



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
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# LSE Springboard

**Evaluation report: The first three years**

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With thanks to the participants of LSE Springboard 2023-2025.

## Executive Summary

This report evaluates the first three years of [LSE Springboard](#), a 10-month widening participation programme for year 12 state school students from UK regions outside London and the South East. The programme combines in-person campus visits, admissions guidance and online webinars with super-curricular academic enrichment delivered in collaboration with [The Brilliant Club](#). The programme was developed to broaden the geographic reach of LSE's widening participation work and to support students from underrepresented backgrounds to make informed decisions about LSE and studying in London. The findings of this evaluation will be used to support future development of LSE Springboard.

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What research questions were explored?

1. What is the impact of LSE Springboard on participants' understanding of LSE and their sense of academic and social belonging?
  2. What is the impact on participants' academic skills and self-efficacy?
  3. Does taking part in LSE Springboard influence participants' attitude towards moving to London for university?
  4. Are shifts in participant outcomes at the midpoint of the programme reliable predictors of end-of-programme outcomes?
  5. To what extent do LSE Springboard participant applications and offers support LSE's institutional goals to increase representation from diverse UK regions and TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2?
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How did we seek to answer these questions?

The evaluation used a mixed-methods design, drawing on pre-programme, midpoint and post-programme surveys, assignment data from The Brilliant Club, participant focus groups, and administrative and admissions data. Across the first three cohorts, 133 students completed Springboard. Of these students, 110 completed both the pre- and post-programme surveys, and 95 completed both the baseline and final academic assignments. Survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, while qualitative responses and focus group data were analysed thematically.

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Key findings

- **Improved understanding of LSE and university study:** knowledge of what studying at university would be like increased from 37% to 98%. Large improvements were also observed in understanding of student life and student support services at LSE. Qualitative feedback indicates that contact with Student

Ambassadors and campus visits were especially important in helping participants see LSE as a realistic and accessible option.

- **A stronger sense of belonging:** feelings around identity and belonging increased across all measures, with belief around fitting in socially at university increasing from 71% to 90%. Campus visits and interactions with Student Ambassadors were integral to this change.
- **Supported academic development:** Among the 95 participants who completed both university-style assignments, the average mark increased by 9 percentage points. For the 87 participants with full sub-mark data, average progress was +7.9 in written communication, +9.1 in critical thinking and +9.8 in subject knowledge.
- **Academic self-efficacy remained high:** there was little overall change to academic self-efficacy due to high baseline scores.
- **More informed decision-making about London:** participants recognised that Springboard helped them to gain a realistic sense of living at LSE and in London. Views about staying in their home region or relocating for university became more definite by the end of the programme, with cost a key driver in decision-making.
- **Encouraging LSE admissions outcomes:** as of May 2026, 66 of the 133 participants (50%) had applied to LSE, submitting 74 applications. Of these applications, 39 resulted in an offer, giving an offer rate of 52.7%. This was more than double the offer rate for Home UK (HUK) fee status applications from TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2 and 2.5 times higher than the offer rate amongst all HUK applications.

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## Recommendations

1. **Preserve the valued campus visits and LSE student interaction, which are key mechanisms of change:** ensure these remain key programme components, particularly both structured and informal time with LSE students.
2. **Enhance writing support to strengthen written communication gains:** liaise with the Brilliant Club and/or with academic development colleagues at LSE to support students to plan, structure and edit their writing.
3. **Use midpoint survey data as an operational tool for targeted support:** offer light-touch follow-up support in the second half of the programme to students who show lower than average belonging and clarity about LSE at the midpoint.
4. **Refine the Theory of Change and evaluation around academic self-efficacy:** clarify whether the intended outcome is growth, maintenance, or a more LSE-specific form of academic confidence.

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- 2.4 Are shifts in participant outcomes at the midpoint predictors of end-of-programme outcomes?
- 2.5 To what extent do participant applications and offers support LSE's institutional goals to increase representation from diverse UK regions and TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2?

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Preserve the valued campus visits and LSE student interaction, which are key mechanisms of change
- 3.2 Enhance writing support to strengthen written communication gains
- 3.3 Use midpoint survey data as an operational tool for targeted support
- 3.4 Refine the Theory of Change and evaluation around academic self-efficacy

## 1 Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of the first three cohorts of the LSE Springboard programme, a widening participation initiative for year 12 students. The following section details the background and aims of the programme and outlines the evaluation design and purpose.

### 1.1 Intervention

[LSE Springboard](#) is a 10-month, no-cost widening access programme for years 12-13 state school students who live in UK regions outside London and South East England. Launched in 2022/23, it aims to help students unlock their academic potential and become more familiar with LSE as a higher education destination. The programme is delivered in a hybrid format, combining three in-person campus visits with online webinars, tutorials and workshops.

The programme was established to broaden the geographic reach of LSE's widening participation work (which had historically focused on communities local to LSE) and to contribute to the reduction of place-based disparities in social mobility.

Annual Department for Education data shows that on average, students from regions outside of London achieve lower GCSE and A-level grades compared to their peers in the capital. Research for these regions also suggests that both attainment and access to information, advice and guidance (IAG) about higher education can influence university access for students living in low participation areas (defined as TUNDRA quintile 1 and 2 areas). During an internal feedback session in 2023/24, current LSE students from outside of London described how the quality and availability of IAG in their schools had been limited, and that teachers and advisers often did not have enough knowledge about LSE or other highly-selective universities to support them in their application journey and decisions.

Springboard responds to these challenges by offering increased exposure to LSE, academic development opportunities and tailored admissions guidance, with the aim of strengthening both university readiness and informed decision-making. Participants visit the LSE campus, gain insight into student life from Student Ambassadors, and take part in super-curricular academic enrichment with [The Brilliant Club](#). This academic element includes university-style tutoring from LSE postgraduate students.

Through its intended outcomes, the programme aims to support students to develop:

- a stronger sense of social and academic belonging at LSE
- academic skills and self-efficacy for university-style learning
- a positive perception of LSE as a viable and beneficial place to study
- an informed view of whether moving to London for university is right for them
- knowledge of the LSE and university admissions process, so that they feel confident submitting an undergraduate application to LSE.

Completion of LSE Springboard leads to eligibility for a contextual offer from LSE. Research has found that [LSE's contextual offer scheme](#) has a positive effect on contextual offer holders' initial consideration of top universities as one of their five choices and a significantly positive impact on selecting LSE as a firm choice if they receive an offer (Schulte and Benson-Eggleton, 2024).

Across the first three cohorts, 133 students completed LSE Springboard. They began the programme in January of year 12 and finished the programme in November of year 13. Participants in these cohorts had the following characteristics:

LSE Widening Participation priority group	Participants
Low university participation areas (TUNDRA quintile 1 or 2)	74%
Eligible for free school meals during their secondary education	45%
First generation in family to attend university	64%
Care-experienced student	9%

Table 1: Characteristics of LSE Springboard participants for 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 (n=133)

In line with patterns observed for LSE's other widening participation programmes, 70% of attendees were female, 29% were male, and 1% preferred not to say.

The largest number of participants were from the West Midlands and the East of England.

Participants over the three cohorts came from 99 unique schools across 48 local authorities in England and Wales. Of these 99 schools, 42 schools (42%) were schools that the LSE Widening Participation team had not engaged with before across any widening participation programme.

**Note:** Throughout this report, the following cohort labels will be used to refer to the respective programme years.

- Cohort 1: 2022-23
- Cohort 2: 2023-24
- Cohort 3: 2024-25

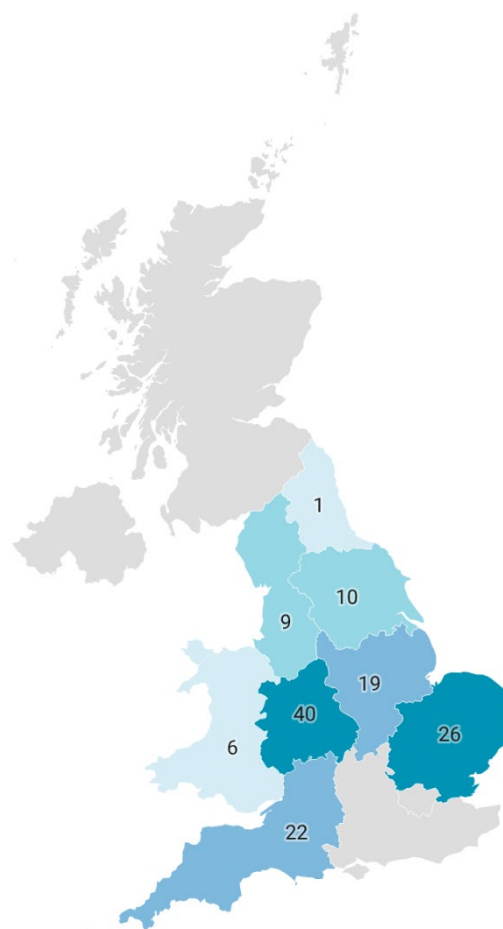


Figure 1: Home regions of LSE Springboard participants (n=133)

## 1.2 Previous Work

Existing research suggests that intensive widening participation programmes containing academic components and engagement with student staff can support participants' applications to competitive universities (TASO, 2023 and HEAT, 2025). These findings map onto Springboard's design, which combines academic tutoring with sustained interaction with LSE students.

In LSE Springboard, participants undertake a bespoke version of [The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme](#), engaging with online tutorials delivered by LSE PhD Tutors and completing a university-style graded assignment. In 2022/23, a UCAS study found that participants of the Scholars Programme were 'significantly more likely to apply to a competitive university than students from similar backgrounds' and that 21% of participants might not have applied to a competitive university without the programme (The Brilliant Club, 2023). There is also evidence that widening participation activities delivered by university student staff help school students to explore and develop their learner and higher education student identity (Gartland, 2015).

In addition, using Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) data, TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education) found that taking part in programmes with a similar intensity and duration to LSE Springboard is associated with increased progression to 'top third' institutions (TASO, 2021).

## 1.3 Research Questions

The introduction of the programme marked a new phase in LSE's widening participation strategy, developed in response to both sector-wide regional access gaps and a decline in undergraduate enrolments at LSE from students living outside of London and the South East. As a multi-touchpoint, long-term programme, Springboard offers a wide variety of opportunities and support for participants. Consequently, there are a range of research questions of interest, relating to both the programme's impact on participants and to its impact on LSE as an institution. As the programme continues to grow in popularity and broaden its geographic reach, this is a useful point to reflect on the outcomes and impacts observed to date.

This evaluation seeks to answer:

1. What is the impact of LSE Springboard on participants' understanding of LSE and their sense of academic and social belonging?
2. What is the impact on participants' academic skills and self-efficacy?
3. Does taking part in LSE Springboard influence participants' attitude towards moving to London for university?
4. Are shifts in participant outcomes at the midpoint of the programme reliable predictors of end-of-programme outcomes?

5. To what extent do LSE Springboard participant applications and offers support LSE's institutional goals to increase representation from diverse UK regions and TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2?

#### **1.4 Methodology and Ethics**

This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to examine the contribution of LSE Springboard to participant outcomes and to LSE's undergraduate access objectives. The approach combined impact and process evaluation to capture the breadth of intended outcomes, variation in participant experience and the early years of the programme.

Data was collected at key points before, during and after the programme through the following methods:

- Pre-programme, midpoint and post-programme surveys
- Baseline and final assignment grades
- Feedback activities to obtain reflections on specific programme events
- 90-minute virtual post-programme participant focus groups, co-facilitated by a member of LSE's WP Team and a Student Ambassador who had worked on the programme
- Administrative data, including programme application and attendance records
- LSE undergraduate admissions data, used to identify any patterns in applications, offers and enrolments amongst participants

Of the 133 participants who completed the Springboard programme,

- 132 completed the pre survey (99% completion rate)
- 122 completed the midpoint survey (92% completion rate)
- 112 completed the post survey (84% completion rate)
- 110 (83%) completed both the pre and post surveys
- 95 (71%) completed both the baseline and final academic assignments

Surveys contained quantitative scales and open-text questions aligned to the programme's intended outcomes for participants. Repeated items on sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, study skills, admissions knowledge, and intentions around applying to LSE and moving away from home for university were included across the three surveys, enabling analysis of change over time at cohort level. Open-ended questions invited participants to provide more detail on their experiences during LSE Springboard and to explore how their intentions about relocating for university had developed.

Shortly after the end of the programme, one focus group per cohort was conducted in November of year 13 with 2, 4, and 6 participants respectively in each cohort. The focus group allowed more in-depth and free-flowing exploration of complex topics like sense

of belonging and university decision-making, and enabled participants to reflect on how their views had developed over the course of the programme. Alongside the programme's WP Coordinator, a Student Ambassador who had supported the cohort was invited to co-facilitate the focus group, promoting peer-led discussion and a more informal environment for the year 13 participants. Survey and focus group data was analysed thematically to identify recurring themes, and the focus group data complemented survey findings by providing additional contextual insight.

Quantitative survey data was analysed through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Survey responses were linked to participant characteristic data to explore patterns and differences in outcomes between participant groups.

An overarching limitation of this research is the position of LSE and its role in students' futures, whereby LSE will make decisions on LSE Springboard participants' applications should they choose to apply for undergraduate study at LSE. Although students are informed that there is no link between their evaluation contributions and any future interactions with LSE, this dynamic may nevertheless influence some participants' responses, leading them to be overly positive or to withhold negative feedback. Whilst students are encouraged to be honest, this limitation is an inherent risk in all higher education research activity with students who will later be subject to individual-level decision-making by the institution.

Additional limitations also exist in relation to the evaluation design and purpose. Participants self-selected into joining the programme and the evaluation considers the outcomes of those who completed the programme and remained engaged over 10 months. This could mean that students who took part in the programme or evaluation are particularly motivated students and/or are students who did not face challenges in completing the programme. Furthermore, the timeline of the evaluation means that participants' knowledge, perceptions and behaviours are captured up to the point of applying to university, but the evaluation does not necessarily suggest a longer-term continuation of observed outcomes beyond this stage.

Ethics approval was sought and granted for this evaluation.

## 2 Findings

This section presents the findings of the mixed-methods evaluation.

### 2.1 What is the impact of LSE Springboard on participants' understanding of LSE and their sense of academic and social belonging?

Springboard aims to increase participants' familiarity with, and exposure to, LSE. This includes developing a more accurate sense of what studying at LSE is like and forming an opinion on whether LSE is the right destination for them. The findings below draw on repeated pre-post survey items and qualitative survey and focus group data to examine whether participants' understanding around this changed.

#### General knowledge of university

Before looking at LSE-specific measures, it is useful to first examine changes in participants' general knowledge of university, which logically acts as a foundation for interpreting any change in LSE-specific understanding. Figure 2 shows that by the end of the programme, most participants felt positively about their knowledge of university and the 'disagree' responses for each statement had been eliminated. There was a 61-percentage point increase in knowledge of what studying at university would be like and a 12-percentage point increase in confidence about gaining a university place.

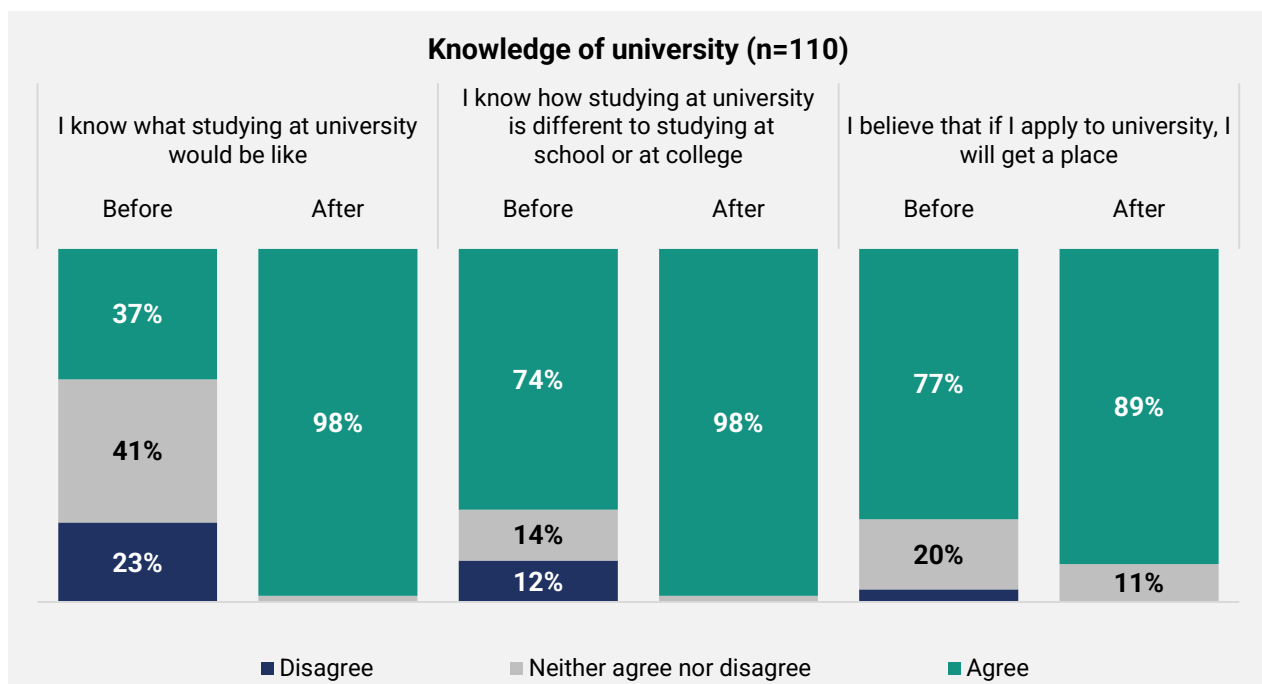


Figure 2: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, aggregating 'agree' and 'disagree' options. Scale sourced from TASO's validated Access and Success Questionnaire.

## Knowledge of LSE

Amongst this broader context, Springboard also had a positive or affirming impact on participants' understanding of LSE specifically. The magnitude of impact was influenced by varied baseline scores for different aspects of understanding, with lower baseline scores experiencing positive change and high baseline scores seeing an affirmation effect.

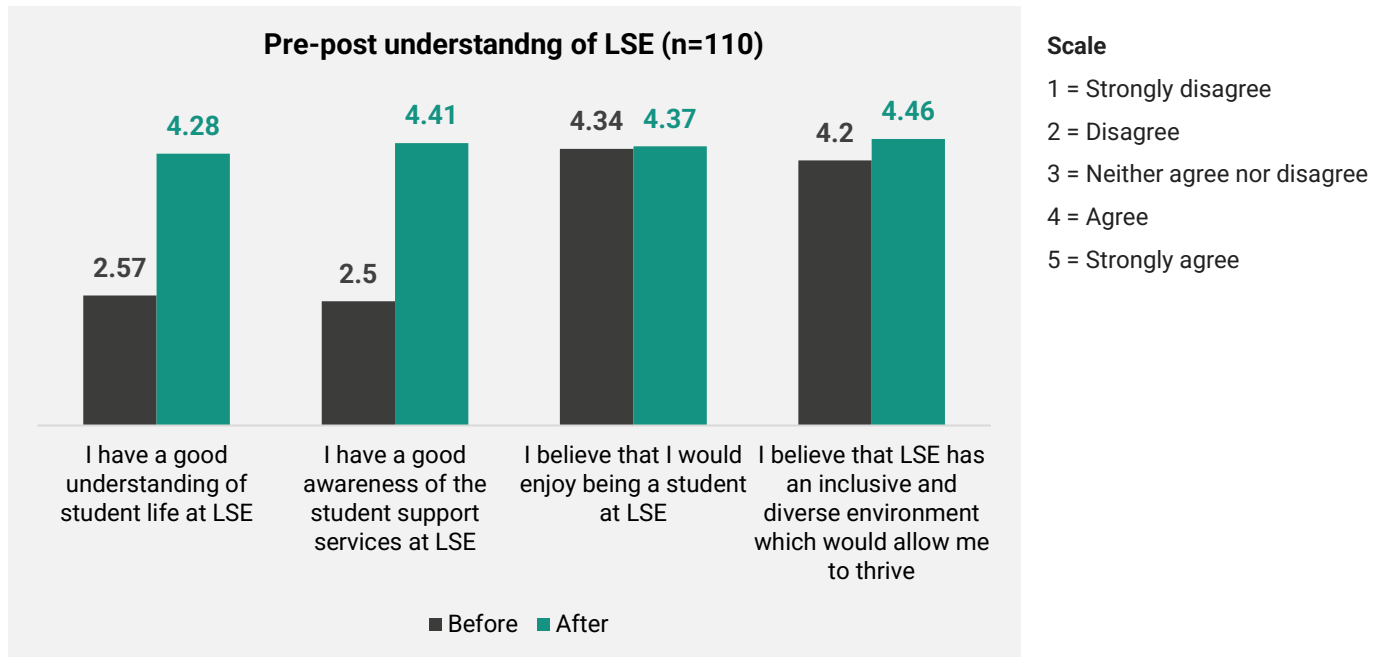


Figure 3: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, with 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree' responses scored as 1 to 5.

On average across **all participants**, the largest improvements were in understanding of LSE student life and awareness of LSE support services. This suggests that the programme helps to make LSE more accessible and navigable. Meanwhile, belief in enjoying being an LSE student showed negligible change, but baseline scores were already high at the start of programme. Holding this belief was likely a key motivation for applying to take part in the programme in the first place, so a lower baseline would be unexpected.

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“ I feel a lot more comfortable applying to LSE now over some other universities as I've been there, and I know more what studying and day-to-day life is actually going to be like. ”

Springboard participant, Cohort 2 focus group

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These overall patterns mask differences between subgroups which suggest that Springboard may be particularly beneficial for some participants in areas and communities where access to information, advice and guidance about highly-selective universities may be more limited.

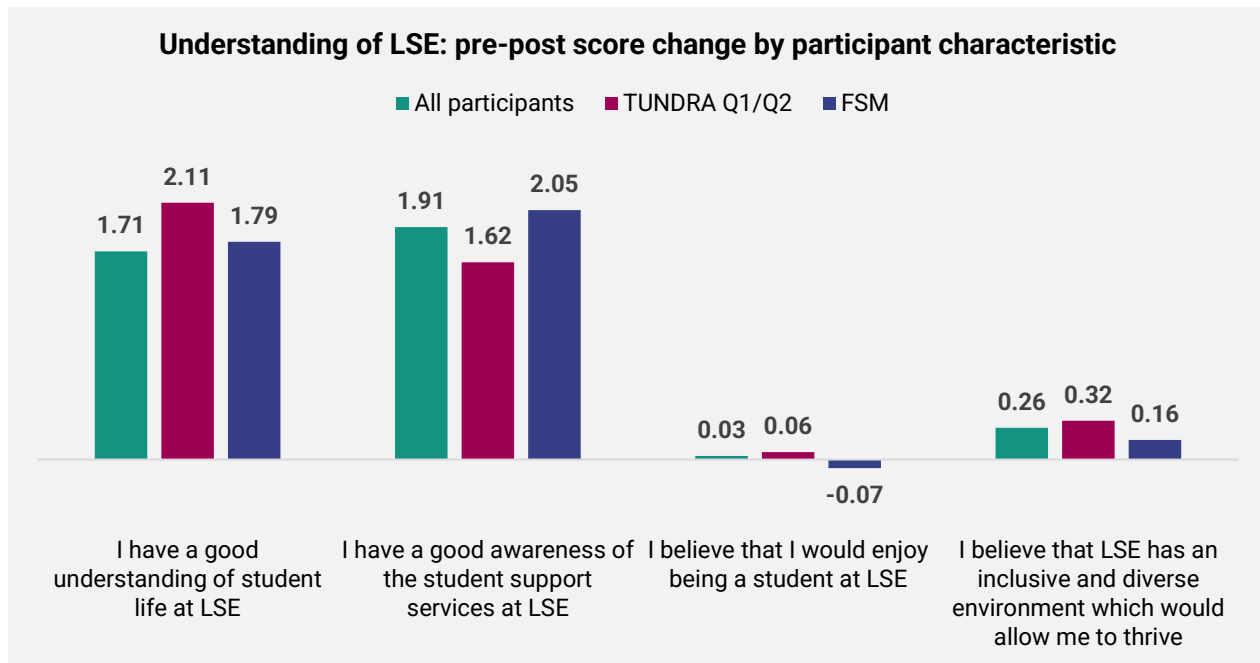


Figure 4: Score change in participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, with 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree' responses scored as 1 to 5.

Participants from lower university participation areas (**TUNDRA Q1/Q2**) showed a stronger than average improvement in understanding of student life at LSE and in the belief that LSE offers an environment in which they could thrive. Participants eligible for free school meals (**FSM**) showed greater than average improvement in awareness of student support services at LSE.

These findings suggest that Springboard contributes to demystifying LSE for its priority widening participation groups, with some of the strongest success in measures relating to practical knowledge and institutional accessibility.

## Sense of belonging

Alongside knowledge and perceptions of LSE, Springboard also aims to strengthen participants' sense of academic and social belonging.

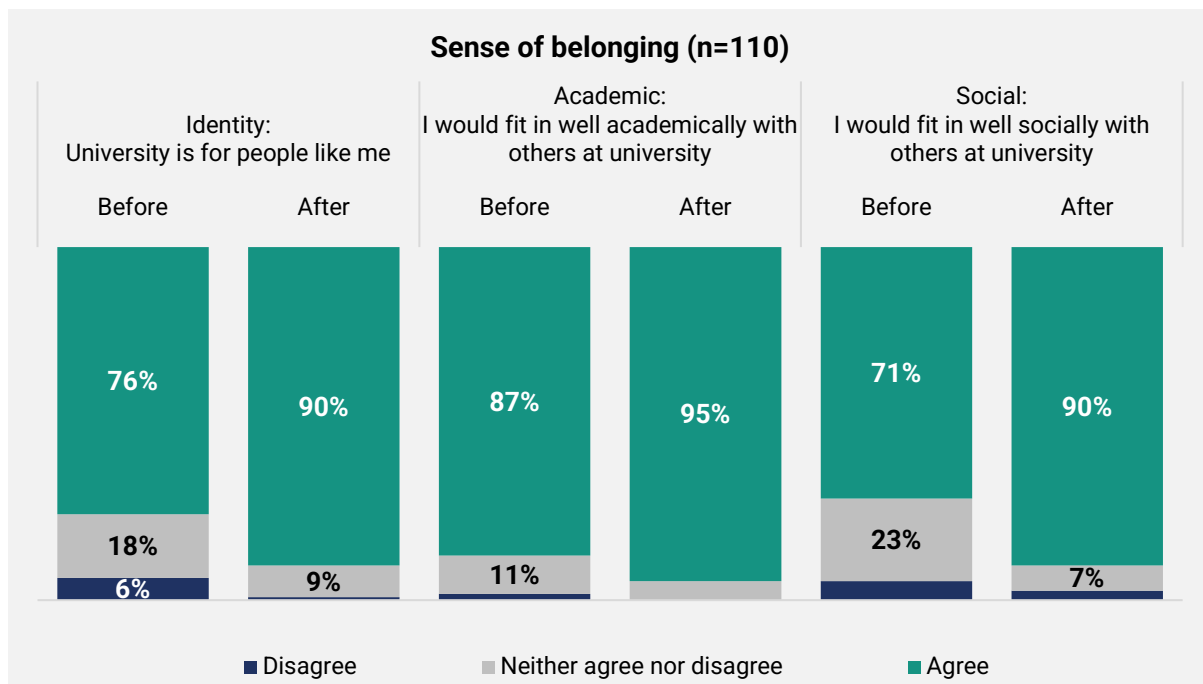


Figure 5: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, aggregating 'agree' and 'disagree' options. Scale sourced from TASO's validated Access and Success Questionnaire.

Across cohorts, the three sense of belonging measures displayed notable positive improvement at the group-level by the end of the programme, with participants converging towards mainly positive responses. Importantly, many participants who were uncertain before the intervention reported positive sentiments after participating, particularly in relation to social belonging at university. This suggests that the programme helped participants form more concrete feelings and expectations about fitting in.

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“ LSE Springboard has shown me that the LSE isn't some magical, mysterious institution which is inaccessible, but rather a friendly, curious environment full of interesting people ”

**Springboard participant, Cohort 1 post-programme survey**

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To explore how these dimensions of belonging related to one another, correlations between the three measures were explored before and after the programme. Correlation analysis across the cohorts showed moderate positive correlations between all three measures at both timepoints. This highlights the interconnected nature of the sense of belonging components, with Springboard participants who felt positive about one

measure tending to feel positive about the others. Nevertheless, as correlations were always moderate rather than strong, the measures can be considered as interconnected but still distinct. This indicates the value of continuing to track each component in future evaluation.

Sense of belonging measures	Correlation before ( <i>r</i> )	Correlation after ( <i>r</i> )	Change	Correlation strength (before → after)
Identity and academic	0.42	0.60	+0.18	Moderate → Moderate
Academic and social	0.57	0.51	-0.06	Moderate → Moderate
Social and identity	0.58	0.55	+0.03	Moderate → Moderate

Table 2: Correlation between sense of belonging survey measures, before and after the programme.

By the end of the programme, the correlation between “*university is for people like me*” and “*I would fit in well academically with others at university*” strengthened (while remaining moderate). This stronger link suggests that the programme may have helped some participants connect or align their identity with their university academic self-perception and integration expectations. In other words, the programme may have contributed to the reduction of academic self-doubt in a university setting for some participants.

Qualitative feedback helps clarify some of the mechanisms underpinning these changes. Participants frequently explained that the campus visits helped them to visualise life at LSE, with many framing the experience as pivotal in helping them see LSE as a place where they could belong and thrive. One participant remarked that during the campus visits, “*all the information about LSE was finally put into perspective*”. Meeting current LSE students also helped to correct misconceptions and reduced perceived distance between participants and university life; one participant noted that it “*made the whole idea of university feel less intimidating*”. Direct exposure to LSE and near-peer insight and interactions can therefore be recognised as key mechanisms underpinning positive shifts in participants’ familiarity and belonging.

Taken together, the quantitative shifts and participant reflections indicate that Springboard supports both clearer understanding of LSE and stronger expectations of academic and social belonging, enabled by campus-based experiences and interactions with Student Ambassadors.

## 2.2 What is the impact on participants' academic skills and self-efficacy?

During LSE Springboard, participants experienced several academic-focused elements, including:

- a bespoke version of The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme, consisting of four university-style tutorials, plus graded baseline and final essay assignments with individualised feedback from their PhD Tutor
- an LSE100 workshop
- an information session on studying at LSE
- insight from Student Ambassadors about their experience of studying at LSE

Considering both pre-post survey and baseline-final assignment data shows that overall, there was a positive impact on participants' academic skills and a negligible impact on their academic self-efficacy (see section below). However, the capacity to impact academic self-efficacy was limited due to strong baseline results creating a ceiling effect.

### Development during the academic enrichment

Firstly, analysis of assignment data and participant reflections collected during the academic enrichment with The Brilliant Club highlights academic gains. Due to operational challenges which affected assignment completions (particularly during Cohorts 1 and 2), 95 of the 133 participants completed both the baseline and final assignments. These challenges have since been addressed jointly by LSE and The Brilliant Club. However, this completion rate could mean that engaged participants are over-represented, leading to a slight inflation in reported gains for the included cohorts.

Participants completed a themed essay assignment after attending four tutorials on the topic, and the same Tutor marked their baseline and final assignment out of a maximum 100 marks.

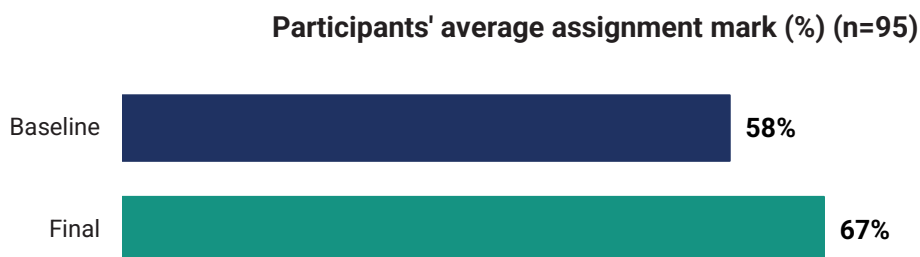


Figure 6: Participants' average mark for the baseline and final essay assignments with The Brilliant Club.

Figure 6 shows that participants' average assignment mark increased by 9 percentage points, equivalent to a 15.5% increase compared to their baseline mark. This represents movement towards a higher grade band and suggests improved readiness for university-level study. To provide the overall mark, participants were assessed by their Tutor on

their subject knowledge, written communication skills, and critical thinking skills. Tutors awarded a mark out of 100 for these areas and averaged the marks to generate the overall assignment mark.

Of the 95 participants who completed both assignments, skills and knowledge matched baseline and final sub marks are available for 87 participants due to one Tutor in Cohort 1 not submitting the breakdown of marks for their tutorial group.

On average across these 87 participants, there was observed progress in knowledge and skills across all measures:

Assignment sub-mark criteria	Average baseline mark (max 100)	Average final mark (max 100)	Average mark progress (final – baseline)
Written communication	56	63.9	7.9
Critical thinking	56.2	65.3	9.1
Subject knowledge	55.9	65.7	9.8

Table 3: Participants' average baseline and final sub-marks for assessed skills and knowledge, and their average progress (n=87).

Consideration of the proportion of participants who made progress and the average mark progress showed that subject knowledge was the area with the most growth for participants. This is particularly positive as all tutorial and essay topics were super-curricular in nature, meaning that nearly all participants were able to successfully engage with new and challenging subject knowledge outside of their normal classroom setting.

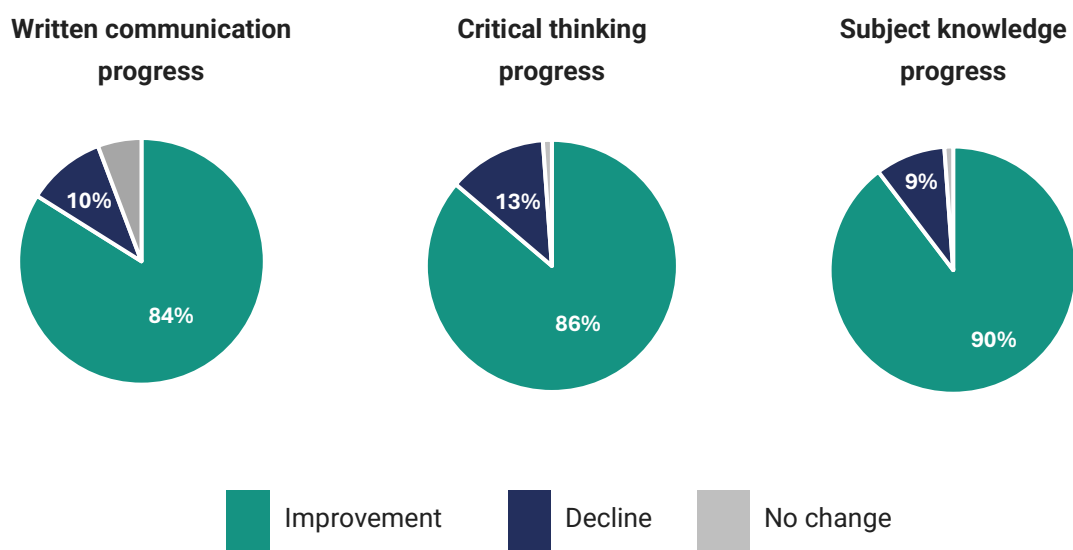


Figure 7: Proportion of participants making progress in each skill and knowledge measure (n=87).

Written communication was the area with the most challenges, with a lower mark progress (7.9) compared to critical thinking (9.1) and subject knowledge (9.8). Furthermore, by the end of the enrichment, 9 participants had declined in their written communication mark and 5 showed no change. Across all cohorts, students repeatedly requested more guidance on structuring their essays in survey feedback. These findings may suggest that the academic enrichment model and timeframe were more aligned to developing conceptual understanding, whereas written communication may be more strongly influenced by individual starting points and require more explicit support or sustained practice over a longer period.

Through an optional LSE survey following completion of the academic enrichment, participants reflected further on their learning during this component, and reported consistently positive experiences:

Participant reflection	Participants agreeing (n=68)
I have a better understanding of degree-level study	100%
I have developed my academic skills	96%

Table 4: Participant reflections on their academic development following The Brilliant Club enrichment (n=68).

Qualitative survey and focus group data also revealed the wider benefits of the academic enrichment for some participants:

- personalised feedback acted as a mechanism for academic improvement
- the experience conveyed a clear understanding of academic standards at degree level
- participants gained concrete skills that they recognised as being of long-term value (researching, referencing, engaging with other people's perspectives)
- the process provided a relevant and super-curricular academic experience to include in their personal statement

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*"I especially appreciated the feedback on the assignments, the detailed feedback felt very personal and like advice I could apply in and outside of school and that I can take with me to uni."*

**Springboard participant, Cohort 2 post-academic enrichment survey**

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### Study strategies

Similar to the skills development identified above, participants' survey responses at the beginning and end of the Springboard programme overall showed progress across a range of study strategies.

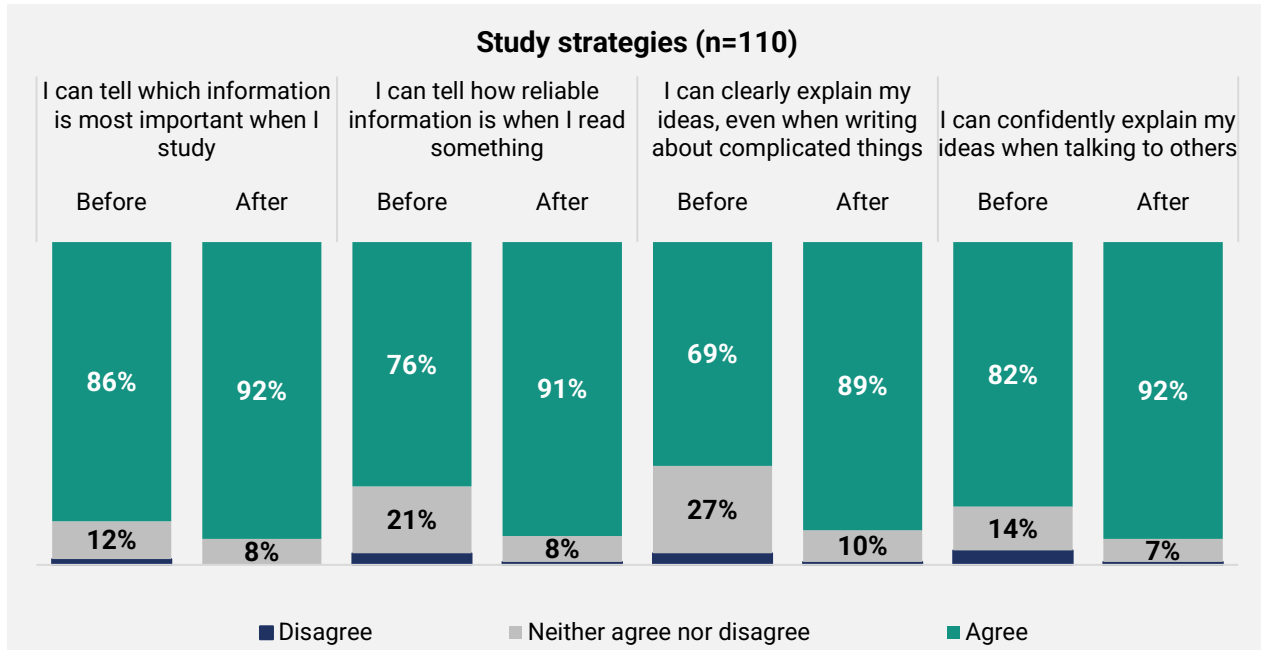


Figure 8: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, aggregating 'agree' and 'disagree' options. Scale sourced from TASO's validated Access and Success Questionnaire.

### Academic self-efficacy

Whilst skills improved, on average participants reported a negligible change in their academic self-efficacy, which remained high and stable before and after the programme.

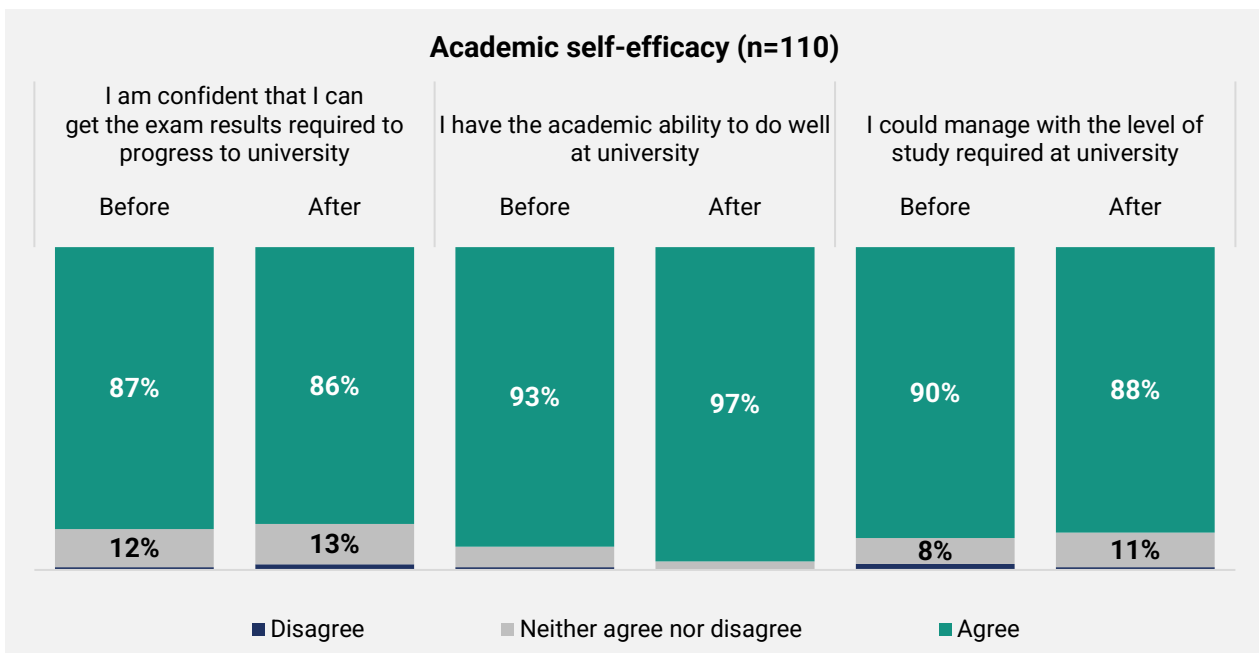


Figure 9: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, aggregating 'agree' and 'disagree' options. Scale sourced from TASO's validated Access and Success Questionnaire.

## LSE Springboard: the first three years

This initial strong starting point could be due to participants' self-selection into applying to the LSE Springboard programme, which may implicitly necessitate a certain level of academic self-efficacy to have the confidence to apply to a widening participation programme at a highly selective university. Additionally, it may be that the effect on academic self-efficacy is at the LSE-specific level, rather than relating to university study in general, as measured in Figure 9. It may therefore be worth refining the programme's Theory of Change to focus on maintaining high self-efficacy and/or on more context-specific academic confidence (eg, LSE or similar university contexts).

### 2.3 Does taking part in LSE Springboard influence participants' attitude towards moving to London for university?

LSE Springboard aims to provide students from UK regions outside of London and the South East with the opportunity to virtually and physically explore LSE and London as part of their higher education decision-making. The programme removes the cost barrier to visiting LSE in-person by covering all travel costs between the participants' home location and LSE for the three campus visits. During these visits, participants experience the journey from their home to LSE, tour all key facilities on campus and visit an LSE halls of residence.

From Cohort 2 onwards, specific pre-post programme survey questions covering participants' views on staying in their home region or relocating for university were introduced.

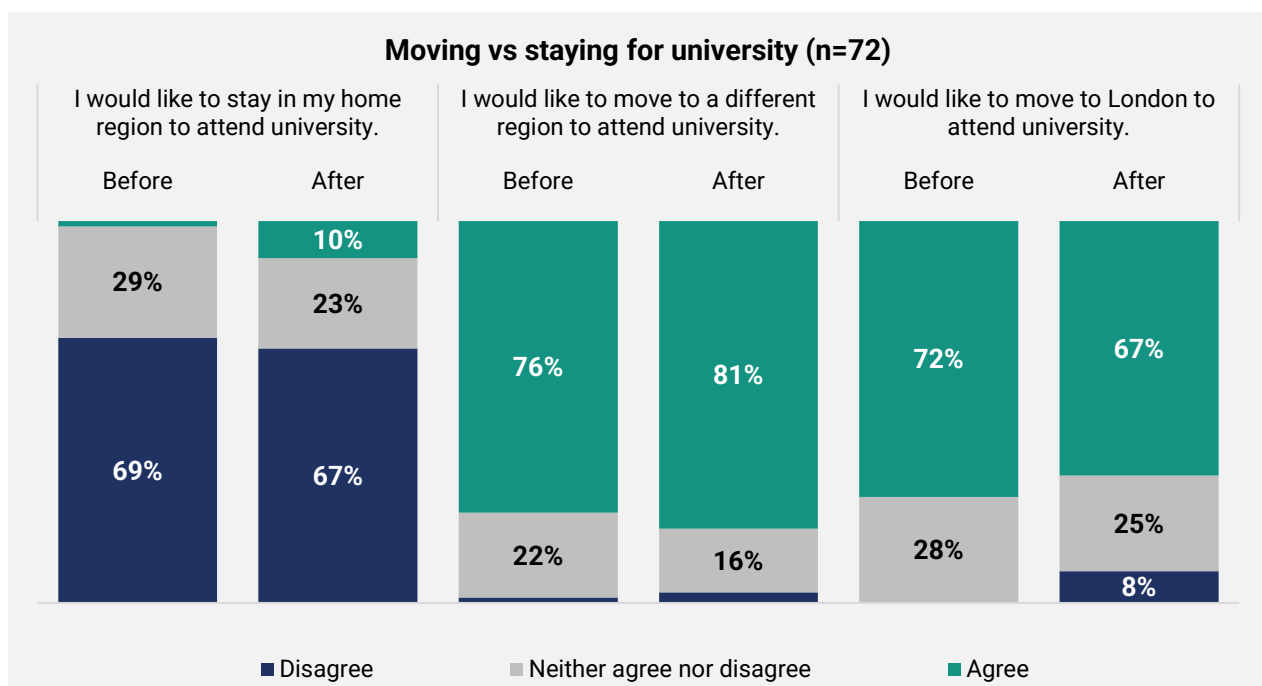


Figure 10: Participants' responses to each statement as self-reported pre-post responses on a five-point Likert scale, aggregating 'agree' and 'disagree' options.

The results for Cohorts 2 and 3 showed that:

- Most participants did not see their home region as their preferred option. However, a minority who were previously unsure became more likely to want to stay in their home region for university by the end of the programme.
- The majority of participants wanted to move to a different region for university (not necessarily London), with some previously uncertain participants becoming more confident by the end of the programme that this was the right choice for them.
- Before and after the programme, London remained an attractive university option for many participants, but enthusiasm weakened slightly overall. This is not

necessarily a negative outcome as it could reflect a better-informed choice, and the aim of Springboard is to provide a realistic insight to university life in London rather than to promote studying in London over all other considerations. Among those who did not view London as their preference by the end of the programme, there was a mix of views, some preferred a different (non-London) region, some preferred to stay in their home region, and some remained unsure.

Thematic analysis of qualitative survey and focus group data revealed that within these higher-level outcomes, the Springboard programme had helped participants to consider a range of factors in their decision-making.

On their perception of London specifically, participants mentioned both positive and negative learnings through Springboard which influenced their perception of studying in London:

- finding London difficult to navigate and daunting
- pollution in London
- London being “*busy*” – however, participants in the Cohort 3 focus group felt that the community and social bonds at LSE balanced this out
- the useful central location of LSE in London
- the networking and career opportunities in London.

On decisions around staying or moving in general, the knowledge gained generally related to the cost and how this varied by location, particularly of accommodation and transport. One Cohort 3 participant commented “*I am indifferent to location. Prices matter more.*”

Across all cohorts, participants described in surveys and focus groups how valuable it was to visit the LSE campus and connect with LSE Student Ambassadors, and how this helped them to make an informed decision about whether they could see themselves living and studying at LSE.

- “*The information given by the Student Ambassadors was extremely valuable and as someone who is unsure about living in London, I feel like I would move there so I could study at LSE*”
- “*I feel a lot more comfortable applying to LSE now over some other universities as I've been there, and I know more what studying and day-to-day life is actually going to be like.*”

Overall, Springboard’s main contribution to influencing participants’ attitudes towards studying in London was in increasing their knowledge and realism about living at LSE and in the capital. While London remained an attractive option for many, cost understandably remains a key driver in decision-making, particularly with respect to LSE and the higher costs of its location. However, Springboard plays an important role in helping participants to experience and visualise themselves at LSE.

## **2.4 Are shifts in participant outcomes at the midpoint indicators of end-of-programme outcomes?**

Analysis of pre-programme, midpoint and end-of-programme outcome scores indicated that midpoint scores were more strongly associated with post-programme outcomes than pre-programme scores. Participants who showed positive change by the midpoint survey almost always maintained or strengthened these gains by the post survey.

Conversely, participants with flat or declining midpoint scores were more likely to finish the programme with lower confidence, a weaker sense of belonging, and lower clarity about LSE compared to participants who had shown positive pre-midpoint change.

This pattern was particularly true for the following observations at the midpoint:

- participants with low academic or social belonging
- participants who did not show improvement in academic self-efficacy or skills
- participants who remained unsure about the LSE application process.

This trend and the significance of the first half of the programme is logical as the pre-programme survey measures capture participants' starting points, which often reflect long-standing structural and personal factors. By the midpoint, however, participants have experienced several core programme activities (including two campus visits and the academic enrichment with the Brilliant Club), so their midpoint scores reflect both their baseline position and their interaction with, and response to, the programme. Meanwhile, the midpoint-post change can then be thought of as reflecting a period of consolidation during the programme rather than developing further knowledge.

During future programme delivery, midpoint data could therefore be a valuable operational tool for identifying participants at risk of not achieving the intended participant outcomes by the end of the programme. This data could then be used to provide additional targeted support for those participants, to enable them to gain the most benefit from the programme.

## 2.5 To what extent do participant applications and offers support LSE's institutional goals to increase representation from diverse UK regions and TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2?

As of May 2026, 66 of the 133 participants (50%) had applied to LSE, submitting 74 applications across degree programmes and entry years. Applications were concentrated in Law, Economics and Finance degree programmes, which are among the most competitive subject areas at LSE.

Of the 74 applications, 39 resulted in either a conditional or unconditional offer, representing an offer rate of 52.7%. These 39 offers were made to 37 unique applicants, meaning that 56% of Springboard applicants and 29% of the original 133 Springboard participants received an offer from LSE.

This offer rate was higher than the offer rates for all Home UK fee status applications (HUK), HUK applications from TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2, and for HUK applications from outside London and the South East across the same application cycles.

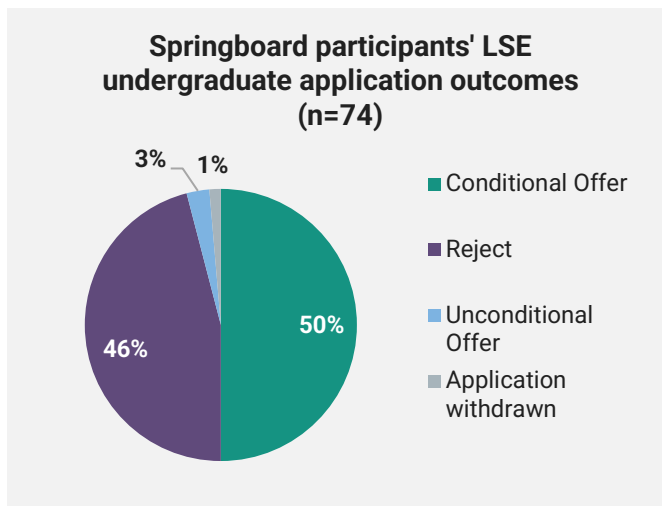


Figure 11: LSE application outcomes (n=74)

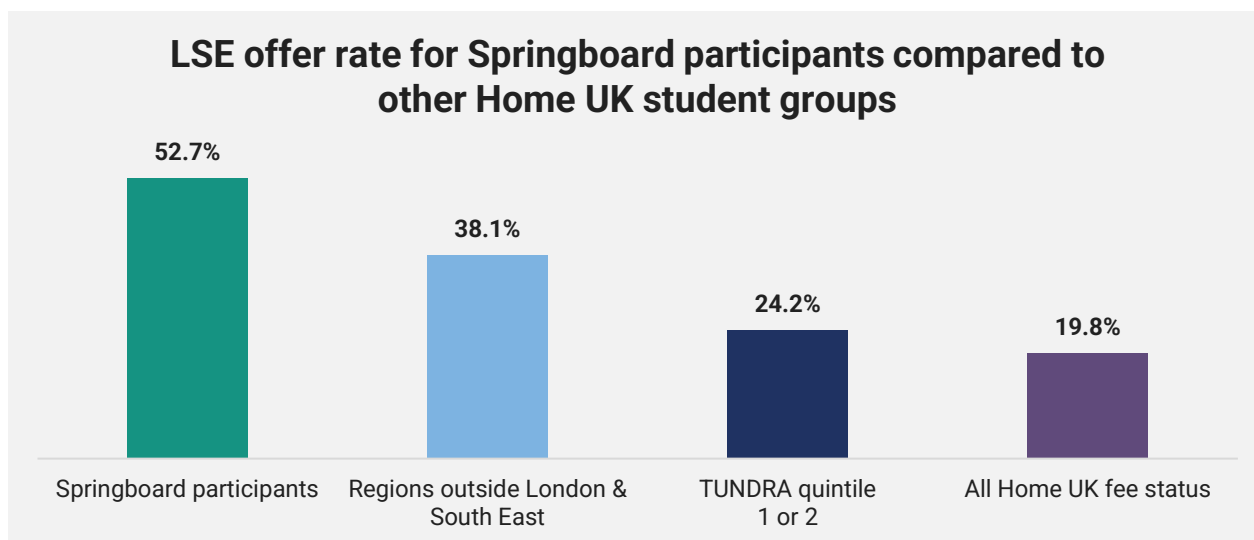


Figure 12: LSE offer rates amongst Springboard participants and comparator groups

The offer rate for applications from LSE Springboard participants was:

- **14.6 percentage points higher** than the offer rate for HUK applications from regions outside London and the South East
- **More than double** the offer rate for HUK applications from TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2
- **2.5 times higher** than the offer rate amongst all HUK applications.

## LSE Springboard: the first three years

These results suggest that Springboard students are progressing to LSE offers at higher rates than the relevant HUK comparator groups, demonstrating evidence that the programme may be contributing to stronger representation in the admissions pipeline for students from regional and TUNDRA quintile 1 and 2 backgrounds.

Conversion from offers to enrolments is also important to consider as the final stage in the access journey. As of May 2026, LSE enrolment data is available for Cohorts 1 and 2, with Cohort 3 due to enrol in Autumn 2026. Across Cohorts 1 and 2, nine of the 20 participants who received an offer have since enrolled at LSE for undergraduate study. While this is a small number, LSE typically admits around 900 Home students per year (most are HUK students, alongside a smaller but significant number of Home EU (HEU) students) and is a relatively small institution compared to other highly selective universities. Additionally, this offer to enrolment conversion of 44.5% is slightly higher than the average 39.3% conversion for all HUK offer holders at LSE across the same two entry years. This provides some early indication that Springboard is contributing not only to applications and offers, but also to entry to LSE.

These early findings are encouraging but should be viewed cautiously given the relatively small number of participants and applications involved. Further analysis of the higher education destinations of Springboard participants (including university type and region) will be possible when Springboard data becomes available through HEAT's Higher Education Track dataset, with Cohort 1's destinations due by August 2026.

### **3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, this section outlines recommendations to enhance the impact of LSE Springboard and shape future programme development.

#### **3.1 Preserve the valued campus visits and LSE student interaction, which are key mechanisms of change**

Continue to offer these programme elements, which participants have described as instrumental in developing their understanding of LSE and informing their decision about whether to apply to LSE for undergraduate study. In particular, protect structured time with Student Ambassadors, informal Q&A sessions, practical navigation experiences (travelling to LSE, taking part in a campus tour), and opportunities to imagine themselves at LSE (eg, in student spaces on campus).

#### **3.2 Enhance writing support to strengthen written communication gains**

Support participants to plan, structure and edit their writing so that gains in written communication can be strengthened and consistent across the cohort. This may include collaboration with The Brilliant Club and/or with academic development colleagues at LSE to create additional resources or practice opportunities. Targeted support for those with significantly lower than average baseline marks for written communication could also be considered.

#### **3.3 Use midpoint survey data as an operational tool for targeted support**

Use midpoint survey data to identify participants who may be at risk of finishing Springboard with lower confidence, weaker belonging, or lower clarity about LSE. Agree risk flags in advance (eg, 'disagree' or 'neither agree nor disagree' responses on key survey items) and use these flags to offer light-touch follow-up support in the second half of the programme.

#### **3.4 Refine the Theory of Change and evaluation around academic self-efficacy**

Reflect on the intended direction and context of change for academic self-efficacy within the Springboard programme and clarify this within the Theory of Change and evaluation measures accordingly. Decide whether academic self-efficacy is an outcome to increase, an outcome to maintain, or if it should be reframed in the LSE-specific context.

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