3 MAT learners have opportunities to work together on specific tasks or projects, and to provide peer support for one another
- 5.4 Teachers use formative assessment, informed by active observation of their learners, to vary learning activities and to plan progression for all learners, including the exceptionally able
- 5.5 Individual learning plans are used to set challenging targets for learners and as the basis for regular progress reviews, with extensive input from the learner
- 5.6 Learning is differentiated to ensure that all learners are challenged and encouraged taking into consideration the language of communication
- 5.7 Detailed feedback enables learners to improve their work (even if they are already performing at a very high level), and gives them specific guidance on how to achieve their target grades or other outcomes

Over recent years, teaching and learning in the FE sector has evolved to incorporate many techniques which are designed to meet learners' individual needs, including assessment for learning, blended learning, differentiation, questioning and extension activities. These are all about understanding the individual learner's strengths and weaknesses, and tailoring learning activities in response to these – particularly important in groups where both learners' abilities and their levels of motivation may vary widely.

Addressing the specific needs of MAT learners means using many of these same techniques, but with special consideration for the characteristics of these individuals and how they learn. As this guidance explains, practitioners need to have clear and comprehensive criteria for identifying MAT learners, as well as an understanding of their particular challenges. To reach their potential, MAT individuals need to be enabled and encouraged to work independently and to direct their own learning, but with appropriate 'scaffolding' to ensure that they make progress and do not become isolated or disengaged.

The MAT practitioner

As outlined earlier in this guidance, it isn't always easy being MAT – and it isn't always easy teaching learners with such complex needs. There are obvious challenges involved in working with learners who may have a propensity to become bored easily, dislike practice or revision of

topics they have already mastered, have difficult relationships with peers... and may already know more than the teacher in some areas.

The skill of differentiation is crucial to working with mixed-ability and bilingual groups which include MAT learners. This topic is explored in more depth in the next section. There are other skills that practitioners can use to meet the needs of MAT learners, and there are some strategies which FEIs should use to help build their capacity in this area:

- ➔ ensuring that there is an infrastructure in place that all practitioners can use for advice and support, including the MAT co-ordinator as a first point of contact;
- ➔ recruiting staff who are role models – this could include Russell Group graduates, successful entrepreneurs, and those with a track record of high achievement in their own fields (for example, award or competition winners);
- ➔ providing CPD to all practitioners on identifying and supporting MAT learners;
- ➔ celebrating the successes of practitioners as well as learners; and
- ➔ developing ‘communities of practice’ (for example, through Seren hubs) which practitioners can use to support one another, learn from best practice and share resources, supported where possible through the use of collaborative technologies which can help staff to work together across geographic divides.

The best FE MAT practitioners ...

- Contextualise learning to ‘real world’ situations and are able to show that they can still ‘do’ as well as teach.
- Are confident enough to take risks, make mistakes, and recognise that in some cases they may not know as much as the learner.
- Are open to challenge and debate, making constructive use of MAT learners’ curiosity and their tendency to question the status quo.
- Create a positive ethos in which achievement is accepted and acknowledged.
- Are willing to listen as well as talk.
- Strike the right balance between developing MAT individuals as autonomous learners, and giving them support and challenge when needed.
- Recognise the topics that inspire learners’ passions, and give them opportunities to explore these areas in depth through extension activities and independent study, including digital learning.
- Are committed to continually developing and extending their own knowledge (for example, through subscription to professional bodies, industry-based CPD, research, museum visits, conferences, communities of practice, use of social media and digital resources).
- Utilise their networks, including MAT specialists, support staff, student services, mentors and parents/carers, to ensure a fully rounded learning experience.

Of course, these attributes will have a positive impact on all learners, not just those who are MAT. Every learner will benefit from being in an environment where they are encouraged to take

Case study – see Annex C

[Bridgend College: Individualised learner support](#)

pride in their work, challenged to achieve their potential, and exposed to role models who show them what ‘excellence’ looks like in a particular subject or industry. But practitioners do need to know who their MAT learners are and what motivates them.

Assessment for learning

In recent years there has been a growing recognition that summative assessment – generally based on tests, marking and grading – is too limited in scope, giving little direction for future progress and improvement. Formative assessment is more of a continuous process, which allows teachers to review and adapt their approaches in order to support learners. Assessment for learning combines the two approaches, so that they can be used in a balanced way to help learners and their teachers understand not only where they are now, but what they need to do to improve. This philosophy is well suited to the FE delivery model, with its established use of individual learning plans (ILPs) as the basis for ongoing review and target setting.

Formative assessment	Summative assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mainly about improvement ▪ Tends to be forward looking, part of the learning process ▪ Mainly used to diagnose needs, providing feedback to help learners learn and help teachers improve teaching and learning ▪ Casts teacher in the role of facilitator ▪ Favours the use of classroom assessment planned as part of the lesson ▪ Tends to take more time, relates to individual learners, is less easily generalised and more subjective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mainly about accountability ▪ Tends to be backward looking and indicate past or present achievement ▪ Mainly used to provide information to others about how much learners have learned, for certification and accountability ▪ Casts teacher in the role of judge ▪ Favours the use of formal standardised tests, usually devised and sometimes scored by someone other than the teacher

To maximise the benefits for MAT learners, formative assessment should:

- ➔ set personalised targets that reflect the learner’s potential as well as their past achievements;
- ➔ allow the learner to set their own targets and goals and to take personal responsibility for their own progress;
- ➔ allow the learner to make decisions about how they approach and organise their work, both online and offline;
- ➔ clearly communicate learning objectives and success criteria, so that learners can make decisions about how to approach their work and understand what success looks like;
- ➔ avoid repetition of knowledge, skills and techniques that learners have already mastered;
- ➔ actively seek feedback from learners to ascertain whether learning objectives are challenging enough using appropriate methods including digital media;
- ➔ build in learner self-assessment, which can be used to complement other forms of assessment and as the basis of dialogue between learner and practitioner; and

- be used to inform future planning for the individual learner (and the whole group if appropriate), to ensure that learning reflects progress.

Differentiated learning

Differentiation is a set of techniques used to accommodate learners' different learning styles, abilities and understanding of a topic. It is becoming widely used in FE and [research](#) has shown that, used well, it can be a highly effective way of meeting the needs of a mixed-ability group. Some useful resources on general differentiation and 'stretch and challenge' are available on the [CollegesWales Teachers' Toolbox](#); this guidance focuses on using differentiation and extension activities with MAT learners.

Practitioners will often need to use differentiation with MAT learners because they will naturally tend to finish their work earlier than other members of the group. They may even have moved ahead in their own reading and research before the rest of the group starts to learn a particular topic or skill. In these cases, it is essential that learners are not given 'more of the same', for two reasons:

- they are likely to become bored and frustrated at repetition or at practicing a skill they have already mastered; and
- they will soon learn that finishing early will only result in more work, and will slow down accordingly.

Extension

An extension activity is one which extends the learning of a lesson or workshop activity. It could be undertaken by any learner, individually or in groups; for a learner who is struggling, an extension activity could involve reinforcement or repetition to ensure that they understand and can apply the course content. For a MAT learner, it will be a challenging task or problem which builds on what the rest of the group has learned, and which is designed to develop higher level thinking and/or practical skills.

Instead, extension activities should be used to deepen and enrich learning. MAT learners are characterised by their ability to quickly absorb new information, and practitioners can use their knowledge of learners to 'match' activities to their individual interests and talents. However, variety is also important to keep learners engaged and avoid them getting so entangled in a particular topic that they fail to move on; the aim should be to broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills. Above all, practitioners should plan in order to avoid MAT learners becoming frustrated that they are being 'held back' by other learners' slower progress; this can quickly lead to demotivation, 'acting out' and conflict within the group.

Case study – see Annex C

[Grŵp NPTC: National Young Ambassador Programme](#)

More information:

<http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/assessment-and-di-whitepaper.pdf>

Suggested differentiation strategies for MAT learners

Do

- Identify learners' specific abilities, talents and interests, so that learning can be planned accordingly
- Use [tiered assignments](#) which allow all learners in the group to explore the same material, but with different outcomes required depending on the learner's individual abilities
- Ensure that tasks and assessments are content-rich – learners need a foundation on which to base their problem-solving, creative thinking or independent research
- Create opportunities for MAT learners to work together in pairs and groups so that they can motivate and challenge one another to achieve more
- Encourage learners to explore and develop their own areas of interest through independent research and through modules such as the Welsh Baccalaureate Individual Project

Don't

- Use MAT learners (or others who finish tasks ahead of the rest of the group) as 'teaching assistants' – it isn't fair on them and doesn't meet their learning or emotional needs
- Expect MAT learners to be well behaved – their behavioural and social development may be behind their intellectual development
- Give them more of the same kind of work because they finish early – you want them to produce quality, not quantity
- Isolate them from the rest of the group to work independently without oversight – they may not be able to self-regulate and will not flourish without appropriate direction.

Adapted from [Serving Gifted Students in General Ed Classrooms](#), a blogpost by Dr Elissa Brown

Developing 'real world' skills

To reach the peak of their chosen professions, vocational learners need more than just technical skills or 'tricks of the trade'; curiosity, determination, persistence and motivation are at least as important. The [Edge Foundation's Bodies of Knowledge report](#) proposes four **habits of mind** which are essential in successful practical learning:

1. **Investigation**: openness to new information, the inclination to seek it out and to evaluate it intelligently.
2. **Experimentation**: developing multiple versions of an idea or plan and practising the skills of a trade over and over.
3. **Reasoning**: the ability to analyse progress and results, work out the consequences of their actions, and construct models and explanations.
4. **Imagination**: the ability to sense new possibilities and solutions.

It is easy to see how this concept lends itself to teaching MAT learners. Of course, any carpenter, hairdresser, vehicle mechanic or nursery nurse needs to develop these habits if they are to qualify and go on to work successfully in their industry. But the exceptionally able learner will be able to push themselves further by using their particular skills and attributes, including:

- solving problems by making connections and exploring a range of possible solutions;
- innovating, taking risks and learning from their mistakes;
- sifting and evaluating evidence, and making judgements on the relative value of information from different sources;

- sustaining attention in complex and challenging situations; and
- being inspired by healthy competition.

Case study – see Annex C

[Gower College Swansea: Hair and Beauty Events Team](#)

Fostering exceptional ability in vocational subjects – what works

- Professional conversations with employers and workplace practitioners about subject-specific standards of excellence.
- Contextualising learning to ‘real world’ situations, jobs and industries.
- Providing opportunities for learners to emulate excellence, through the use of real equipment and access to working practitioners.
- Developing habits of mind such as motivation, persistence and patience.
- Participating in competitions, and involvement with trade unions and professional bodies, to energise learners to raise their game.
- ‘Keeping the door open’ between vocational and academic domains when demanding conceptual content is required (such as mathematics in engineering).

Adapted from Haight, A. (2012) [*The academic-vocational divide: Are notions of ‘gifted & talented’ relevant and useful to vocational education?*](#)

Section 6: Supporting learners to fulfil their potential

Standards

- 6.1 The institution has a culture of setting high expectations for all its learners, and of recognising and celebrating success
- 6.2 Role models, mentors and alumni are used to exemplify diverse models of achievement and success
- 6.3 The institution helps parents and carers of MAT learners to understand how they can best support their child
- 6.4 Careers information, advice and guidance includes a focus on opportunities for exceptionally able learners, and develops a clear understanding of the possibilities that are available for high-achieving and motivated individuals
- 6.5 Progression routes are planned to fit individual learners' needs, interests and aspirations, taking a long-term view that looks beyond the immediate 'next step' after their current programme
- 6.6 A systematic approach is in place to ensure that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those without a history of graduates or professionals in their families, are able to access financial and other support to help them progress
- 6.7 The institution works effectively with partners, including universities, employers and specialist organisations, to provide support, enrichment and extension opportunities for all learners

All learners need encouragement, challenge and reward to keep them motivated and making progress. MAT individuals are likely to face some specific challenges, and FEIs need to ensure that their strategies support these learners' emotional well-being as well as their progress in achieving learning outcomes. This section provides guidance on some of the factors that may affect MAT learners' performance, and the development of effective whole-institution approaches to addressing these.

Challenges for MAT learners

As outlined in [Section 2](#), MAT learners will not always arrive in FE with a track record of success and an eagerness to learn. They may, of course, face any of the same barriers as other learners, whether these are financial, emotional or personal. They may be 'twice exceptional' (having both exceptional ability and a learning difficulty) and this may have prevented them from being identified as MAT at school, or from reaching their full potential in the past. There are also some specific challenges that can result from having exceptional ability and which can make the learning journey – and the job of the FEI – more difficult. The box below summarises some of these challenges.

Factors affecting the performance of underachievers

Emotional and motivational factors

- May be unaware of their own potential: they may lack insight about themselves and others
- May have expectations that are too low and too limited – can manifest itself as a lack of personal goals and values
- May have experienced a high incidence of emotional difficulties and/or be prone to anxiety
- May have a habit of blaming others
- May not perform well in test situations
- May submit work that is unfinished or poorly done
- May show tendencies to perfectionism and self criticism
- May set goals unrealistically, either too high or too low
- May dislike practice, memorisation and mastery
- May find it hard to focus attention and concentrate on tasks
- May have a specific learning difficulty

External factors

- Boredom, because the work is undemanding
- Negative attitude of the teacher
- May have difficulty functioning in a group or forming peer relationships
- Influence of family background – hostility, lack of support, excessive parental expectations, lack of interest
- Cultural, social or religious background with different values or goals
- Influence of the peer group, pressure to conform and fear of being seen as 'different'

Adapted from the NACE Cymru [More Able and Talented Training pack](#) for schools (2013)

When identifying a learner as MAT, FEIs also need to identify possible barriers to achievement and start putting plans in place to address these. Comprehensive training and guidance for staff, overseen by the MAT co-ordinator, is important in ensuring that appropriate teaching, learning and support strategies are used which are tailored to the particular needs of MAT individuals.

Ensuring equality

When it comes to securing equal opportunities, good practice for MAT learners is the same as good practice for all learners. FEIs do need to be aware that MAT learners may face specific barriers which could limit their progress, and ensure that they:

- ➔ incorporate specific monitoring of outcomes for protected and disadvantaged groups into their overall arrangements for monitoring MAT outcomes;
- ➔ identify learners whose backgrounds may present barriers to achievement (for example, care leavers, learners from minority groups, learners without a history of graduates or professionals in their immediate families) and consider using tailored interventions with them, such as mentoring;
- ➔ make appropriate use of learning technologies to ensure accessibility for all learners;
- ➔ are discreet and sensitive in using personal information which learners may not want to disclose;

- ➔ promote an inclusive ethos of success across all subjects, using diverse role models; and
- ➔ make learners aware of the support, including financial support, available to help them succeed and progress.

Research has identified a number of specific challenges that may face MAT learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, and which can be addressed through tailored support and enrichment programmes. These are summarised in the box below.

Potential challenges for MAT learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

Financial challenges

- Concerns about the financial costs of attending HE institutions, including living costs
- Understanding the student finance and repayment system
- Concern that the financial return on HE may not be worthwhile

Social, cultural and geographic challenges

- Concerns about living away from home or moving elsewhere
- Lack of family encouragement to apply to HE
- Feeling that HE 'is not for them' and that some universities may not be inclusive to students from working class or minority ethnic backgrounds

Other contextual challenges

- Concerns about levels of attainment and exam grades
- Lack of knowledge and interest in the courses offered by HE institutions

Adapted from [School and College-level Strategies to Raise Aspirations of High-achieving Disadvantaged Pupils to Pursue Higher Education Investigation](#) (UK Government Department for Education, 2014)

Building resilience

FEIs work with young people and adults at a crucial stage in their learning journey. They need to develop learners as individuals who can take responsibility for their own learning, set their own challenging targets and are motivated to achieve and grow.

The potential of MAT learners may not always be matched by either their levels of motivation, or by a clear focus on what they want to achieve. There are, therefore, some particular considerations for FEIs in supporting the development of this group of learners:

- their levels of social and emotional maturity may not (yet) match their talents or abilities;
- while celebrating success is essential, this may need to be handled carefully as indiscriminate praise could be counterproductive for a MAT learner (it may be so familiar as to be meaningless, or too vague to give them anything they can work with);
- to stay motivated, even the brightest learner in a group still needs specific feedback on how to improve and develop;

- although MAT learners need opportunities to work independently, they will become isolated and demotivated if left too much to their own devices; practitioners need to use appropriate ‘scaffolding’ and to give learners opportunities for group work with clear shared goals; and
- making mistakes and learning to fail are necessary for developing resilience and, while this can be difficult for any learner, it may be a new and painful experience for MAT learners who are used to success and to finding things easy.

The growth mindset

In considering how to build resilient learners with the skills they need for life beyond FE, practitioners may find it helpful to consider the work of Carol Dweck, PhD. Professor Dweck is a specialist in psychology at Stanford University and a leading researcher in the field of motivation. Her ‘Two Mindsets’ model³, illustrated on the next page, proposes that learners with a ‘growth mindset’ (the view that ability can be increased with practice and application) show more motivation and achieve more highly than similar students who have a ‘fixed mindset’ (belief in a static model of intelligence). This attitude is something that FEIs can develop and nurture in all of their learners, regardless of levels of ability. MAT learners will not necessarily come ready-equipped with a growth mindset!

The [Research Summary – Assessment for Learning](#) suggests one way in which the ‘growth mindset’ could be crucial in helping MAT learners to reach their potential:

We now know that success itself does not necessarily motivate. It depends to a great extent on why we think we have been successful in our learning. Even the performance of very able pupils can plateau or even diminish if they believe that they have reached what they consider to be the limits of their intelligence – that their level of intelligence is fixed and they are powerless to increase their ability to learn.

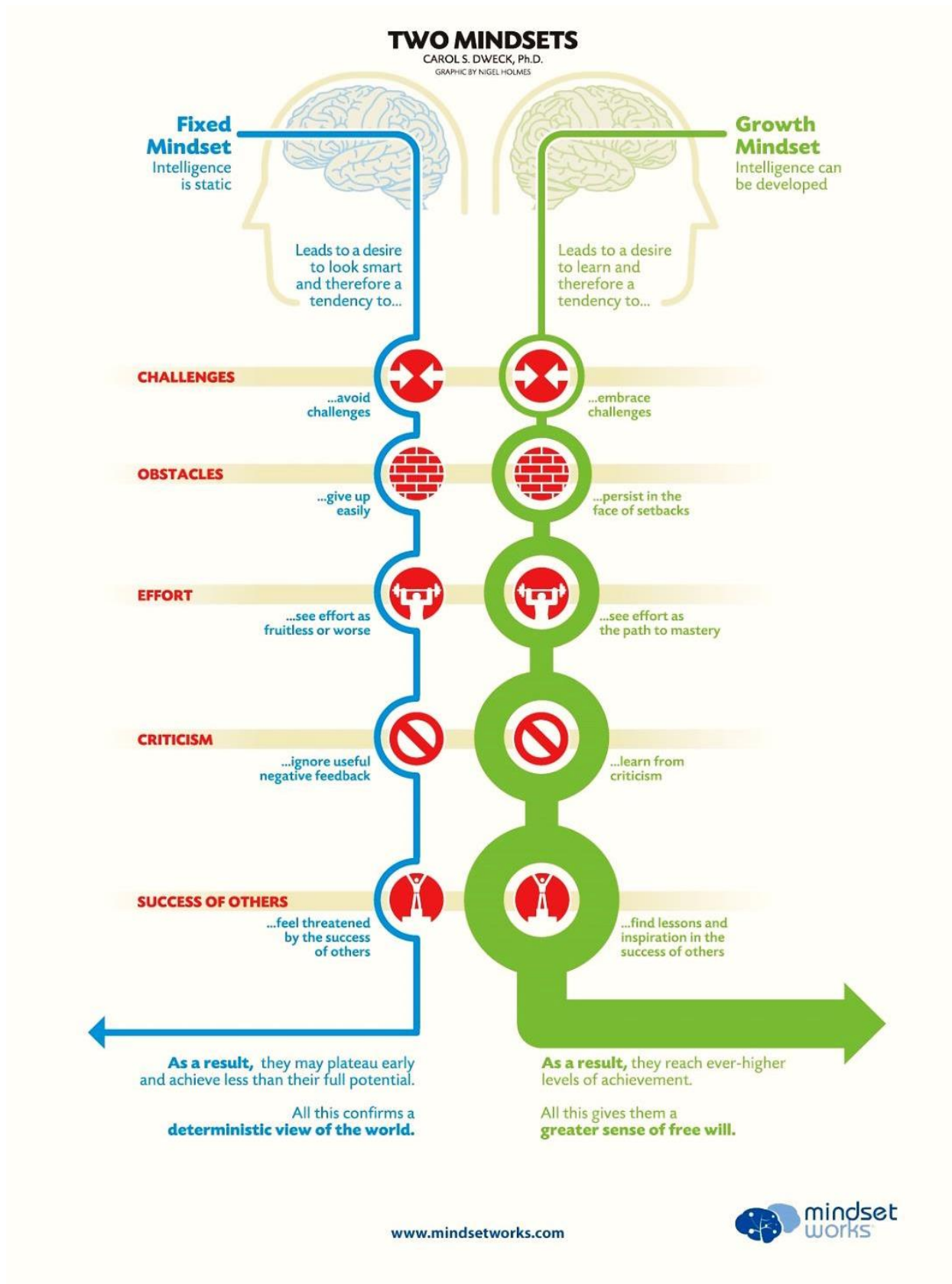
Securing progression pathways

FEIs should be aiming for a seamless transition process as learners progress between stages in their learning, and then into the outside world. Our 2016 [Review of FE Progression Planning in Wales](#) made a number of recommendations for FEIs which should be considered in relation to MAT learners, including:

- ➔ centralising data on learner progression and destinations, using it to identify systemic weaknesses in the curriculum, and exploring differences for different groups of learners;
- ➔ increasing flexibility through the development of modular courses, interim courses and accelerated learning programmes;
- ➔ ensuring that information, advice and guidance integrates challenge and is informed by learners’ aspirations, capacity and potential;
- ➔ using engagement activities (such as open days) to better inform parents of the subject choices and subsequent progression routes available to their child; and
- ➔ strengthening individual support, including for learners’ social and emotional needs.

³ Dweck, C, (2008) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Random House)

Fig. 8: Two Mindsets



In working with learners to agree ILPs and individual goals, FEIs need to be mindful of the specific needs of MAT learners. Some will have a very clear mental picture of their future careers, but others may not, and may find it difficult to narrow down all of the possible options – particularly learners who are gifted in multiple areas. In addition, as outlined above, some learners will have barriers which make the idea of progression more daunting.

While many MAT learners will clearly be aiming to progress into HE, FEIs are uniquely well placed to help them consider longer-term career options as well. The FE sector has strong links with employers and needs to use these in a structured way to widen opportunities for MAT learners; this could lead to concrete outcomes (such as job offers, sponsorship or internships), but can also provide learning experiences which challenge learners, tap into their passions and give them an understanding of how their abilities can be put to practical use.

Fig. 9 sets out some practical suggestions for how FEIs can support MAT learners in progressing to their immediate next steps. It should be emphasised, however, that these routes are not mutually exclusive; MAT learners may follow all of them over time, and not necessarily in a linear way.

Fig. 9 Supporting progression: best practice for MAT learners

Into employment

- Provide curriculum content, coaching and role models which give learners a clear idea of what it means to be an ‘expert’ in their chosen field and how they can continue to develop their skills throughout their careers.
- Work with learners to foster a sense of pride and achievement in doing a job to a high standard, rather than focusing solely on assessment and grades.
- Use industry mentors to give learners insight into the skills and attributes employers look for, and to help them to envisage themselves in a particular career or profession.

Into university

- Consider using multiple interventions (visits, outreach events, discussions with alumni) to ‘normalise’ the idea of applying to a selective university. The [Oxbridge Ambassador's review](#) found that learners may have negative perceptions of these institutions as ‘not for people like me’, which cannot be countered by a single visit.
- Establish effective links with universities so that learners are given honest, specific feedback on their applications. This will help develop teachers’ understanding of what universities are looking for, and their ability to support learners in future applications.
- Work with organisations such as the Sutton Trust, Villiers Park Educational Trust and Future First, to help support MAT learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in their applications to HE and in planning their transition.

Case study – see Annex C

[Coleg Cambria: Progression to university](#)

Into entrepreneurship

- Consider using enterprise projects, where entrepreneurs and employers set business briefs for learners to solve, to encourage team working, leadership, working to deadlines, problem-solving and an understanding of financial planning.
- Encourage volunteering/shadowing of entrepreneurs.
- Build links with Welsh Government funded Enterprise Champions in each FE and HE institution and with Entrepreneurial Business Owners.
- Undertake visits to Incubator Hubs which help new and start-up companies to develop by providing services such as management training or office space.
- Maximise the use of the support and resources on the [Big Ideas Wales](#) website.

Case study – see Annex C

[Coleg y Cymoedd: Tafflab](#)

Annex A: The MAT learner journey

	Challenges for the MAT learner	Mitigating strategies
Application to FE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have 'hidden' potential which has not previously been recognised or nurtured May not previously have achieved at a high level May have a preference for practical learning styles which were not fully accommodated in the school environment May have personal goals which are unrealistically high or low Parental/teacher pressure may lead to a focus on a particular route at the expense of considering other possible options May have mental health problems, learning difficulties or other barriers to learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Train admissions staff to recognise and record signs of potential and high aspirations → Establish arrangements for information sharing with schools, where possible → Engage at an early stage with parents/carers to involve them in planning a suitable learning pathway → Identify tools, teaching techniques and learning technologies that can help learners to engage and to overcome barriers
Enrolment and induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May fear stigma or being singled out as MAT May perform poorly in test situations May find it difficult going from school to college environment, having previously been a 'big fish in a small pond' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Develop inclusive criteria for identifying ability and talent across vocational and academic subjects, and ensure that staff are trained in their use → Systematically record MAT learners and track their progress → Use ILPs to negotiate challenging targets with learners, specifically tailored to their abilities, interests and aspirations → Use formative assessment to establish what learners already know and develop course delivery accordingly
On programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May become bored with routine practice and repetitive tasks if they have already mastered a skill May have difficulties forming relationships with peers Perfectionist tendencies could lead to late submission of work or becoming overly fixated on a topic Possible emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties could limit progress Course content not sufficiently challenging or differentiated to meet the learner's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use extension activities to develop higher level skills (not just 'more of the same') → Provide opportunities to work with peers on projects designed to explore areas of interest and develop in-depth thinking → Provide enrichment programmes which are closely integrated with classroom/workshop activities → Review the ILP and change learning objectives to reflect learner progress, in dialogue with the learner → Gather regular feedback from the learner and parents/carers → Be aware of independent study the learner may have undertaken, and provide appropriate 'scaffolding'

	Challenges for the MAT learner	Mitigating strategies
Changing programme or progressing within the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May find it difficult to build relationships with new teachers and/or peers ▪ May need to reassess learning goals and targets ▪ May find new programme insufficiently challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Set new and stretching goals ➔ Keep the door open to changes in aspiration or desired career, including opportunities for flexible combinations of academic and vocational activities ➔ Find opportunities to build on and extend previous learning by developing higher level thinking and practical skills ➔ Continue to expose learners to different models of success, prepare them for the world of work and support them in developing resilience ➔ Consider opportunities for MAT learners to mentor younger learners
Progressing beyond the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First generation entrants into HE or professional environments, and their families, may be anxious about the transition, including practical/financial issues or 'not fitting in' ▪ Potential pathways and specialisms for vocational MAT learners may not be as clearly defined as for academic learners, or as well promoted ▪ MAT learners may have been told that 'you can do anything you want' and this can create additional pressure and anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Invest time in listening to learners and supporting them to make decisions about their future ➔ Utilise links with HE institutions and employers to plan individualised progression routes ➔ Ensure that learners have comprehensive and up-to-date information on their skills, achievements and aspirations (including online portfolios and 'personal brands' where appropriate) ➔ Ensure, through HE/industry links, advice and guidance, that learners know what to expect and what support is available to them

Annex B: Healthcheck template

Descriptors:

Red: not in place

Amber: work has started but consolidation is needed

Green: in place and monitored regularly

	Standard	Evaluation of current performance	Status			Actions required	Timescale for review	Lead responsibility	Resources required (finance/people/partners)
1. A whole-institution approach	1.1 The institution has an overarching strategy for MAT including defined aims and objectives with appropriate targets, not just a series of separate initiatives								
	1.2 MAT provision is led at the highest level within the institution, incorporated into its strategic plans, and regularly discussed at senior leadership team and Board levels								
	1.3 There is an integrated approach which encompasses learners with exceptional abilities in academic, vocational or other areas (such as artistic, sporting or entrepreneurial activities), and which values all of these areas equally								
	1.4 MAT programmes are part of an inclusive whole-institution strategy for maximising learners' opportunity and potential, which establishes a culture of high expectations across all learning areas								
	1.5 Governors are engaged with the MAT strategy and its accompanying programmes, and discuss regular evidenced updates on their outcomes								
	1.6 The institution has strong partnerships with schools, HE institutions, employers, specialist MAT organisations and the third sector to ensure that it draws on a wide range of expertise to support the development and progression of its MAT learners								
	1.7 An infrastructure is in place to support MAT learners, including designated members of staff with responsibility for co-ordinating activities taking into account learners' linguistic preferences and strengths in English and Welsh								
	1.8 The MAT co-ordinator(s) have clearly defined roles, allocated time, CPD, bilingual resources and authority to carry out their responsibilities								
	1.9 Staff across the institution have access to guidance, support and CPD to help them effectively identify, teach and support MAT learners								

	Standard	Evaluation of current performance	Status			Actions required	Timescale for review	Lead responsibility	Resources required (finance/people/partners)
2. identifying MAT learners	2.1 There is a whole-institution framework for identifying MAT learners, which is reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis								
	2.2 MAT learners are identified using a range of methods and criteria, recognising that exceptional ability may be manifested in different ways and at different times								
	2.3 The approach to identifying MAT learners focuses on potential and does not rely solely on prior attainment or other narrow definitions of 'ability'; it recognises that a MAT learner may not currently be high-achieving or motivated to succeed								
	2.4 Subject or faculty teams have developed their own criteria to consistently identify high-potential learners in their areas								
	2.5 Learners, parents and carers are involved in the identification process								
	2.6 Staff, including admissions teams, tutors, lecturers and mentors, are trained in identifying MAT and understand what they should do when a learner is identified as MAT, including support, referral and recording requirements								
	2.7 The institution adopts a culture of equality and inclusion in talking to and about MAT learners, so that they do not feel uncomfortably 'singled out' – and non-MAT learners do not feel inadequate or excluded								
3. Tracking, monitoring and evaluation	3.1 The institution has a systematic approach to evaluating the impact and outcomes of its MAT strategy, continually developing its approach to meet learners' needs								
	3.2 Qualitative and quantitative measures are used to evaluate the impact of MAT activities, tailored as appropriate to specific initiatives								
	3.3 The overall MAT strategy itself is regularly reviewed and updated, informed by reviews at departmental/subject/course level								
	3.4 Examples of learner success are evaluated and analysed to identify 'what worked' and 'lessons learned', with input from the learners and staff involved, so that best practice can be shared and extended								
	3.5 Consideration of MAT is built into peer observation, course reviews, self-assessment and action planning across the institution								
	3.6 Tracking systems are used to monitor the progress of MAT learners, including specific analysis of outcomes for disadvantaged and protected groups								
	3.7 Learners, parents and carers are closely involved in evaluating MAT strategies and								

	Standard	Evaluation of current performance	Status	Actions required	Timescale for review	Lead responsibility	Resources required (finance/people/partners)
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	activities and there is a 'feedback loop' to ensure that they are informed of actions taken in response to their views						
	3.8 Senior managers and governors review and consider the impact of MAT activities on a regular basis, in the context of the institution's overall MAT strategy rather than as separate initiatives						
4. Curriculum design	4.1 The institution has undertaken an audit of its curriculum across vocational and academic areas (and language of instruction) to ensure that provision is aligned with the needs of MAT learners						
	4.2 Provision planning for MAT learners is integral to the institution's overall MAT strategy, and used to inform CPD planning and evaluation of delivery						
	4.3 Creativity, enterprise, questioning and problem-solving are encouraged and valued in all areas of the curriculum and at all levels of ability						
	4.4 The institution has a comprehensive approach to providing enrichment opportunities, including academic, vocational and other areas of ability and talent						
	4.5 Enrichment and extension are an integral part of the curriculum and are delivered in the classroom, workshop, tutorial or workplace, not just as 'bolt on' activities						
	4.6 Learning technologies are used effectively to broaden and deepen MAT learners' experiences, within a framework of clear learning aims						
	4.7 There is enough flexibility built into curriculum planning for teachers to adapt their delivery during the year in response to learners' progress						
	4.8 Processes are in place to ensure that new curriculum developments are evaluated against clear criteria						
5. Teaching and learning strategies	5.1 Practitioners support one another, share good practice, and have access to specialist knowledge to ensure that they are able to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of MAT individuals						
	5.2 A range of teaching and learning methods, including seminars, tutorials, blended learning, work placements, enrichment opportunities and independent study, is used to give MAT learners experience of working in pairs, groups and alone						
	5.3 MAT learners have opportunities to work together on specific tasks or projects, and to provide peer support for one another						

	Standard	Evaluation of current performance	Status			Actions required	Timescale for review	Lead responsibility	Resources required (finance/people/partners)
	5.4 Teachers use formative assessment, informed by active observation of their learners, to vary learning activities and to plan progression for all learners, including the exceptionally able								
	5.5 Individual learning plans are used to set challenging targets for learners and as the basis for regular progress reviews, with extensive input from the learner								
	5.6 Learning is differentiated to ensure that <u>all</u> learners are challenged and encouraged taking into consideration the language of communication								
	5.7 Detailed feedback enables learners to improve their work (even if they are already performing at a very high level), and gives them specific guidance on how to achieve their target grades or other outcomes								
6. Supporting learners to fulfil their potential	6.1 The institution has a culture of setting high expectations for <u>all</u> its learners, and of recognising and celebrating success								
	6.2 Role models, mentors and alumni are used to exemplify diverse models of achievement and success								
	6.3 The institution helps parents and carers of MAT learners to understand how they can best support their child								
	6.4 Careers information, advice and guidance includes a focus on opportunities for exceptionally able learners, and develops a clear understanding of the possibilities that are available for high-achieving and motivated individuals								
	6.5 Progression routes are planned to fit individual learners' needs, interests and aspirations, taking a long-term view that looks beyond the immediate 'next step' after their current programme								
	6.6 A systematic approach is in place to ensure that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those without a history of graduates or professionals in their families, are able to access financial and other support to help them progress								
	6.7 The institution works effectively with partners, including universities, employers and specialist organisations, to provide support, enrichment and extension opportunities for all learners								

Annex C: Case Studies

Case study: The 14-19 MAT Supplementary Programme

Coleg Sir Gâr

Coleg Sir Gâr, in partnership with the schools in Llanelli, devised an enrichment programme for MAT pupils in schools. The programme consisted of Science, Technology, Languages, Creative Arts and Sports and took place during twilight slots (4.30pm – 6.30pm) at considered times throughout Year 10 and Year 11. The purpose of the programme was to stretch and challenge pupils beyond their current levels of learning. The focus was the application of higher level skills in the different disciplines chosen by pupils, such as the use of performance analysis software in sport to analyse athletic performance. This gives them opportunities to develop valuable skills that can be applied in the real world, aid progression to further learning and employment, and engage in exciting activities that stretch their knowledge skills and understanding in their chosen areas of interest.

The enrichment programme provides MAT school pupils with the opportunity to further increase their subject knowledge, complementing the work they are currently undertaking within their GCSE programme of study. It also provides pupils with the opportunity to express themselves and have fun within an assessment-free environment. The programme highlights future progression and career routes and gives pupils the opportunity to visit local industry and Higher Education institutions to talk to staff about their experiences. Pupils also work and forge friendships with more able and talented pupils from other schools and get to know experienced tutors leading the programme. The college awards pupils with certificates for good attendance and active participation in the scheme.

The college worked extensively with the schools to ensure their active participation in the project and this was received well. Most schools could identify their academic MAT learners well and they responded to the initiative positively. In cases where the criteria for identifying vocational MAT learners were not so well defined, some filtering had to take place to ensure that the programme would have maximum impact with learners who demonstrated potential in their chosen discipline. Pupils were brought to the college by school staff and left with their parents at the end of each session.

Providing the programme in a twilight slot at carefully chosen times, spread throughout the year, initially proved to be a challenge. However, tailoring the programme in Year 10 and Year 11 to be more concentrated over one term was more successful. Timing of such initiatives should be planned carefully to avoid impacting on schoolwork.

Overall, pupils' confidence and skills levels have been improved as a result of this initiative and there has been excellent feedback. Undoubtedly, this initiative has helped with transition for MAT learners into college and provided them with an opportunity to become familiar with the surroundings and teachers at college. It has exposed them to higher level skills and the expectations the college will place on them when studying at a higher level. It was an enjoyable experience for them; hard, practical work with lots of fun.

Prior to the implementation of the Seren network, Pembrokeshire College and the heads of sixth forms in Pembrokeshire had already been working collaboratively to implement a post-16 MAT programme within the county. The work began with Ian Warwick from London Gifted and Talented, who was commissioned by the local authority to review the provision for MAT within Pembrokeshire at primary, secondary and post-16 levels. Following the initial scoping exercises, the Pembrokeshire MAT Steering Group implemented a county-wide programme of MAT activities. This programme included HE conferences, the introduction of Horizons Wales (an alumni charity which provides mentoring opportunities for learners, aspiring to Russell Group universities as well as the eminent professions), an annual Oxbridge visit, visiting speakers, attendance at university events and interview preparation.

In 2015 the Pembrokeshire group amalgamated into the 'Pembrokeshire/Carmarthenshire Seren hub', alongside Coleg Sir Gâr (which also had an existing MAT programme) and the Carmarthenshire schools. An executive group was formed which consisted of the heads responsible for MAT in the colleges, the local authority 14-19 partnership managers, and two heads of sixth form from each of the counties. The Seren hub was formed in June 2015 and launched officially at Parc y Scarlets on 3 February 2016.

The hub from the outset was very proactive, with both partners able to learn from the work that had already been undertaken in the two counties and pool their expertise, contacts and resources. The budget for the hub is split equitably between the counties and includes learner bursaries which are able to support learners to attend open days and activities, as well as supporting applicants to achieve in Oxbridge aptitude tests. The geographical spread of the hub has meant that events have to be carefully planned, and learners and staff have had to be willing to travel.

Learners entering the Seren programme are selected on the basis of their GCSE grades with an A* being worth 3 points, an A being worth two points and a B grade being worth one point. For the STEM pathway 20 points are required; for the Business and Humanities pathways 16 points are required; and for the creative arts it is based on individual merit.

The impact for MAT learners has been significant. They are able to take part in a significant programme which goes beyond local provision, and given an additional national identity which they have been able to record on their UCAS applications. They have access to increased mentoring opportunities, for example the work that the Oxbridge applicants have undertaken with Dr Jonathan Padley from the University of Cambridge in preparation for making their application. Learners also benefited from the camaraderie and linkage with other MAT learners following similar disciplines and aspiring to the same university provision. Companies such as KPMG have also been involved, enabling learners to gain an understanding of the professions beyond graduation.

In 2015/16, the Welsh Baccalaureate was delivered across all full time learners studying at Levels 1, 2 and 3. At the Advanced level, learners complete the Skills Challenge Certificate which consist of three challenges – the Community Challenge, Enterprise and Employability Challenge and Global Citizenship Challenge, as well as an Individual Project across two years. This was an opportunity for Level 3 MAT learners to further develop their essential and employability skills alongside their main vocational programme, including planning and organization skills, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving and personal effectiveness.

The Community Challenge brought about many opportunities for learners to become involved in charities and local and regional organisations. Joe, a Welsh-speaking learner on the Level 3 Year 1 Extended Diploma in Information Technology course, completed his Community Challenge by working with the Bilingual Development Manager on a project in collaboration with Mentor Iaith, a unique and independent organization who promotes the use of Welsh as a community language. The project involved developing a website to promote Welsh courses as evidence for the Community Challenge. Joe's tutor initially put him in contact with the Bilingual Development Manager, and then supported Joe to participate in the project.

All learners were supported to fully participate in all three challenges and the Individual Project through timetabled sessions, support for organizing events throughout the year and initial contacts being made with external agencies by tutors. Guidance on the challenges were also readily available via the college's e-learning platform and learners were encouraged to share best practice within groups, across schools and across the college. MAT learners were able to have the freedom to develop the brief to include extra-curricular activities which they could use to demonstrate their essential and employability skills.

At first, Joe found it difficult to juggle the commitments of a demanding Level 3 course and this extra-curricular activity. However, time and support from his tutor and the Bilingual Development Manager helped to ensure that Joe was able to successfully complete the project to a high standard, and gather evidence to put towards his challenge portfolio and application for higher education. This has further led to Joe being approached again the following academic year to support small businesses who wish to develop a bilingual website for their business. This has developed his confidence and improved his employability skills far beyond what can be developed from main qualifications alone. The further development of Joe's Welsh language skills was a further benefit from the Welsh Baccalaureate.

The college has found that many learners may not have the GCSE qualifications as a means of accurately identifying if they are more able or talented. This is particularly true of adult learners whose qualifications were completed a number of years ago, for students with qualifications from another country who have relocated to the area, and learners who may have underachieved in examinations because of personal issues. The college has found the University of Durham ALIS Adaptive test together with subject specific characteristics to be a particularly effective tool to identify more able students who possess an innate ability. It uses this as part of a combination of strategies to identify students as more able and talented.

The ALIS Adaptive test uses adaptive algorithms ensuring they are accessible for all learners at any developmental stage and provides assessments that are: personalised; age-appropriate; and tailored to each individual's developmental stage. Its profiling system analyses student responses and generates comprehensive, detailed and holistic learner profiles, enabling the college to:

- Understand students' strengths, weaknesses and underlying potential;
- Tailor teaching and learning; and
- Set realistic and aspirational targets, and generate comprehensive, detailed and holistic learner profiles, enabling teachers to carefully monitor student progress.

To ensure early identification of whether a learner is MAT the college recommends that the ALIS adaptive test is completed as part of the enrolment process or shortly thereafter.

Chris enrolled onto an A Level course at the College having previously been employed in the armed forces. He met the entry requirements and based on his prior achievement he was predicted to achieve 'D' grades at A Level. In contrast it was noted that he had achieved a high baseline score in the Adaptive Test and that the predicted grades based on this measure were significantly different. His apparent innate ability was further supported by information from course tutors who commented on how eloquently he was able to discuss complex concepts. Chris was set more aspirational targets to work towards and his progress against these targets was monitored closely. He subsequently achieved the A Level grades required to continue his studies at university.

The college's Media Production department is relatively small, recruiting 16 students per year from a variety of social backgrounds. The majority of learners have been disillusioned by the school educational system, and many of them have low self-esteem even though they may be talented. The college has excellent facilities and equipment, and a team of staff committed to developing learners' professional work ethic.

The Media Production curriculum has been structured to include flexibility and to stretch MAT learners, by encouraging them to take on real project briefs. Once a student with potential has been identified, the course tutor will make sure that the student becomes aware of his/her potential and will encourage the student to interpret the briefs in a challenging, ambitious way. This could be academically, in terms of technical skills required, but also in terms of the professional and interpersonal skills required to produce a programme in the media industry.

The whole teaching team is informed about the student's project and responds to the needs of the production and the student's skills development accordingly. For example, tutors may hold a one-to-one work shop about writing documentary voice-overs, evaluate the student work giving feedback, setting smaller challenges within the framework of the overall challenge the student has set for him/her self. Equipment is made available for the student to practice technical skills and the technician (who is also a tutor) demonstrates more advanced functions of equipment such as cameras in order to meet the creative ambition of the student.

Students are expected to work in their own time in response to the demands of the brief, and to become independent learners, planning their projects and liaising with clients. The college sets clear expectations that each student will work with a professional ethos to represent the course and to deliver a product that technically reflects professional standards. This can involve complex logistics such as getting filming permission, organising multiple shoots across different locations, and overseeing the creative direction of a film from conception to post-production.

In the second year of study, the team plans for a major project where the whole cohort of students works together for a real client. The students will be responsible for interpreting the brief, proposing a creative solution to the client and implementing the brief. The projects are challenging and all students are expected to work in a way that reflects professional good practice.

MAT students are directed towards relevant extracurricular activities such as workshops and work experience, and to join relevant professional bodies. Student films are entered into competitions and festivals such as Ffresh (The Student Moving Image Festival of Wales), Zoom International Youth film festival, Just a Minute film festival and the National Eisteddfod. Course graduates leave college with a strong portfolio of work and a track record of delivery for real clients.

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai set up “Rhaglen AUR” (Gold Programme) to provide challenging activities for its brightest students as part of its MAT strategy. The first activity organised was a two-day residential initiative to stretch and challenge a group of 20 MAT learners from both academic and vocational programmes. The residential programme was planned in order to enable students from across a very large geographical area to attend.

In order to fund the event, a successful application was made to Bangor University’s Widening Access Centre, which covered the costs of the residential programme and those of a visiting lecturer. All other costs were met by the college, and all aspects of the event from arranging the funding to organising speakers and booking the venue were organised by college staff. Tutors and managers from the college were present at the event to facilitate and to support the learners during the residential.

The theme of the residential programme was developing ideas for local sustainable and environmental businesses. The programme of activities included:

- a bilingual keynote lecture by a lecturer from Bangor University, followed by discussion and identification of relevant themes;
- a workshop on entrepreneurship and creative thinking skills;
- a lecture on presentation skills;
- teamworking to research and plan group projects; and
- presentation of projects, which were assessed by a panel of prominent local people.

Feedback from learners who attended the event was extremely positive. Many learners noted the challenge of the activity as a key factor in preparing them for higher education and employment. The need to be pushed out of their “comfort zone” was a common theme in the feedback, as well as the opportunity to build time management, communication and presentation skills. The guidance and support of professional and academics were also appreciated by the learners.

It was a very challenging weekend – and for all the right reasons – which meant that we all extended our skills in some way or another (the skills weren't limited to just academic). Also I liked the whole format of the weekend and how it was very formal and professional, with the balance of leisure time as well. An added bonus to all of this was the fact that everything was free of charge.

Critical success factors identified by the college included:

- taking the learners out of their traditional learning environment and challenging them to complete a high-level practical project in a restricted timeframe
- the opportunity for learners to experience a HE level lecture delivered by an external speaker as well as having the support of familiar tutors
- the residential nature of the experience, which offered opportunities for learners to socialise on an informal basis with others of similar abilities
- securing funding from Bangor University to help meet the costs of the event
- scheduling to fit around the academic timetable and learners’ part-time employment.

Inspiring Skills Excellence in Wales, secured by the Skills Champions Network and led by Coleg Sir Gâr, is a project funded through the Welsh Government. The project, focused on skills competitions, offers a supportive infrastructure for Welsh competitors competing at a national and international level. Funding is available to support age appropriate competitors competing in WorldSkills UK competitions, which are aligned to competitions at an international level.

The delivery of the project strives to improve competitor success through working collaboratively with FE colleges, competitors, training providers and employers across Wales. Its ambition is to establish an ethos across all providers to deliver more than simply qualifications and deliver skills that are of a world-class standard. Providing experiences for learners that build confidence and personal technical skills is key to this project's success. In addition, the project also has the following aims:

- host masterclasses for staff and learners to better their knowledge and understanding of skills competitions;
- host team building events for learners across Wales;
- develop the Skills Ambassador network to include independent training providers; and
- encourage employer engagement.

The Inspiring Skills Excellence in Wales project has worked extensively with the FE colleges and independent training providers across Wales to develop the project and ensure participation in Skills Competitions is maintained at local, national and international competitions.

Most providers could identify their academic MAT learners well and they responded to the initiative positively.

In cases where the providers' knowledge and understanding of skills competitions needed improving, the programme hosted master-classes for both learners and staff. Each gained knowledge on the eligibility criteria and the constraints' linked with current course curriculum content.

Overall, learners' confidence and skills levels have been improved as a result of engaging with skills competition in local, national and international arenas. There has been excellent feedback from participants, indicating a boost in self-esteem, increase in technical skills and their communication. Employability skills are also strengthened, preparing competitors very well for the world of work and the standards expected in their chosen disciplines.

St David's Catholic College has established an Honours programme for learners that show particular academic aptitude and interest that goes beyond the normal limits of the class room. It has been designed in consultation with employers, consultants and academics to give young people the experiences, qualifications and skills they need to 'stand out from the crowds' and be more employable.

Learners apply to the programme and, if successful, are expected to study the Welsh Baccalaureate and complete an individual project. They select four AS courses relevant to their education or career aspirations, and attend Professional Skills Programme lectures based on their subject choices. They also have the opportunity to access high quality work placements relevant to their pathway and optional academic tours. At the end of the AS academic year, learners have the opportunity to attend open days at Oxford and Cambridge.

The programme takes students on a learning journey through civilization, starting in ancient Greece, through the Roman Empire, into the Ottoman Empire and the Renaissance. Learners explore philosophies, ideologies, sciences, arts, mathematics and music of specific periods in time. They hear from outside speakers, and are given opportunities to read, debate and think for themselves. Through the individual project of their choosing they develop undergraduate level language, experience super-curricular concepts and undertake rigorous data analysis, supported by a 'social analytics' module led by Cardiff University.

Learners are expected to self-manage, self-motivate and study independently. They are also encouraged to undertake extra curricular activities such as establishing and participating in societies. The experience gives them a taste of what to expect in higher education.

The programme is facilitated by lecturers who provide support and challenge in each subject area, and is assessed through presentation work, research papers and organised debate. As a result learners on the programme have developed excellent research, presentation, report writing and communication skills.

Mared attended a youth theatre in 2014 where she was spotted by Bridgend College's performing arts lecturer, Grace Warner. Seeing her talent, Grace told Mared about Bridgend's musical theatre course. Mared successfully applied to the course and during her time at Bridgend proved herself to be an exceptional and dedicated learner.

She was extremely organised and went above and beyond normal expectations, handing in assignments before the deadline and supporting her peers with their work. She enthusiastically embraced the wide range of extra curricular activities offered by Bridgend College, and her personal tutor and lecturers readily gave up their free time and skills to help her achieve her goals and fulfil her potential. They helped her choose suitable material for auditions, refine her performances, and gave extra coaching sessions. Her vocal coach encouraged her to try new styles and overcome the effects of her speech impediment.

Mared took full advantage of the many extra curricular activities on offer at the college, and some of her achievements included:

- attending every afternoon master class run by the curriculum area manager
- representing her course as a student academic representative
- attending MAT learner events
- encouraged the refectory to sell more food suitable for coeliacs
- baking cakes for fellow learners and staff to brighten their day
- organising the performing arts department end of year meal for staff and learners
- volunteering to act in many student made films including one promoting the importance of literacy to be used in learner induction in 2016
- devising and running a role play workshop on customer service
- compering the Bridgend College Art and Design festival
- volunteering to sing at the Christmas meal for college governors
- running her own karaoke business

Mared successfully completed BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Performing Arts Musical Theatre (QCF) and won a place on the Foundation Year at RADA, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. She was later talent spotted at a workshop during a college trip to *Move It*, the UK's biggest dance event, where she was offered an audition for a four year drama scholarship at a university in the United States. She completed the audition, and was offered the scholarship. She weighed up her options and decided, on balance, that studying at RADA was the more financially viable option for her at the time. America's loss was RADA's gain!

The National Young Ambassador (YA) scheme, a Sport Wales initiative, operates in each local authority aiming to empower and inspire young people to become role models and leaders through sport by developing confidence and skills in order to increase physical participation by others. The programme gives learners opportunities to develop 'real world' leadership skills, enhancing their chances of progressing to university and ultimately into employment.

Each academic year in May, first year BTEC Sport students based at Grŵp NPTC's Llandarcy Academy of Sport are invited to apply for the programme. They go through a rigorous written, verbal and practical interview process in order to choose the most suitable ambassadors for the region. The college works closely with the local authority team to help select candidates with sporting and leadership potential. Tutors' knowledge of the learners has proved critically important in the selection process.

For the successful new Ambassadors, the first event is the Young Ambassadors conference in Cardiff, an inspirational platform where they are able to learn about how they undertake their ambassadorial roles in the coming year and mentor the young sports leaders of the future.

In 2015/2016 the college's YA programme was modified and enlarged into a Senior Management Team (SMT) within Grŵp NPTC, to help extend the promotion of physical activity and healthy living to their peers throughout the college's student base, including hard to reach groups. The SMT was given a budget and the freedom to plan a strategy to enable them to meet their targets.

Effective partnership working has been identified by the college as a critical success factor in the YA programme, which is still evolving and growing. There is a close working relationship between the college Sports Department and the local authority's Physical Activity and Sport Service. Currently every Young Ambassador is employed on a part-time basis with one of the college's partner organisations.

Keira Davies, a Gold Young Ambassador involved in a wide range of events and activities over the past two years, has recently been made a Platinum Young Ambassador. She has gained a place on the national steering group for the YA programme, as well as being invited to attend the National Leadership Academy where she has the opportunity to develop herself even further as a leader in sport. Keira has also been invited to address Ministers and other dignitaries on health and wellbeing in further education.

The college's Hair and Beauty area has a tradition of successful involvement in marketing its courses and working on outreach activities with local schools and communities. It is also an area with an excellent track record of raising money through charity activities undertaken by staff and students working together.

Four years ago the department decided to formalise this work and give a group of students the opportunity to lead these activities. This led to the introduction of the Student Events Team.

All students in the learning area are given the opportunity to take part and the team is selected through a competitive application and interview process. The interviews are carried out by teachers, the Learning Area Manager and a member of Senior Management. While MAT learners are not specifically targeted, the process does tend to attract the more motivated and able students, who often wish to take on greater responsibility. Selected students join the team and lead this aspect of the Learning Area's work although all students are encouraged to take part in the activities.

The Events team is central to the life of the Hair and Beauty Learning Area and their role includes:

- school liaison activities;
- marketing and promotional activities;
- charity events;
- cross-college events, including children's Christmas party, Welsh-themed activities and Equality and Diversity events; and
- representing the college at competitions both locally and nationally.

The team members demonstrate a high level of skill, creative ability and flair. Through involvement in promotional campaigns across the county and nationally, they develop management and organisational skills along with self-confidence. The experience helps students as they progress on to higher study or the workplace and rewards those students who demonstrate talent and motivation.

Competition work is a key part of the Events Team's activities, so the most able students have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate higher level skills. The ethos behind the group is stretching practical skills, which can be shown in competitions. Recent successes have included gaining first place at the Urdd Eisteddfod and Salon Cymru Awards.

The Events Team membership also includes work-based learners. This has helped to bring FE and WBL learners together, as well as allowing apprentices to showcase their practical skills. They have been supported by their employers to take part in competitions, which encourages them to stretch their abilities, as well as allowing the college to strengthen its links with these employers.

Amber came to college to study Level 3 Beauty Therapy having had difficulty learning in secondary school due to her additional learning needs. At college she displayed a passion and flair for beauty therapy that made her stand out as a 'more able and talented' learner early on.

Staff utilised a one page learner profile to help understand how they could best support Amber. It identified her talents and things of importance to her, helping the teaching style to be framed around her needs. Amber was initially concerned about being identified as a learner with additional needs, having masked them well within her peer group. However through understanding what gave her pleasure and meaning staff were able to support and encourage her far beyond any pre-determined potential. For example, Amber often had difficulty remembering instructions and organising her time, making it hard for her to combine movements into a controlled sequence and complete treatments in the time allowed. Mobile technology was used to capture treatment set-ups and recording of routines to help her overcome these barriers.

Her confidence grew with the support of her peers and mentors, and she no longer saw her learning needs as a restriction. Her work was of an excellent standard and her results were always exemplary. She was chosen to represent the college at Welsh and UK skills competitions, including Skills Competition Wales in March 2016 and World Skills UK Regionals in May 2016, where she was the youngest competitor and achieved bronze award on both occasions.

In order to prepare her for competition pressure she attended one-to-one skills training sessions outside of her timetable to develop coping strategies. In each competition she completed three vocational skills in a set time. She was marked on the organisation of her treatment area, application and performance of treatments, health and safety and overall demeanour of a therapist.

To perform and represent Cardiff & Vale College in such a professional manner at such a young age is an outstanding achievement. Amber has embraced opportunities and overcome challenges and is now employed within the industry whilst continuing with a full time level 3 programme. She is currently researching the level 3 competitions available this academic year in order to continue with her success.

Ifan came to study at Coleg Cambria with good GCSE results. At enrolment he was advised to take four subjects based on his achievement profile and career aspirations.

Following his mock results Ifan decided that he wanted to apply to Oxford University. A co-ordinator was put in touch with him and his parents to discuss his aspirations and how the college could support him.

During both years of his study he was offered a wide range of stretch and challenge opportunities, networking opportunities and progression events for example, progression talks by Alumni, university admissions tutors and industries, Physics Olympics, Royal Society of Chemistry Young Analyst Competition and university master classes.

In the classroom value added targets were used to benchmark his performance and a strong emphasis was placed on stretch and challenge to develop higher level thinking skills. Enrichments activities were offered weekly to compliment all subjects, including “Oxbridge” style tutorials and the Pennant Science Society to broaden and inform the interests of science students and showcase local aspirational role models.

During his application to Oxbridge, Ifan received one-to-one support with his personal tutor and the Deputy Director. He was given the opportunity to have his draft application critiqued by an external reviewer, and undertook mock interviews with an internal member of staff and an external professor from Reading University.

Ifan worked exceptionally hard during his time at Coleg Cambria and achieved A* in each of his four subjects. As a result he progressed to read Natural Sciences at Cambridge. He has since been invited back to speak to the college’s latest Oxbridge applicants.

The college believes key success factors in supporting learners such as Ifan include:

- Developing close links with schools to highlight the opportunities available at college.
- Good advice at enrolment to ensure learners take the right number of subjects relevant to their ability and career aspirations.
- Early identification of more able and talented learners.
- Use of value added targets to benchmark performance.
- Involving parents as partners in learning and progression.
- Rigorous and realistic mock examinations.
- Established “professional communities” amongst teaching staff to share good practice and conduct peer observations.
- Provide weekly enrichment activities to stretch and challenge learners and explore career and progression opportunities.
- Use appropriate external support for the UCAS application process.
- Establish good links with the top universities.

Alys applied for a level 1 catering and hospitality course at Coleg y Cymoedd. At interview it was identified that Alys would be better suited to a level 2 course, where she demonstrated tremendous skill and talent.

After enrolling she was encouraged to showcase her skills at the National Culinary Competition. She earned a gold medal and 'best in class' out of 300 competitors. The Welsh Guild of Chefs judges approached Alys' tutor after the competition, stating they had never seen such a talented 16 year-old. She is now a member of the college's culinary team and provides advice and support to new members.

Acknowledging her entrepreneurial drive, her tutor encouraged her to apply for a Tafflab award. Tafflab is a scheme developed in partnership with the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) to help entrepreneurial learners create real sustainable businesses. Learners on the scheme work to develop their enterprises whilst continuing with their studies. They have access to mentors who ask questions about their ideas and provide advice and tools to help them succeed.

Alys' application was successful and she was awarded £1,000 and a year's worth of mentoring. The college then signposted to other complementary opportunities, including the Big Ideas Wales 'Bootcamp', an event supported by Welsh Government which offers a stimulating three day residential programme of guidance and planning with top Welsh entrepreneurs.

As a Tafflab award winner Alys was a founding member of the 'EDGE', a closed college Facebook group that allows learners, staff and business people to interact with one another and offer support and guidance.

The opportunities highlighted and provided by the college helped Alys develop her skills, confidence and profile in the industry. She has since been offered the opportunity to run a six week cake decorating course at the college, thus maximising her potential.

As a result of Alys' story the college is developing a MAT strategy called 'Maximising Opportunity and Potential' which focuses on:

- Identifying underachievers and disaffected learners, as well as high achievers.
- Ensuring teaching and learning experiences stretch and challenge learners.
- Identifying effective means of communication to all stakeholders.
- Ensuring that learners are given the opportunity and encouragement to participate in extra-curricular activities and take responsibility for their own learning and development.
- Ensuring that adequate resources are in place for effective monitoring and tracking.
- The college is also in the process of developing a level 4 catering qualification in partnership with Derby University that they hope Alys will enrol on.

Annex D: Resources - Useful websites

General information on supporting MAT learners

NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education)

NACE provides guidance, support and training for teachers to attain the best from able learners. The site provides information on professional development, conferences, seminars and enrichment activities.

<http://www.nace.co.uk/>

The Seren Network

The website contains background information on the Seren network where partners work together, sharing resources and experience, to develop a programme of support for high achievers across the region. <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/seren/the-hubs/?lang=en>

London Gifted and Talented

This website's focus is on how to inspire teachers and raise the achievement of all learners through an inclusive approach to more able education. The organisation offers continuing professional development, resources and consultancy to improve the quality of gifted and talented teaching and learning.

<http://londongt.org/>

Urdd National Eisteddfod

This website provides information on various projects all over Wales that give young people new opportunities and experiences.

<http://www.urdd.cymru/en/>

Horizons Wales

This website provides information on accessing educational and careers support, advice and mentoring to young people in West Wales in order to broaden their horizons.

<http://www.horizonswales.org/>

Supporting progression to higher education

Sutton Trust

Information on the opportunities Sutton Trust provides to support talented disadvantaged young disabled people, including summer schools which allow bright students from non-privileged homes to taste life at a leading university.

www.suttontrust.com

Villiers Park Educational Trust

Helps students with high academic ability raise their aspirations and improve their attainment. The website includes information on their courses, programmes and advisory service. Also includes downloadable/online resources.

www.villierspark.org.uk

UNIQ

Information provided on the summer schools held by the University of Oxford.

<http://www.uniq.ox.ac.uk/>

Reaching Wider Programme

Provides information on the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) programmes, these are aimed at widening access to higher education and higher-level skills from targeted groups and communities.

https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/widening_access/reaching_wider_initiative.aspx

Future First

This site has information on how schools and colleges are helped to link up with university alumni and the type of support alumni communities can provide, such as career and educational role models, mentors/e-mentors and work experience providers.

<http://futurefirst.org.uk/>

Arts organisations

Arts Council of Wales

The site has information, advice and resources including an arts directory which contains information about artists, organisations, arts events, as well as arts jobs and opportunities in Wales. It also provides grant advice to artists.

www.arts.wales/

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Includes information on the support it provides to young actors and musicians.

www.rwcmd.ac.uk/

Tŷ Cerdd (Music Centre Wales)

Website providing information on the work of Tŷ Cerdd, including the grants and artistic advice it provides to its members.

www.tycerdd.org

National Youth Arts Wales (NYAW)

Information provided on the work of NYAW which covers drama, dance and music. Also provides links to other useful websites.

www.nyaw.co.uk

Disability Arts Cymru

The site provides information and advice to support disabled artists including training and funding opportunities.

www.disabilityartscymru.co.uk

Sporting organisations

SportWales

The website provides a range of information including funding and support available under programmes such as Elite Cymru and Talent Cymru. Also highlights facilities and coaching available.

www.sport.wales/

Subject-specific resources

UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT)

This site provides national individual and team mathematics challenges and other mathematical enrichment activities.

www.ukmt.org.uk

Literature Wales

Practical information and advice, useful resources, and information on services - Writers' Bursaries, Mentoring and Critical Service - which can assist writers at all stages of their careers.

www.literaturewales.org

Cilt Cymru (The National Centre for languages)

Contains downloadable language resources for learners plus careers advice.

<http://www.ciltcymru.org.uk/>

Eversheds Unlocked

Provides information on Eversheds Unlocked which is a programme aimed at students who are first time family members to go to university, are studying at state schools and have a genuine enthusiasm for the legal profession.

<http://www.eversheds.com/global/en/where/europe/uk/overview/csr/eversheds-unlocked.page>

Skills and entrepreneurship

Big Ideas Wales

Information for supporting young entrepreneurs, where they can learn about business, get support on developing their business ideas and taking the first steps to becoming their own boss.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/bigideas/>

World Skills UK

Further information on regional and world skills competitions with detail on how to compete, also includes downloadable resources.

www.worldskillsuk.org/

Skills Competition Wales

Registration portal for those who wish to enter local skills competitions funded by the Welsh Government and run by a network of colleges, work-based learning providers and employer-led organisations.

www.skillscompetitionwales.ac.uk

Resources: Recommended reading

Wales-specific reports and guidance

Review to Identify More Able and Talented Provision in Wales (Welsh Government, December 2015)

An independent report undertaken by Markit Training and Consultancy Ltd to establish the strategies used by schools, Further Education Institutions and Local Authorities to identify, support, challenge, monitor and track more able and talented learners to ensure they reach their potential.

Download at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/mat-across-wales/?lang=en>

The Final Report of the Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales (Welsh Government, June 2014)

Paul Murphy MP was appointed as Oxbridge Ambassador to establish the reasons behind the decline in Welsh applications and admissions to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This report summarises the findings of the project including main issues and recommendations, it also identifies areas of effective practice.

Download at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/seren/oxbridge-project/oxbridge-final-report/?lang=en>

Meeting the Challenge - Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils (Welsh Government, May 2008)

This guidance document has been designed to provide advice to schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) on meeting the educational needs of more able and talented pupils. The Standards contained within this guidance aim to support schools and LEAs in identifying, assessing and providing for more able and talented pupils as part of a whole school improvement agenda.

Download at:

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-meeting-the-challenge-en.pdf>

The more able and talented training pack (NACE Cymru, August 2013)

The materials in this training pack are intended to support schools in providing high quality, stretching learning experiences for more able and talented learners.

Download at:

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/mat-training-pack/?lang=en>

Research

What works for gifted and talented pupils (National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2003)

A literature review was undertaken to inform the Local Government Association of the implications for the practice of teaching gifted and talented pupils. The review sets out to suggest practical recommendations for the processes that contribute to gifted and talented education. From the literature it was identified that these processes included methods of identification, differentiation, enrichment, acceleration, classroom organisation, monitoring and evaluation as well as the roles and responsibilities taken on by various individuals.

Download at:

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGT01/LGT01.pdf>

The impact of the Sutton Trust's Summer Schools (The Sutton Trust, January 2012)

This paper is a brief summary of the findings of a report undertaken by the University of Bristol's Widening Participation Research Cluster into the Sutton Trust's summer school programmes.

Download at:

<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/summer-school-summary-final-draft.pdf>

The full report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/full-summer-school-report-final-draft.pdf>

School and College-level Strategies to Raise Aspirations of High-achieving Disadvantaged Pupils (DfE, January 2014)

The report examines findings from research among secondary schools, and sixth-form and FE colleges which was carried out by TNS BMRB and the Institute for Policy Studies in Education (IPSE) in 2012 and 2013. It investigates the strategies used by schools and colleges to support high-achieving disadvantaged pupils in different year groups to pursue Higher Education and, in particular, to apply to Russell Group universities.

Download at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278117/RR296 - School and College-level Strategies to Raise Aspirations of High-achieving Disadvantaged Pupils to Pursue Higher Education Investigation.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278117/RR296_-_School_and_College-level_Strategies_to_Raise_Aspirations_of_High-achieving_Disadvantaged_Pupils_to_Pursue_Higher_Education_Investigation.pdf)

Benefits of Developing Vocational Excellence through Skills Competitions (University of Oxford, September 2013)

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) commissioned this research brief to look at the benefits of skills competitions for: participants; employers and industry; and colleges and college tutors. It also makes some recommendations for NAS to consider.

Download at:

<http://vocationalexcellence.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Project-3-Research-brief.pdf>

Coffield et al 'Learning Styles & Pedagogy' (Learning and Skills Research Centre, 2004)

This research led by Frank Coffield reviews the main models of learning styles, and the implications of these for post-16 teaching and learning.

Download at:

<http://www.leerbeleving.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/learning-styles.pdf>

The academic-vocational divide: Are notions of 'gifted & talented' relevant and useful to vocational education (Annie Haight, November 2012)

A paper presented to the inaugural research conference of the Edge Foundation. It explores issues surrounding the academic – vocational divide as it relates to talented learners in practical, vocational and applied education.

Download at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258818188_Haight_A_2012_The_academic-vocational_divide_Are_notions_of_'gifted_talented'_relevant_and_useful_to_vocational_education_Paper_presented_to_the_inaugural_research_conference_of_the_Edge_Foundation_Bi

The Most Able Students: An update on progress since June 2013 (Ofsted March 2015)

This report looks at how well secondary schools are supporting their most able students in response to the recommendations in Ofsted's 2013 report, which identified that too few schools set high enough expectations of what these students can achieve.

Download at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-most-able-students-an-update-on-progress-since-june-2013>

Educating the Highly Able (Alan Smithers, and Pamela Robinson, Centre for Education and Employment Research, University of Buckingham, July 2012)

This report focuses on how schools support the most able students to ensure that the brightest pupils fulfil their potential.

Download at:

<http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/educating-the-highly-able-2/>

Other useful guidance

Supplementary Guidance: More Able and Talented Learners (Estyn, Autumn 2017)

Guidance for inspectors evaluating standards and provision for more able and talented learners aged 3 to 19 years of age in Wales.

Download at:

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/NIA%20Supplementary%20guidance%20-%20more%20able%20and%20talented_0.pdf

Developing very able students at post-16 (Villiers Park, March 2009)

This handbook aims to provide practical advice and expertise to improve teaching and learning at post-16. It has been structured around the Institutional Quality Standards for Gifted and Talented Education (IQS), which is a self-evaluation tool used in England to judge the quality of provision for very able students.

Purchase from:

<http://www.villierspark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Handbook-Flyer-2012d.pdf>

Exceptionally Able Students – Draft Guidelines for Teachers (NCCA, 2007)

This guide, published by Ireland's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, aims to support the teaching and learning of students who are exceptionally able. It provides practical advice such as checklists and case studies covering topics such as identifying exceptionally able students, their profiles, and both classroom and whole school strategies for supporting learners to make maximum progress.

Download at:

https://www.ncca.ie/media/1974/exceptionally_able_students_draft_guidelines_for_teachers.pdf

Differentiating curriculum for gifted students (Sandra L Berger)

This article examines how gifted students need an appropriately differentiated curriculum designed to address their individual characteristics, needs, abilities and interests.

Download at:

<http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/entry/A10342>

Gifted and Talented education: Guidance on addressing underachievement – planning a whole-school approach (DCSF, 2009)

This guidance from the UK Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families addresses the issues of gifted and talented education for learners who are underachieving or are at risk of underachieving within schools.

Download at:

<http://www.ttrb3.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/guidance-on-addressing-underachievement-planning-a-whole-school-approach.pdf>