

# ***Learner Managed Learning: Motivators, Processes and Outcomes***

## **The student experience of independent study**

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## **Independent Study at NE London Polytechnic: timetable of development**

1972 - 74 Dip HE development team

- focus on 'competence' and skills, problem solving
- 'give students problem of own development'

1974 Dip HE approved by CNAAs, all disciplines, 70 recruits

1976 Degree by Independent Study approved - all disciplines

1985 M.A/M.Sc by Independent Study, all disciplines

1988 900 students, 630 FTEs

1985 - 89 study of early student's experience

## The Dip HE by Independent Study programme

Proposed Statement by \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) of a programme of study leading to the award of the Diploma of Higher Education in the context of his/her present position and intentions.

### APPENDIX A: Experience

I present here a critical appraisal of my educational and other experiences.

### APPENDIX B: Present Position

I am able to identify the following areas of knowledge, skills and experiences which I indicate as strengths/weaknesses and regard as potentially relevant to the development of my programme of study.

### APPENDIX C: Intentions

I am able to identify the following intentions, personal, academic and vocational on gaining the Diploma.

## **The Dip HE by Independent Study programme**

### APPENDIX D: Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed

Consistent with my stated intentions I am currently able to identify that by the end of my programme of study I will need to have acquired the following areas of knowledge, skills and experience.

### APPENDIX E: Proposed Programme of Study

In order to acquire the above areas of knowledge, skills and experience I have formulated the following plans for individual work and central studies.

### APPENDIX F: Assessment

In order to demonstrate that I have achieved my targets I propose the following form of assessment.

**Signatures** of student, personal tutor, specialist tutor.  
Clerk to the Validation Board

**Formal programme and personal development entwined**

## Research methodology

What was the student experience of independent study?

Life history approach

- retrospective participant interpretation Sample of 48 life histories:
- how did Independent Study impact on your life?
- what worked or did not work?

Ethnographic

Grounded theory

## **SAMPLE COMPARED WITH FULL POPULATION OF INITIAL LETTERS A, B AND C.**

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		<b>SAMPLE`</b>	<b>ABCs'</b>
<b>Average age on entry</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>28.6</b>
<b>% Female All intakes</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>54.3%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>% Male All intakes</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>45.7%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>% Female 1975-1979</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>% Male 1975-1979</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>57.1%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>% Female 1980/1981</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>% Male 1980/1981</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>% 2 A levels or equivalent</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>190</b>

## HIGHEST RANKED PERCEIVED BENEFITS (out of 69)

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Rank	Perceived Benefit
1	Specialist knowledge
2	Ability to find things out oneself
3	Intellectual development
4	Self-direction
5	Ability to learn without instruction
6	Emotional investment in activity
7	Ability to take risks with careful planning
8	Ability to focus on key issues
9	Ambition for self advancement
10	Decisiveness
11	Able to set own goals
12	Self-confidence
13	Willingness to take responsibility
14	Ability to plan ahead
.....21	Self esteem

## Primary benefit No 1: Commitment

Responses from the first 24 cases indicating high levels of **commitment** include:

'I find it difficult to see how anything else could take precedence over my painting. Everything else I do I regard as a waste of time'

'It's terrific really because it's something I really love doing and being involved in. It's not a bit like work.'

'I'm doing the job I want to do. There is no way that I will go back to decorating.'

The most important benefit has been an increase in the emotional investment in what I'm doing.'

## Primary benefit No 2: Independence

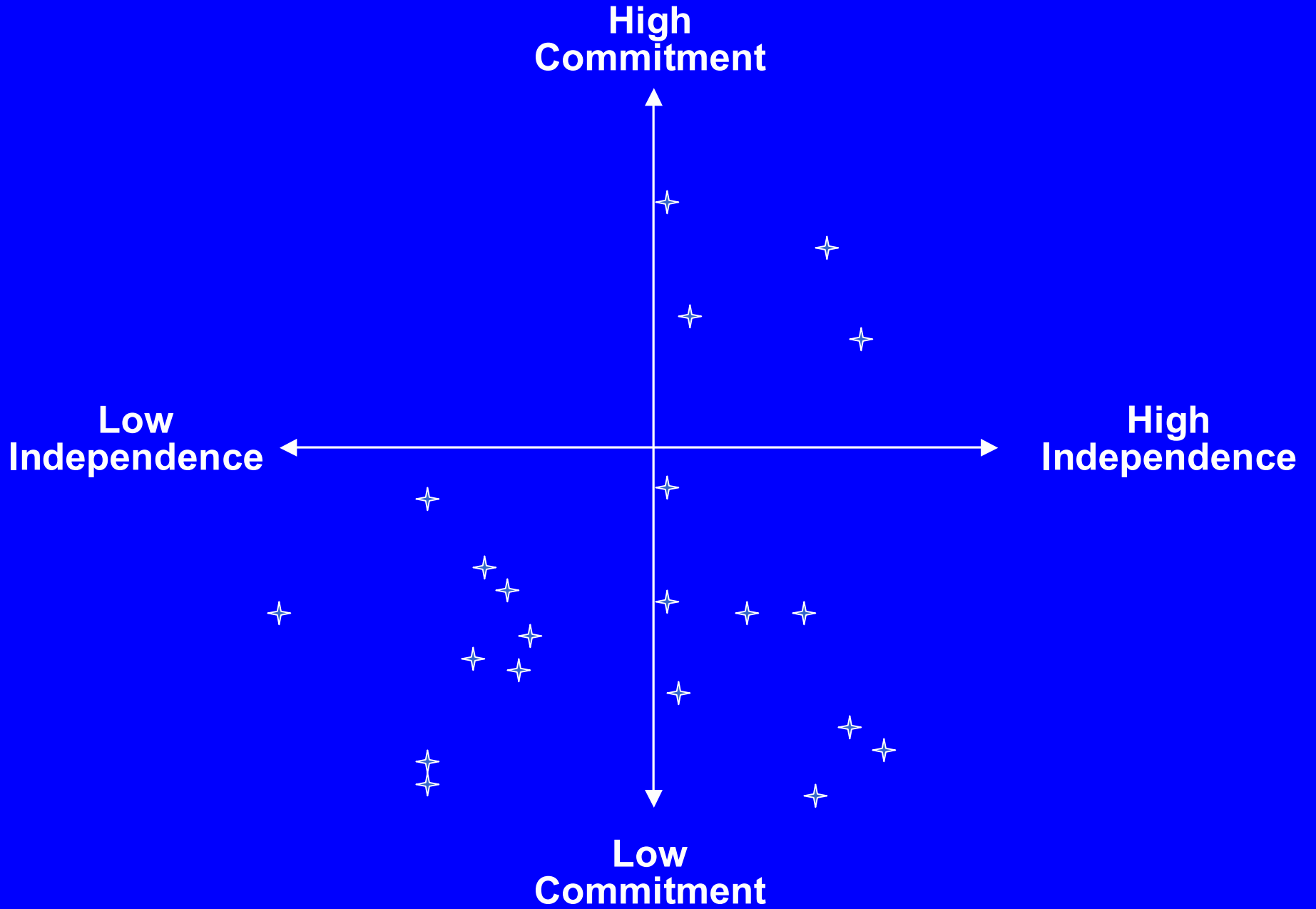
Responses from the first 24 cases indicating high levels of **independence** include

'I could make decisions, able to say what I wanted and had the strength to see it through.'

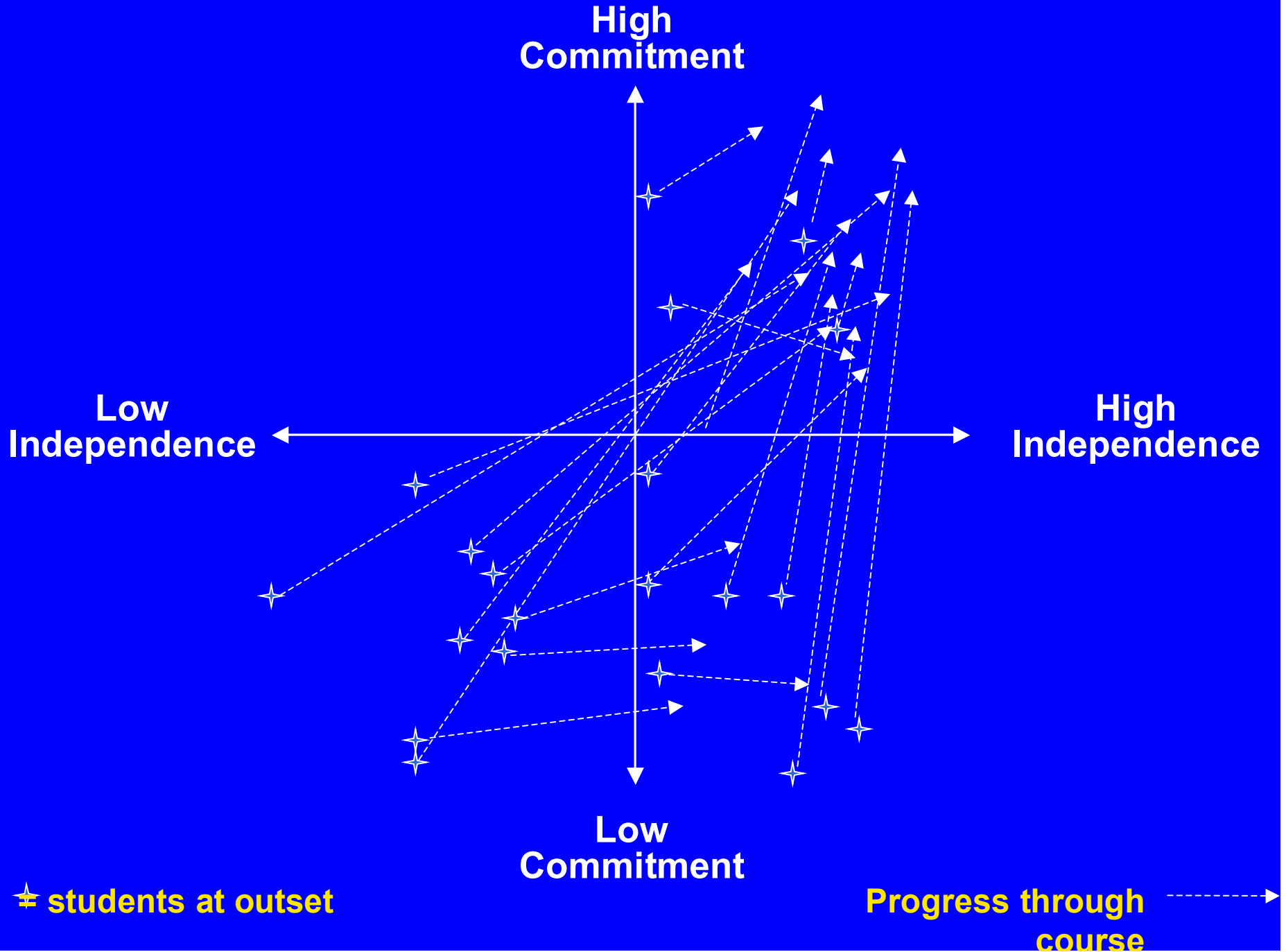
'I've got a lot of freedom and independence.'

'I have the power to defend myself... you don't have to lead your life according to some fixed structure that has been invented by someone else.'

'people feel locked into a situation... it's (The Diploma) liberating.'



**★ students at outset**

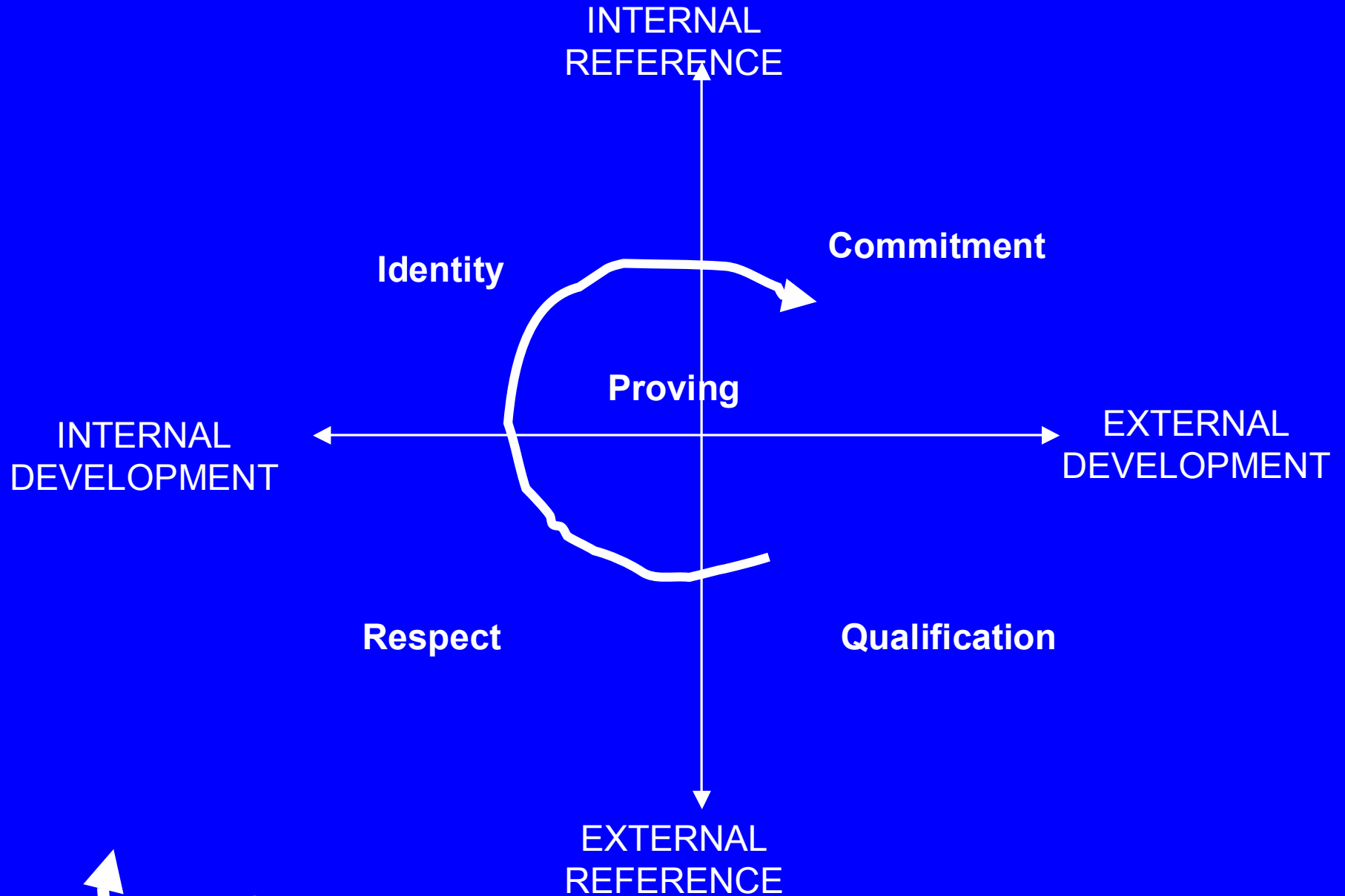


## Motivation

**‘There is an awful truthfulness about independent study. It is about yourself and there is no getting away from it’ - former student**

**Deep ‘primary’ needs were key drivers for life-change**

<i>Takers</i> of	qualifications
<i>Earners</i> of	respect
<i>Searchers</i> for	identity
<i>Provers</i> of	personal worth
<i>Builders</i> of	commitment
<i>Total</i>	transformation



 Transformers

## Key processes

Risk to primary need

Legitimation, in response to risk of primary need

Attribution and self-efficacy

## **Jean risks her identity as a poet**

I put forward the proposal that I wanted to do my own poetry and he (specialist tutor) was very nasty and he said 'Give me your poetry' and that was the first time ever that I'd handed it over to someone who wasn't sympathetic, or to anyone really. It was one of the biggest risks I had ever taken.

I knew he had it in him to turn round and say "This is crap!" He didn't. He said "Thank goodness, you can write poetry". It wasn't a sort of patting me on the back saying "Oh, I think it's lovely, I really do." It wasn't like that. It was "Yea, that's good." So this is where I got the impetus to go on and do my own poetry.

## **Jean risks her identity as a poet**

It was coming out of the closet. You got the security to show it to more people. You suddenly realised that you had the capacity to understand things that before you might have put on one side because you wouldn't have tried. You discovered that you really could walk.

## **Jim transforms from a chancer to a serious social worker**

I was recognising fifteen years of failure. It was one of the hardest things I ever did but one of the most valuable things. At the time, what I was presenting was the really confident macho individual. It was a total myth; that was what I believed myself to be.

So I was covering up the embarrassment that I felt... my level of confidence was totally false. What was inside was pure panic.

I think that one of the bravest things I did was to actually decide to open up and let the facade go. The mutual support was very important. I don't think I would have been able to have done it but for that kind of mixture. That was very positive for me..

## Carol taken seriously by top artists

`you are sort of thrown in at the deep end (on the course) and the first thing you learn is to make a fool of yourself and then you realise that everyone else is more or less frightened of being a fool or being made to look silly at times.

So you just go and ask stupid questions. I had to contact top portrait painters... just wrote letters... long telephone conversations... they were all very helpful... it was consoling that the things you thought of yourself, these painters who had made it were thinking on similar lines to yourself. You knew you were on the right track. It cheered me up more than anything.'

## Five conditions for successful legitimation

1. **An atmosphere of acceptance** provided by the whole ethos of the procedures and relationships of the institution which recognises the student as legitimate initiator of the learning experiences.
2. A positive attitude to the **potential that lies within student anxiety**, uncertainty and disorientation, and an acknowledgement of the importance of and provision of support for students taking risks.

## Five conditions for successful legitimation

3. Opportunities and encouragement for **student determined interactions**, between students and students, students and a range of tutors, and students and relevant specialists inside or outside the institution.
4. An appreciation by the students that **genuine reactions (positive and negative) from specialists to their products are important** to both their personal and specialist development.
5. Agents of **legitimation, capable of giving genuine reactions** to students' work without denying students' integrity as persons in their own right.

## Three different kinds of legitimation:

**Self** - I am a person of value, with a right to be; I am who I am and that is all right. **(I AM)**

**Self-efficacy** - I can make things happen, I can have an effect. **(I CAN)**

**Specific competence** - I have achieved, through my own efforts, at an appropriate level. **(I HAVE)**

**Legitimation of all three is a powerful basis for independence and commitment**

**PROPOSITION: LML has the potential to do this**

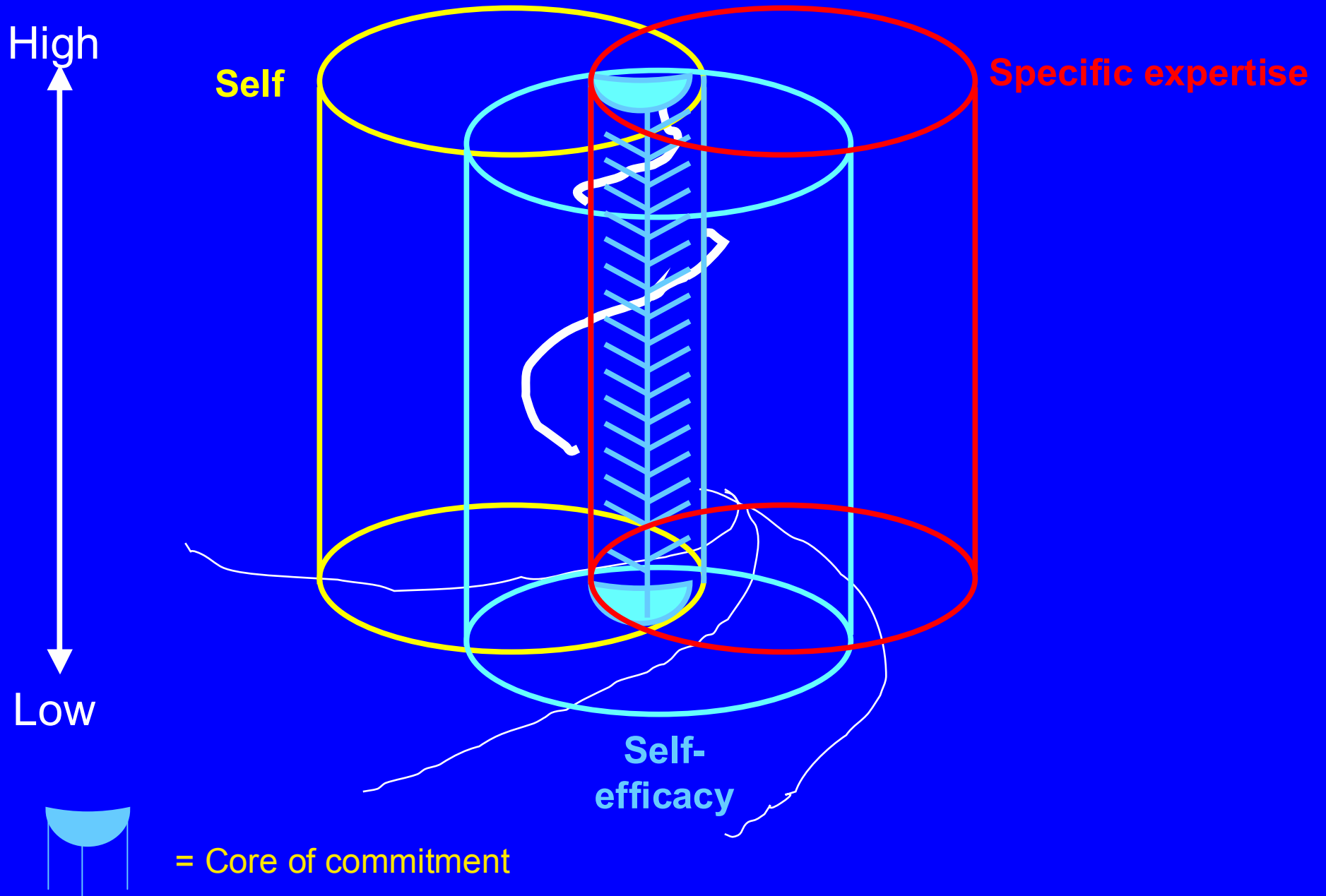
## A spiral of legitimation:

The common sequence: self, self-efficacy, and specific competence.

Legitimation of self-acquired specific competence provides further legitimation of self and self-efficacy.

With **each turn of the spiral**, as students take more control for themselves, assertions of "I am" or "I can" have more substance.

# A spiral of legitimation:



## **Students' explanation of why it works**

**I think the fact that you are actually required to input so much and rely on your own resources so much actually gives you much greater confidence about independence and ability to actually fend for yourself.**

**It works because you have to cope with it.**

## **Growth in components in personal capability**

### confidence in **judgements and values**

*I certainly express my opinions more freely.*

*I have a lot more confidence in my own ability and judgement.*

*It has allowed me to make my own decisions.*

*I am much clearer in what I want and what I don't want.*

*It built up my confidence in . . . trusting my judgement about things.*

*I'm now much more confident to back my judgement and take things on.*

## **Growth in components in personal capability**

### Increased **self-esteem**

*It has given me a lot more confidence to talk to people at different levels.*

*I'm more self-assured and confident.*

*I feel more able to instigate things . . . with people in authority.*

*Independent study gives you a certain feeling of self-worth.*

*I'm a lot more secure in myself . . . I have a higher opinion of myself.*

## **Growth in components in personal capability**

### Confidence in the **power to perform**

*I don't think that anything is beyond me.*

*I have the confidence to do almost anything, to try almost anything.*

*I can cope with most things that people can throw at me now.*

*It's like finding a muscle you haven't used.*

*I know I can do it whatever it is. . . . I think my personal power is now much higher.*

*I feel autonomous, much more confident in my own ability.*

## **Growth in components in personal capability**

Confidence in **managing own learning**:

*It gave a great space to make mistakes again, to rebuild a confidence.*

*The opportunity to fail--that's where learning takes place.. it is acceptable to learn from mistakes.*

*(What makes it work?)--the person taking responsibility for their own learning--it places much more importance on learning than teaching.*

*You have to get off your backside and go and find out and it wasn't that difficult. . . . You learn from it. . . .*

## Issues and further study

Are these learning experiences typical of  
other independent study learners;  
all lifelong learners;  
all graduates?

Do the various models (legitimation spiral, primary motives, grids)  
ring true of other people's experiences;  
offer any insights or assistance for others?

Where / how can the models be tested / developed further?

## Points raised in discussion 12 12 01

- Emotional intelligence
- Robustness of the models - cycle of legitimation - DNA - ups and owns
- Attitudinal aspects as well as skills - knowledge
- Transferability of the models - try varying components
- Students with experience of both kinds of courses - eg contrasting modules in same degree programme
- Process vs outcomes - system is outcomes driven, but the value is in the process
- Rewarding the process - how do we do it?.
- Self- moderation - false arrogance?
- How they coped with assessment.
- Style of tutor feedback needs to relate to the primary motive - eg style and focus feedback might be different for an earner of respect than for a builder of commitment.

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