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**Abstract**

Self-directed and social forms of learning are fundamentally different from traditional didactic educational settings from which students are selected for veterinary, medical and other professional degree courses. It is therefore expected that a mismatch may emerge between students? conceptions of effective learning and expectations inherent to the new learning environments. The present study addressed this issue by examining 128 preclinical students? predispositions towards two key elements in problem-based and case-based learning, namely self-directed and social forms of learning. A mixed method approach revealed converging evidence of students? overwhelming preference for external, teacher regulation and individual forms of learning. External regulation was consciously invoked as a coping strategy in managing large amounts of complex information. Constructivist conceptions of learning were positively related to an appreciation of the cognitive benefits of social forms of learning, a relationship that has attracted little attention in the higher education literature. These findings stress the importance of guiding students? transition towards learning autonomy required for

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social forms of learning and continuous lifelong learning after graduation. (HRK / Abstract  
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