

A Digital Balance Campaign for 16–24-Year-Old University Students in London

Task 3: Benefits and Challenges

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Physiological Benefits

What does the body do when digital use is in balance?

6h20

average daily online time among UK
18–24s in May 2025

48%

of UK 16–24s said they spent too
long on social media

- **Better sleep quality:** Less late night scrolling means less cognitive arousal, and promotes sleep hygiene.
- **Better energy and focus:** Sleep recovery helps with day-to-day studying, mood and memory.
- **Less physical strain:** less long sitting sessions can decrease eye strain, headaches, neck and postural discomfort.
- **More active time:** screen breaks make room for walking, sport, outdoor study breaks and daily exercise.

Ofcom (2024, 2025); NHS (2024); Olson et al. (2022); Tu et al. (2023); House of Commons Education Committee (2024).

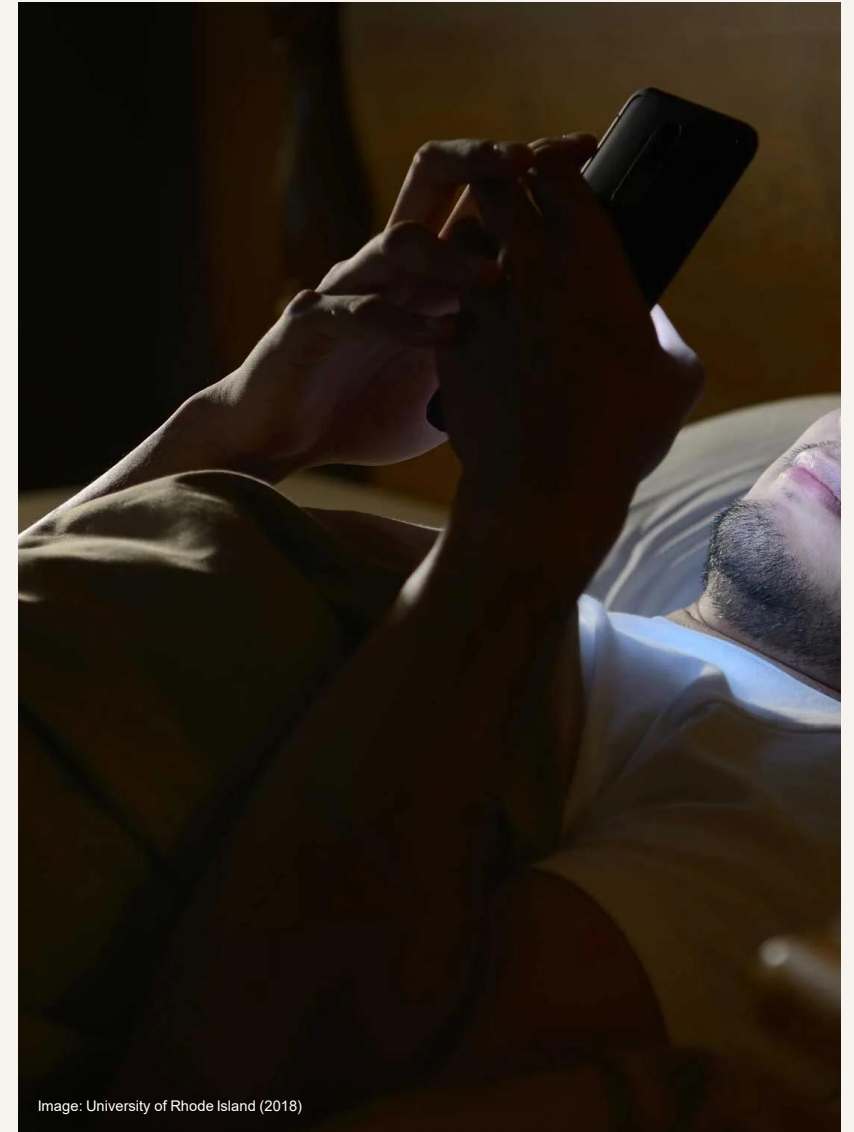


Image: University of Rhode Island (2018)

Sociological Benefits

Why balancing fosters belonging, participating and safer social life



Belonging

Participation

Safer culture

- ❑ Group sessions without phones promote eye contact, active listening and trust among pupils.
- ❑ Being able to do activities instead when offline can lessen passive comparison and help foster healthy peer norms.
- ❑ Pledges to digital boundaries make the transformation collective, not solitary or punitive.
- ❑ More face-to-face time can improve support networks for students who feel isolated in a big metropolis.

HO Regional Office for Europe (2024); Plackett et al. (2023); What Works Centre for Wellbeing (2023); Mental Health Foundation (2023).

Psychological Benefits

Balanced use keeps focus, mood and self-control

- ✓ **Less anxiety and rumination:** scheduled breaks mean less constant alerting, less doomscrolling, and less fear of losing out.
- ✓ **Better mood regulation:** Students learn to cope without reaching for the phone immediately.
- ✓ **Greater focus:** fewer interruptions = protection of intense study, reading and contemplative thought
- ✓ **Healthier self-image:** less comparison-oriented social media can boost self-esteem and life satisfaction.

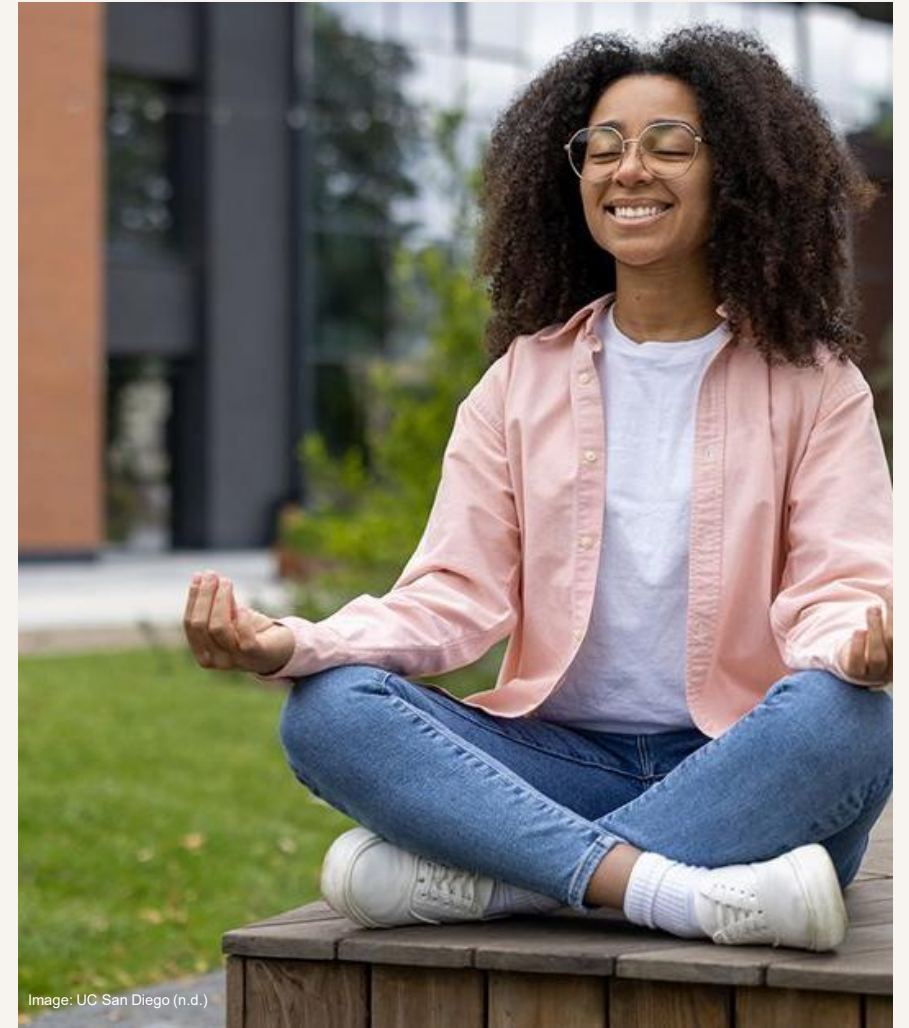
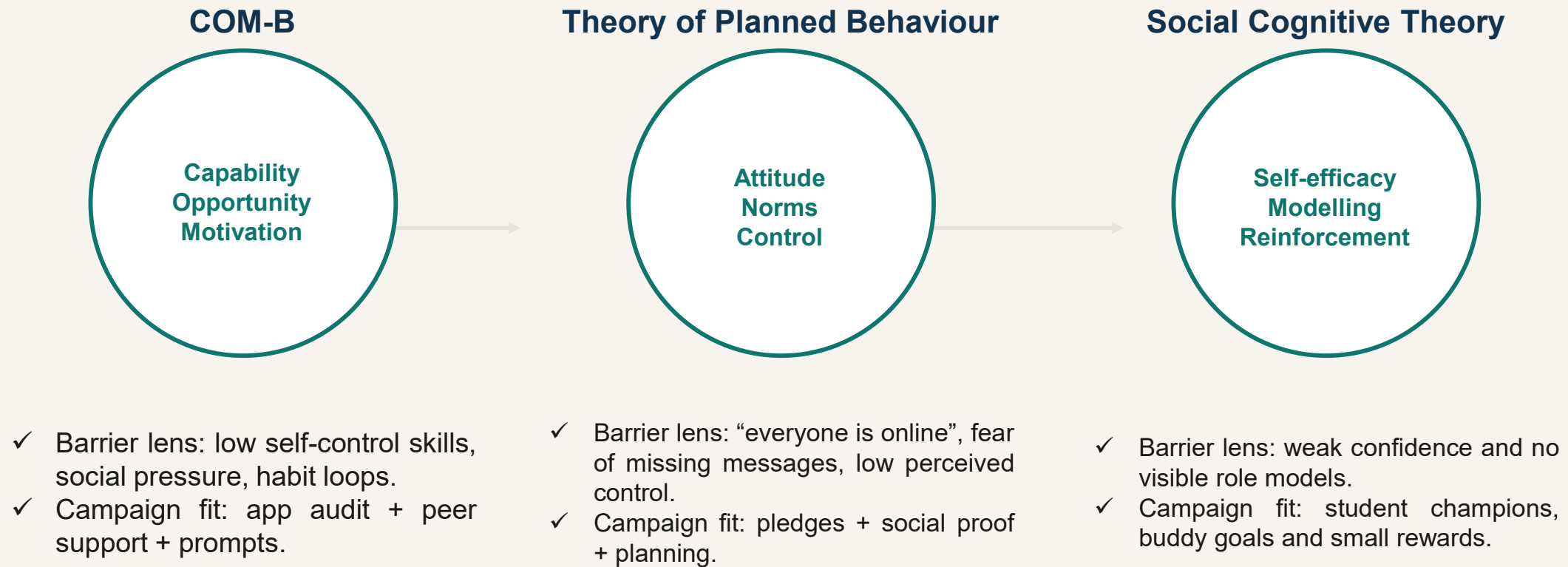


Image: UC San Diego (n.d.)

Calvert et al. (2025); Ramadhan et al. (2024); Plackett et al. (2023); WHO Regional Office for Europe (2024).

2–3 Health Behaviour Theories / Models

Explaining digital-balance behaviour change hurdles

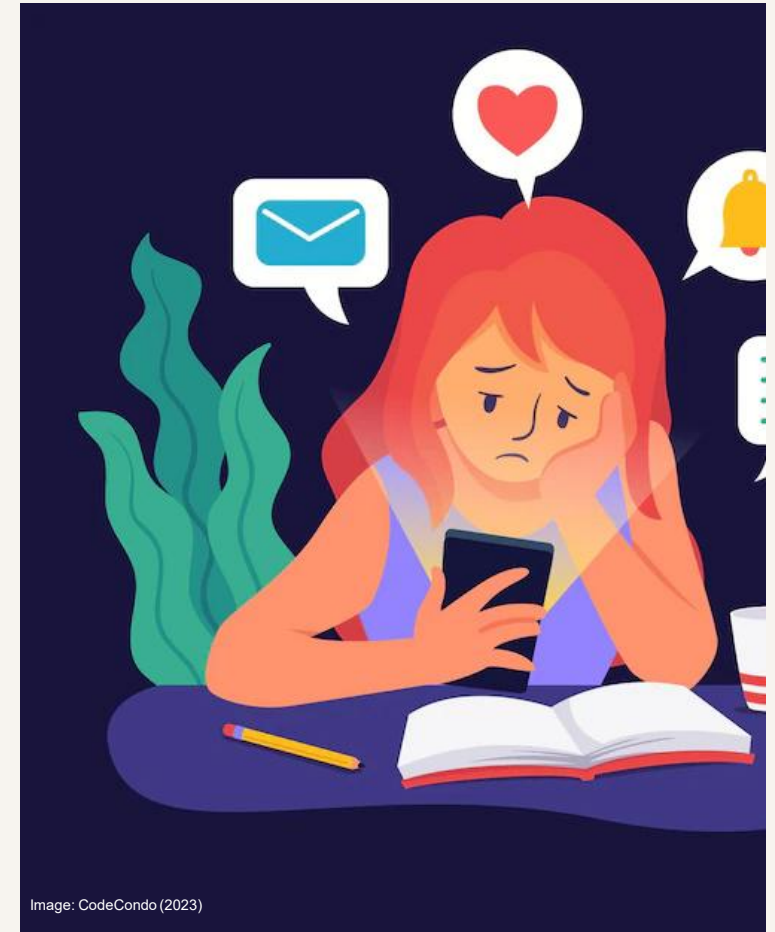


Michie et al. (2011); Ajzen (1991); Ajzen (2020); Bandura (1986); Islam et al. (2023).

Key Challenges to Behaviour Change

A digital-balance campaign must be pragmatic, not moralistic

- ❖ Academic reliance Students require phones/laptops for VLE, email, maps, work shifts and transit.
- ❖ **Social pressure:** group conversations and social media induce anxiety of losing out on information, events or friendship cues.
- ❖ **Habit and reward design:** “Just five minutes” is hard with notifications, endless scroll, and brief movies.
- ❖ **Inequality risk:** Blanket abstinence could impact students with caring responsibilities, part-time jobs or safety concerns.
- ❖ **Mental-health sensitivity:** Too much limitation can feel isolating if offline options are limited.



Ofcom (2024, 2025); House of Commons Education Committee (2024); WHO Regional Office for Europe (2024); Plackett et al. (2023).

Campaign Solutions to Overcome Challenges

Low-cost actions embedded in the 6–8 weekly campaign sessions

- ❑ Balance it out: target bedtime scrolling, passive social media and notification overload, not prohibiting study tech.
- ❑ Use micro-commitments: “no phone 30 minutes before sleep”, concentrate mode while studying, app-limit reminders.
- ❑ Walk groups, phone-basket café discussions, analogue study pods and campus wellbeing events are being replaced, not taken away.
- ❑ Peer-led support: student advocates show actual use, normalise relapse and give practical ideas for use in contexts.
- ❑ Track progress: Weekly screenshots of screen-time, sleep/mood check-ins and short feedback forms.



Conclusion

Digital technology, used deliberately rather than automatically, can help students have a healthier, more balanced existence. Cutting back on screen time might translate into better sleep, less physical strain and more time to move. It can also improve peer support and healthy campus standards, as well as in person connections. Mindful use of technology can have psychological benefits, such as a calmer mood, better concentration and increased self-control. However, as cellphones are crucial in study, communication and daily activities, the campaign should encourage chosen, adaptable and helpful digital habits instead of complete avoidance.

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