

Independent learning: Student perceptions and experiences

Information sheet and consent form

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Overview of the research study

The Higher Education Academy has commissioned the National Union of Students (NUS) and Liz Thomas Associates (LTA) to undertake research about independent learning, between February and June 2015.

Directed independent learning can be broadly understood as study which is guided by curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment, and supported by staff and the learning environment. There may be an emphasis on disciplinary contents, and/or on learning how to learn effectively. Students play an active role in their learning experience - either on their own, or in collaboration with peers.

The aims of the research are two-fold:

- a) To explore students' conceptions and experiences of directed independent learning, including how they were made aware of its role in higher education, how they were prepared for it within the context of their discipline, and how they have approached it; and
- b) To disseminate the findings in order to assist disciplines in developing or reinforcing effective practice.

The study is a mixed methods, in-depth qualitative study, which involves students as partners at each stage of the research (design, implementation and analysis). The primary research methods are student diaries and interviews conducted by trained and supported student-peer researchers.

The study will produce a number of outputs for the HEA and the higher education sector in general:

- Research report

- Summary report
- Participatory workshops, two for students and four for academic staff
- Student case studies that can be used for development activities

For further information about the project please see: [Insert weblink](#)

Ethical guidelines for student diarists and interviewees

Should you agree to participate in this study we commit to the following:

1. Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. You can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will you be questioned on why you have withdrawn.
3. You will be paid for the work completed as follows: £10 on signing up for the project, including the provision of contact details, study information and optional demographic information; additional £20 on completion of the diary and participation in the interview. A maximum of £30 will be received by each participating student.
4. Interviews will be conducted by a trained student-peer researcher. They will adhere to the confidentiality information as set out in this document. The student-peer researchers will not have access to your diary submissions; this will be read by the research team only. Themes emerging from the diaries will be used to inform the semi-structured interview schedule used by the student-peer researchers.
5. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview by a member of the research team (usually conducted by phone, at a time convenient to you). You are under no obligation to participate in this additional interview; no payment will be received for participating in this interview.
6. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed to inform the research analysis.
7. Your contribution to the Social Media activities associated with this study is entirely voluntary, and it is your responsibility to decide how much information you share in this public domain; you are advised to check your privacy settings when using social media. You will not receive additional payment for contributing through social media.
8. You will not be named, nor will your higher education institution, in any publications or dissemination associated with this study, or in any informal feedback to your HEI.
9. If you have any preliminary questions or need further clarification please contact liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk
10. If you would like to make a complaint about the research please contact debbie.mcvitty@nus.org.uk in the first instance. If your concern or complaint has

not been adequately responded to within two weeks, please contact the Higher Education Academy Research team research@heacademy.ac.uk.

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