



# Learning in Higher Education

## A guide for students at CIHE

In Higher Education (and here at CIHE) you are expected to become an independent learner and we will provide you with the guidance, resources and support you need to engage in learning as a more independent process as you develop over the time of your study with us.

Learning independently can be difficult, especially if you are not used to this. It's got nothing to do with how bright or motivated you are; developing independence can be tough for anyone.

Using the work of the University of Waterloo,\* we explore below four key stages to independent learning (also called self-directed learning). They are,

1. being ready to learn
2. setting learning goals
3. engaging in the learning process, and
4. evaluating learning.

### **1. Am I ready to learn?**

You need various skills and attitudes towards learning for successful independent study.

Signs of readiness for self-directed learning include being autonomous, organised, self-disciplined, able to communicate effectively, and able to accept constructive feedback and engage in self-evaluation and self-reflection.

Conduct a self-evaluation of your current situation.

What are my major study habits?

How does my living situation impact my capacity for study?

Do I have a good support network to help me focus and get through tough times?

### **2. What are my learning goals?**

We'll tell you what we want you to learn – we list learning outcomes for all our courses and units and we also provide a set of criteria for every assessment task.

Our unit Learning Guides provide you with a structure to consider and shape your goals. They set out:

- Learning Outcomes for the unit of study
- Structure and sequence of activities
- Timeline for completion of activities
- Details about resource materials for each week
- Details about grading procedures and how you will receive feedback and evaluation for each assessment task
- Agreement of unit policies, such as a policy on late assignments

### **3. How do I engage in the learning process?**

Students need to understand themselves as learners in order to understand their needs as self-directed learning students — referring students to our resource on learning preferences may be helpful. Students should also consider answering the following questions:

What sort of instructional methods best suit my learning style?

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\*Adapted from the University of Waterloo website: Accessed 17 January 2018: <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/tips-students/self-directed-learning/self-directed-learning-four-step-process>



What kind of teachers/teaching do I respond to well?  
What do teachers I respond to well do differently from other teachers?

Try also need to understand your approach to studying. Many thinkers about education contrast **deep** and **surface** learning.

A **deep** approach to learning is about 'understanding ideas for yourself, applying knowledge to new situations and using novel examples to explain a concept, and learning more than is required for unit completion.'  
A **surface** approach to learning involves 'reproduction' and focuses on 'learning only what is required to complete a unit' combined with a tendency 'to regurgitate examples and explanations used in readings.'

A surface approach *will not* work in higher education.

You must understand ideas and be able to apply knowledge to new situations. You should focus on generating your own connections and become your own motivator.

#### **4. Evaluate your learning!**

To be a successful independent learning learning, you must be able to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation of your learning.

Try to:

- regularly consult with your lecturers and the Language and Learning Advisor,
- ask for feedback

Reflect on your own work:

- Have I learned? How do I know?
- Can I adapt and apply knowledge?
- Can I provide clear explanations of content, ideas and processes?
- When have I learned enough?

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Students,

- consider your readiness to learn
- consider your goals
- monitor your learning process
- take initiative and be self-motivated
- Re-evaluate your goals as you progress
- Consult with staff and seek advice

Staff

- build collaborative environments
- guide student learning
- support student initiatives in learning
- be ready and willing to consult
- facilitate, don't just teach