Imperial Thrive

Getting in and Getting on - Enhancing Student Transition and Progression SIG meeting

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Agenda

- What is Imperial Thrive
- Rationale for the programme
- How it’s going
- Plans for the future

Imperial Thrive

The Imperial Thrive community is made up of students who meet Imperial's contextual admissions criteria.

Every September, as part of the Imperial Thrive programme, we run pre-arrival residentials, giving students the opportunity to experience life on campus before term starts.

Students have the chance to:

- Make connections with other students before they start term.
- Meet their departmental staff and take part in a range of academic and non-academic activities to help them transition smoothly into university.
- Find out more about the support and opportunities available to them during their time at Imperial.

Following the residentials, the students are supported through regular communications, events and workshops.

Rationale for Thrive - Access and Participation Plan

Improvement in continuation and progression rates for these groups of students:

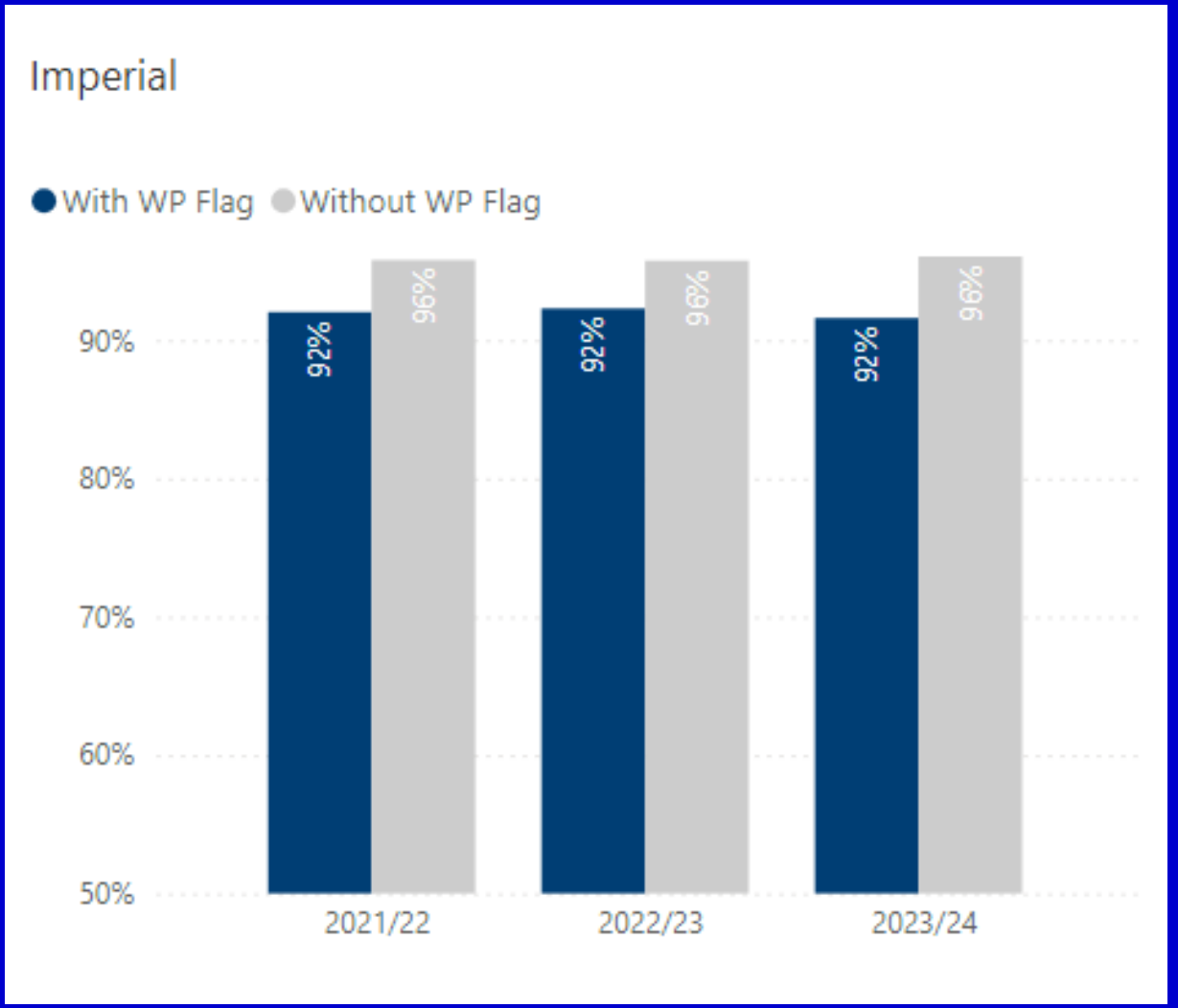
Objective 4: to decrease the continuation gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 students to 4.0 percentage points by 2029.

Objective 5: to decrease the continuation gap between Black students and White students to 4.1 percentage points by 2029.

Objective 6: to decrease the continuation gap for FSM-eligible students to 6.4 percentage points by 2029.

Objective 7: to decrease the progression gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students to 9.7 percentage points within 6 years.

Continuation rates



Programme Rationale

- Before Thrive was the New Starter's Programme delivered by Jackie Bell and team in the Faculty of Engineering which were hugely successful.
- Evidence showed a lower non-continuation rate for students who participated in the programme than those who did not (9.6% compared with 14.5%).

As of last September, the residentials:

- **Expanded across all faculties, led by the Education Office**
- **All WP students** from **all programmes** were invited
- Followed by **wraparound support and activities** throughout the academic year.

The aim of the residentials were to improve:

- Increase awareness of university-wide support services
- Develop a sense of belonging, resilience and academic confidence
- Build supportive peer networks and cohorts
- Student outcomes – continuation and progression

Importance of the Transition Period

Transition is critical stage for WP students – these students often experience greater challenges in navigating early university life.

Enhancing support during this phase is strongly linked to improved retention and student success. (Deane et al., 2024)

Imperial Evidence from FoE New Starter's Programme (APP 2024).

Transition programmes have been shown to:

- Reduce feelings of isolation
- Provide essential support
- Clarity of academic expectations
- Adapt socially and academically.

(Jones, MacDonnell and Aamir, 2025).

Residentials 2025

Key outcomes

4 Residentials – took place from the 4th – 21st September. 203/240 places filled. 43% of 2025 WP Cohort attended.

95% stated (n=202) stated they would recommend the residentials to a friend with a further 5% stating they might recommend the residentials.

'I truly appreciate how much effort was put into making this programme so inclusive. This made me feel very comfortable and valued. Now, I feel confident in the fact that Imperial prioritises catering to ALL students, regardless of background.'

Insights from Thrive Residentials
2025

Expectations Met or Exceeded

162 students reported that the programme met or exceeded their expectations, citing:

- Easier transition to university life
- Formation of supportive peer networks

Confidence and Belonging

156 students reported **increased social and academic confidence** and **readiness** for university, with particular emphasis on social connections and academic preparedness.

Motivations for attending

- Building **social connections**
- **Familiarisation with campus** and university environment
- Gaining **academic insight** before and during transition

Challenges

- Short delivery time
- Intensity of days
- Access to data

Student Voice

Insights from Thrive Evaluation so far

Post-residential Survey

Thrive Students

(n=202): students requested more information on

- time management
- workload, academic transition
- social connections

The most common themes of concern when starting Imperial were:

- Making friends and fitting in
- Academic challenges
- Workload

Future plans

Residentials

Taking on feedback from staff and students.

Residentials will be increased from **4 to 5** days.

7–11 September – Natural Sciences and Medicine
14–18 September – Engineering and Business

- 120 students per residential
- Faculties kept together
- Co-creating programme timetable with faculties, departments and students
- StudentShapers

Ongoing support – post residential

Activities:

- Events/workshops on key topics
- Socials
- Regular communication – check-ins, newsletters

Feedback:

- Value social opportunities & chance to meet peers across cohort
- Enjoy activities that build academic confidence

Co-creation/evaluation:

- **Student Partnership** – Recruited 7 Thrive Interns from the cohort
- **Thrive Wraparound Workshop -** co-developed with key stakeholders in faculties – ensure Thrive compliments departmental activities, ensure all Thrive students have access to consistent support
- **Ongoing evaluation** – surveys, focus groups, Planning and Insight team to track progress on long-term aims (continuation and progression)
- Working on what support beyond first year might look like

Thank you.