

# IMPERIAL

10-14  
FEB  
2025  
South  
Kensington  
Campus

## Learning Well Programme

DESIGNED FOR ALL IMPERIAL STUDENTS

Craft your personal journey to success

Connect study strategies with positive mental wellbeing

Foster wellbeing through effective learning practices

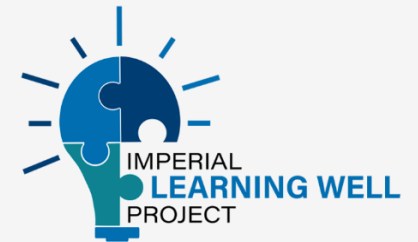
Explore the Learning Well Project student resources



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

**Facilitators: Dr Tiffany Chiu & Dr Sue Sing**  
(Centre for Higher Education Research & Scholarship)

**10/02/2025**



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## Pre-session check-in exercise

### **Imperial students -**

To support you to get the most from the Learning Well Programme, please take a moment to complete this short exercise about your current understanding and expectations of this session:

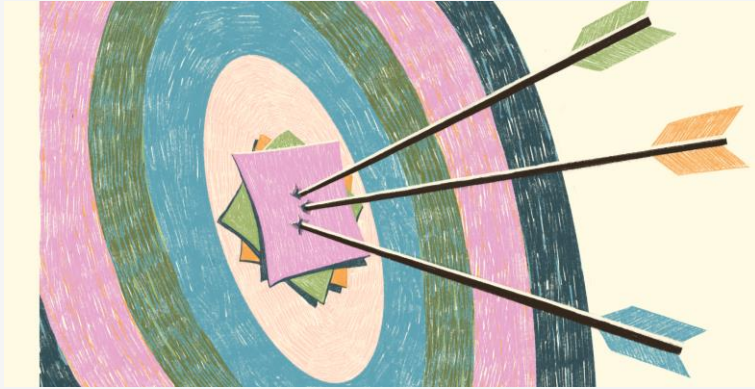
- Your responses will be submitted anonymously.
- There are no right or wrong answers – feel free to share your thoughts.
- This activity should take no more than 2-3mins.

Learning Well Programme: Pre-session Check-in Exercise  
(MONDAY)



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## Session aims & Structure



### Session aims:

- To explore transition from school to university (relevant irrespective of your current stage of study)
- To consider what it means to be a university student
- To learn practical strategies that can enable you to be an (effective) independent learner at university



### Session structure:

- Interactive
- Participatory – with space to ask, explore, discuss, reflect, challenge and think about how these ideas relate to your own learning context
- **The more you participate, the more you will get out.**



### Your takeaways:

- Practical strategies you can realistically put into practice
- A renewed understanding of why these can make a difference in your learning

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**‘Being an independent learner at university’:  
Is this a relevant & important topic for Imperial students?**

**YES!**

**But, why?**

- Students' prior learning experiences
- Expectations and requirements of being a university student
  - do we know what is really expected and required of us?  
(Field, Duffy & Huggins, 2014)
- The nature of teaching and learning changes over time
  - as do you, as learners
    - therefore, your own needs as a student, and what it means to be an effective independent learner, will also change



Field, R., Duffy, J. & Huggins, A. (2014) Independent learning skills, self-determination theory and psychological well-being: strategies for supporting the first year university experience. In Creagh, T. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the 17th International First Year in Higher Education Conference*. Queensland University of Technology, Australia, p.1-10

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Mentimeter

Go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and use  
the code **7852 0478**



**Q:** What are the main differences you've noticed between learning at school and learning at university?

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## Learning at school compared to learning at university

### Key similarities & differences

Level of scaffolding

Frequency of seeing  
your teacher(s)

Workload

Prep work before  
attending class

What 'in-class'  
learning &  
engagement looks  
like

Expectations of  
work you do, and  
how much, outside-  
of-class

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Go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and use  
the code **4932 8553**



**Q:** What do you consider the most important or desirable features of being an independent learner at university?



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## Challenges in asking for support at university



Illustration: Emma Russell, BBC article:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-48267420>

### TOO SCARED TO ASK FOR HELP

- Fear of the unknown
- Avoided support (including office hours or tutorials)
- ‘Knowing’ vs. ‘Going’

Wong, B. & Chiu, Y.L.T. (2019). ‘Swallow your pride and fear’: The Educational Strategies of High-Achieving Non-Traditional University Students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 40(7), 868-882.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1604209>



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## Challenges in asking for support at university, cont'd

### TOO PROUD TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

Asking for help ≠ an independent learner

**Foreman** (Black British man):

“I don't really ask anything from anyone in life”

**BUT**

**“I realised the value of showing your lecturers your draft, I've learnt to let other people look at my work ... I also send her [student support service] all my essays, I see the benefit now and she really helped with my English and grammar.”**

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## The courage to ask for help – Advice from fellow students

### ■ Overcoming the fear of seeking support

“I’ll tell them to **swallow their pride**, you’re gonna need help, even if you have a system in place, **it can be improved on**. Don’t get too stuck in your own way. Take your shield down, **just open yourself up**... Go to the student support service if you have issues with your writing. **Go and bother your lecturers** and ask them to see drafts, go to every tutorial and make sure you are there for every session because you will learn something” (Foreman, Black British man)

- The ‘can-do’ attitude shared by our underrepresented students ought to also include the simple but effective phrase (and practice): **‘just ask’**.



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## Key messages

- ...the ‘ideal’ university student **is not about perfection**, nor being the best.
- “We need to dispel the perception that seeking support is reserved for those who are desperate or dependent and **promote the importance of utilising their available support as a key attribute of an independent student**”  
(Wong & Chiu, 2019: 878)



“You decided to come here, you must work for it. No one’s going to be spoon feeding you. If you need help, you need to go to the lecturer. They’re not going to come find you if something is wrong with your essay or if you’re not in class. It’s just that you have to up your game now.”  
(Selina, British Asian female)

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## Effective independent learning at university



### In-class learning

#### What does 'in-class' learning refer to?

- (typically) structured, teacher-led sessions



### Studying outside-of-class

#### What does 'outside-of-class' refer to?

- non-timetabled learning
- studying you do in your own time
- expectations noted in your programme specification, e.g. hours of independent study

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## Small group discussion

**Look at the examples of study strategies on your table, discussed by fellow Imperial students and then consider the following questions:**

**Q:** In your view, which of these strategies (if any) do you feel are effective? Why?

**Q:** In your view, which of these strategies (if any) do you feel are ineffective? Why?

**Q:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each other?





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## Practical strategies to be/become an effective independent learner: in-class

### What resources are in your 'learning toolbox'?

For example:

- Your teachers
- Other university staff and services
- Yourself
- Your peers (students in the same/different year groups; students on the same/different courses)

Imperial Learning Well Research Project (2023-2025)

Upsher, R., Nobili, A., Hughes, G. & Byrom, N. (2022) A systematic review of interventions embedded in curriculum to improve university student wellbeing. *Educational Research Review*, 37, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2022.100464>



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## Practical strategies to be/become an effective independent learner: outside-of-class

### Questions to ask yourself:

<b>Where?</b>	What does my ideal study environment look like?
<b>When?</b>	Do I study better at certain times of the day? (and how long should I study for?)
<b>How?</b>	Which study strategies should I use?
<b>Why?</b>	These elements separately, and together, can make a key difference to your ability to make <u>effective use of your study time</u>

### To be/become an effective independent learner:



Try asking yourself these kinds of questions



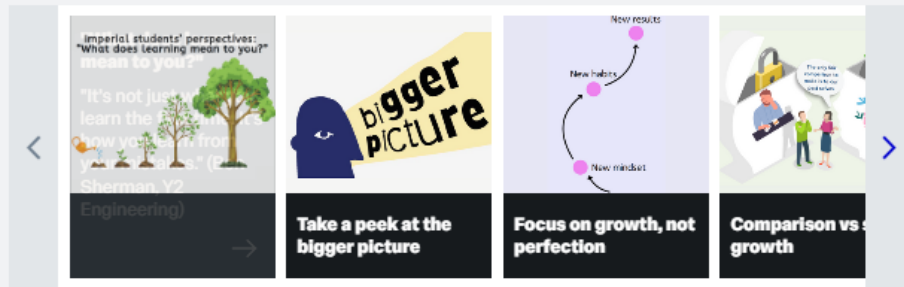
Find what works for you (which may be different to what works for other people...)



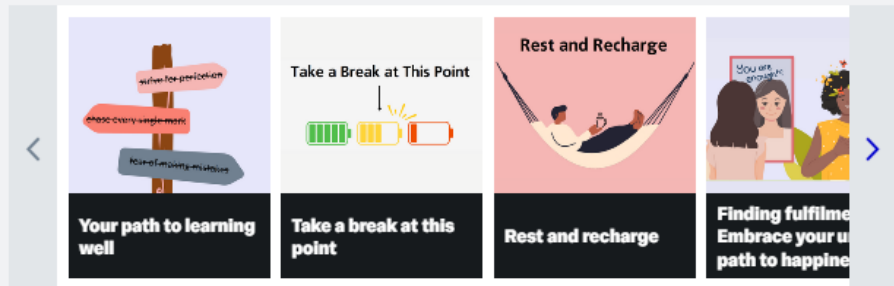
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## Learning Well Resources

### Understanding 'Learning Well' and strategies to achieve it



### Maintaining mental wellbeing is essential for effective learning



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

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## Post-session Reflection

### **Imperial students -**

To help you maximise this learning opportunity, this activity is designed to support you to reflect on what you've learnt and to consider what you can personally take away from this session.

- Your responses will be submitted anonymously.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- This exercise should take no more than 3mins.
- We hope you find this activity helpful.

## Learning Well Programme: Post-session Reflection Activity (MONDAY)

