DIRECTED INDEPENDENT LEARNING (DIL) TOOLKIT: CONTENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Who is it for?

This toolkit is intended for all academic and professional staff who teach and support students' development as independent learners.

What does it contain?

In addition to resources for staff, it also contains some elements that staff may find useful to give to students, to use as the basis for tutorials, study skills workshops and in-class activities, or to direct students to for self-development. Under each of the toolkit items, you will find specific suggestions for use.

1. Directed independent learning: an overview

This is a short introduction to the topic of directed independent learning (DIL), covering definitions, benefits, characteristics, and an illustration of how students can be supported to progress from active but closely directed learners to fully autonomous learners. It provides background information for staff.

The section on defining DIL (page 2) may be useful to show to students when introducing the approach to them.

2. Sharing good practice networking event prompts

The set of ten prompt sheets that comprise this tool each covers an aspect of DIL, based on those explored by Thomas et al when they undertook research into effective practice in DIL in 2015. They are presented in this way so that participants at a networking event can note down examples of how they are already addressing each of these aspects.

The completed sheets will serve as a good-practice sharing tool both during and after the event. Using the sheets in this way would serve as an excellent preparation and ideas-gathering activity prior to action planning (see below), especially if done as a multi-programme or multi-School event before programme teams meet separately to plan more local actions.

More detailed suggestions for how to run the networking event are given at the start of the set of sheets.

3. Directed independent learning: an agenda for action planning

This tool would be suitable to use as part of a teaching and learning away day, or in an extended (90 minute to 2 hour) staff action planning meeting or workshop, or as part of the periodic review or new course design process.

This annotated action planning agenda is organised by the same ten aspects of DIL as the networking event prompts (see item 2 above), but this time they are all presented in a single table. Each aspect is accompanied by a short explanation of why it is important ('rationale') with links or references to resources and student-facing activities that may be useful in developing this aspect of your curriculum.

There is space for you to note how you plan to address each, or some, of the aspects in the coming months.

4. Guidance on motivating, encouraging and building students' confidence

As you will note when you read the section on the challenges of independent learning in 'Directed independent learning: an overview' (page 1), we need to work proactively to prepare students to learn independently, especially in the early stages of their course.

This document offers twelve ideas for practical ways you can do this, whether face to face or online, in class or out, by using culturally inclusive pedagogy, creating 'safe spaces' for 'learning to learn', mobilising peer support networks, and more.

5. Tools for students to develop aspects of independent learning

A themed set of links to ready-to-use activities and tools for students. Some of these are suitable for you to use in classes, tutorials or workshops with students working individually or in groups; others are designed as self-access activities to be completed independently.

6. Further resources for staff

Links to references and resources for you to follow up on the theory and research hat underpins this toolkit, as well as good practice case studies from a range of disciplines.

DIL inclusive assessment information sheet

Mick Healey independent learning workshop handout