

## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

### *Enhancing our knowledge of students independent learning techniques via a qualitative approach.*

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There is increasing interest in the role of independent learning (IL) in higher education (Thomas, 2015). Indeed, numerous studies have found important differences between high and low achieving students in relation to goal setting, monitoring, use of study strategies, and self-efficacy (Difrancesca et al. 2016, Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990, 2008). Whatever the strategy taken, it is clear that students need to have some level of independent learning to achieve in their degree.

Qualitative focus groups were conducted with students and staff to identify how students learn while at university and what resources they utilise in their search for the 'top grade'. Some students indicated that people were the most important resource, whilst others noted the importance of online resources and the opportunity to work from home. This, however, varied according to their stage at University and whether they were a mature student. Staff indicated that students are not as independent as they once were, but acknowledged that this may have been accelerated by COVID or the way in which schools' have resorted to rote learning, which stifles creativity and innovation.

In conclusion, there is a clear need to develop independent learning skills and aid the student in learning how to learn. A system which also gives staff key information on their learners is required to give all the best chance in adapting the experience. Resources need to be streamlined, more accessible and become a toolkit as a 'go to' when students require it. This is not unlike the approach taken by Abertay university through its route to micro credentials which is already seeing success (Millard, 2022).

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