Procedure 3.3 Encouraging Independent Learning					
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Review No	2	**Next Review Date**	August 2025	**Approved on**	28.08.2024

Procedure issued: April 2015

Procedure owner: Principal / CEO

- ❖ This procedure is shared with our students and staff and/or can be obtained:
    - o on our website https://docklandsacademy.co.uk/policies-and-procedures,
    - o on the desktops of all the computers in the library on the top floor,
    - o by emailing us at info@docklandsacademy.co.uk
- ❖ Also, our students and academic staff are fully informed about the main aspects of the procedure in the Student and Staff Handbooks, Induction Seminar and Learning Agreement.
- ❖ The procedure is reviewed and monitored on a regular basis for currency and fitness as part of our "DAL Procedure 1.9 Review and Revision of Policies and Procedures".

1. Introduction

1.1 There is a wide range of definitions of '*Independent Learning'*. The term is often used to include concepts such as critical thinking and learning without direct tutor contact. However, Docklands Academy London (the Academy) defines independent learning as "incorporating self-directed learning and autonomous learning, with study support and tutor direction, as required".

1.2 Knowing that there is support and advice available is central to helping students to grow their capacity to work in ways that allow them to identify and utilise key information sources. As independent learning can mean different things to different people, in different disciplines and in different cultures, it is important that this concept is explained to students so that they know what is required of them.

2. Aims and Objectives

The Academy aims to foster and support students to become independent learners. Lecturers provide students with the tools to make the transition to a new way of learning through providing guidance, references, and formative assessments as well as tutorial support. Students are encouraged to question, enquire, and be supported in developing their skills to interpret and apply information sources to develop arguments and to solve problems.

2.1 The Procedure aims to ensure that teaching at the Academy is inspirational and of the highest quality by:

- all learners having the opportunity to succeed and be empowered to fulfil their potential,
- placing the learner at the centre of the learning process,
- active promotion of diversity and equality of opportunity,
- the self-esteem and aspirations of all learners being raised through mutual support and commitment,
- all staff and learners having high expectations and working together to develop high levels of achievement and success,
- ensuring learners are retained and achieve their qualification,
- developing employability skills as part of the curriculum,
- providing excellent progression opportunities to further and higher learning,
- recognising and celebrating success of both learners and staff,
- using assessment to provide effective learning opportunities through feedback,
- ensuring levels of student satisfaction and learner voice feedback are high across all courses,
- using research to inform and inspire students,
- promoting a culture of academic challenge, scholarly activity, and research informed teaching,
- the subject expertise and pedagogic content knowledge of staff leading to excellent teaching and learning,
- actively promoting best practice in terms of embedding sustainability, particularly in the areas of resource efficiency, recycling, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, conservation of natural resources, and welfare,
- meeting the targets identified in the Academy Strategic Plan.

2.2 The Academy will Provide an Outstanding Teaching and Learning Experience as follows:
- inspire learners to exceed their aspirations and achieve through stimulating and challenging courses and a learning environment with highly qualified and motivated staff,
- deliver a student experience which consistently exceeds expectations,
- create opportunities for all to succeed,

2.3 This policy embraces the Academy Values:
- Excellence: We strive to achieve the highest quality in every aspect of our work, providing a learning experience that is truly first class.
- Passion: We create an environment in which our students and staff can develop and celebrate their shared interests. We empower our graduates to combine their passion with their career and shape the future of the specialist industries we serve.
- Challenge: We support students and staff who want to challenge and be challenged. We inspire them so that they can confidently achieve their ambitions, create their own successes, and be the very best they can be.
- Nurture: People are the centre of everything we do, with our students at the heart of our community. We invest in our people, support their development, and encourage them to grow and reach their full potential.

- Respect: Inclusivity underpins our organisation; we respect and celebrate equality and diversity. We seek to create a community in which all of our staff, students and partners thrive and feel proud to belong.
- Dynamism: We use our expertise and passion to energise and enthuse everyone around us. We collaborate, respect each other and contribute to our collective success. We create an environment in which our students and staff can develop and celebrate their shared interests. We are forward-thinking, we innovate and take ownership of our futures. We take a long-term view, strategically, financially and digitally.
- Sustainability: As the Docklands Academy London community, we work to drive forward a sustainable future by improving the skills, knowledge and confidence needed, which will be translated into building social responsibility and resilience to tackle global challenges.
- Equality and Inclusivity: Docklands Academy London respect and celebrate equality and diversity. We seek to create a community in which all of our staff, students and partners thrive and feel proud to belong. At Docklands Academy London equality and inclusion is a key driver to ensure we have a diverse and multi-cultural approach. We support everyone from all backgrounds and social standing to offer equal opportunities to generate a solid and strong position in the sector.

3. <u>Operational Descriptions</u>

The following list provides some broad guidance on how independent learning can be fostered. This work can form a part of standard teaching sessions as well as tutorials, individual learning plan tutorials or additional workshops.
- talk to students about their previous learning and teaching experiences,
- find out what students expect from the course and how they expect to be taught and assessed,
- find out how students can facilitate their own learning and what they understand by managing their own learning,
- provide a lecturer perspective on the course requirements and independent learning,
- reach a shared understanding of expectations,
- talk about independent learning in the context of 'communities of learners' and provide students with support and opportunities for developing study groups (through group work, online discussions, etc.),
- students can be supported into new ways of learning by the provision of formative assessment,
- students' learning can also be supported by working with peers and elements of peer and tutor feedback,
- recommend on-line and multimedia sources and texts,
- encourage and build students' confidence in the early stages of the course by providing opportunities for students to bring questions and observations to class which have arisen from their independent reading,
- remind students of the various support systems available to them especially a few weeks after induction when this useful information may have been forgotten,
- provide un-assessed opportunities to test out students' independent learning with tasks set between classes,

- gradually move over time from a role as teacher to that of a learning facilitator and teacher as students become more confident independent learners,
- when teaching and learning take place exclusively online, students may require support and guidance using unfamiliar software tools as part of the learning process.

4. Tools for Independent Learning and Self-Organisation

- e-portfolios (collections of multimedia including text, images, audio, blogs) can be assembled by students to demonstrate their learning over time,
- study skills sessions (goal setting, time management, working to deadlines, self-appraisal, reading),
- ongoing training in using online information,
- ongoing support in the classroom-based and / or distance learning, tutorials, and academic skills sessions to help students use strategic approaches to finding the information they need, and in the right quantities by defining the scope of their searches.

5. Roles and Responsibilities for Teaching and Learning Practice the Academy will provide:

- an induction for all learners and staff, who deliver teaching and learning,
- a clean, tidy, and well-maintained environment,
- a safe environment following the Academy's health and safety procedures,
- access to resources that enable effective teaching, learning and assessment to take place and appropriate learning outcomes to be achieved,
- a stimulating environment with displays of learners' work, research activity, posters, and relevant learning materials,
- a welcoming environment for all learners promoting equal opportunities,
- access and promotion of digital technology,
- curriculum delivery that provides interaction, flexibility and encourages a wide range of teaching and learning activities,
- opportunities for teaching and learning to be discussed and promoted with good practice and techniques being shared,
- information regarding learners with SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) and necessary adjustments, including access arrangements for assessments, to be shared with all members of the area team,
- support for teaching staff through the Advanced Teaching Practitioners
- appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for teaching staff. The details can be found in "DAL Procedure 6.9 Continuing Professional Development".

5.1 Lecturers will ensure that all lessons are prepared and delivered to the highest standard. Learning sessions at the Academy will:
- ensure that all the teaching and learning practices provided by the Academy are in line with "the UK Quality Code and its Advice and Guidance" which can be found at **https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance**
- show clear evidence of planning with learning outcomes appropriate to the level and used to monitor student/learner progress.
- meet the needs of all individuals with, where appropriate, the full involvement of Inclusive learning in the planning and delivery of the session,

- meet all course / programme objectives and requirements,
- build on learners' prior knowledge and understanding, using formative assessment to monitor progress and inform future learning,
- have strong links between theory, practical and industry practices,
- promote independent learning,
- be informed by current research and scholarly activity,
- have completed up to date Risk Assessments,
- follow relevant procedures in relation to Health and Safety,
- use findings from learner feedback to improve planning and delivery,
- generate learner confidence through the sound subject knowledge of tutors,
- use learning methods that inspire and challenge learners,
- promote and demonstrate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion,
- provide a teaching schedule that shows the outline plan for the module and provides opportunity for learners to plan ahead,
- promote the use of the VLE and other physical and electronic learning resources such as the library in the support of learning and the provision of additional learning opportunities,
- provide opportunity for learners to take part in module/course evaluation surveys (learner voice) to provide effective evaluation and shape future improvements,
- promote best practice in terms of sustainability,
- enable lecturers to reflect on and develop their practice using the Education and Training Foundation Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training which can be found at **https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/professional-standards/** and the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework for Higher Education which can be found at **https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/ukpsf**
- include marking of assessments that is accurate, consistent and diagnostic. Marking procedures at the Academy are in line with the UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance which can be found at **https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment**

5.2 The Academy staff will be expected to manage the learning environment in line with Academy policies on attendance, discipline, and quality:
- registers will be completed for each timetabled session,
- poor attendance and punctuality will be monitored, and the relevant actions promptly taken,
- learners will be expected to use time effectively and take responsibility for their own learning in timetabled sessions and throughout the Academy,
- discipline issues will be dealt with promptly by staff with the appropriate reporting procedures followed.

6. <u>Observations of Teaching and Learning</u>

6.1 Lesson Observation

The lesson observation process is fundamental to enhancing and improving the learning experience and supporting staff in the development of their teaching and management of learning. For more and detailed information, you may refer to "DAL Procedure 6.10.1 HE Lesson Observation".

6.2 Peer Observations

All teaching staff is required to observe another tutor at least twice per academic year. The purpose of the observation is for the mutual benefit of both the observer and the observee with the aim of encouraging dialogue on teaching, learning and assessment and the sharing of good practice. The main aim is to encourage self-reflection of the teacher observing another teacher. They are not graded, nor judgements made and there is no central monitoring of the outcomes. For more and detailed information, you may refer to "DAL Procedure 6.10.2 Peer Review".

6.3 Outcomes from Observations of Teaching and Learning

Observed lecturers who demonstrate consistent strengths will be encouraged to share good practice with their appropriate team through the Academic Head. Observed lecturers with significant areas for improvement over a minimum of two observations will be identified by the observer and referred to the Improving Teacher Programme (ITP). Staff will be supported with the action plan initiated through the Improving Teacher Programme by the Academic Head. To assist the member of staff in achieving the necessary improvements the plan must cover:
- the areas for and strategies how to achieve the desired improvement,
- the measurable improvement required,
- the time scales within which the improvement must be achieved, and any additional support required,
- the date on which progress will be reviewed.

7. Analysis of Lesson Observation Outcomes

All outcomes relating to lesson observation and online reviews will be processed, analysed and reports produced to meet the requirements of the Academy's Quality Cycle. Outcomes from lesson observations and online reviews will inform the relevant areas of self-assessment process. This process is monitored and reported by the Academic Head.

8. Related Documents

8.1 Policies
- **3** Teaching Learning and Assessment
- **5** Student Support Engagement and Learning Resources

8.2 Procedures
- **1.9** Review and Revision of Policies and Procedures
- **3.1** Expectations of Staff in Teaching Delivery
- **3.2** Supporting Teaching Staff
- **4.4** Attendance Monitoring
- **5.3** Equality, Diversity and Special Needs
- **5.4** Student Engagement
- **6.9** Continuing Professional Development

- **6.10.1** HE Lesson Observation
- **6.10.2** Peer Review
- **9.4a** Health and Safety Policy under HASAWA

8.3 Strategic Plan

8.4 External References

- **Office for Students (OfS) Requirements and Guidance** at *Advice and guidance - Office for Students*
- **UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access** at *https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/admissions-recruitment-and-widening-access*
- **UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Enabling Student Achievement** at *https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/enabling-student-achievement*
- **UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Learning and Teaching** at *https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/learning-and-teaching*
- **UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Student Engagement** at *https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement*
- **Higher Education Code of Governance** (Committee of University Chairs, December 2014) at *https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUC-HE-Code-of-Governance-publication-final.pdf*
- **Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) principles of Good Governance for Independent Training Providers** at *https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2595/code-of-governance-final-sept-2018.pdf*
- **Pearson Recognition of Prior Learning Policy** at *https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Support/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees/Recognition_of_prior_learning_and_process_policy.pdf*
- **UKCISA Code of Ethics** at *https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Membership/Codes-of-practice/Code-of-ethics*
- **Equality Act – 2010** at *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents*
- **Related QAA guidance: Understanding assessment: its role in safeguarding academic standard** Higher Education include the QAA Quality Code at ***https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code***.
- Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework at ***https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification***.