



# IMPERIAL Students' Trip to WHO Academy

# 2025 Report

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[www.imperialwhocc.org](http://www.imperialwhocc.org)

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*"This trip truly opened my eyes to the innovation and impactful work being carried out."*



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# I. Background

As part of our mission to advance public health globally through high-quality education, leadership development, technical collaboration, and evidence-informed capacity building, with a focus on equity, resilience, and sustainability, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Public Health Education and Training at Imperial College has been committed to creating opportunities for students to grow their professional expertise.

One of the activities through which the centre has been fulfilling this objective is a long standing history (dating back to 2008) of an annual study trip for Master students (Master of Public Health and Global Health) to the WHO Headquarters (HQ) in Geneva. With the increasing numbers of cohorts each year it has become increasingly difficult to satisfy the appetite for this unique experience.

Vibhuti Khara  
Team Lead – Learning Delivery And Impact at [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int), delivering welcome session

Fortunately, a new partnership that has been explored between our Co-Director Celine Tabche and Dr Vibhuti Khara [pictured below], Team Lead for Learning Delivery and Impact at the WHO Academy, which opened a welcome solution. The WHO Academy in Lyon, France has opened its doors to Imperial students and the initiative evolved into two study trips in 2025: one in Geneva and one at the WHO Academy in Lyon, each hosting 25 students.



The WHO Academy study trip was designed as an immersive and innovative experience into the lifelong learning design for healthcare professionals. Based on a probable and realistic scenario of a rapidly spreading epidemic in a resource-limited region, the overall aim of the trip was to provide hands-on experience in crisis management, epidemiological analysis, and inter-agency coordination.

The trip aimed to enhance students' educational experience, by exposing them to the real world public health situations that are dealt with by main stakeholders in the Global Health scene: WHO and its partners.

## II. Key Learning Objectives

- Identify the role, mandate, and work of WHO; students gained a deep understanding of WHO objectives, its impact on health policy, and its engagement with member states.
- Explore collaborative efforts, students learnt about the partnerships between the WHO, regional governments, and international organisations to address public health challenges
- Understand International Health initiatives, students gained insight into the specific health initiatives by regions, including those related to communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, and health system strengthening.
- Assess future strategies through the WHO Academy work, including innovative approaches to learning: students learnt about future plans, strategies, and innovations within global health and the WHO Academy initiatives.
- Demonstrate coordination's impact, students understood how collaborative efforts can influence population health outcomes in the region.
- Translate MPH Knowledge into Real-World Contexts. The trip offered opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge from their MPH program to practical scenarios.
- Explore Career Opportunities: Students explored potential career paths in international public health and learn about job and internship opportunities with the WHO, NGOs, and governmental agencies.

The trip span three days from Wednesday, 11th June, to Friday, 13th June 2025, and included a visit to the simulation labs of the WHO Academy, engaging in simulation activities, engaging with experts on international collaboration, a visit to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), and the University of Lyon 1.

By the end of the three-day programme, the groups have completed a needs analysis (stage gate 2), course concept (stage gate 3), elements of design (stage gate 4), including curriculum design, simulation, and assessment, and have also developed an evaluation plan (stage gate 9). A WHO Academy learning designer reviewed the stage gate 3 to assist the students in their development.

# III. Programme

## Day 1: June 11, 2025 – WHO Academy

**Theme:** Understanding the WHO ecosystem and the Learning Methods

- 09:00 – 10:15: Introduction to WHO's role and mandate
- 10:15 – 11:15: Presentation on WHO Academy's structure and flagship programmes
  - 11:15 – 11:30: Break & Networking
- 11:30 – 12:15: WHO Academy facility tour
  - 12:15 – 13:30: Lunch
- 13:30 – 15:30: Working at WHO (career-oriented session)
  - 15:30 – 15:45: Break & Networking
- 15:45 – 15:50: Introductory video – Group simulation
- 15:50 – 16:30: Real-time simulation of the emergency coordination meeting
- 16:30 – 17:00: Debriefing, Reflection and Wrap-Up

## Day 2: June 12, 2025 – WHO Lyon Office, IARC, WHO Academy

**Theme:** Designing and Testing Training Approaches

- 09:00 – 10:00: Meeting with WHO experts on strengthening laboratory capacities
- 10:30 – 12:30: Visit to IARC: discussion on research and public health prevention
  - 12:30 – 14:00: Lunch
- 14:00 – 15:00: Understanding learner profiles and adapting teaching methods
  - 15:00 – 15:15: Break & Networking
- 15:15 – 17:15: Working group session – 1st session:
  - Simulation-based learning
  - Course design and curriculum development
  - Evaluation and impact measurement
- Evening: Dinner

### **Day 3: June 13, 2025 – WHO Academy**

**Theme:** Promoting Lifelong Learning for WHO Staff and Adults

- 09:30 – 10:00: Key takeaways from Day 2
- 10:00 – 11:00: Working group session – 2nd session:
  - Simulation-based learning
  - Course design and curriculum development
  - Evaluation and impact measurement
- 11:00 – 11:15: Break & Networking
- 11:15 – 12:15: Team presentations – elevator pitch
  - 12:45 – 14:15: Lunch
- 14:15 – 14:45: Reflection and discussion on innovations in global health education
  - 14:45 – 15:00: Closing remarks
- 15:15 – 17:30: Visit to the University Lyon 1

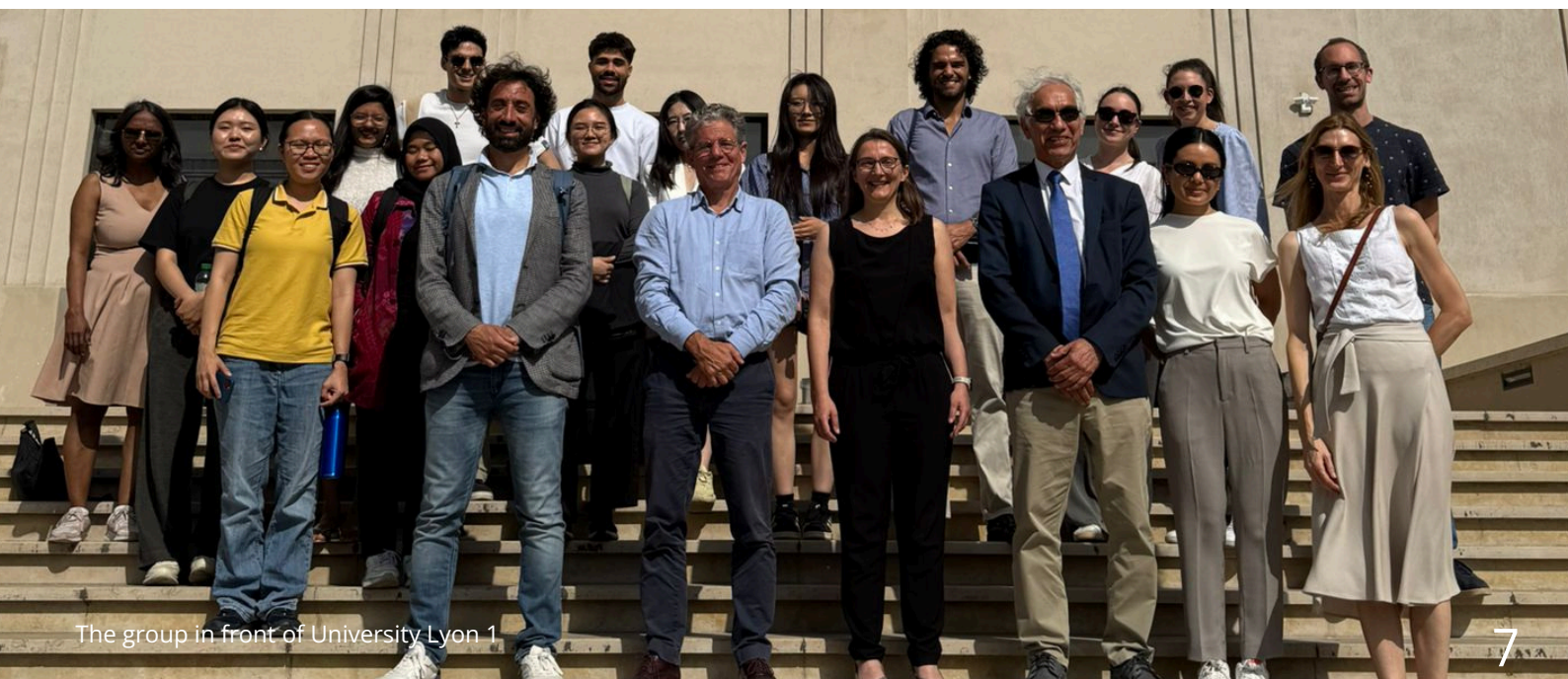
# IV. Overall Summary

As this 2025 trip to Lyon, WHO Academy was a pilot and first of its kind, the feedback was of substantial value. The feedback was recorded as surveys for each day of the trip and also followed up in an informal focus group style interview with the representatives of the group. The responses were recorded and reviewed.

Across the three days, participants overwhelmingly felt they achieved their desired learning and experience outcomes. All respondents from Day 1 confirmed they achieved their desired outcomes, and all respondents from Day 2 confirmed this achievement. For the Third Day (WHO HQs), seven respondents confirmed achievement, with two selecting 'Other'.

The Simulation labs and high-fidelity simulation were the standout experiences and the overall highlight of the trip:

- Lab tour and high-fidelity simulation were the standout experiences.
- The IARC visit was highly engaging and memorable.
- Practical sessions were widely regarded as the most valuable. They were preferred to any lecture-type presentations, and their value was widely appreciated.
- Participants would have preferred one hour less each day to allow time to recuperate.
- Dinner was enjoyable and welcome. The setting did not allow for easy mingling and getting to know each other. A game to meet everyone around the table and interact with everyone would have been an interesting addition.
- Encourage future students to arrive early or stay longer to explore the city.





**Key Day 1 Takeaways:** The highly-rated simulation activities were the standout success, though logistical issues concerning entrance signage and the clarity of instructions for the role-playing exercise needed attention.

# V. Detailed Feedback Summary by Day



### Key Day 2 Takeaways:

The visit to IARC was unanimously rated as excellent (5.00 average) and was one of the overall stand-out experiences. Value gained from the health emergency team session was stressed.

The main area for improvement involved reducing the length of sessions and ensuring practical/interactive elements (like the WHO role investigation) are conducted fully in-person.



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### **Key Day 3 Takeaways:**

Appreciation for the friendly and open WHO Academy team. The 2<sup>nd</sup> session of working group received very positive evaluation: “Good!”, “Great learning”, “Enjoyed optimizing prompts.” Discussion on innovations in Global Health Education was also highly rated as: “Good”, “Amazing, youthful energy, positive vibrations.” Visit to Lyon 1 University was described as “Unnecessary”, “Tiring content”, “Purpose unclear.”

# VI. Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

Based on participant feedback in the focus group, several areas could be adjusted to maximise the experience and address logistical challenges:

- 1. Session Length and Breaks:** The sessions felt "really heavy" and "really long" It is recommended that participants have one hour less each day to allow time to recuperate, and more breaks should be introduced.
- 2. Instructions Clarity:** More clarity in the instructions for the exercises would be a valuable improvement, possibly by providing a single printed set of instructions per group and briefing everyone together before splitting.
- 3. In-Person Preference:** Online and hybrid sessions were less engaging and harder to coordinate. Future practical and interactive investigation sessions should be conducted face-to-face
- 4. Career Content:** The career session should be shortened and restructured as a Q&A, focusing on general career advice, given the current hiring limitations. The inclusion of personal career journeys from current staff was specifically requested.
- 5. Content Repetition:** The content related to Logframe and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) felt repetitive given the students' existing coursework. This content should be reduced or enhanced with new insights beyond basic coverage.
- 7. Logistics and Navigation:** Clearer navigational assistance is needed for the WHO Academy, including a shared Google Maps link or picture of the entrance, and better signage/printed arrows within the buildings. Security tag management for late arrivals should also be addressed.
- 8. Social/Networking:** Improvements to social events, like the dinner, should be considered to encourage better mingling and interaction among attendees (e.g., incorporating a game).

# VII. Conclusion

The WHO Academy trip successfully met its objectives of exposing MPH students to real-world public health challenges and innovative learning methodologies. Feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction, especially regarding the simulation activities and site visits.

Moving forward, refinements such as balancing session duration, integrating more interactive elements, and facilitating informal networking opportunities could further enhance the experience.

This collaboration has reaffirmed the value of connecting academic learning with international practice and has strengthened ties between Imperial College and the WHO Academy.

# VIII. Acknowledgements

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