

Wellbeing and productivity:

International PhD students' academic journeys at Warwick



IATL student project report
July 2024

Project Introduction

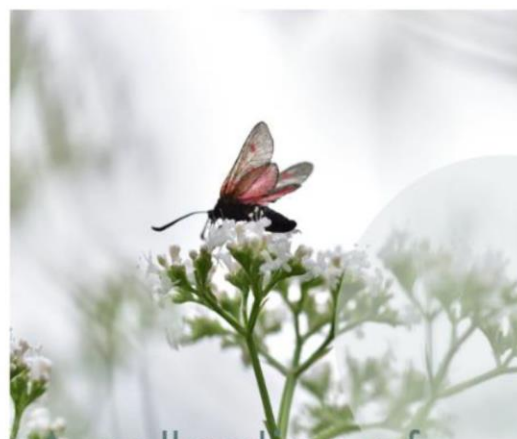
A PhD is challenging. Doing it in another language makes it even more so. This project, focusing specifically on international doctoral students at Warwick, aimed to map out the various challenges they face and work out possible coping strategies for them and many more to come. The overall purpose of this project was to enhance their well-being and productivity during their academic pursuits at Warwick. In this project, we successfully hosted a one-day conference on the Warwick campus on 26 July and successfully compiled a collection of life stories (contributed by international PhD students at Warwick) and a collective zine (Conference attendees).

A collective zine

Well-being and productivity: International PhD students' academic journeys at Warwick



IATL Student Project output



A collection of life stories

Well-being and productivity:
International PhD students' academic
journeys at Warwick

IATL Student Project output

The Conference

A1.11, Applied Linguistics
July 26th, 2024

Our conference attracted nearly 40 registrations and expressions of interest to participate.

Unfortunately, the accessibility facility was out of order during the conference day. Therefore, we were not able to accommodate two wheelchair users. Various reasons also stopped other registrations.

*Nevertheless, we welcomed 14 participants from different disciplines and nationalities. ^{*We also had 3 volunteers to help us on-site (2 international master's students and 1 local PhD student)}*

Conference Programme

Generally, it went according to plan. To add value to this conference, we also invited staff from the library (which also provided library goodies for our conference participants) to do a brief introduction of service for PhD students at Warwick and answered any questions participants might have. Another disruption was the late arrival of conference participants, the conference started at 10.30 am. Therefore, here is the updated program for the conference day.

09.45 –10.30 Event Registration & Refreshment

10.30– 10.35 Welcome & Introduction

10.35 –10.50 Library service introduction & Q&A

10.50- 11:30 PhD speed- -dating network activity

11.30–11:50 Food mindfulness, Tea & Coffee break

11.50–13.00 Zine-making: wellbeing and productivity

13.00–14.00 Lunch break & Socializing

14.00-14.30 Zine-sharing: life stories

14.30-15.30 Group discussion: Challenges & Coping strategies

15.30-16:00 Nature mindfulness, Tea & Coffee break

16.00-16.30 Reflection & Conclusion

Overall, participants gave very positive feedback at this conference. We received a rating of 4.75 out of 5 for their satisfaction with the experience.

Comments from participants:



It was amazing! Thank you for organizing it!

Very nice event. It is good to see everyone having vibes as an international PhD...

Yes. It went fantastic. I found it interesting and feel like I need this kind of activity.

I like it so much. It provides opportunities for us to socialize, meet other phds, discuss everything.

It was really fun and engaging. Everyone was nice and friendly. Loved the different activities.

I like the interactive and sharing session, but it would be very much appreciated if there were more expertise sharing.

I love the individual artwork about PhD journey and going to the hill...very relaxing and fun

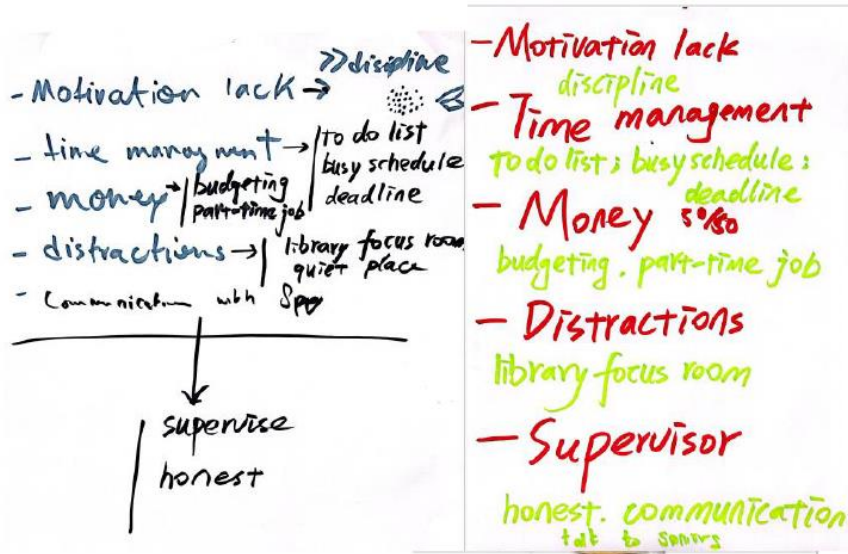
I like the Engagement, participation and everyone's contribution!



Participants' suggestions for similar future events:

- *More time in nature*
- *Invited expertise*
- *BBQ / Hiking / Nature exploration*
- *Skill building*
- *More on art works*
- *Mindfulness tips in daily activities*

Participants' views on challenges & solutions:



THE PHD JOURNEY

The Challenges GROUP 3

- Social life
- Cultural Barriers
- Time Management
- Home Sickness
- Financial Hardships
- Lack of Guidance
- Weather

Solutions

- Networking Events, societies, sports activities
- Making new friends / communities
- Focus on personal and academic life balance
- Communicate effectively with supervisor
- Budgeting financial management.
- Rely on weather predictions.

Challenges: Group 1
 Loneliness ☹️
 Imposter syndrome. Doubt yourself. ? ? ?
 Food UK food sucks!!
 Maintaining health ☹️

Solutions:
 • Socialising with new companions. 交朋友
 • Doubt your own criticism. Doubt your doubt
 • Cooking our own meal. Don't believe UK food
 • Take exercises regularly. Sleep well!
 Join sports activities. 健身房

↳ Happy life.

International Student

Challenges

- Loneliness
- Culture shock
- Weather
- Food
- Academic pressure
- Transportation
- Language barrier
- Communication (via software in communication)

Solutions

- Calling your friends - 保持联系
- Doing research
- Take a holiday / Travel
- Meditate / be mindful
- Trying new activities
- Collaboration
- Software

Academic pressure → Discussion, Collaboration, Software
 Loneliness → Culture shock, Weather, Food, Academic pressure, Transportation
 Culture → Learning language, Meditate, New activities
 Communication → Calling friends, Doing research, Take a holiday / Travel, Meditate / be mindful, Trying new activities, Collaboration, Software

Conference moments 1. Networking



2. Food Mindfulness

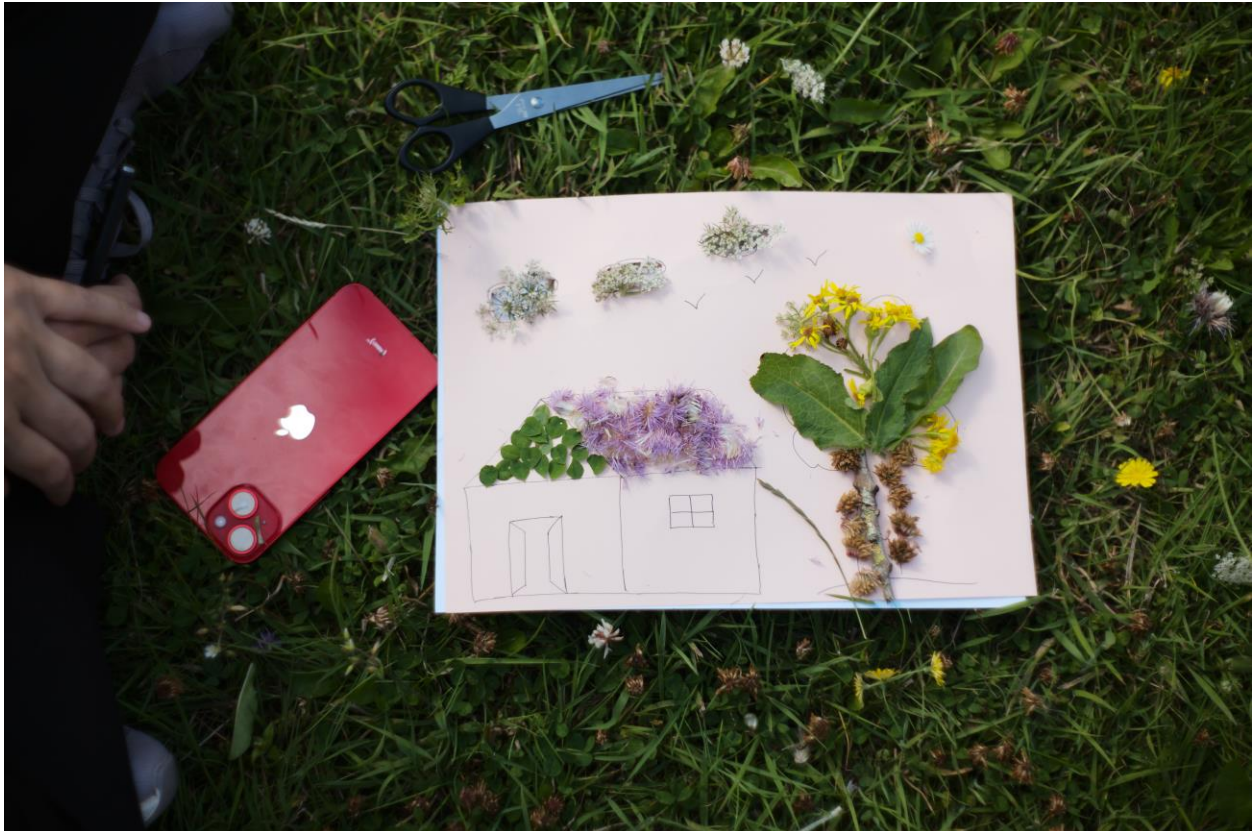


3. Zine-making and sharing



5. Nature Mindfulness





Conclusion

It was a lovely project to remember.

It was lovely to have you all.

Please, remember that you are not alone.

Wish everyone a big success in their academic pursuit here at Warwick.

All the best.

Love from the team

Biographies



Meifang Zhuo

Meifang Zhuo, a 3rd year PhD student with Applied Linguistics, is interested in language teacher/learner related topics, and interdisciplinary research methods. She is leading this project to support other international PGRs at Warwick. Feel free to connect through [Twitter@ZhuoMeifang](https://twitter.com/ZhuoMeifang); [LinkedIn: Meifang Zhuo](https://www.linkedin.com/in/meifang-zhuo).



Siyu Wang

Siyu Wang is a 2nd year PhD student with Applied linguistics. Her research interests include intercultural language teaching and learning, second/foreign language acquisition, and Intercultural communication. She is undertaking this project to map out the challenges faced by international PhD students and to develop effective strategies to improve their academic well-being and productivity. For further discussion, please contact her at dorothy.wang@warwick.ac.uk.



Peter To

Peter To is a 2nd year PhD student in Psychology. His research lies in the relationships between physical activity, sleep and pain among chronic patients in the UK. As a member of well-being research cluster at the Department of Psychology, Peter would like to promote well-being among PGR students at Warwick. Contact: peter.to@warwick.ac.uk



Mehmet Onur Sahin

Mehmet Onur Sahin, a 2nd year PhD student with WMG, is interested in international defense collaboration by using insight from civilian sectors. He is doing this project to reach out to other international PGRs at Warwick. Feel free to contact him at mehmet-onur.sahin@warwick.ac.uk

Thank you **IATL Project Support** for making this collection possible!