Grit Breakthrough Programmes: Mindsets for Success

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Students and new graduates already have all they need to make a success of their time – at university, in the workplace

- Foundation Year to postgraduates
- Universal programmes for students with low-engagement, targeted programmes for students with more challenges
- Black talent workshops and programmes for Students of Colour
- Student mentors and student leaders
- Year 12 and 13 students transitioning to university and as part of induction programmes
- Teaching and student support staff
- Enterprise and employability programmes
- Corporate partners have included: Freshfields; Octopus Investments; Levi Strauss

77% of students we work with designated by the Office for Students as having an 'at risk' characteristic

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- First in family to go to university

- Carers

- Care leavers

- Students of Colour

- Commuter students, mature students

- Estranged from their family

- Were eligible for free school meals

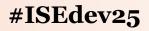- Declare a disability

- Repeating students

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Up to a year after their Grit experience

81% tell us Grit still impacts their sense of belonging

78% of students say Grit continues to impact their resilience

88% report a greater sense of personal agency

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Completion and Attainment

42% more global majority students achieved an end-of-year grade of 2.1 (*Nottingham Trent University, 2019-24*)

22% more students pass the year than in comparator groups (*University of Hull, 2022-24*)

Continuation and Retention

50% increase in 'at risk' students continuing (*Nottingham Trent University, 2019-24*)

19% less exit without completing (*University of Hull, 2022-24*)

84% of students who had been thinking of leaving were still at university

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"I often felt overwhelmed, ignored. Grit gave me a new mindset. I'm motivated, I've taken control. I go out and find opportunities. Now I've got faith in myself. I'm being the best I can possibly be."

Black student leader, University of Nottingham, 2024

"Uni had become something I had to get through, not something I enjoyed. I needed Grit. It's given me confidence in myself. I know I can do what ever is set my mind too. I'm becoming a better version of myself."

student, University of Greenwich, 2024

"I'd recommend it 100%. It gave me new purpose, new meaning: to realise my passion, to be a success in my life, to take the next steps with confidence."

student, University of Westminster, 2024

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Gen Z

"Gen Z accountants to have lessons in 'picking up the phone'"
Daily Telegraph, April 2025

"World leaders to have lessons in using phone messaging apps securely" not a recent Daily Telegraph headline

"She took initiative all the time to do more than was asked from her... was able to take charge right from day one... his ability to gather and synthesize information was amazing.... stand-out stakeholder management" what employers tell the London Interdisciplinary School, 2025

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Expectations vs Reality

- These will be the best years of your life

- You'll find yourself, discover who you are

- You'll meet your future life partner

- You'll enjoy the independence you've always wanted

- The first year doesn't count

- It's easier that A-Levels

- You'll only study things that are really interesting

- It'll get you to the career you always wanted

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Support and Development – the barriers

- Confidence - asking for support is difficult to do

- Notions of the perfect student, the "ideal" employee

- Belief that they should be able to cope, be independent, of feeling self-conscious or not wanting to be a nuisance

- Stigma of 'you need to be in trouble to need support', a sign of weakness or failure

- Help is only for emergencies

- Assumption that there is no support at university because you're just supposed to be independent

- Past experiences of when asking for help had not gone well

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Re-framing support and development

Support so it is more than simply finding a lifeline in a crisis, but instead is about gathering what you need to be a success.

We wouldn't expect an elite athlete to manage without a coach, nutritionist or psychologist. We apply the same principle to students who then pro-actively build positive networks of support and make use of support provided.

Mistakes

'We learn from our mistakes'

- Take responsibility

- Own mistakes fully, embracing the discomfort but not from a place of judgement but from a place of commitment to the job, to their own learning and development

- Invite feedback

- Forgive yourself

- Reflect

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Imposter Syndrome

- Confidence – feeling not worthy, not capable
- Fear of making mistakes, risk averse
- Skipping classes for fear of being exposed as a fraud
- Self-sabotage
- Attributing success or failure to external factors or other people – undermining sense of agency, self-efficacy, belonging
- Always comparing themself unfavourably to the others

Gen Z

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- Caring for a relative or a child; working 20 hpw at the same time as doing a full-time degree (*prioritising, time management, problem solving, responsiveness*)

- Adaptability and resilience (*Covid experience*)

- Digital literacies from a whole range of cultures and sub-cultures (*Creativity, collaboration*)

- Complex conversations day-to-day about racial, gender and other identities, purpose, ownership of mental health and wellbeing issues (*critical thinking, working with complexity*)

- Comfortable with online and offline environments *(relationships, social capital)*

Students and new graduates already have all they need to make a success of their time – at university, in the workplace

It's just that sometimes, some of them, need a shift in mind set so that they can see it too

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