Questacon

The National Science and Technology Centre

THE QUESTACON LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Questacon, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, engages the minds, bodies and emotions of people of all ages through a diverse range of exhibitions, performances and programs in Canberra, across Australia and internationally.

Questacon stimulates learning in informal ways – through play, interpretation and experimentation - so that learning experiences are both educational and entertaining. Formal learning often involves explanations of happenings and ideas which learners have had little or no opportunity to explore for themselves. Questacon, however, reverses this. Informal learning at Questacon enables people to explore phenomena through first hand experience, stimulating them to re-think and further develop their understanding.

Visitors to Questacon bring with them a great diversity of knowledge and experience, assumptions and expectations, as well as ways of thinking and learning. Questacon develops exhibits and activities to accommodate this diversity, providing open-ended experiences which are flexible in the manner and level of interactions people may wish to undertake. As visitors interact with exhibits or other people, they are confronted with happenings and ideas that challenge their present understanding. The more engaging these experiences are, the more likely people will further develop their understanding so that it 'makes sense'. In essence, Questacon models an approach to learning known as constructivism.

The notion that we are becoming “information-rich” but “experience-poor” has never been more true. With an informal learning approach, the focus is not on specific information-based learning. Instead, the intent is to stimulate curiosity and motivation to explore and to discover in an experience-rich environment where learners can test and develop their understandings at their own pace. In this way, Questacon’s role is less about teaching facts, and more about helping people to develop a positive relationship with science and technology.