

Procedure 3.3 Encouraging independent learning					
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1 Introduction

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, the Academy defines independent learning as incorporating self-directed learning and autonomous learning, with study support and tutor direction, as required.

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.

3 Operational description

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 tutorial or additional workshops.

- talk to students about their previous learning and teaching experiences
- find out what students expect from the course and how they are expecting 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 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
- student 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 is taking 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