Strategies for Effective Independent Learning - Things to consider

What is Independent Learning? *It is taking responsibility for your own learning!*
You are expected to spend time studying outside of lectures, tutorials, practical activities etc. This includes:

- ✔ Understanding the material in lectures
- ✔ Understanding assigned reading
- ✔ Preparing for tutorials, lab work etc.
- ✔ Doing research for assignments
- ✔ Doing revision for assessments
- ✔ Thinking about the larger picture

Independent Learning involves:

- **Identifying what skills are needed for the task, such as:**
  - Critical thinking
  - Reading with a purpose
  - Effective listening
  - Note-taking
  - Finding materials
  - Discussion and debate
  - Self-assessment
  - Organisation/Planning

- **Time management and planning:**
  - Planning around events both at university and home
  - Knowing deadlines – when and where to hand in work
  - Creating schedules to help you meet deadlines e.g. planning backwards from deadlines – making time for each step of the process for a piece of work

- **Organisation, so that you can:**
  - Find materials easily and quickly
  - Hand in work on time
  - Attend lectures, tutorials, practical sessions and be prepared
  - Read required texts and have time to take in the information

- **Self-discipline and Perseverance:**
  - Setting and overcoming challenges
  - Seeing a project through
  - Working to deadlines
  - Regular study
  - Where to study - any physical space, wherever is a good place for you at home or on campus
Knowing how to study. There are lots of techniques, here are few to think about:

- Finding your own learning style and trying out new techniques
- How do you learn best? Seeing, hearing, writing, thinking, doing or a combination of these?
- Identify the task, decide how best to go about it
- Set small goals – make them achievable
- Take breaks
- Keep track of your achievements – reward yourself!
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Keep positive (Positive Mental Attitude)
- Create ‘study triggers’ – things or routines that encourage you to study/revise
- Environment – create the best one for you
- Use ‘Active Learning’ techniques: writing index cards, condensing notes, writing notes on texts, creating mind maps, repeating out loud, doing past papers etc.

Are you returning to study after a break?
Think about what can you bring to your studies? These are work/life skills that are acquired with time, can you think of others that apply to you?

- Experience e.g. working in teams, communication skills
- Time management e.g. juggling work/home/family
- Responsibility e.g. for others, yourself, finances
- Independence e.g. making your own decisions
- Self-motivation e.g. seeing a task through

Different circumstances may require different/new strategies
- Be honest with yourself – have confidence! You can probably do more than you initially think you can
- Be willing to adapt and identify new ways of thinking /learning/working

Identifying opportunities for self/further development. There are many opportunities at university to develop new and expand on existing skills. Here are just a few:

- Joining a society or sports club
- Taking part in course events
- Becoming a class representative
- Volunteering
- Setting up a study group ...

Knowing when and where and who to ask for help:

- Course guide
- Teaching staff (email, office hours / appointment)
- Personal Tutors/Programme Co-ordinators
- Books and online resources on study skills
- Information Consultants in the libraries
- Student Learning Service: www.abdn.ac.uk/sls