

## How can we encourage students to contribute to discussions that support learning?

### Independent evidence

Lessons in which teachers invited students to ask questions and to challenge their views were observed to lead to lively debate that helped to support and steer the students' learning. The key point was that the teacher gave students the opportunity to make their own contributions <sup>i</sup>.

### Your evidence and reflections

Adults may vary a great deal in their willingness to take part in discussion and to project their own views. Their experience and expectations of education might be quite formal with regard to the roles of teachers and students. You could explore students' views on group work and discussion by identifying a small group of say two or three students who do not participate greatly in discussion. As a stimulus to your discussion you could provide them with some sentence stems to complete, along the lines of the ones below.

- Before I say anything in group discussion I need to ...
- Those people who say a lot in group discussion do so because ...
- The tutor asks us to discuss things because ...

### Putting the evidence to work

You can use the student comments from the discussion to identify the types of encouragement and support you need to give students so that they all participate in discussion. These might include:

- Being more explicit about the learning benefits of group discussion
- Providing more scaffolding, such as preparation activities which help students organize their thoughts
- Debriefing group discussions so that you bring to explicitly talk about students' performance.

Your colleagues will have their own ideas about what works in learning discussions, this may be an area you would like to more formally make a focus for a CPD project.

<sup>i</sup> Find out more about how colleges succeed here:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/3759.pdf>

For a report on leadership and learner voice follow this link:

<http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/files/12814.pdf>

The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) Further Education Commentary is available at: <http://www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/FEcommentary.pdf>