

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Enhancing our understanding of independent learning amongst RGU students.

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Background: There is increasing interest in the role of independent learning (IL) in higher education (Thomas, 2015). Indeed, several studies demonstrate the significant impact of IL on students' academic achievement (Difrancesca et al. 2016) and retention in higher education (Robbins et al. 2006). There is, however, no simple definition of IL (McKendry & Boyd, 2012) and many students fail to understand what is expected of them.

Aims: To explore student's levels, understanding and style of IL and its relationship to academic performance.

Methods: A quantitative survey approach was employed. One hundred and twenty three students recruited via opportunistic sampling completed an online JISC survey. **Findings:** Whilst the majority of students: considered themselves to be an IL (74%), had heard of the term (85%) and understood what IL was, 82% erroneously believed it meant learning on their own. In terms of IL strategies, students were most likely to employ Elaboration and Time Management, and least likely to use Self Regulation and Rehearsal. Further, results indicated that A grade students engaged in significantly more IL and used more strategies of rehearsal than B grade students.

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