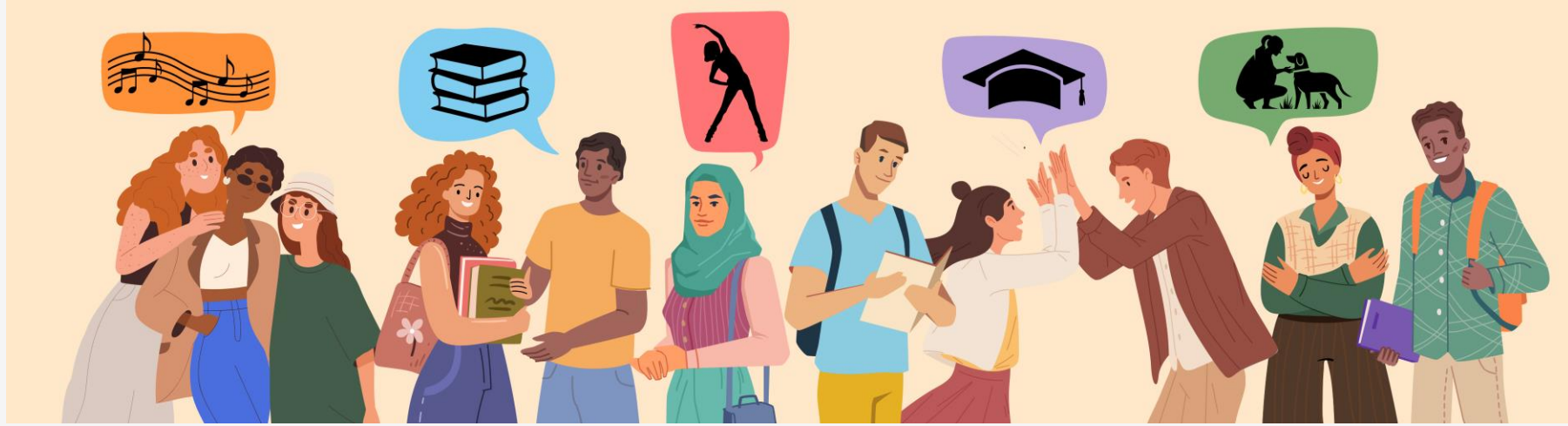


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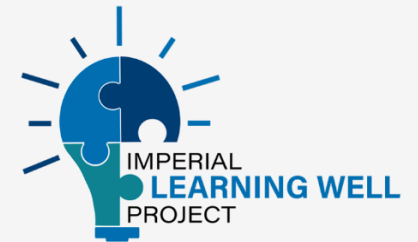


Empowering Students to Develop Sustainable Study Strategies: Insights from the Learning Well Project

Dr Tiffany Chiu^a & Dr Sue Sing^b

^aPrincipal Teaching Fellow in Educational Development, ^bResearch Associate
Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship (CHERS)

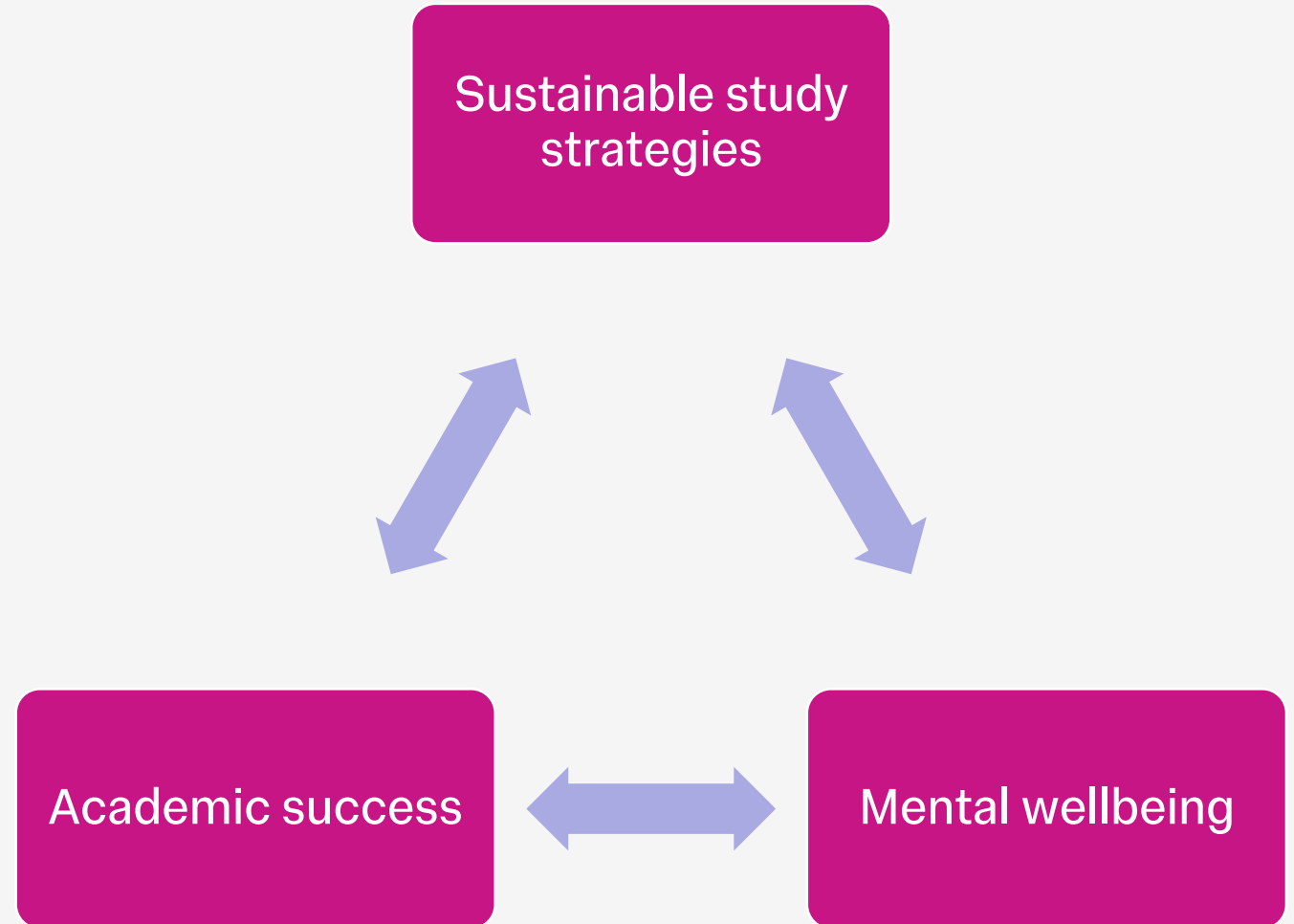
Funded by the President's Excellence Fund for Learning & Teaching Innovation



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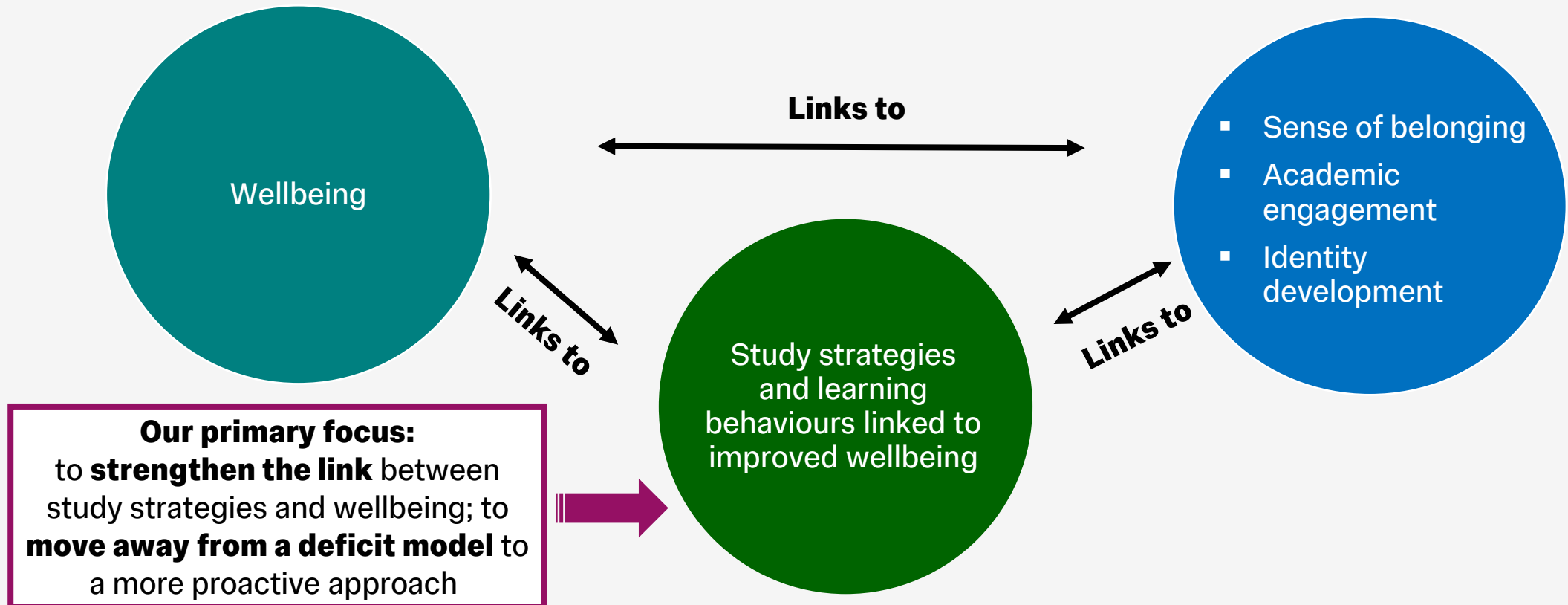
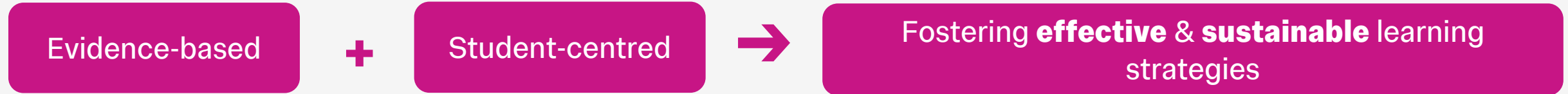
Significance of sustainable study strategies

- What do we mean by sustainable study strategies?
 - ✓ Approaches students can maintain long term to support learning and wellbeing.
- Why this is important for students' academic success?
 - ✓ Students often carry over study strategies from school — but these may no longer serve them well.
- Why this is important for students' mental wellbeing?
 - ✓ Sustainable habits that promote balance between study and self-care.



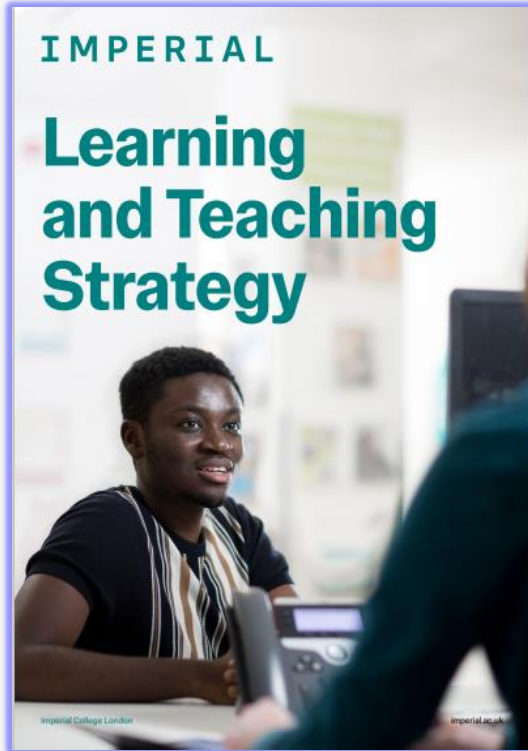
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Project focus & approach

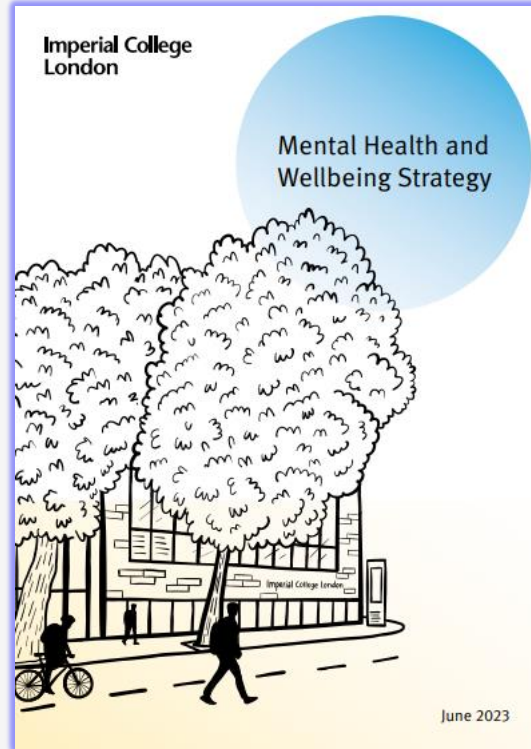


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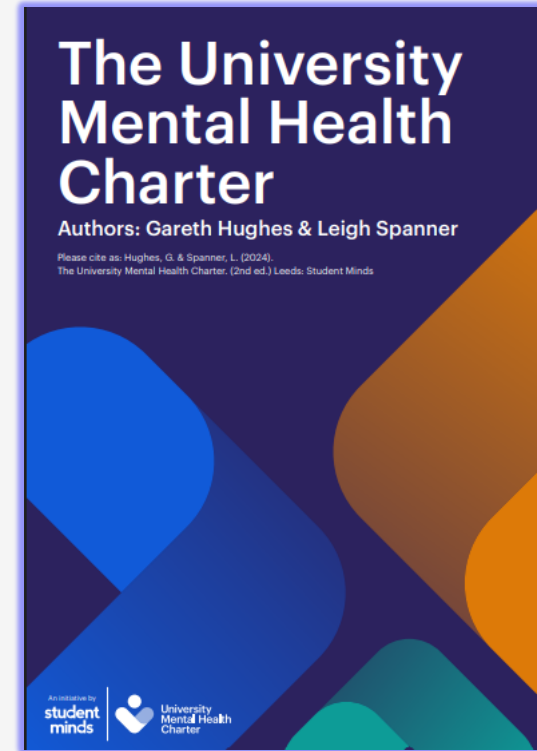
Background and context



**Imperial Learning & Teaching Strategy
(2017, 2023)**



**Imperial Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
(2023)**



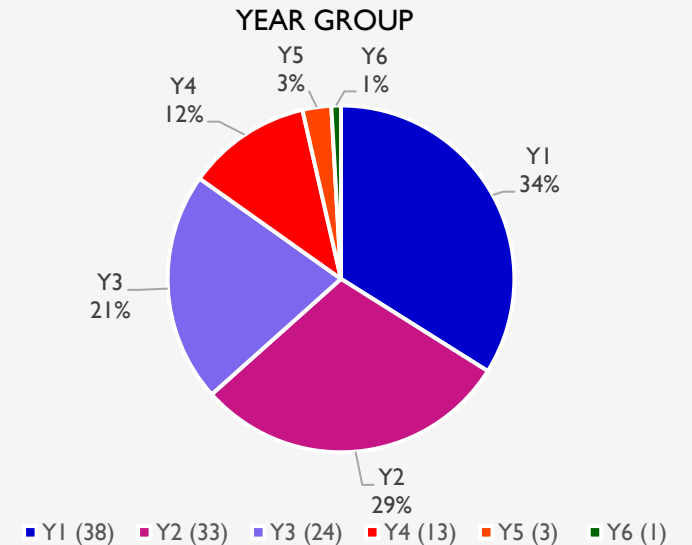
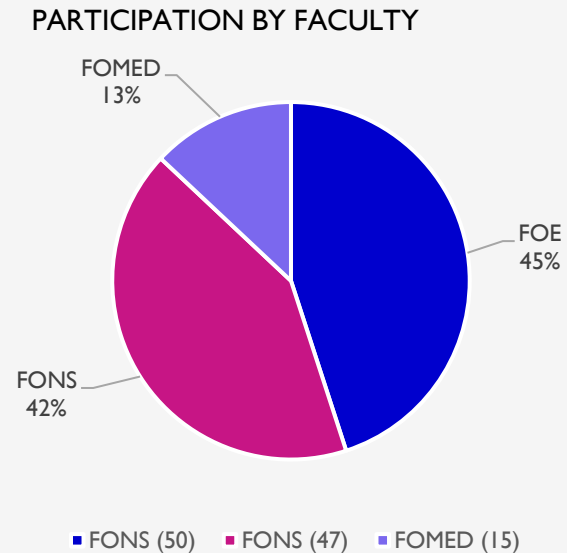
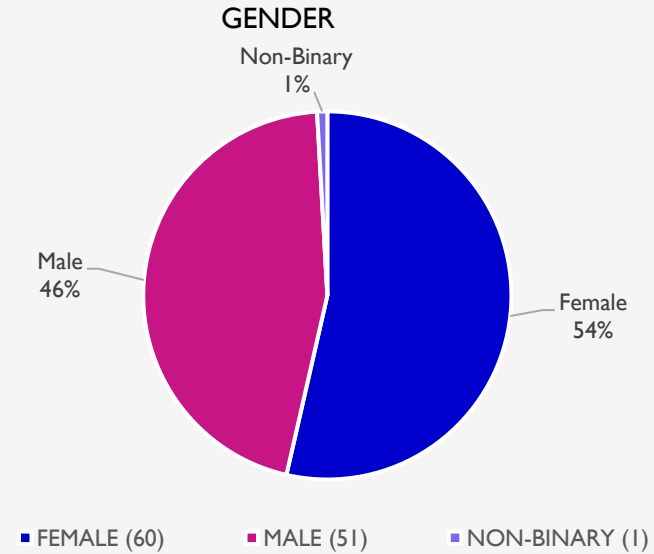
**The University Mental Health
Charter (Hughes & Spanner, 2024)**



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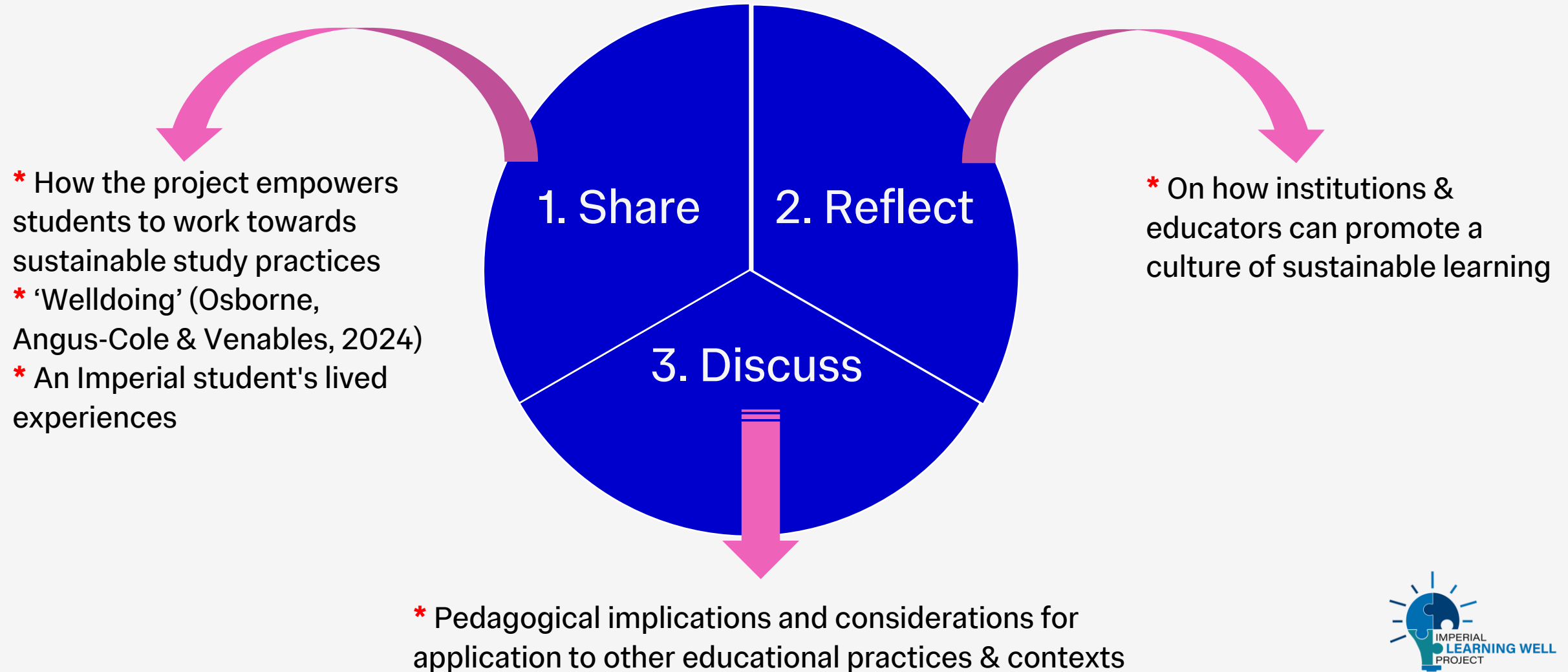
Learning Well Project data

- Data collection: **May–Aug 2023**
- Focus groups: **33**
- UG students: **112**
- Faculties: **3** (FoE, FoNS, FoMED)



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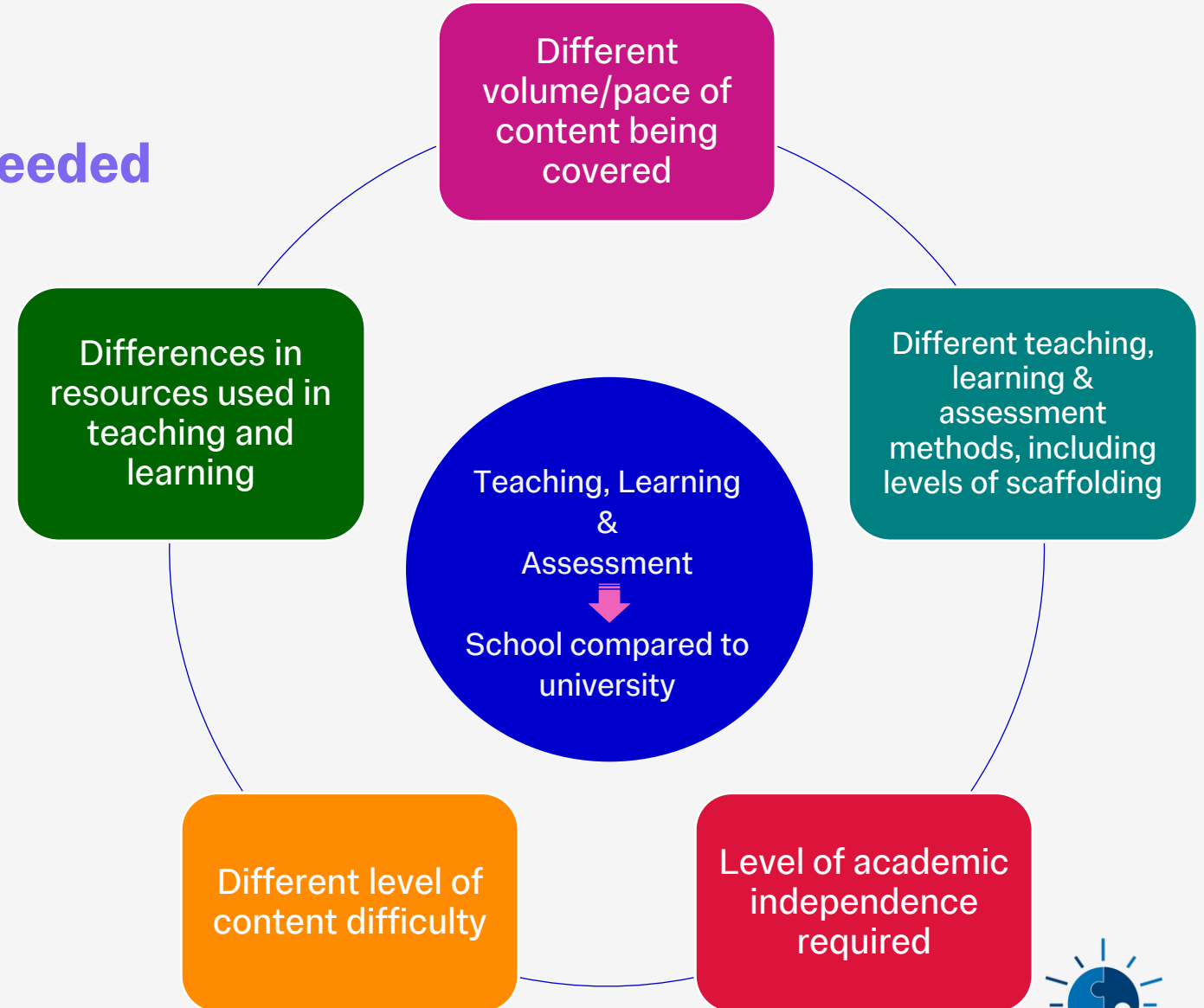
Focus of today's session



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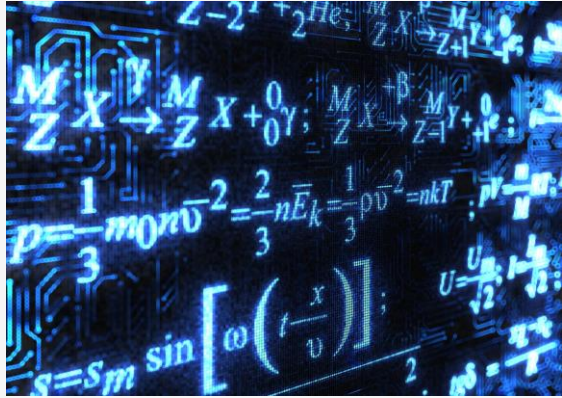
Why different strategies are now needed
- students' perspectives

**Q: Are the strategies you use now
the same or different to those you used
when you were at school?**



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Selected key findings



[Volume]

...I never really had flashcards for mathematics back in [school] because the technique's way more simple. There's nothing you really need to memorise. But now you come to university and **there's so much you need to know. Like an entire A-level could be stuffed in one module in one year.** Which is scary.

- Benjimen, Y1 Maths



[Pace]

...it's been **a huge learning curve for me...** I feel like **in high school they used to give you a lot of time** to write stuff down. **Like 'everyone stop, have you written all the notes?'** And **here** it's like you're in a lecture, **they're never gonna ask if you're keeping up.**

- Anine, Y1 Life Sciences

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Selected key findings

[Academic independence]

...at A levels and GCSE, **you're told places to look** and **you're told most of the content** just from textbooks or by the teacher, whereas **a degree it's more like you have to fend for yourself.**

- Harriet, Y1 Chemistry



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Learning Well Programme 2025

- Mon 10 – Fri 14 February 2025 (inaugural event); 27 scheduled sessions
- **Evidence-based:** drawing on research findings
- **Student-centred:** StudentShapers collaboration
- **University-wide staff involvement:** drawing on expertise of Imperial staff; a Town Hall meeting
- Flexible programme: interactive, participatory staff/student-led sessions
- Aimed at **all** Imperial students
 - Year groups
 - Disciplines
 - Level of study
 - Ability and achievement levels





How Does Competition Shape Your Learning Experience? Navigating Competition and Building a Collaborative Mindset



How can pets as therapy support your wellbeing?



Growth Over Perfectionism



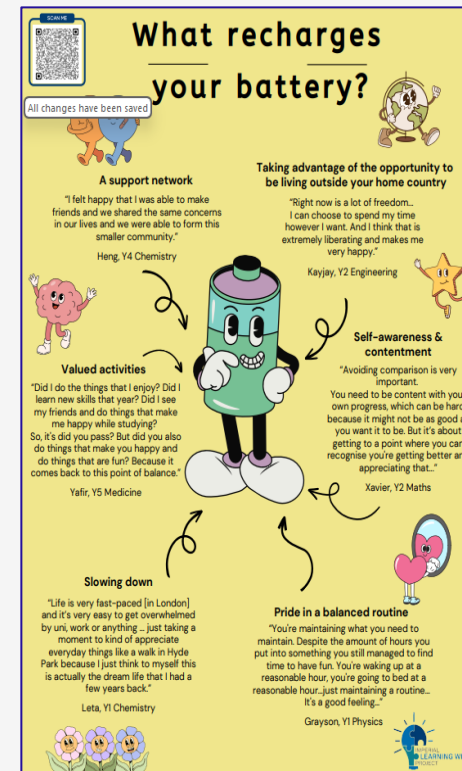
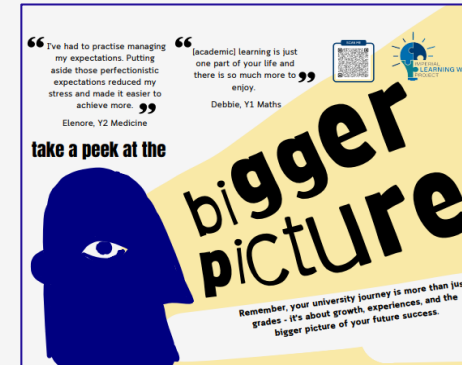
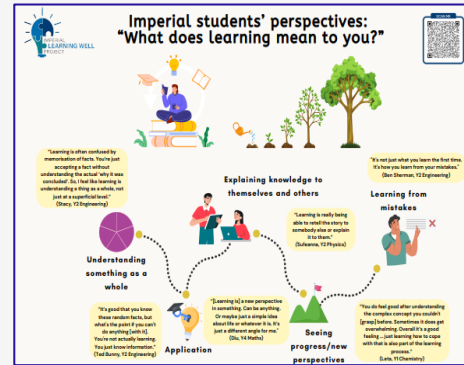
How can music boost your wellbeing and learning?

Learning Well Materials

Resources co-created with students

Resources and materials that students can use to:

- designed to help students think more proactively about their study strategies and how these relate to wellbeing.
- highlight key messages from our research and serve as great starting points for discussion
- access evidence-based ideas for effective and efficient study strategies



Poster examples

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/education-research/our-work/efficacy-agency-and-wellbeing/imperial-learning-well-project/pedagogical-materials-development-innovation/>

Learning Well Materials, cont'd

Resources co-created with students

Postcard examples



How do you balance long-term goals with immediate tasks in your study routine?

“...by ticking off lots of little, easier things I felt like I could build myself up to do the big thing at the end.”
Harriet, Y1 Chemistry

“...by not wasting time trying to understand every single little thing and accepting that that's okay, you end up making a lot more progress. I wish I'd figured that out at the beginning.”
Xavier, Y2 Maths

What works for one person may not work for another. Find what suits you best!

An illustration of two students, a man and a woman, sitting on the floor and reading books. There are several stacks of books around them. The background is a light blue and yellow circular design.

What works for one person may not work for another. Find what suits you best!

“...at school I wanted to do everything on my own...but now I quite like listening to others because peers can share and discuss valuable tips on how to optimise your study approach during your degree. So I'm open to it.”
Grayson, Y1 Physics

“I don't think I would have made as much progress or had as much fun if I hadn't been working with other people.”
Debbie, Y1 Maths

What role can peers play in shaping your study habits and personal growth?

An illustration of a student sitting at a desk, reading a book. There are books and a lamp on the desk. The background is a light blue and yellow circular design.

How can different study environments affect your focus and efficiency?

“...I'm currently [in a study room] in South Ken with a coffee... it's a perfect space because, for me, the library wouldn't work as we're always talking... this [study] room means that we can do what we need to do... [also] I tend to get distracted at the campus I'm usually based in because I end up seeing everybody there. You've got to travel in [to South Ken], so if you see people it's more of a hi-bye situation and back to your study room...”
Yafir, Y5 Medicine

“...in my dorm room it's like no-one is there, it's just very lonely... [in] the library, as much as I'm also just alone, usually with my headphones, I feel like it's a more stimulating environment and I feel like it's boosts productivity to work around other people who are working as well... that was a huge change [from school] for me.”
Anine, Y1 Life Sciences

What works for one person may not work for another. Find what suits you best!

An illustration of a student sitting at a desk in a library, reading a book. There are bookshelves and other students in the background. The background is a light blue and yellow circular design.

How has the transition from school to university affected your approach to in-class learning?

“...in school the classes weren't often recorded - what you gathered is what you gathered. Then you had to fill in the gaps with the textbook. But I noticed that at uni it isn't like that at all. I can come back home and watch the lecture again, which means that in class I'm not scribbling to write, I can soak it in. Then, I can go home, watch the recording and fill in the gaps.”
Dana, Y1 Life Sciences

“I don't often write anything down during the lectures, I just listen. And afterwards, in my own time, I will go through the notes and summarise everything.”
Arno, Y2 Engineering

What works for one person may not work for another. Find what suits you best!

An illustration of a student sitting at a desk in a lecture hall, watching a presentation. There are other students and a lecturer in the background. The background is a light blue and yellow circular design.

Finding study strategies that work for you is an ongoing process

It can feel like you're going round in circles... Vs. ...but remember, you're always making progress through your reflections and experiences.

An illustration of a student sitting at a desk, reading a book. There are books and a lamp on the desk. The background is a light blue and yellow circular design.

Take a Break at This Point

“Being happy and relaxed at uni is tough with academic stress, personal life events, and everything else. It's important to take breaks to **reconnect with yourself**. Even 30 minutes doing something you enjoy can boost your **mental wellbeing and happiness**, leaving you more energised for the next day.” - Sianna, Y3 Medicine

“I'm pretty strict about having a **cut-off point** for how much I do in a day as there's always more [to do]. People need to be able to tell themselves, **'now I need to stop and take a break'**, otherwise, you could end up working all the time.” - Andrea, Y2 Physics

An illustration of a battery with a break point. The battery is shown in three states: full (green), partially full (yellow), and empty (red). A yellow lightning bolt is shown above the battery, indicating a break point.

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/education-research/our-work/efficacy-agency-and-wellbeing/imperial-learning-well-project/pedagogical-materials-development--innovation/>

Learning Well Materials, cont'd

Resources co-created with students


What does 'enough' look like for you?

'Enough' can look different each day - some days it's tackling the hardest tasks, other days it's choosing what feels manageable.



"Some days I have the energy to tackle Physics, even though it's difficult and not something I enjoy. On other days, I recognise that Physics is not the right focus for me, so I shift to something else, like studying volcanoes, which feels more manageable. So I try and tailor what I work on based on my energy levels, and I don't waste the energy. If I've got Physics energy that day I use it because it doesn't happen all the time."

Juliet, Y1 Engineering



1 How can I tailor today's goal(s) to match my current energy and motivation?

2 When do I feel most energised, and what types of tasks feel easier or harder to tackle during those times?

3 How do I know when I'm close to reaching my limit, and what helps me accept that it's okay to stop?

4 What is one small win I can celebrate today, no matter how my energy fluctuated?




What does 'enough' look like for you?

'Enough' can mean knowing your worth goes beyond grades - it's being content with who you are, not just what you achieve in your studies.



"What I like striving for now is more contentment or peace with where you are, rather than just chasing a top mark in your exams to get that rush of happiness when you open your results. Ultimately, that's going to fade away and soon enough your brain will need another thing to get stuck into and create as a goal."

Arjun, Y6 Medicine




1 What's one way I can cultivate a sense of peace with where I am, regardless of my academic standing?

2 What brings me genuine happiness or peace, even on days when I don't feel particularly accomplished?

3 What values or qualities do I want to embody that aren't reflected in exam scores?

4 What's a message I can give myself to stay focused on inner fulfillment rather than external success?




What does 'enough' look like for you?

'Enough' can be trusting in your own path, knowing that your work is valuable - no comparisons needed.



"I've never really looked at other people and said, maybe I'm not doing enough or they're doing more work than me. I'm just doing different work."

Johan, Y2 Engineering




1 When have I felt most proud of my own progress without comparing myself to others?

2 What's one area where I tend to compare myself the most, and how can I reframe it to celebrate my own progress?

3 In what ways have I grown or improved that I might be overlooking?

4 What message would I tell someone else who feels 'not good enough' because of comparison?



Bookmark examples

IMPERIAL

Impact on students' engagement: Some qualitative insights

I will be more cognizant of the fact that learning is done on your own terms and it's ok to stick with the things that work for you

- Welcome to Welldoing

Hydrating, obtaining food, are two types of nourishing breaks and can be scheduled into the day to help you remember to do them

- The power of taking breaks

That perfectionism affects more people than I thought

- Growth over perfectionism

Competition and collaboration can go hand in hand

- How does competition shape your learning experience?

Identify one thing you have learnt

Taking a minute to relax can improve your working pattern overall

- PaT

Setbacks can be helpful as long as you don't dwell on your failure

- How do you move forwards from setbacks?

Emotions are learnt and many many ways to regulate emotion! Not just avoidance like I always do or confrontation like I don't like and avoid.

- Should learning be enjoyable?

Screen time can affect 50 percent of sleep quality

- The art of mastering sleep

The different definitions of intelligence and that IQ tests are not very useful for determining intelligence

- What is intelligence, and how and why is it important to you?

IMPERIAL

Impact on students' self-efficacy: Some qualitative insights

Go for more small breaks instead of infrequent long ones

- PaT

not using my phone in the night

- The art of mastering sleep

Protect times for breaks and self-care to allow myself to focus better in study (or work)

- What does it mean to be an independent learner at university?

Trying to make my work perfect, I will do what's good enough and learn to be happy with that

- Growth over Perfectionism

when learning a tough topic

- The power of taking breaks

To start creating done lists and take more time to appreciate my progress.

- Welcome to Welldoing

Identify one example of where/how you might apply what you have learnt

Daily life - what I'm going to do when I go home at night and am listless as to how to end the day - going to reflect on setbacks in this new way [rather] than avoid them

- How do you move forwards from setbacks?

I need to make exercise and stuff be a part of your daily routine :)

- What's your body telling you?

Participating [in] societies can benefit studies

- Staff panel discussion: What is Learning Well?

To break down big goals into smaller SMART goals.

- What keeps you going?

To try to improve on some of the skills that experts across fields have such as having good frameworks to organise knowledge.

- What is intelligence, and how and why is it important to you?

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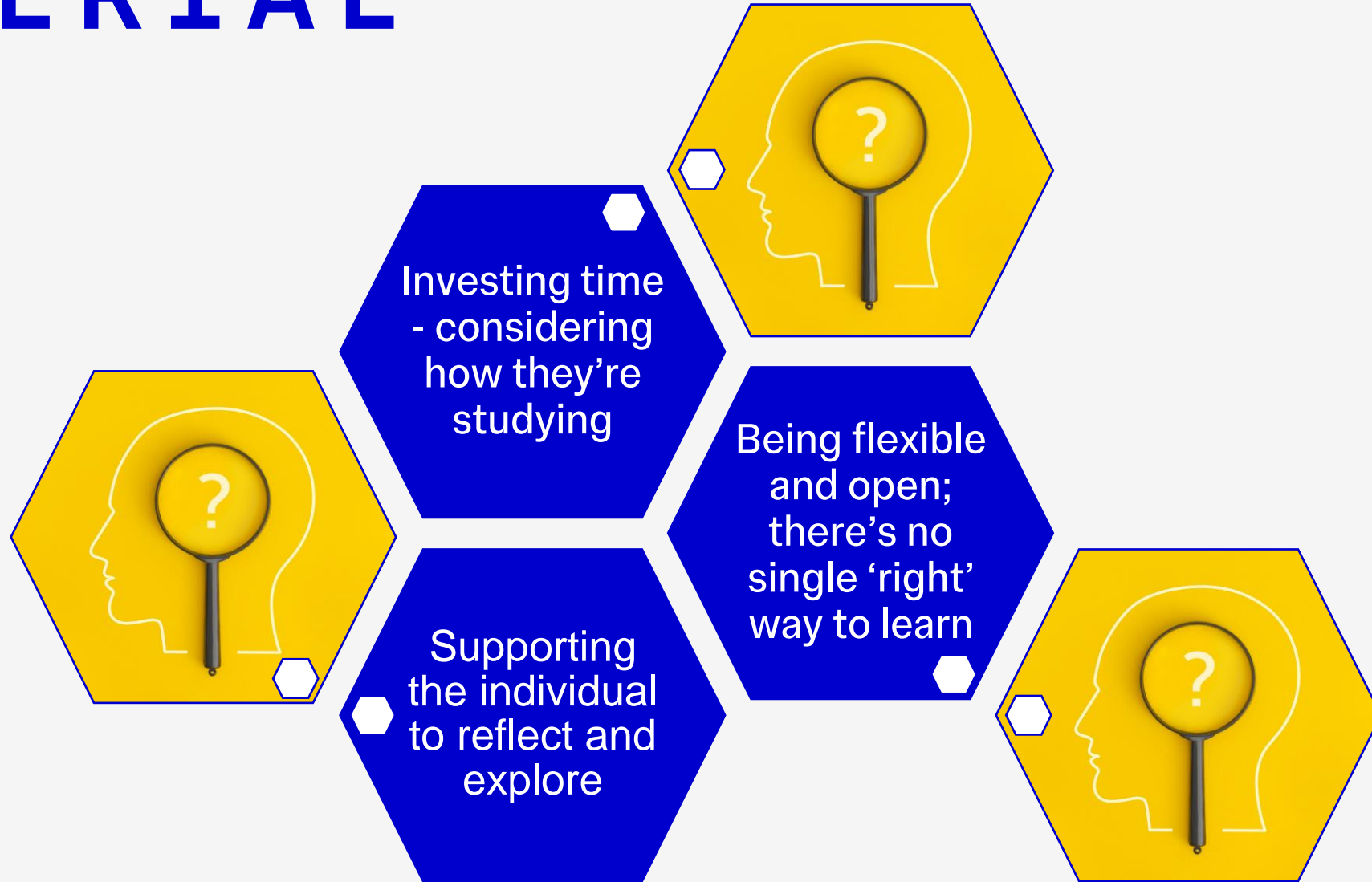
An Imperial student's lived experiences



- Time management is key
- Transition students to independence
- Allow for peer-to-peer teaching
- Students need to understand, not memorise

Shawn Huang
(Department of Materials)

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Promoting a culture of 'sustainable learning'

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Pedagogical implications: Considering these approaches for your own educational practices & contexts

Discussion questions:

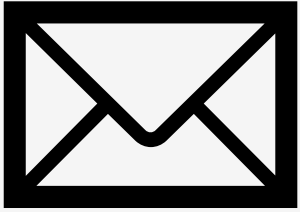
- Which materials or approaches from the Learning Well Project align with your students' needs, and how might you apply or adapt them to support your students?
- **In your context** - Given that the teaching and learning context is continually evolving, do you see any gaps in existing support and resources and, if so, do you have suggestions for how these gaps might be addressed?



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The Learning Well Project team – contact details

Please get in touch:



Dr Tiffany Chiu (PI) t.chiu@imperial.ac.uk @yltiffanychiu

Dr Richard Bale (C-I) richard.bale@law.ac.uk @RichBale

Dr Sue Sing s.sing@imperial.ac.uk

Ms Hannah Bannister h.bannister@imperial.ac.uk

Project website

