



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



Widening Participation Report 2019

Introduction

I am proud to introduce you to the School's widening participation (WP) report. LSE has a longstanding commitment to fair access and widening participation – recruiting students with the highest academic and intellectual potential, regardless of their background. Further research by the Reform think tank once again ranked LSE top in the UK for our efforts to increase the number of students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods¹. Our efforts have helped turn more applications from talented but under-represented students into offers at LSE and to other universities. The report shares further examples of our work and progress to date, alongside how we continue to monitor and build on this across the student lifecycle.

Continuing to widen access to, and participation in, higher education is of utmost importance to the School. We want to build on our achievements to date, whilst addressing higher expectations for universities from the Office for Students' recent consultation on access and participation. Our commitment to achieving this, and the measures to deliver, will be set-out in LSE's Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 and the new LSE Strategy.

Our commitment and responsibility to widen participation is shared across the school. Thank you to the many colleagues and students who contribute to the initiatives explicitly outlined, as well as the many other areas of work that support our overall goals for widening participation now and in the future.



Minouche Shafik
Director, LSE



¹ https://reform.uk/sites/default/files/2018-11/Gaining%20Access%20HE_AW_WEB.pdf

Key highlights:

Sector wide developments

2018 saw the end of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and the inception of the Office for Students (OfS) as the new regulator for higher education, including widening participation. The OfS has moved from access agreements to access and participation plans, restating their emphasis on outcomes for students in higher education alongside access. OfS has moved from access agreements to access and participation. LSE's Access and Participation Plan for 2019 is published online at [lse.ac.uk/wideningparticipation](https://www.lse.ac.uk/wideningparticipation)

Access to LSE

In September 2018

31

students from our intensive pre-entry outreach schemes enrolled at LSE

Outcomes for pre-entry participants

As part of our commitment to measuring the impact of our work, we undertake a tracking process for all participants on our intensive schemes. In September 2018, we were able to track 85 per cent of these participants, finding that 8 in 10 held a confirmed offer to a university. Sixty four percent of these had gained a place at a Russell Group university, including 31 registering at LSE.

Our follow-up survey has highlighted that a proportion of these students who chose not to apply to LSE reported grades which met LSE's minimum A Level offer, making them eligible to apply for at least some of our courses. Further detail suggests that part of the rationale for not applying was that students didn't think they would have the necessary requirements to receive an offer from LSE, an important insight to use within our current WP programme. In addition, through our research and evaluative work, we will continue to explore the barriers that may be preventing students with the potential to study at LSE from applying here.

80%

of flagship scheme participants held a confirmed university offer

64%

of confirmed offers were for a Russell Group institution including LSE

Drawing together this report provides an important opportunity to reflect on the many achievements, whilst acknowledging that there is always more to do. A particular highlight for me this year has been the progress we have made building on existing, and developing new collaborations, many of which are featured throughout the report. Developing these collaborations has allowed us to expand our work early in education to Year 5 pupils and enabled engagement with other young people, staff, and parents/carers we have previously not had an opportunity to work with,

Alongside these external collaborations, we have also seen more academic input to our work from an increasing range of subjects highlighting to prospective students the diversity of social science education at LSE. These connections have also seen a greater number of perspectives represented in discussions about how we make progress in future years, which is crucial to our mission. With this in mind, I want to take this opportunity to recognise the input of everyone who has made our work possible again this year and add my thanks for your time, energy and commitment.

Kirsty Wadsley, Head of Widening Participation



Outreach work

Engagement with our pre-entry outreach work

On-campus activities ranged from half-day sessions for students in Years 6-11 (ages 10-16), to day-long conferences for students in Years 10-12 (ages 14-17), to week-long summer schools and longer-term repeat engagements for those in Years 11-13 (ages 15-18). Off-campus activities included trips as part of the Sutton Trust Pathways schemes, and regular mentoring and tutoring sessions in our target schools and colleges, supplemented by WP staff attendance at HE and careers fairs.

In 2017-18 (excluding HE Fair attendance)...

Our outreach activity engaged
2,540
unique participants...

... from
360
schools and colleges
across London

We delivered over
100
on-campus sessions...

... and
30,000
learner hours

All of this activity was underpinned by 266 LSE Student Ambassadors, Mentors, Tutors and Pathways Mentors, as well as numerous committed and highly qualified spring/summer school and Saturday teaching staff, and supported by collaborations with external delivery partners and colleagues from across the school.

We are delighted to have delivered a range of outreach activities to so many schools and young people throughout 2017-18

68%

of participants will be in the first generation in their family to access Higher Education

32%

of participants were eligible for free school meals

60%

of participants were from ACORN Priority Areas

81%

of participants were from IDACI Q1/Q2*

We worked with

76

young people who at the time were in local authority care.

*Index of Deprivation Affecting Children



New initiatives

LSE Sprint

As part of the LSE 2018 Festival Beveridge 2.0, the WP team worked in collaboration with the Social Policy Department and LSE Careers to devise "LSE Sprint". The one day event provided 22 sixth form students with a unique opportunity to engage with the LSE Festival and make a tangible link between theory and real-life social issues in a fast-paced six hour policy challenge.

The students worked in small teams to solve one of three policy challenges – illiteracy, food poverty, or in-work poverty. Mentored by LSE 100 academics and current LSE students, the teams proposed solutions that were presented to a panel of esteemed judges including guest judge, TV presenter June Sarpong.

Participants said the experience boosted their confidence, encouraged them to think about issues from different perspectives, and taught them to work effectively with others under time pressure.

LSE Sprint returned as part of the 2019 LSE Festival - New World (Dis)Orders. With input from a range of academic departments, the teams tackled challenges on conspiracy theories, immigration policy, and control of social media.



June Sarpong (centre) with Team Charlie, LSE Sprint event winners 2018



Mature students

In 2018, the Widening Participation Team collaborated with the Mature Students Society to run the first one-day event for Access Students who are interested in applying to LSE. The day was filled with Undergraduate Admission advice, a taster lecture, student panel, and an opportunity to meet other LSE support services. The event was well received and will run again in 2019 with the hope of marketing the event to more colleges and encouraging even more Access Students to apply to universities including LSE.



The presentations were fantastic, they were of a really high quality which was impressive considering the short time in which the students had met and had to prepare. If they are the future, we're going to be fine! ”

June Sarpong, guest judge, LSE Sprint

Collaborative engagements

Operational Group

The group brings together a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to provide input into the WP team's operational work. We currently have representation on the group from schools/colleges, colleagues from across LSE, as well as current and former LSE students. The group meets termly to guide our pre-entry work and take on work as directed by the WP Steering Group. A key benefit of this group is that it has allowed us to create a forum to gain input and feedback to further improve our operational work. This will also allow us to enhance current projects as well as ensure new innovations, planned in relation to sector and local priorities, have the best possible impact.



The Brilliant Club

2019 sees LSE Widening Participation Team, LSE Careers and LSE PhD Academy partner with The Brilliant Club to deliver the Scholars Programme. The Scholars Programme recruits, trains and places doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in non-selective state schools on a part-time basis to deliver programmes of academic enrichment to small groups of pupils. Through a combination of university trips, in-school tutorials and online resources, The Brilliant Club support pupils aged 10-18 to develop the knowledge, skills and ambition needed to progress to highly-selective universities. This collaboration will allow LSE and the Brilliant Club to offer greater input in schools in a unique way to our existing outreach programmes.



Intouniversity

IntoUniversity provides local learning centres where young people are inspired to achieve. Each local centre IntoUniversity offers an innovative programme that supports young students from disadvantaged background to attain either a university place or another chosen aspiration. From September 2018, the LSE Widening Participation Team have partnered with IntoUniversity to sponsor the delivery of the Brent Centre Primary Focus programme. The team has already hosted 220 students at their IntoUniversity graduation with over 60 parents and carers also attending. The graduation cements the end of the Primary Focus Week and provides the opportunity to visit a university. Further plans include the involvement of LSE Academics to assist in the delivery of workshops at the Brent centre.

Schools Partnership

Over the course of the academic year, we have identified two schools with which to develop a bespoke partnership. The main aim of the partnership will be to raise attainment amongst pupils, and to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) to parents/carers and teachers at both partner schools. We are currently in the early stages of formalising the partnership. In the pilot year, we will be identifying cohorts across three year groups and seeking to create a coordinated series of events across key stages that enable students to aspire and progress towards greater levels of academic attainment, and would allow parents/carers and teachers to more effectively support students along the way. More specifically, by tracking pupils in various year groups as they progress through our offerings, we may observe whether and how the sum whole of our offerings affects progression into higher education.



The LSE Partnership with HASJW has been an invaluable opportunity – the WP team has provided the space to think innovatively and creatively about how to challenge and inspire pupils throughout their secondary school careers, in order to instil a love of learning while also ensuring preparation for the next stages of education. The partnership provides a forum through which to share best practice, and to develop tailored programmes, with the overall aim of ensuring that pupils who might experience an array of challenges preventing them from achieving their full potential, are able to do so. ”

Edita Memisi, Harris Academy, St Johns Wood



The school is delighted to be forging a stronger partnership with LSE and see their collaborative input as invaluable to strengthening our ties with higher education providers. In a highly competitive and increasingly challenging landscape accessing the expertise and skills that this successful institution has to offer will definitely incentivise, equip and motivate students in Years 7, 11 and 12 further. The school has already used the many Summer school and outreach programmes as fantastic opportunities to bolster its students awareness and readiness for a university pathway but the supplementary projects, workshops and support sessions being offered will complement and enhance their 'higher education readiness' and perspectives to a new and higher level. We are very much looking forward to this exciting and productive association. ”

Anthony Moloney, Head of Sixth Form, Barking Abbey School



Testimonials

“

I learnt more about myself and have a clearer view about what I want to do in the future... Mentoring gave me confidence and pushed me to do better in school. ”

Mentee

“

I met so many like-minded young people who I will keep in contact with for the distant future. Thanks to all the lecturers for providing a fascinating insight into their respective subjects. You've facilitated a space for young people to interact and explore and I'm genuinely so grateful. ”

LSE Compass participant

“

I've learnt what student life is like at University, and I have been shown different perspectives on topics that I did not know before. ”

Introduction to Social Sciences participant

“

The programme has not only allowed me to add to my own knowledge about the world, but has allowed me to grow as a person and to see things from different perspectives. The programme has helped me get offers from prestigious universities such as LSE. ”

LSE CHOICE student

“

I learnt so much and have become a much more confident person who is ready for university. I learnt that no matter what financial background you come from, you can still achieve your dreams through hard work, confidence and support of amazing teachers and organisers. ”

LSE CHOICE student

“

(The day) improved my motivation and gave me confidence that I will get into a university like the LSE ”

Black Achievement Conference Attendee

Engagement across the student lifecycle

Work continues to facilitate embedding participation across the lifecycle throughout LSE. The Widening Participation Team has played a part in facilitating the work highlighted below. It is delivered in collaboration with colleagues in relevant areas of LSE responsible for the outcomes and supporting the embedding of this work longer-term.

Widening Participation Steering Group

Working across the whole student lifecycle is vital to widening participation. Various initiatives see colleagues from across the School engaging in widening participation. The Widening Participation Steering Group (WPSG) continues to meet termly to oversee the strategic direction of the School's work across the student lifecycle. Consisting of representatives from professional service divisions and academic departments, the Group reviews LSE's performance in annual monitoring returns, sets the direction for the formal regulatory documents, and sets work to meet the identified needs, as well as sharing best practice from within and outside of LSE. The Group provides a steer on these issues to Education Committee and the Student Experience Sub-committee.

Analysis on degree outcomes and engagements

In 2018 we developed and ran a comprehensive multi-dimensional analysis exploring the relationship between student entry-characteristics and final degree outcomes for UK undergraduate students. The analysis included key widening participation indicators namely: low participation neighbourhood; low household income; ethnicity; age on entry; measures for prior attainment; curriculum and school type/performance; sex, and disability. Initial outputs indicated that at School level there was evidence of statistically significant unexplained gaps based on the ACORN postcode measure of household disadvantage, age on entry, and ethnicity.

This work was important as a starting point to clearly identify the current outcomes for all students to highlight inequities and ensure these would be meaningfully addressed.

The quantitative analysis provided the catalyst for a programme of work being taken forward within the School to understand the causes and address these gaps as part of the access and participation plan. This work was supplemented by a small scale analysis of engagement with services which highlighted the potential to investigate engagement in more detail to support student success for all students and was reported back to the WPSG in December 2018.

Headstart

Headstart is an initiative which has been co-created with LSE students who have taken part in LSE's pre-entry widening participation programme and are now studying at the School. The scheme is designed to aid students' transition to university and support retention and success, and has been developed in accordance with our participants' recommendations and requests. This year the scheme has included a specific offer-holders' event, pre-Welcome Week induction event and priority consideration for Student Ambassador, Mentor and Tutor roles with the WP team.

During the next term we plan to offer bespoke skill building sessions, employer networking sessions and paid internship opportunities in partnership with LSE Careers.



I found it really helpful and a great relief to find there were other students from my background and culture coming to the university. A big worry of mine was that I wouldn't meet any people I could relate to but this really changed my view. ”

Headstart student, 2018 Pre-Welcome Week Induction

Case study:

Headstart student Deborah

Deborah Afolabi is a first year BA Anthropology and Law student and a former participant on our Pathways to Law programme.

Pathways to Law was a life changing opportunity and the core reason I am currently an undergraduate student at LSE. Attaining a place on the Pathways to Law programme surrounded me with students from similar backgrounds to my own. We could all relate to one another in numerous ways and, thus, we were driven and motivated to overcome boundaries set in society together.

Whilst on the programme, I was able to expand my social network beyond my expectations. I have built professional relationships with the Pathways Mentors, graduate recruitment members, senior associates of the Law firms and my fellow peers on the programme. The programme enabled me to gain first-hand experience of life as a Law student, through visits to the LSE, lectures and conferences, and the opportunity to shadow students.

I was able to acquire a host of transferable skills and resources whilst on the programme, including the abilities to negotiate, network in a professional environment and produce an eye-catching CV. These skills were particularly useful during my work experience at the magic circle law firm Allen and Overy. The programme overall helped mould me into the Law student I am today and fostered an aspiration in me to become a solicitor at a top law firm.

Headstart has been tremendously useful in my transition into university. I have been able settle in with relative ease due to the pre-welcome week session that was held before the start of university.

Many useful sessions were delivered to us including "How to make Effective Lecture Notes". Their guidance truly helped, and I have been able to study from my notes this Christmas holiday with great ease. The Headstart team also held a networking session with various departments at the LSE, who provided us with information on a range of opportunities, from volunteering to beneficial schemes, such as the LSE SU Hardship fund. This session was extremely informative and increased my enthusiasm for starting University, as it was a reminder to the fact that university is about the balance of academics, acquiring key skills, and getting support needed.

I applied to be a Student Ambassador and Pathways Mentor at LSE because I felt a duty to give back. The widening participation team have given me so much, and their ethos in helping young people, just like myself, break boundaries is a movement I want to be a part of. So far as a Student Ambassador I have been able to visit my Sixth Form on behalf of the marketing and recruitment team and deliver a presentation on Life at LSE. Additionally, I have taken part in sessions for Year 8 students on how to think like a social scientist and have participated in Q&A sessions. My aim as a representative of LSE is to break down the common perception younger students from similar backgrounds to mine have of attending top universities, whether it's that university is too difficult, or that university isn't "made for people like them", and be a living testament to the fact that those statements are false.

During my first term here at LSE, I have been out of my comfort zone academically; my mind has been stretched past limits I didn't know existed. Ironically, I have never been so comfortable. I am surrounded by like minded yet dissimilar and fascinating people, with whom I can alleviate stress and celebrate each other's successes. So far at LSE, I have had so many remarkable encounters and the fact that I have already completed my first term is a testament to how fast this year will pass by and I intend on making every moment meaningful.



Student Staff – impact and skills development

LSE students are essential to the success of our WP programme, acting as inspirational role models and sources of information and support.



“
I loved the summer school experience. (We) could always turn to the student ambassadors for help; they were very supportive throughout the whole week.”

CHOICE Cohort 12 Participant

“
The student ambassadors were priceless and very encouraging to our pupils’ young minds.”

Brentfield Primary School Staff at a Moving On Session

“
The information the ambassadors shared about their own decisions was very useful. It was great to meet a diverse group from different years and different backgrounds.”

Staff from Stoke Newington School on an Inbound School Visit

Skills development

Our student staff navigate a competitive recruitment process for all our roles. The work is varied, including event logistics, academic and pastoral support for participants, and office administration. It is at times challenging but also very rewarding.

Through their work for the WP team LSE students have numerous opportunities for skills development to increase their confidence and to provide them with a rich variety of experiences to help them secure jobs whilst studying and after graduation. We also strive to enhance their student experience, building connections across the school between peers in different year groups and departments.

“
The experience of working on WP schemes, has enabled me to help hundreds of students navigate this critical part of their life. At the same time, the work tested my own communication and teamwork skills: essential for my CV and proving myself at interviews.”

Hanif Osman. Student Ambassador 2018

“
The programme is excellent. As a volunteer tutor, I benefitted as much as the tutee – we both learned and developed during the process.”

Tutor 2017/8

Case Study:

Student Ambassador Sam Muturi

Final year Geography student Sam Muturi has been a Student Ambassador since his first year, and also became a Mentor in 2018.

Throughout my tenure as a student ambassador I have had the opportunity to work with students of all ages from schools all over London in WP programs ranging from ACE, to Promoting Potential and the CHOICE and Year 11 summer schools. I think that when applying for the role and when you first start working, it is tempting to fall into this self-congratulatory mindset in which you are the one who is doing the young people a service by giving up your time and energy to students, giving them an insight into higher education and helping them to realise their aspirations for the future. In reality, I have learned that the relationship works both ways and for all the time and energy you put into the program, you gain so much in return, both in terms of what you can learn from the participants and also just how fun these programs can be. I also really enjoy working with the other Ambassadors. The diversity within the Ambassador cohort means that there is always something new to be learned when, whether it's about their degree and academic/career interests or about their personal interests and where they are from. It has also helped me to build up a strong network of friends across the school. The emphasis on teamwork throughout all the WP programs really encourages us to socialise and get to know each other so that we can work together better.

In my role as a Student Ambassador there have been many students whom I enjoyed working with and advising, and I sensed that they had a lot of potential and with bright futures ahead of them. However, I often wished that I had the opportunity to be able to continue helping them and to see how they would

progress in the future. I found the Mentoring scheme appealing because it provides an opportunity for me to be able to work with students on a longer-term basis.

Furthermore, on a personal level, I have some experiences in common with the students that participate in LSE WP because I too was a state school student from a low-income background. In retrospect, I think things would have been a lot easier for me if I had someone like a Student Mentor to talk to about personal, social, and academic issues, and most importantly of all, to encourage me to be confident and aspire to achieve the best. I never had a student mentor to support me in that way, so I understand the importance of the role and I want to be that person for other people.

Working with WP is always a pleasure because the whole team are really friendly and easy to get along with. There have been a variety of highlights, but I would say the main ones that stand out are; having the opportunity to be a panellist at the 2018 Black Achievement Conference and being a part of the summer school teams for the past 2 years.

Being a Student Ambassador is very valuable work experience and it is something which employers always ask me about when I am applying for jobs. Due to the nature of the way the programs are run, I have developed strong teamwork, interpersonal, and communication skills from working with other ambassadors and the WP team. Being responsible for the safety and wellbeing of groups of students has also enabled me to become more organised and refine my leadership skills. Finally, working as Student Ambassador has enabled me to access new opportunities that I otherwise would never have encountered such as becoming the LSE WP student advisor to both the LSE Widening Participation Steering Group and the AccessHE Student Advisory Group.

This is my third and final year in my role as a Student Ambassador and I can genuinely say that it has been the best part of my university experience.





Evaluation and Research

Key findings

In 2017-18, we focused on embedding the evaluation framework for our pre-entry outreach schemes that was developed in the previous year. Working towards a set of common high-level aims and objectives, the team gathered data in a variety of ways to measure key changes in participants' attitudes and knowledge.

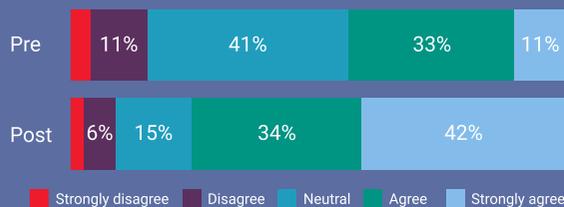
Throughout the year we also undertook a number of discrete projects which will inform how LSE widens participation across the student lifecycle. To better understand which indicators provide the best chance of reaching students from disadvantaged geographical areas, we undertook an analysis of three key postcode metrics: Participation of Local Areas (POLAR), Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Acorn (page 19). To increase our awareness of young peoples' attitudes and

expectations in relation to finance and plans for the future, we carried out a multifaceted project involving a literature review, focus groups and a large scale survey of applicants to our pre-entry programmes (page 18). Finally, to explore the relationship between degree outcomes and different individual characteristics, we undertook an evidence-informed regression analysis using five years of institutional data on behalf of the School (page 12), actions required on the back of this work are now being undertaken in the Academic and Professional Development Division.

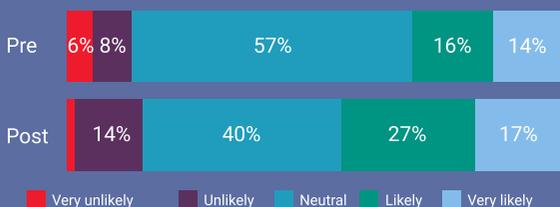
In 2018-19, we are making greater use of quasi-experimental methods to tell us more about the link between attainment and participation in our intensive programmes. In addition, we will begin to grow our evaluation practice through the generation of programme-level Theories of Change.

After participating in our of our activities, students better understand the funding available for university study and are more likely to make an application to LSE

There is plenty of financial support available to students that will enable me to study at university (n = 446)

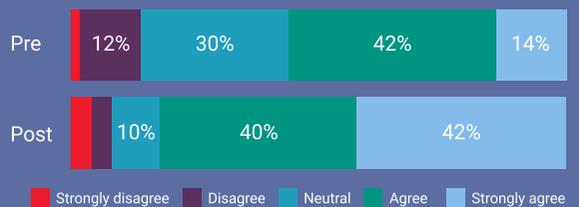


How likely are you to apply to LSE? (n = 405)

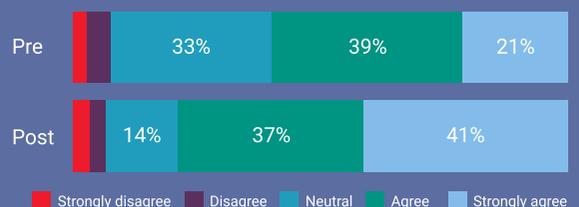


After spending time at LSE, students feel more connected to university life and believe that they would enjoy the student experience

I would have time to work and take part in social activities while studying at university (n = 444)



I would have fun at university (n = 436)



Work and Finance study

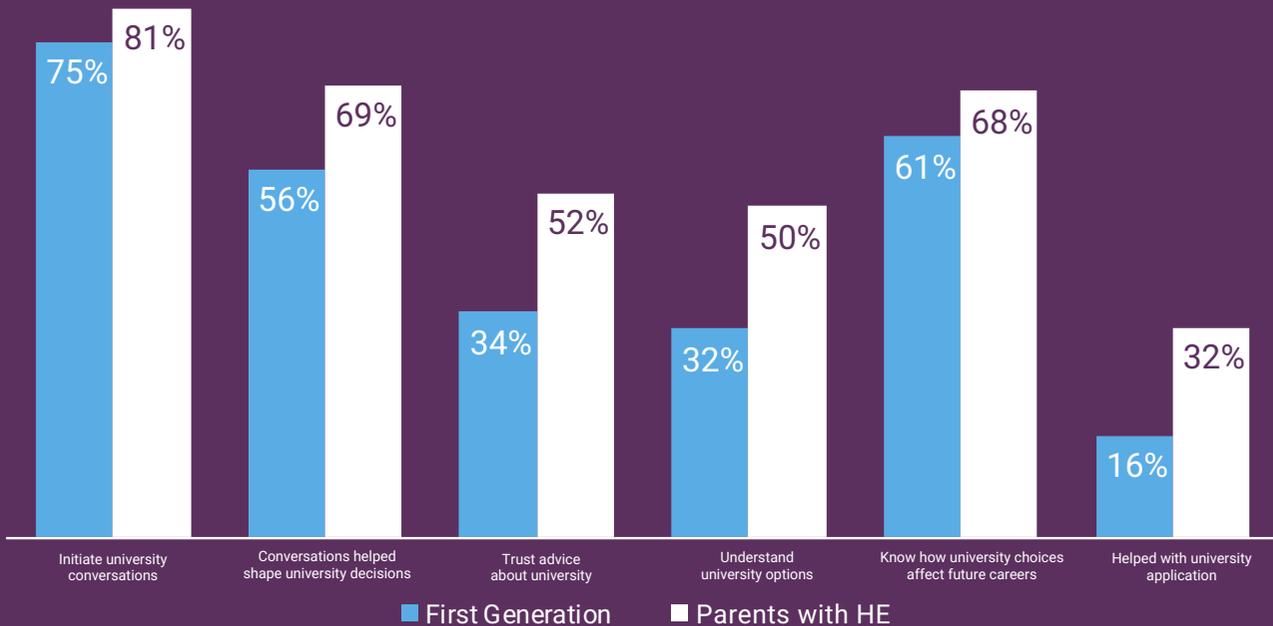
In 2018 we carried out an ambitious research project to better understand students' attitudes towards and expectations of work, university and their future careers, as well as exploring current behaviours related to these attitudes, such as who students approach for advice. This project included commissioning a literature review, conducting focus groups with participants in some of our pre-entry schemes, and carrying out a large-scale, in-depth online survey. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants to our outreach programmes were invited to take part in the survey and over 650 complete responses were received.

One of the key pieces of information collected about survey participants was whether or not either of their parents or carers

had gone to university. Preliminary findings suggest differences between 'first generation' and non-first generation responses to a range of questions, including who young people go to for information and advice to guide their university and career decisions. Results suggest that first generation students are generally less likely to draw upon their parents or carers as a resource when planning their next steps. However, results did not indicate any difference in intention to apply to university between first generation and non-first generation students, with around 80 per cent of both groups saying they will 'definitely apply'.

This research project has provided us with a rich source of insight into young people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to university and work, and we will be publishing a full report on the findings later this year.

Parents/carers as a source of information, advice and support (Year 12 focus)



Postcode research

Over the last year we conducted a piece of research evaluating the relevance of demographic indicators other than the sector-standard POLAR metric to help target our activities as efficiently as we can.

Acorn, POLAR4 and IMD use different data sources and methodologies to articulate “disadvantage”. In particular, Acorn and IMD focus on socio-economic disadvantage rather than the single criterion of HE participation.

POLAR4 suggests that in urban environments other than London, 46-66 per cent of the population are “disadvantaged”. In London, seven per cent of the population are “disadvantaged”. IMD and Acorn have more consistent classification proportions within urban environments. Of any urban environment, London has the biggest difference between the proportion of people considered “disadvantaged” by the different classification measures.

Key findings of the research were that POLAR4 on its own is not an adequate data-point to identify students who may benefit from interventions and support. It fails to identify a large number of London students who are socio-economically deprived, according to other more rounded/ granular classifications (ie, Acorn and IMD).

POLAR4 on its own is also not an adequate measure for ‘disadvantaged’ student outcomes once they are at university,

despite its current widespread use for this purpose. This is key for the “whole lifecycle” approach to WP as there’s evidence that socio-economic factors can affect student continuation and success rates.

We concluded that because these metrics (POLAR, ACORN, IMD) capture different things and therefore likely reflect different underlying causes for low participation, universities should be encouraged to target and monitor their progress on access for each group separately. Solely employing POLAR prevents universities from fully understanding how to make their admissions and degree provision genuinely inclusive.

- **Acorn** is a segmentation tool which categorises the UK’s population into demographic types utilising data such as the census. It analyses social factors and population behaviour in order to provide detailed differentiation between households.
- **IMD** is measure of relative deprivation for small geographical areas combining seven domains including income, employment and education.
- **POLAR** groups geographical areas according to the proportion of young people living in that area that participate in Higher Education by the age of 19.





MACAT and Brilliant Club collaboration – evidence based approach to assessment schemes impact on participant attainment



The LSE Widening Participation team are collaborating with The Brilliant Club and MACAT on a research project exploring how universities can support attainment in schools.

Universities are required by the Office for Students (OfS) to support students from under-represented backgrounds into higher education and have been asked to provide evidence that their outreach and pre-entry support activities contribute to raise attainment among participants. The link between critical thinking and attainment is widely recognised as a central aim of education, and one of the key skills needed for higher education and the workplace.

Research has also indicated that a pupil's background is an important factor contributing to critical thinking, and that individuals from less affluent backgrounds are less likely to increase their critical thinking whilst at university (Cheung *et al*, 2001)*

To support LSE's priorities, The Brilliant Club will evaluate the impact of WP's LSE CHOICE programme on Year 13 students' critical thinking skills. Over the course of two years 120 CHOICE students will take part in the work.

We will adopt an "infused approach" and explicitly teach critical thinking within the context of subject knowledge alongside teaching general critical thinking skills. This critical thinking infused version of LSE CHOICE will be compared to normal LSE CHOICE. We expect the group that receives the infused critical thinking version of LSE CHOICE will show greater gains in subject-specific and general critical thinking than the LSE CHOICE group. Findings will be collated and published at the end of the 2019/20 CHOICE programme.

*(Cheung, C K, Rudowicz, E, Lang, G, Yue, X D, and Kwan, A S (2001). Critical thinking among university students: Does the family background matter? College Student Journal, 35, 577-598)



“

As an Admissions Specialist, it's important that we work closely with our peers in WP. In addition to our admissions work, we assist in many WP events and programmes. This year, I've had the pleasure of giving presentations to parents, carers, and students at the Promoting Potential launch, mature students event and the launch of Pathways to Law and LSE CHOICE, to name a few. These presentations aim to demystify and familiarise the application process to students. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is assisting the WP team with LSE CHOICE. It's really fulfilling to be able to engage with students at different stages in their schooling; their CHOICE application, the launch, the personal statement workshops, and finally the admissions stage where they may receive an offer from LSE. It underscores that a successful application and getting into university is just one stage of many in widening participation in HE. This is why the Operational Group will be immensely important as it will provide the space for different stakeholders and individuals across the sector to discuss a range of issues pertaining to WP. ”

Sarah Mak, Admissions and Access Specialist, Member of the WP Operational Group

In progress initiatives

We are planning a number of developments across widening participation throughout the next year.

Governor Community of Practice

As part of LSE's commitment to support the strategic direction of schools and support attainment, Summer Term 2018 saw the establishment of a Governor community of practice. This is for LSE staff who are governors in local schools/colleges to join together and explore development opportunities and share best practice about having a governance role and the services LSE provides for schools and colleges. It was agreed that this would be most effective if it was a virtual network with minimal meetings but a common space for sharing information. As such a collaborative MS Teams space has been set-up. Anyone interested in joining should contact the LSE WP Team who manage this.



Bespoke work for key groups

In 2019 the WP team will begin work to design and deliver two bespoke initiatives. One for care experienced young people, care leavers, and estranged students and a second for students with a disability. They will aim to provide access and insight into Higher Education along with information on specific services and support available to both groups. These will be devised in collaboration with colleagues from across LSE and external organisations too.

Find out more

To find out more about our work, visit lse.ac.uk/wideningparticipation

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