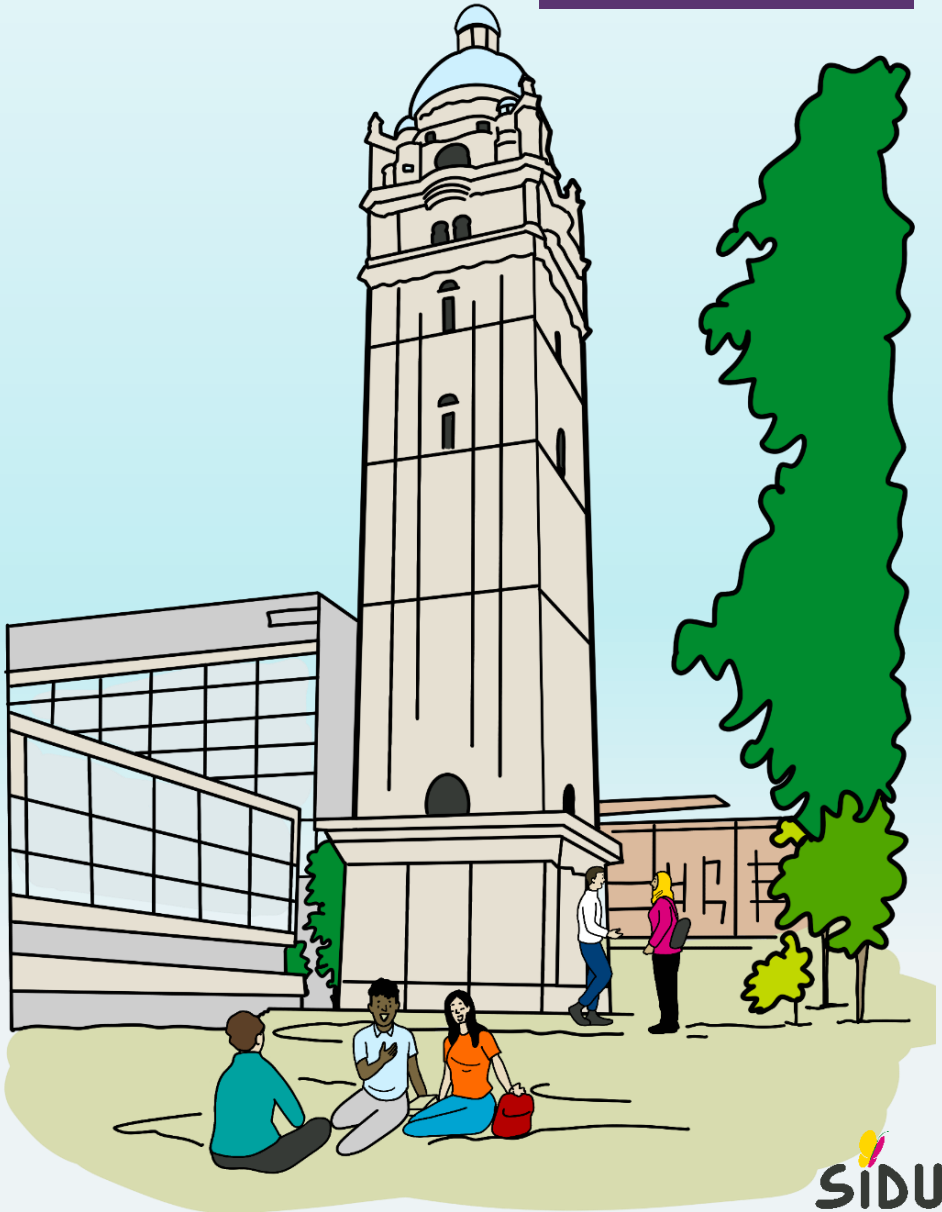


# A Student's Guide to

# Imperial





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Ready? Let's go! —————>

This handbook has been developed from the Supporting the Identity Development of Underrepresented Students ([SIDUS](#)) Project (funded by the Imperial's Excellence Fund for Learning and Teaching Innovation). SIDUS aims to promote inclusion and support success for STEMM students from underrepresented groups, inspiring students to cultivate a sense of belonging to the academic community and their academic student identity at Imperial. The SIDUS project team includes Dr Tiffany Chiu (Principal Investigator), Dr Jo Horsburgh, Professor Martyn Kingsbury, Dr Órla Murray (all Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship) and Dr Billy Wong (University of Reading).

Based on 110 interviews with undergraduate students across departments at Imperial College London and the University of Reading, SIDUS explored students' lived experiences, including their successes, challenges, opportunities. From this, SIDUS has developed suggestions for how the university can foster a diverse and inclusive learning environment for all, especially amongst underrepresented groups. SIDUS research data has informed this Handbook in collaboration with StudentShapers. For a digital copy of this handbook and related poster and bookmark campaign, please access them via the SIDUS website [here](#).

## Meet the SIDUS team



Dr Jo Horsburgh



Prof. Martyn Kingsbury



Dr Tiffany Chiu (PI)



Dr Órla Murray

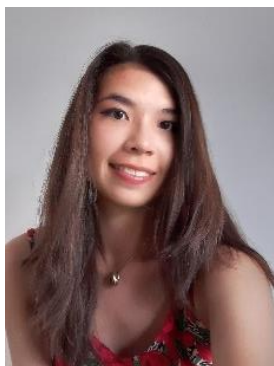


Dr Billy Wong

## StudentShapers

StudentShapers is a programme that offers Imperial undergraduate students the opportunity to undertake projects in partnership with staff to enhance curricula, develop innovative teaching practices and make positive change to the student experience. This Handbook has been produced by three student partners: Danai Bili from Physics, Marine Coispeau from Life Sciences and Katarzyna Zukowska from Electrical and Electronic Engineering. The content is based on and inspired by the rich interview data collected in the SIDUS Project.

### Meet the Student Partners



Marine Coispeau



Katarzyna Zukowska



Danai Bili



## Message Behind the Logo

The butterfly in the SIDUS logo is a symbol of a positive transformation and the ability to develop and progress personally, academically, and in many other areas. The butterfly represents the diversity and dynamism of students' sense of self, particularly as they are actively negotiating multiple identities and learning to spread their wings at university. We hope this guide will help you to navigate your time at Imperial and beyond.

## Meet the illustrator

The logo and handbook illustrations are the work of a professional illustrator: Raquel Durán.

✉: [raquelcronopia@gmail.com](mailto:raquelcronopia@gmail.com)

 [@raquelcronopia](https://www.instagram.com/raquelcronopia)  [@raquelcronopia](https://twitter.com/raquelcronopia)

## Your student profile

Name: .....

Subject: .....

Department: .....

Constituent Union: .....

Year of Entry: .....

Graduation date: .....

Top 3 things I wish to achieve during my time at Imperial?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Top 3 things that I am scared of?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ways to overcome them?

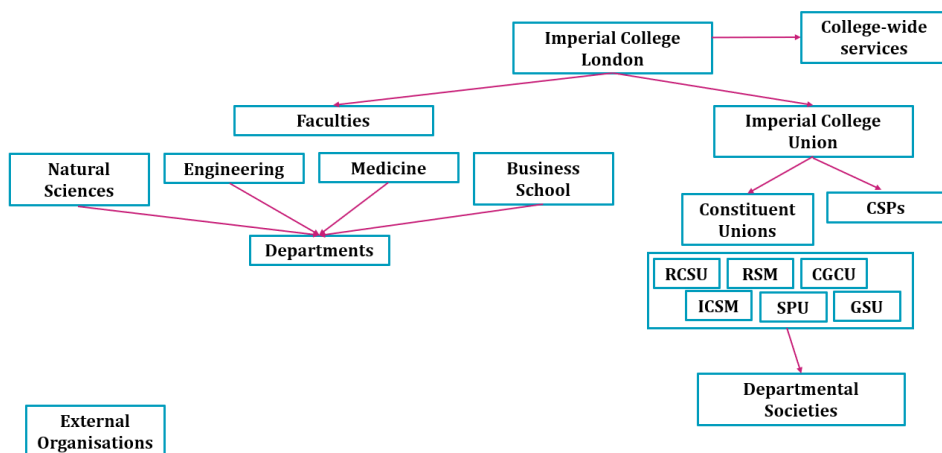
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*“Now I can see that I worked hard to get here, so maybe I did deserve to be here.”*

*- Ella, Physics*



# Demystifying the Imperial structure



## Imperial College Services

From the Careers Service to the Centre for Academic English, the Counselling Service to the Student Hub, there are many points of contact offering **useful advice** to students.

## Faculties

There are four Imperial College London faculties: Natural Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, and Business School. Engaging with your faculty allows you to consider **inter-disciplinary careers**, **hone specific skills**, and **get answers about questions relating to College-wide decisions**.

## Departments

Every faculty consists of multiple departments, which are at the core of the Imperial structure, and host the different courses. They can also serve as points of contact for **personal and**

academic enquiries and collaborate with the departmental societies.

## Imperial College Union

Every enrolled student is part of the Imperial College Union (ICU). It is run by students, who are **elected once a year by the student body in early Autumn and Spring.**

## Constituent Unions

Within the ICU there are constituent unions: The Royal College of Science Union (RCSU), Royal School of Mines (RSM), City and Guilds College Union (CGCU), Imperial College School of Medicine Students' Union (ICSMSU), Silwood Park Students' Union (SPSU), Graduate Students Union (GSU). They provide **a great opportunity to socialise with people from other departments.**

## Clubs, Societies, Projects (CSPs)

You can find any CSP you can imagine or start your own! Turn over for more information of what they are, how to join, and reasons to get involved!

*Joining a CSP can help you make friends,  
develop a sense of belonging at Imperial, and  
maintain a healthy work-life balance!*



# What to expect in your first week, month, term, and exams?



- Visit the **Welcome Fair** to find societies to join - go to as many events as you want!
- Meet your **flatmates** in halls or see people from your cohort - remember that everyone is on the same boat, and everyone is looking to make friends! Don't be scared to break the ice!
- It is **okay to not be having the best** time of your life, after all university is a big change! There is no need to push yourself too much - **take the time to settle in**.
- Your first lecture/ tutorial/ lab. Things may be different from school, so take time to explore and settle in. You might find the **Imperial Student Success Guide** useful for tips on effective notetaking and more.
- Your grades in the first tests do not determine your future performance.



Scan or click the QR code  
for the Success Guide



- You receive your first feedback on pieces of work - keep in mind that the point is to be learning from the process and making **progress!**
- Don't be too hard on yourself, university is a huge step and a change from school. Be **kind to yourself** and give yourself time to adjust.
- We all come from different cultural and educational backgrounds. There might be things you are struggling with. Ask your personal tutor, peers, lecturers, departmental societies, wellbeing advisor or hall seniors - and **ask as many questions as you need to get support!**
- Remember that no-one knows everything even if they pretend that they do.
- Have you met your **personal tutor** yet? Maybe it is time to have a quick chat with them.
- Still **feeling out of place** is normal. University is a big change.
- Are you aware of all the **support services** available? **Have a look through this handbook** an introduction to these services.



- **Congratulations** on completing your first term!
- You might still be **getting used** to university learning, teaching and assessment methods. You may have great friends already, or you may still be trying to find your people. Don't worry, there's lots of **time to find your way!**

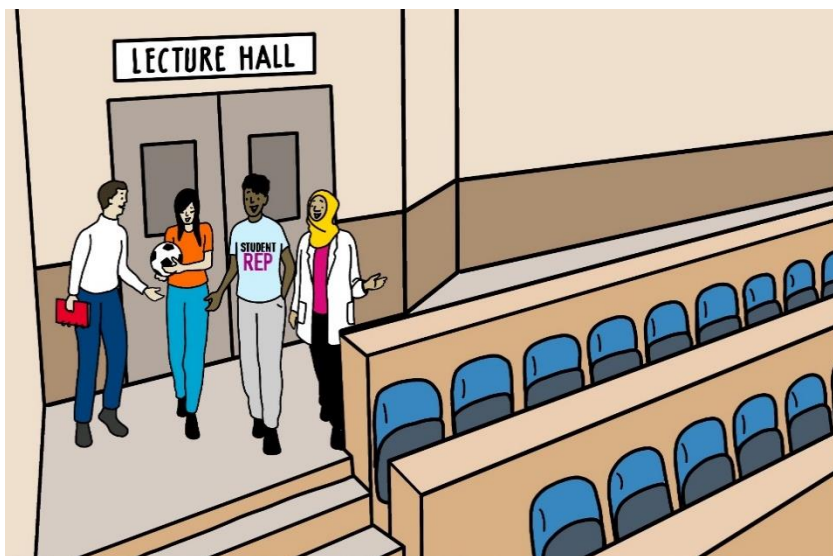


- The golden rule that senior students will tell you is that first exams **do not matter that much**. Learning from them is important, but don't worry if they don't go as well as you'd hoped as they only count for a small proportion of your final degree score.
- The point of first exams is for you to **assess your learning**, studying process and techniques: Did your notetaking technique work? What would you have done differently? What have you learned from this experience? **Ask your personal tutor or peers for help**.
- Remember that **you made it to Imperial**, which means that a board of academics believe that you can make it!
- **Reach out** and ask for help to support your **mental health** and wellbeing if needed. While mental health can be a taboo for some, it is really important to ask for help if you need it.
- First exams over - congratulations! Remember that your self-worth is **not determined** by your grades.
- You may have gotten a **lower mark** than what you're used to at school. **That's okay!** A pass is a **big achievement** already.
- These grades do not determine the rest of your degree. There is plenty of time to **improve** and a range of **resources and services** to help you with that discussed throughout this Handbook.
- Don't be **afraid** of seeking help if you're struggling with academic, personal, or wellbeing issues. Your wellbeing is extremely important!

# A Crash Course to Student Life

## Your Social Life

During your time at university, it is important to maintain a healthy work-life balance, specifically knowing when to work and when to rest. **Clubs, Societies & Projects (CSPs)** can be an important part of this balance. Imperial offers over 340 CSPs in the following categories: academic, arts & entertainment, charitable, cultural, departmental, faith, indoor, outdoor, martial arts, media, social and sports.



The list of CSPs is very diverse, allowing you to continue a **long-loved hobby** or try **something new**. You can meet new people outside your course and from all around the world. You can also join a committee by running for a leadership position in October elections. This is a great way to meet new



people and acquire transferrable skills that are highly sought after by employers!

Not finding what you are looking for? Every year the Union supports the creation of new CSPs that will be beneficial to the student community. Be bold and start something new! Unwind, meet new people, and look after yourself by joining a CSP at the annual Welcome Fair! Hear what other students have to say about CSPs:

*“That’s where I found my sense of belonging”*  
- Felicity, Biochemistry

*“So, if you are a bit lost, you can definitely find your own mini-family in a society”*  
- Austin, Microbiology

*“We have a very strong LGBTQ+ community”*  
- Ella, Physics

## Introduction to CSPs

### What is a CSP?

CSP refers to “Clubs, Societies and Projects”. They are under the umbrella of the Imperial College Union (ICU). Their variety ranges from sports to cultural, and from departmental to social. CSPs are run by student volunteers, elected yearly by other students.



## How to join?

Joining is very easy; just show up! Most CSPs welcome members all year round, but a good chance to meet them is saying hi at the **Welcome fair**. You can get in touch during the year by searching the **Union CSP list** (follow the QR code above), following them on social media or email.

## How to get involved?

Student volunteer elections are in October and March. Get in touch with the CSP committee that you want to join, they may have some unfilled positions. Remember the student volunteers running CSPs are full time students as well so the amount of events might vary across the year and between years.

## What do student volunteers do?

Student volunteers work in teams, called committees. They organise and host events and try to foster a friendly and inclusive environment for everyone in their CSP. Through this, they lead their CSP and have the chance to gain many essential and transferable skills.



Afro Gala by  
African Caribbean Society



Charity Fashion Show by  
Fashion and Design Society



M-night by Malaysian Society



## Why join? See what other students say below!

“Going to [societies] and then having the socials afterwards with a group of different people from different subjects, that was really nice as well. That felt like I felt like I belonged in the university as well.”

- *Alexa, Biochemistry*

---

“But also, at the same time, there are so many societies where you can find an identity with ... So, if you are a bit lost, you can definitely find your own mini-family in a society, and I know so many people that have made such good friends in the societies that they’re in and that’s formed their friendship groups as well.”

- *Austin, Microbiology*

---

“I felt like I belonged to the University, and I think what really helped me to develop this sense of belonging is being a volunteer to student events talking about my experiences at the University.”

- *Sofia, Biochemistry*

---

“I think overall I have had a really good [university] experience, and I feel like we have had lot of opportunities and there’s loads of societies to get involved with”.

- *Asaroyoma, Chemical Engineering*

## Your academic life



Going to university is a **big change**. For most, you have left your home and moved to London. For others you will be carving out a new student life in your home city of London. You may be anxious about making new friends, fitting in, and cooking and cleaning for yourself alongside studying and fitting in. These are all normal feelings that most first years have at some point. Your academic life at Imperial might be **daunting**, particularly the pressure of achieving high grades. But remember, being accepted at Imperial is already a **huge achievement** and you should be very proud!

Some students have done the International Baccalaureate, some A Levels, and others have followed different national curriculums. You may feel like you are **catching up or behind** everyone at the beginning. Do not worry, your department knows that everyone has different cultural and educational backgrounds. First year is there to get everyone on the same page, which is why it usually counts for so little of your overall degree classification. You have an entire year to get to grips with what is expected of you and what you can do to improve. It is a constant and continuous **learning curve**.

As every department runs quite independently at Imperial, make sure you listen to what your department tells you, not what you hear from students from other departments. For example, different departments may use different referencing styles. Do not worry, your **department will give you plenty of guidance** throughout your time at Imperial. To address more general academic jargon that you may have not been exposed to at school, check out the [Imperial Student Success Guide's glossary](#).



[The Centre for Academic English](#) can help you improve your academic communication skills, including listening and speaking skills if that would be helpful. They also offer one-on-one tailored sessions and workshops. Reach out to them if you would like further help with topics such as academic scientific writing or academic/social communication.



The [library](#) offers numerous services including borrowing books and laptops, booking [study sessions](#), [disability support](#), and printing or photocopying. Subject specific support as well as annual workshops (for example on referencing) are also available. Be sure to [check those out](#).



Hear what other Imperial students have to say on this:

*“It wasn't all that smooth sailing, but yet I still managed to succeed despite the difficulties.”*

*- Amandaz, Biological sciences*

*“When I don't understand something, I'll make it clear that I don't understand”*

*- Rachana, Chemical Engineering*

*“Actually, getting a wrong answer is learning and is a part of that process to reaching the right answer”*

*- Oonagh, Mathematics*

*“Get to the right people to ask for help, share opinions, hear what they have to say and let them help you”*

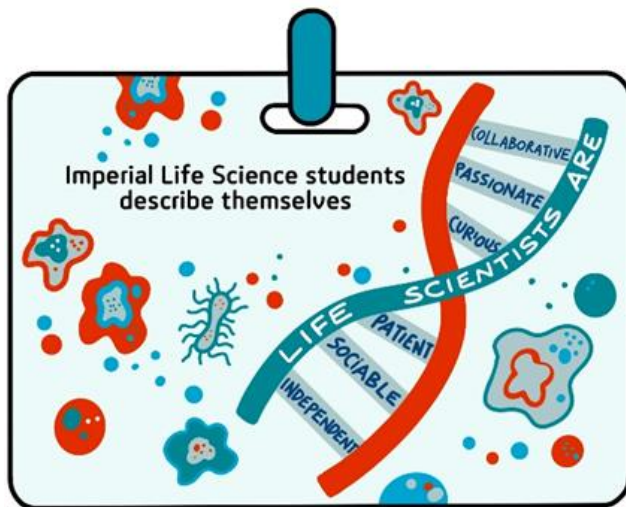
*- Mei-Ju, Mathematics*

## Forging your own disciplinary identity

As a first year, it is not always easy to find out exactly how you fit in the Imperial ecosystem or where you belong and that's perfectly fine. Don't worry about this too much as **you will develop your identity and sense of belonging throughout your degree at Imperial**. Interestingly enough, you will likely have multiple identities. For example, as a woman studying Physics you may identify as a Physicist, a Natural Scientist, a woman in STEM and more.

The below ID cards are mostly focused on disciplinary identity and any inserted quotes were given by students who participated in the project in which **they were asked to describe what the ideal student in their degrees were**. These are by no means fixed and rigid, they are actually very flexible and subjective. These simply act as some guidelines but not definitive characteristics. Remember that your student experience is what you make of it. It's up to you to forge your own disciplinary identity.

Please note that these cards were constructed using quotes from the student interviewees, and so not all faculties and departments are presented below. Feel free to explore the website of your departments and **talk to your year representatives, peers, and staff to help you forge your disciplinary identity!**



**Name:** Biochemist, Biotechnologist, Biologist

**Surname:** Natural Scientist


**Union:** Royal College Science Union (RCSU)

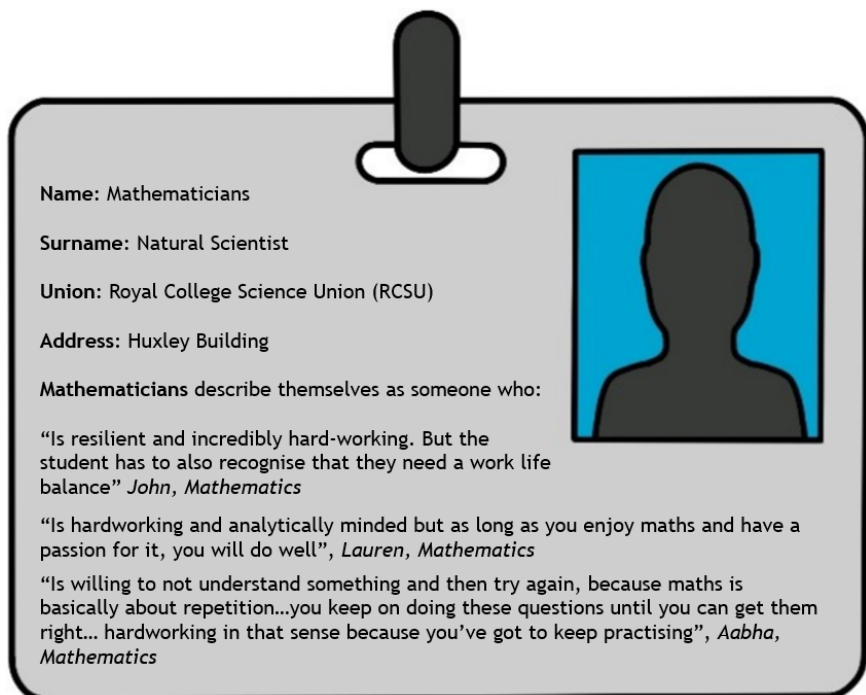
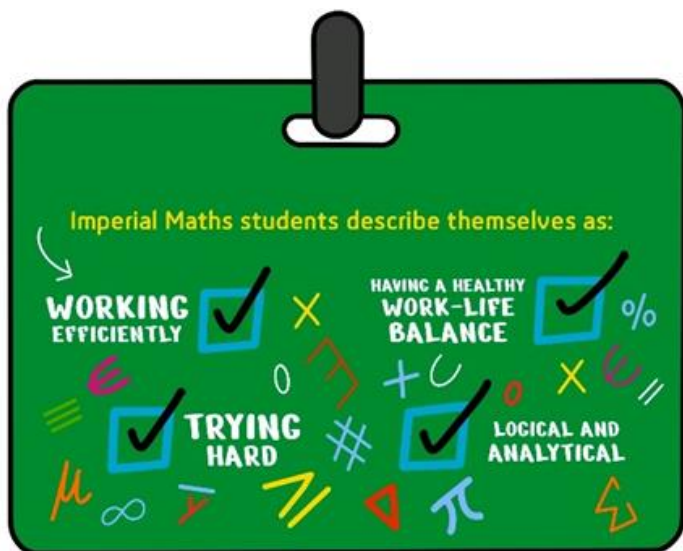
**Address:** Sir Alexander Fleming (SAF) and Sir Ernst Chain Building (SEC)

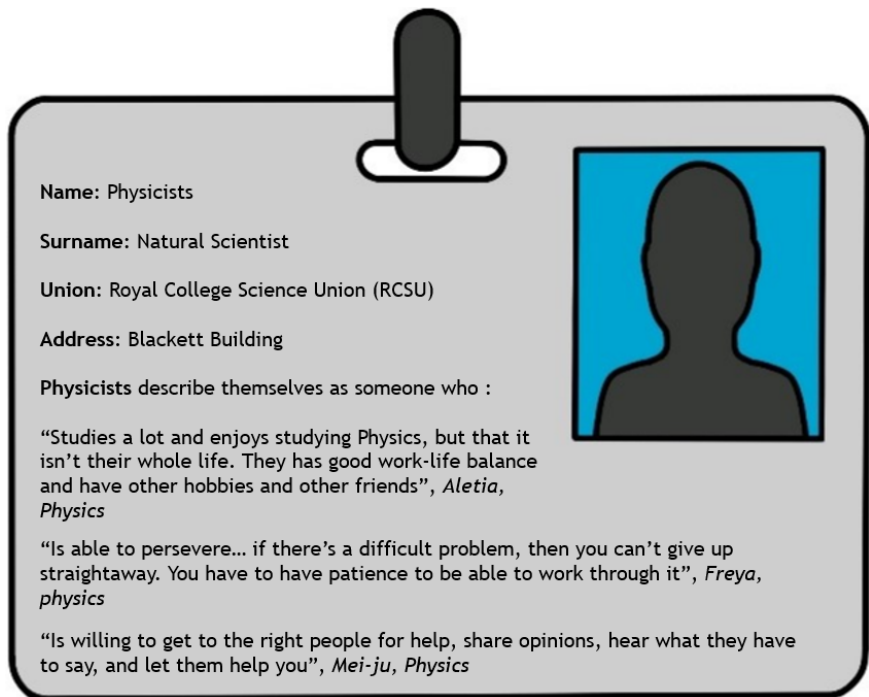
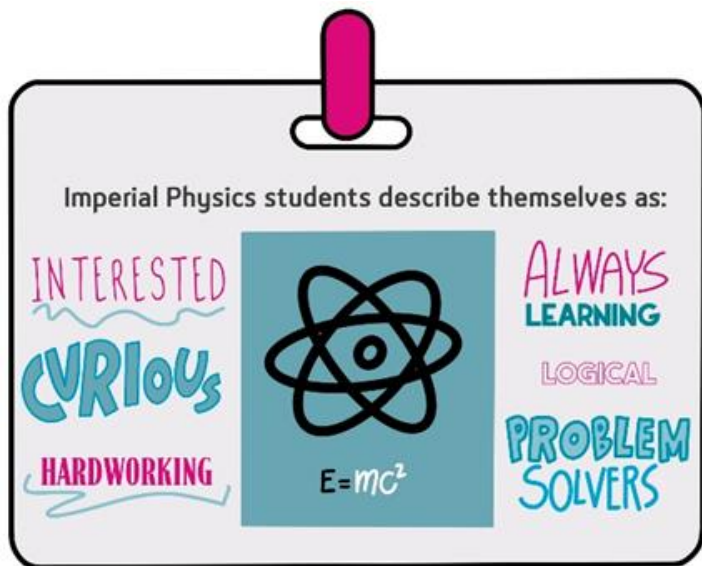
**Life Scientists** describe themselves as someone who:

“Recognises their weaknesses and builds on them by watching the right lectures and further reading in that kind of area. They’ve got a healthy social life as well”, *Aaren, Biology*

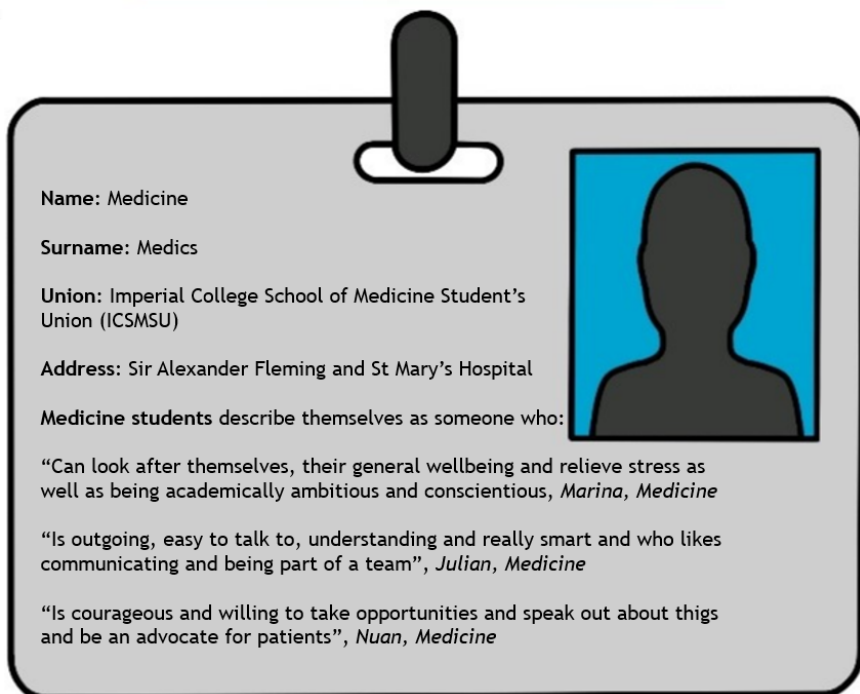
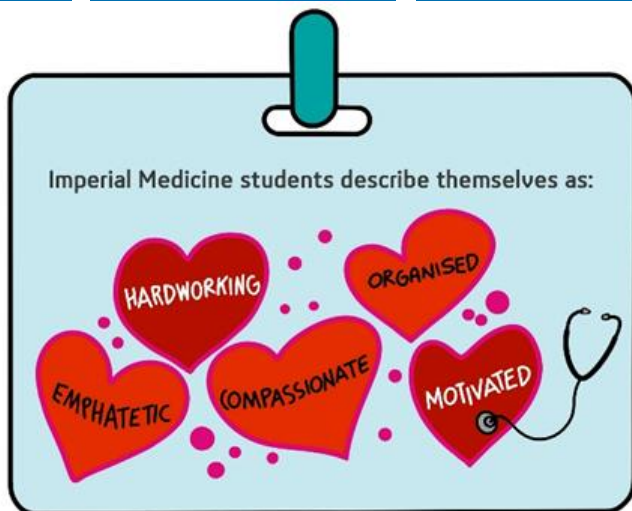
“Is very hardworking, they take opportunities they can get for like not extra credits, but just to make them different to other Biochemists and had strong critical thinking skills”, *Octopus-Lotus, Biochemistry*





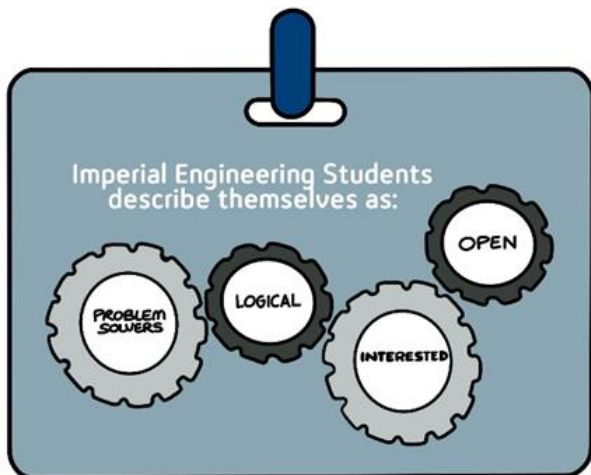


Faculty of Medicine: [Brain Sciences](#), [Immunology and Inflammation](#), [Infectious Disease](#), [Institute of Clinical Sciences](#), [Metabolism, Digestion and Reproduction](#), [National Heart and Lung Institute](#), [School of Public Health](#); [Surgery and Cancer](#)





Faculty of Engineering: [Aeronautics](#), [Bioengineering](#), [Chemical Engineering](#), [Civil and Environmental Engineering](#), [Computing](#), [Earth Science and Engineering](#), [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#), [Materials](#), [Mechanical Engineering](#)



**Name:** Aeronautical, Biomedical, Chemical, Civil, Computing, Design, Electrical and Electronic, Materials, Mechanical, Molecular Engineers

**Surname:** Engineer

**Union:** City & Guilds College Union (CGCU) or Royal School of Mines (RSM for Earth and Materials Engineering)

**Address:** Department dependent and specific

**Engineering students** describe themselves as someone who:

“Is good with communication, a critical thinker, and also just being able to notice things that not many other people do, like seeing gaps in things that you could definitely take advantage of”, *Santana, Design Engineering*

“Can handle heavy workloads. Someone who’s always willing to explore new things, connect with new people, read around the subject in their own time and I feel like that would help with the degree”, *James, Electronic and Information Engineering*

Fill in your card! How would you describe the ideal student from your course? There is no right or wrong answer and your student identity is likely to evolve and develop during your time at Imperial!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Union: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe an Ideal Student from your discipline?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Who Is an Ideal Student?

### **The Ideal student DOES NOT mean perfect!**

A perfect student doesn't exist, but there are certainly ideals which you can work towards. Below are some qualities that we think are worth aiming for, based on interviews with students and academics (Wong & Chiu, 2019, 2020, 2021). This is not an exclusive set of skills and should only serve as an inspiration - you might have a different definition of an ideal student!

**1. Ask questions** when you don't understand something. Being open about it will allow you to learn. Don't worry about being judged or not understanding the material right away, this is exactly what you're at university for! Making mistakes is part of learning and reflecting upon them is a desired quality according to many lecturers and students.

*"I'll tell them to swallow their pride... 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 if you have questions, go to every tutorial and make sure you are there for every session because you will learn something."*

*- Foreman, student*

**2. Aim for progress (but not perfection).** Your first sets of grades may be lower than what you were used to getting at school but remember that the leap between school and university is a big one!

*“An ideal student isn’t really about the level that they are at . . . but an ideal student is someone who applies themselves to the best of their abilities”*

*- Rachel, staff*

At Imperial, a 1<sup>st</sup> (first-class mark) is 70% or above in most departments, and so getting 60% or above is a 2:1 (upper-second class) and a very good mark. Regardless, passing your courses is already a huge achievement! Talk to your personal tutors and lecturers to understand how you can improve in future work. (You can also explore the success guide for undergraduate students, this handbook, page 10). Do you need to work on your analytical scientific writing style or explaining your thinking more? You have at least 3 years to learn during your time at university (and the Centre for Academic English courses to help with that, see page 18)!



*An ideal student is...*

*“Somebody who has the ability to reflect upon their own learning and their own performance”*

*- Nicole, staff*

*“Willing to try, to fail and to keep trying”*

*- Oliver, staff*

**3. Appreciate the importance of preparation.** Take the time to do the reading before the lecture to familiarise yourself with it beforehand. This will help you grasp the topic much more quickly and allow you to actively participate in lectures and classes. You can benefit a lot from discussions with your lecturers and peers. Most academics will be more than happy to share their expertise and answer your questions! Remember that there are no stupid questions and probably more than one student will have the exact same question as you!

*“[Reading] helps them [students] to understand the material at a deeper level”*

*- Yvonne, staff*

**4. Engage in things outside of studying.** Keeping a healthy work-life balance is really important for your mental health and treating yourself after a hard day or long week of work. Join a CSP or become a volunteer. This will also give you transferrable skills which will be useful when it comes to applying to internships, jobs, and postgraduate roles.

**5. Know the importance of taking time off.** An ideal student is not someone who never takes a break. When you're well rested, you will have more energy to be creative and to participate. Not only does this make you feel good, but your lecturers will surely appreciate this as well!

**References:**

Wong, B. and 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), pp.868-882.

Wong, B. and Chiu, Y.L.T., 2020. University lecturers' construction of the 'ideal' undergraduate student. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44(1), pp.54-68.

Wong, B. and Chiu, Y.L.T., 2021. Exploring the concept of 'ideal' university student. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(3), pp.497-508.

## Your Career Life



You may or may not be thinking about life after university. Not knowing what you want to pursue after university is a normal and common feeling. However, the available services can show you some potential career paths that may suit you. A great way to explore your options is by attending career talks, workshops, and fairs. These are often hosted at a departmental level, by the Imperial Careers Service, and by student societies. The Careers Service offers one-on-one appointments for general career advice, CV and cover letter check-ups, and mock interviews. **You can download a copy of the Imperial Guide to CVs and Cover Letters from the Careers Service [here](#).**



You can access a list of internships and job listings, filtered by areas of interest by signing up to [JobsLive](#) with your Imperial login.

Your department and student-led departmental societies run events throughout the year. For tailored help, get in touch with the departmental Career Advisor. Career-focused CSPs (such as Finance, Law and Consulting) can provide you with further support for specific careers. There are lots of options and support available!

## Your Finances, Accommodation & More



As a student, you might face new responsibilities such as budgeting your expenses, cooking and other house chores or searching for accommodation for the first time. Imperial's Student Hub, a central service available to all students, offers advice and information on finances, accommodation, student documents, records, international student enquiries, and more. The team can be reached either on-site (subject to COVID-19 restrictions) in the Sherfield building or via their online portal, email, or phone. **Click [here](#) to find out more information.**



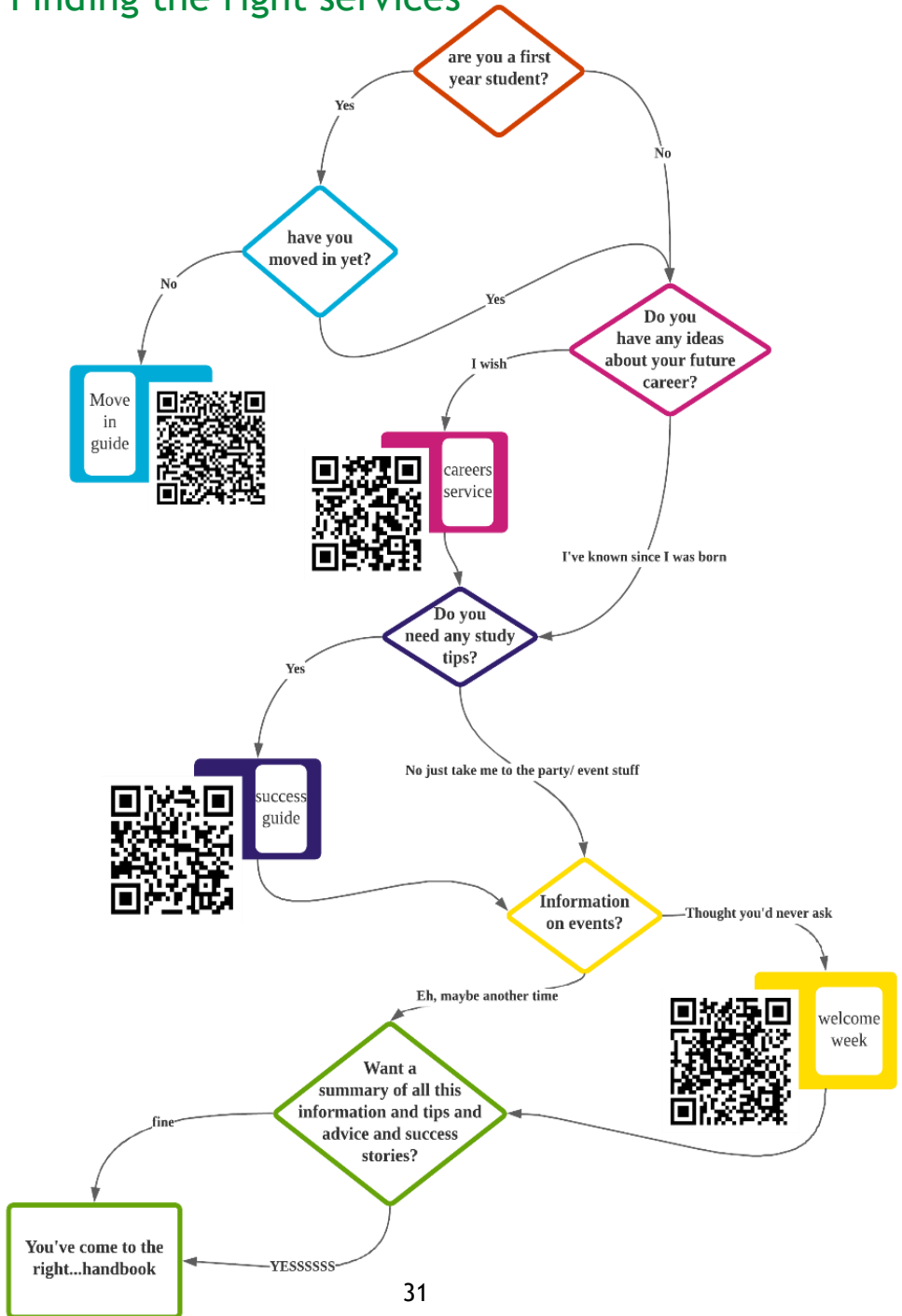
They will also be able to redirect you to another service if they can't help you directly. The Student Hub can help you navigate the university and array of student support services.



*"When I was in Imperial for the first week, it is so overwhelming, and information is all over the place."*

*- Austin, Microbiology*

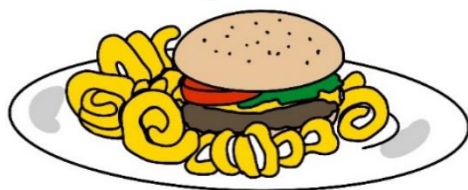
# Finding the right services





## Bucket list of things to explore in the first term

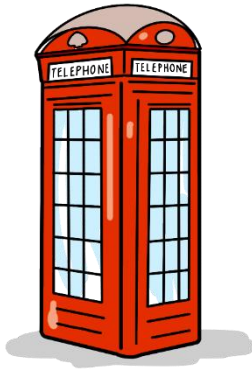
- I spoke to students from at least 5 countries and 5 departments.
- I signed up to at least two CSPs (Club, Society and projects) and got some freebies at the Welcome Fair.
- I attended at least one taster session from my chosen CSPs.
- I had curly fries and burgers at the Union (near Beit Hall on the South Kensington campus).



- I had lunch at the JCR (Junior Common Room) on the Sherfield Walkway with some people I just met. [ Kimiko, the Japanese restaurant, is a classic, remember to bring your student ID to benefit from student discount.]
- I went to the following museums in South Kensington: Victoria & Albert, Natural History Museum and Science Museum [you can even do that in between lectures if you have a free period, it's completely free of charge and a 5 mins walk.]



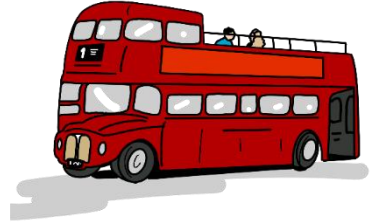
- I got lunch at the weekly Tuesday Farmers' Market on Queen's Lawn and had a picnic with some friends underneath the Imperial Tower.



I took a photo near a red telephone box.

I had a lovely walk or run in Hyde Park. [You can also rent pedalos or rowing boats on the Serpentine]

I went on a red double decker bus. [You can get a student discount Oyster card or can pay contactless. There are also some organised tours of London on these buses.]



I found my department book section in the Central Library [There is a non-academic literature section too!]



I talked to my Year Student Representative.

I tried Ethos, Imperial's Sports Centre/Gym opposite the main entrance next to Eastside Halls. [If you live in Woodward or Kemp Porter buildings, iGym is just around the corner. Check it all the [sports facilities](#)]

*\*Given the pandemic, some of these may not be accessible due to governmental rules. As always, please stay up to date with published governmental guidelines to remain safe.*

## Search the word - identities

Can you locate some of the identities that can be found at Imperial?

### IDENTITIES OF IMPERIAL

W	O	M	A	N	R	I	N	S	B	A	O	S	G
I	O	M	T	S	C	T	T	O	I	S	I	E	N
T	B	E	E	N	T	B	F	A	D	I	D	S	I
E	M	G	N	D	T	S	I	E	N	A	A	O	K
I	K	S	L	G	I	T	I	R	Y	N	I	S	R
E	S	E	D	N	I	C	I	R	C	I	N	E	O
S	O	S	C	I	E	N	T	I	S	T	Y	D	W
S	M	A	T	U	R	E	E	N	C	G	T	I	R
R	U	T	M	L	I	R	T	E	T	R	I	S	E
A	I	I	B	O	N	G	M	M	R	N	R	A	O
A	T	N	K	D	R	C	M	T	E	T	O	B	L
F	S	I	L	E	I	L	R	B	A	I	N	L	O
G	R	F	I	R	S	T	W	G	M	R	I	E	E
O	C	B	L	A	C	K	L	L	S	I	M	D	W

LGBT  
 MEDIC  
 MINORITY  
 ASIAN  
 SCIENTIST  
 WOMAN  
 MATURE  
 BLACK  
 FIRST  
 DISABLED  
 ENGINEER  
 WORKING

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/2625728/>

\* This was made using: <https://thewordsearch.com>. Check the answers at the end of the brochure.

## Scrambled words - appreciating diversity

Just like a discipline-specific glossary allows you to navigate and describe processes and findings in your area of study, an inclusive language helps you understand underrepresented groups and communicate ideas of diversity.



**YLAL** - Most of us won't be activists, but we can certainly be allies. It's someone who's there for people from underrepresented groups, listens to what they have to say and boosts their voice (e.g., by sharing relevant content on social media). Scan these QR codes and learn how to be a white and LGBTQ+ ally!



**GNNDEWI APRITOPTNAICI (WP)** - a strategy to increase the proportion of students from underrepresented backgrounds including adjusting admissions procedures to ensure fair chances for all.

**RUTAME STUDENT** - not all your peers will come fresh out of high school, some are aged over 21 years old. They may already have a degree or have had to take years out for various reasons.

**UNOROPNS** - another example of inclusive language. Some of them are: 'they/them', 'she/her', 'he/him', 'zhe/zir'. Read more about why and how to use pronouns here.

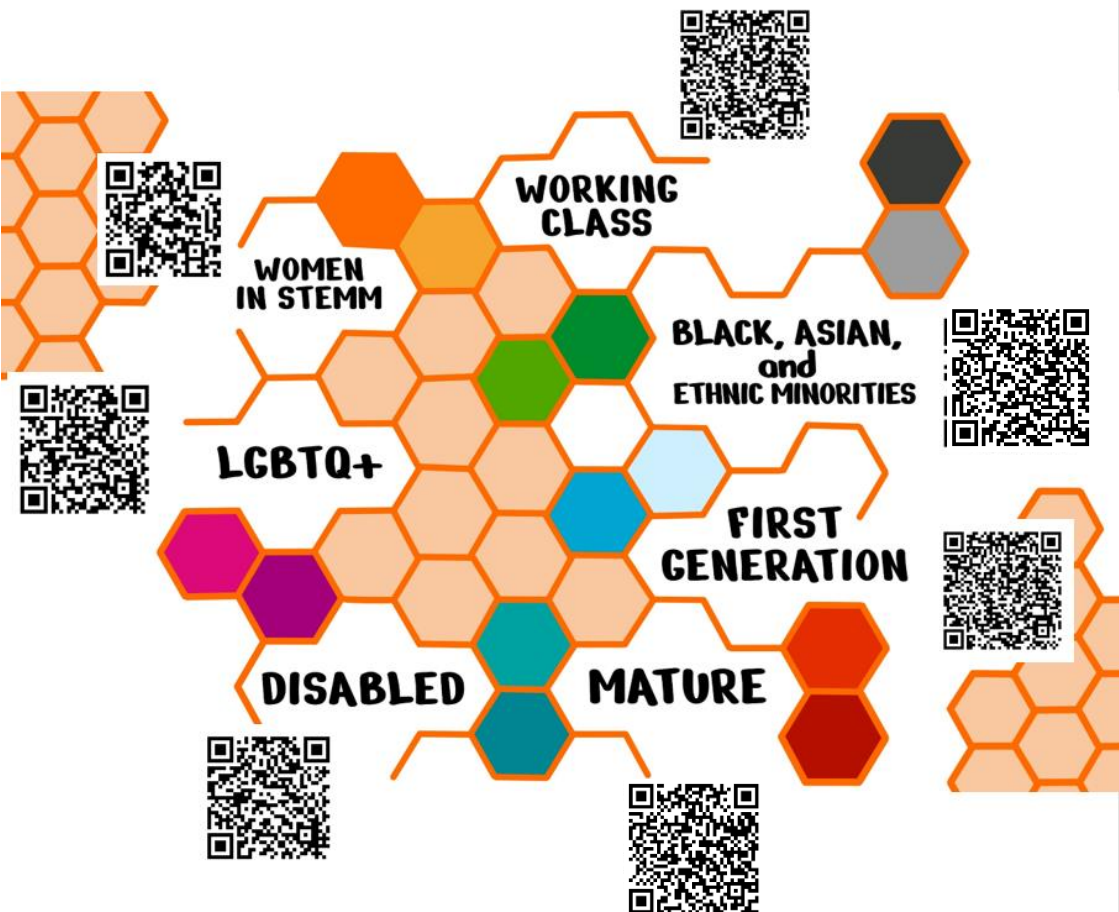
**GOUECVRNDEINRE** - a range of commonly co-occurring 'conditions' related to processing or cognitive differences. It includes Dyslexia, Autism, ADHD, and more. SpLD (Specific Learning Difficulties) is widely used as well, sometimes interchangeably, but is more inclusive. Learn more by clicking or scanning this QR code!



\*Check the answers at the end of the brochure.

# Giving Voice to and Learning from the Experiences of Underrepresented Groups at Imperial

Scan or click the QR codes below to learn more:



## Let's talk about mental health



Settling into university life can be stressful. For some being away from family and school or home friends is hard. Many students struggle with accepting lower grades than what they're used to from school. Others may have financial or health worries. Taking care of your mental health will help you cope with problems and avoid feeling overwhelmed. Make use of the advice and resources from the Student Support Zone and keep reading for tips and summary of resources.

### External services in the event of urgent help:

**Imperial College Health Centre** – nearest doctor's surgery to South Kensington Campus. Call **020 75846301** or email [imperialcollege.hc@nhs.net](mailto:imperialcollege.hc@nhs.net).

**Samaritans** (24 hours) – for people experiencing high levels of distress including suicidal feelings. Call **116123** or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).

**Nightline** - confidential listening, support and advice via instant messaging. Open nightly (18:00 - 02:00) during term time. Go to their [website](#).

**Shout crisis text service** (24 hours) – free text service for anyone in crisis. Text **85258**.

**HOPElineUK** – confidential support for people under 35 who may be having suicidal thoughts and anyone concerned that a young person may be having thoughts of suicide. Call **0800 068**

Here's what other students have said:

*"Sometimes there's a stigma around mental health and getting help. I think that really needs to kind of go away as well"*

- Lakshani, Biology

*"There have been times where I felt like the odd one out"*

- Hazel, Biochemistry

*"moving to a new country (...) and having a completely new environment, was pretty exciting. At the same time, I felt a bit lost because I literally knew maybe one or two other people"*

- Steve, Physics

## Tips and resources

### Open up

Bottling up stress and anxiety is a natural reaction for some of us, but these feelings will likely only build up over time until it gets very overwhelming. If you're struggling, talk to someone - it can be a trusted friend or family member, personal tutor, welfare advisor, GP, or counsellor.

#### First point of contact\*

**Students in Halls:** Wardens and Hall Seniors

**Engineering:** Wellbeing advisor

**Chemistry:** Student Experience Officer

**Maths:** Undergraduate Liaison Officer + Student Experience Coordinator

**Life Sciences:** Undergraduate Liaison Officer

**Physics:** Mental Health Aiders

\*If your department is not listed here, contact your personal tutor and college-wide services

## Counselling

There is no shame in needing professional help. Sign up for counselling if you're experiencing difficulties and could use some extra support.



## SilverCloud

Self-guided therapy that you can do at your own pace. Try one of their programmes to help with anxiety, depression, panic, and positive body image.



## Keep active

Regular physical exercise can be an important part of your mental wellbeing. Even going for a short walk can help you clear your head. Feeling like you could use some exercise but not sure where to start? Check out **Move Imperial** for tips.



## Meditation and mindfulness

Try guided **Mindfulness Meditation** from the Chaplaincy practice or start a daily meditation practice with the help of apps such as Headspace. It can help you take a step back and focus on the important things. Scan the QR code for these and more apps to help you manage stress, anxiety sleep issues and more.



## The Kind Mind Series

Great resources on a variety of mental health and wellbeing topics such as settling into university, coping with stress, isolation and loss, building resilience and much more from the Mental Health Advice Service.





## Recognising and tackling imposter syndrome

\* Note: This is a fictional conversation, but it's based on the SIDUS interview data and the feelings and experiences of students who participated in the project.



I don't think I really deserve to be at Imperial...

Ohh really? Why are you saying that?

I don't know... I don't really have any big achievements.

But surely you wouldn't have been accepted to uni if they weren't impressed with your accomplishments and didn't see a lot of potential in you.

But everyone seems so much smarter here than me...

Hmm, I don't think that's true. Have you ever heard of imposter syndrome?

Imposter syndrome? I've heard of it but I'm not sure what it is.

It's a belief that you don't deserve your accomplishments and that you will be 'found out'.

It's not a complete definition though. There are many feelings associated with it: discomfort, alienation, lack of belonging and not believing in yourself.

Huh. I can really relate to many of these.

Yeah, I thought so.

The interesting thing is that students experiencing imposter syndrome are often high-achieving but despite this they don't believe in their achievements such as getting into a competitive university, achieving good grades or landing a job offer.

That's really surprising...

Why does it happen?

Again, there may be different reasons. Many people find the transition to university difficult. Students who were typically top of their class in high school are disappointed to achieve average grades at university and feel intimidated by so many other high attaining students. Also, many students find university an alienating place and fear that they don't fit in because there aren't many other people like them.

But remember, you have been accepted into a world-class university because **you have what it takes to succeed.**

So, is it common?

Yes. A lot of students experience imposter syndrome and it can have a negative impact on their mental health, academic performance, and sense of belonging.

That sounds depressing...

So is there any hope for me?

Yes, absolutely! There are lots of strategies that can help.

What are these strategies?

Be aware and appreciative of your strengths and achievements. Document your skills and accomplishments, you can write them down and hang somewhere visible to keep reminding yourself of that. Try to catch your inner critic thoughts and replace them with positive ones.

Don't be afraid of failure! It's okay to make mistakes as it's all part of that learning process, we all do! We can learn a lot from our mistakes and it means we have the courage to try new things and develop.

Reach out for support. Check out the Student Support Zone and their materials on imposter syndrome as well as the Kind Mind Series! It will help you process your feelings and learn helpful strategies.

And last, but not least, open up. Have you talked to your peers about the imposter feelings?

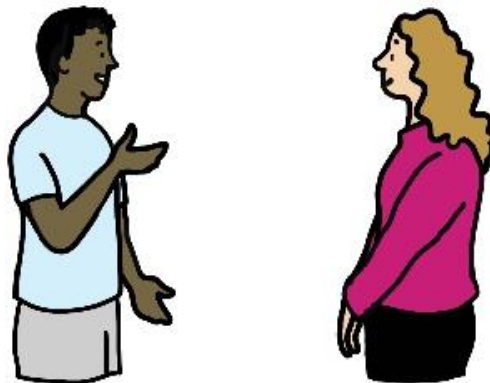
Well, not really... Maybe a few closer friends. To be honest I would feel ashamed.

See, there it is, the fear of being found out typical for imposter syndrome! You might be surprised how many people feel the same as you, even if it doesn't seem like it.

So, break the silence! Be open about your feelings. It can bring you a sense of comfort, belonging and being understood and accepted. We've all been there and there are many solutions to this.

You are not alone, so please reach out and you will deal with it fine. <3

Okay 😊 I feel a little bit better. Thank you.



## Microaggressions

An everyday comment or action can carry a lot of weight.

Derald W. Sue, psychologist and author of two books on microaggressions defines them as: "The everyday slights, indignities, put downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ+ populations or those who are marginalized experiences in their day-to-day interactions with people."

Below are some examples of microaggressions:

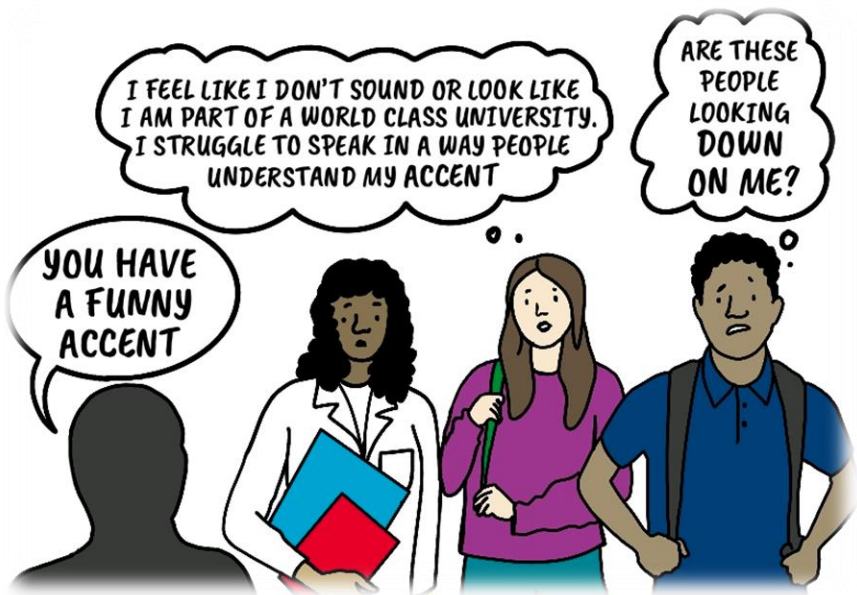


**Intent is not the same as impact.** You might not mean to upset someone, but everyday comments and actions can communicate negative messages, particularly to marginalised groups. Microaggressions can create an atmosphere or a climate of exclusion and make people feel like they don't belong.

Imperial prides itself on its diversity. You belong here regardless of your identity or background.

Learn more about microaggressions [here](#).





## Accommodation after 1st Year



### Hall Seniors and Senior Halls

Whether you lived in Halls in your first year or not, you can apply to become a hall senior. If successful, you will be offered a place in one of the Imperial Halls in exchange for supporting the running of the hall (including social activities or pastoral care).



Another option is applying to Senior Halls such as Evelyn Gardens.

### Private accommodation

Imperial halls are normally limited to 1<sup>st</sup> years except if you are joining as a hall senior, thus you will need to search for private accommodation. Look out for organised talks on searching for private accommodation from halls and the Student Accommodation Office. The comprehensive Student Accommodation information and Student Hub guidebook (links shown below) features timelines of when, where, and how you should start looking for housing. For finding people to move in with, check out the Flatmate Coffee Socials (link below). If you need a guarantor in the UK, Imperial College can act as your guarantor and allow you to rent properties in London.



Further guidance can be found below:

1. Recorded talk on private accommodation:



2. Student Hub guidebook and other resources:



3. Newsletter for private housing (both with the possibility to sign up and access very informative previous content) and Flatmate Coffee Socials



## Commuting students

Not all students live in halls in first year, so live at home in London or nearby and commute. For students who commute to Imperial, here are our top tips to navigate student life as a commuting student.



### 1. **Bring your own food on campus to maximise your time there and further socialise with your peers**

- Some freely accessible spaces with microwaves include SAF (Sir Alexander Fleming Building)
- Check out your departmental common rooms for example the one for Chemists and Life Scientists are in Sir Ernst Chain Building (SEC) or Level 5 Room 502 in EEE (Electrical and Electronic Engineering) building (microwaves available)
- Outdoor sitting places include Queens Lawn for a picnic, Dalby Court with chairs and tables



- Indoor sitting places include SAF orange sofas and tables, Junior Common Room (JRC) in Sherfield Building and most chairs and sofas available throughout the floors in the Imperial buildings

2. **A large variety of food is also available on campus at a discount for students presenting their Imperial ID card.**

Organise lunches on campus with your peers and friends, between lectures, a lab or tutorial class. Some of these restaurants include Kimiko (Japanese food in the JCR), Library Café (meal deals such as a sandwich, drink, and desert) and departmental Cafés scattered around campus.

3. **Join at least one CSP.** As CSPs are student-led and -run, **most of the organised social and academic events occur after lectures where possible.** For example, Wednesday afternoons are reserved for sports at Imperial, so instead of commuting back directly that day, you could go to a sports training. That way you will meet new people while doing some exercise!

## Ongoing education research and initiatives



### **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Strategy (EDI)**

An initiative run by Imperial, which focuses on training students and staff through workshops, shifting the focus on management processes, shaping the student experience, and taking positive action. More information can be found on the EDI webpage.



### **Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship (CHERS)**

The Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship conducts educational research around many themes including identities in education, assessment and feedback, digital learning, wellbeing, sense of belonging, teaching and learning pedagogy. Publications can be accessed by all Imperial staff and students.



## Imperial Education Week 2021

The education research being conducted at Imperial ranges from student and staff wellbeing to the effects of the pandemic, from broadening participation to online assessments, and everything in between! Some examples of this research were showcased at the Imperial Education Week 2021, hosted CHERS. For a brief overview of some examples, works included “Student Belonging and Wellbeing Before, During and After the Pandemic” by Dr Eliel Cohen, CHERS, “Exams? No Thanks!” by Dr Mike Tennant, Centre for Environmental Policy.



## Student success stories

There are many interpretations of what constitutes a “success” story. For many it is achieving a certain grade or landing a certain job or an internship. For others, much more “success” is overcoming a fear, overcoming a barrier, allowing oneself to feel human and seek help, and at the end of the day, despite all obstacles, making it through.

Hear what our own Imperial students have to say on this:

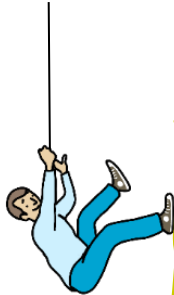


*“Like I felt almost as though you don’t deserve to be here or you’re here by fluke. But I think I’ve been able to shake that feeling off bit by bit to where I am now.” - Kolo, Medicine*

*“In the beginning, it was more the fact that my educational background was different from everyone else. I think that was the main thing that made me feel a bit out of place, but because all the events organised that I went to, they were mainly hosted by my hall of residency. Then it didn’t feel like there were more guys than girls around. I didn’t feel like I was out of place being female.” - Ella, Physics*



*“I struggled in my A-Levels, but when I got there, it seemed like everyone else had flown through them, so I was a bit worried then. After a couple weeks though, I was on the same level as them, so I was okay.” - Carol, Mathematics*



***“And then going [to societies] and then having the socials afterwards with a group of different people from different subjects, that was really nice as well. That felt like I felt like I belonged in the university as well.”***

***- Alexa, Biochemistry***

***“I didn’t feel like I fitted in because a lot of the events in the first few weeks of Freshers’ Weeks were very drink heavy or going out. I just think it’s not where I found myself. Later on, when I began to meet other people who had similar interests to me in the way that they have fun. I think that’s when I started feeling a bit more like I fit in or belonged.”***

***- Masika, Medicine***



**More inspiring stories from Imperial students: Her Imperial**



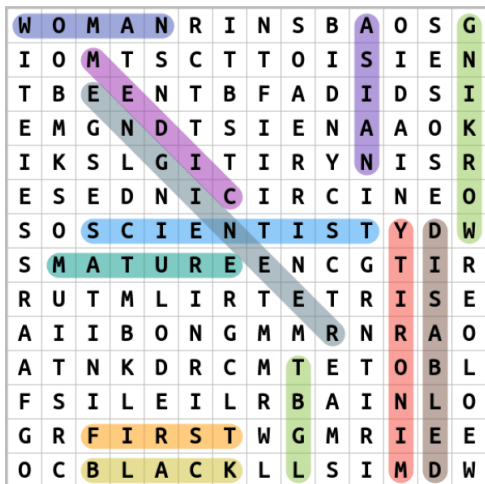
**Join a world leading scientific community where women succeed: Student Blogs**





Search the word answers:

\* credit to <https://thewordsearch.com/>



Scrambled words answers: *ally, widening participation, mature, pronouns, neurodivergence*





