



## IELTS LISTENING S62T4

### Research findings

My talk is about a research study I did over a period of Five Years on learner persistence. Why some people stick at academic study better than others? As teachers, you will know that there is a tremendous variation in the learner's response to certain things for example a short period of illness might completely destabilize some students and cause them to give up their degree studies. Other Learners might overcome tremendous difficulties to stay the course I am particularly interested in this second group who are the ones with learner persistence.

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What I decided to do was design a research study using a sample of my University's third-year undergraduate students 295 in all who obviously had already stayed the course pretty well the sample was drawn from a range of Ages but there was deliberately a significant number of mature students and all respondents were living at home in the local region. I wanted to have this element of consistency not having some coming from outside the area and living in University accommodation. It should be noted though that there was significant variation in **Q32 home background to reflect the variation** in our student population I designed questionnaires which were devised to elicit what their concerns had been as they started the course, and what had sustained them throughout the three years. Findings from the first section indicated that their worries when they started varied from Financial concerns though this had not been as strong as I expected to Career prospects. But mature students with children tended to emphasize uncertainties about their relationship with them.

The second section of my questionnaire looked at learner persistence under three main headings social and environmental factors, other factors, and intrinsic or personal characteristics. I identified three levels of importance for each of these, at the first level those points identified by participants as most important in learner persistence for social factors many respondents said how crucial it had been to have good support though there was no one specific source it could be family or friends. As regards other factors students are heartened not so much by high grades but by what they regard as success in study and for personal characteristics many respondents reported that they took pleasure in **Q33 challenge** and that this was regarded as very significant. At the second level of importance in the first category a sizable percentage talked about the fact that they had enjoyed themselves in **Q34 school** as an important social factor. In the second column other factors a number of people said that what was of most importance was decent **Q35 health**. This had a fairly strong influence on their persistence in their studies, and then under the heading of personal characteristics there were quite a large percentage of respondents who mentioned they felt it was important to have lots of **Q36 interests** in their everyday lives, this gave them a depth and sense of perspective which less persistent learners might lack. And then on to the third level under social factors several respondents talked about good relationships with their **Q37 tutors**. For other factors they mentioned lack or absence of any problems in their families and finally under column three they identified an ability to juggle several roles what we might call their capacity for multitasking.

Now these findings obviously helped inform the design of activities as I mentioned but in addition a number of further recommendations emerged firstly I propose that the department distributes questionnaires to first-year students to help get an idea of their **Q38 maturity** when starting the course. This is really our overriding concern secondly I recommend we look into ways of offering induction courses for some selected students to allow them to take on the role of **Q39 advisors** we think they are the best people to act in that role. This policy will make support much more accessible to our students. Thirdly this help is often most needed in the evening and night when offices are closed and so we should set up **Q40 online** services instead of the more traditional telephone services research has shown that these services are actually more accessible to the majority of students. And finally, it is often important to be proactive if students are not meeting deadlines then someone should contact them rather than wait for them to come to us. Now are there any questions about the points?...

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