LONDON SCHOOL®
OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

LSME Access and Participation Plan

2020/21 – 2024/25

Internal Impact Monitoring Report

AY 2020 – 21

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INTRODUCTION

London School of Management Education (LSME) has had a proud culture of promoting and facilitating access to higher education for underprivileged and under-represented groups in society since its inception in 2007. Our specialist programmes in Education, Business, Hospitality Management and Health and Social Care are accessed by young and mature students from various backgrounds who can succeed and are committed to higher education but yet, due to their difficult circumstances, have not had the opportunity to do so. The majority of our learners are mature, from Low Participating Neighbourhoods, in employment and/or are considering a career change or progression within their existing careers to improve their future job prospects.

LSME's Access and Participation (AP) Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 is an ambitious plan aimed at enabling a wide range of underprivileged and under-represented groups to access higher education. In this five-year plan, we have targeted improving the number of White British Males and Care Leavers accessing higher education. We have aimed to provide more opportunities for young people with disabilities and special needs to gain a higher education qualification. Similarly, our plan emphasises increasing the proportion of mature Black Caribbean and Asian students within our entire student population. While we target their access to higher education, it is equally important to ensure their success and progression to the next stage of life.

ACCESS TARGETS

Access Target - 1: White economically disadvantaged males

This particular target is to improve the participation rate for white economically disadvantaged students to ensure an increased proportion of white British among the white student population. We aimed to raise the percentage number of students of White British Males by 5% in the AY 2020-21. We fell short of meeting the target due to various challenges posed by the dynamism of the group in the East London area. However, in our outreach LSME-Inspire project, we have supported over a small group of white British boys in tutoring, raising attainment and providing career guidance.

Access Target - 2: Care-leavers

We set the target to increase the proportion of Care Leavers in the entire student population during the course of five years to improve the overall outcomes for this group of students. Increase the proportion of Care leavers to 0.5% of the student population. As yet, we have no Care Leavers in our student population. However, we were able to support a small group of young people in care or Looked After Children (LAC), who would upon reaching the age of 18 become Care Leavers. This was made possible through the LSME-Inspire outreach Project.

Access Target - 3: Disabled

The Objective of the target is to increase the proportion of disabled students entering higher education in order to reduce the existing gap between LSME and other HE Providers in the sector. We have met the target to increase the percentage of disabled students 2.5%.

In the AY 2020-21 we had a number of students who had declared their disabilities and special needs, while there may be other students with unseen disabilities who did not disclose their status. The Admissions team makes a conscious effort to discuss with the potential students during their admission process about the support we provide for students with disabilities and encourage to disclose any seen or unseen disabilities.

Access Target - 4: Others (Asylum seekers)

We aim to increase the proportion of asylum seekers in the entire student population at LSME and improve the overall outcomes for this group of students. The target is to recruit students from the categories of refugees and Asylum seekers and increase the percentage participation by 0.5% however, we reached 0.25% of the group within the entire student population. We commit to exploring more avenues to reach the gatekeepers of this community.

Access Target - 5: Ethnicity (Black Caribbean students)

We set out to increase the proportion of mature Black Caribbean students in our entire student population and reach a target of 2.5%. In the AY 2020-21 we were able to raise the percentage to 1.41%. We need to further expand our network to access this Caribbean diaspora and find ways to support this community.

Access Target - 6: Ethnicity (Asian Students)

To increase the proportion of Asian students in the entire student population to reflect that of the local community, our Plan targets 13.5%. Though we were on track with this target due to various challenges posed by Covid-19, we achieved 12.1% of Asian students within the entire population. Plans are in place to increase efforts for this target to be met in the following years.

PROGRESSION TARGETS

The latest Graduate Outcome (GO) data generated by HESA is for 160 graduates in the 2019-2020 academic year. We do not have GO information for the 2020-21 academic year so this analysis utilised information for the previous year. The data had limitations as 18% of the students surveyed did not respond to the question relating to their employment and further education. As per HESA data, the average graduate salary in the UK is about £24,000 per annum; however, average graduate salaries for Management and Health and Social Care professions[1] have been taken into consideration in assuming the average graduate salary as £20,000.

Progression Target - 1: Socio-economic

Our target is to reduce the percentage difference in highly skilled employment or further studies in students in IMD Quintiles 3-5 and those in Quintiles 1-2. Reduce the difference by 13% in the AY.

The data suggests that 67% of the high earners are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 neighbourhoods as opposed to 33% from affluent neighbourhoods. Also, approximately 63% of all the graduates are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and therefore, we can conclude that there are no differences between IMD quintile groups in terms of highly skilled employment and our proposed target has been exceeded.

Progression Target – 2: Ethnicity

We also proposed to improve the progression rate for Asian students. The current rate of progression of Asian students is lower than the rest of the student population. This target aims to improve the rate of progression for Asian students by 20% in the next 5 years with a baseline of 45% in 2017-18 academic year. This is to improve to 50% by 2020-21 AY.

The analysis of the dataset suggests that of the 15.6% Asian students, 60% are in employment or further studies. Hence, although we have achieved our target of 50% employment and further studies rates for Asian graduates, the numbers still fall behind the employment rate for rest of the graduate population by about 28%. Of Asians in employment or further studies, 50% are in highly skilled employment.

Progression Target – 3: Multiple

The objective is to reduce the percentage gap between the progression of LSME students and the HE sector as a whole and narrow the difference in progression gap of the LSME with the HE sector average from 7% to 6% in AY 2020-21.

LSME is a low-tariff institution and admits more mature students of low social backgrounds. Hence it is not surprising that the sector outperforms LSME when it comes to progression to highly skilled jobs and further studies. The Graduate Outcome data for the 2019/20 academic year suggested that 80% of graduates were in employment and further study at the national level [2]compared to the 88.5% of LSME graduates in the same academic year. Hence, LSME has done better than the national average in the 2019/20 academic year and exceeded our intended target to reduce the gap to 6%.

[1] Butler, J., Van Hout, N., (2022). Average Graduate Salary in the UK. Online, available at,https://www.savethestudent.org/student-jobs/whats-the-expected-salary-for-your-degree.html#:~:text=Graduate%20salaries%20in%202022,%C2%A316%2C000%20and%20%C2%A390%2C000. Accessed 21/11/2022.

[2] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-06-2022/sb263-higher-education-graduate-outcomes-statistics

Progression Target – 4: Other

This target is to improve the progression rate in the 31-40 years age group by 20% in the next 5 years to tally with that of the rest of the school. For the 2020-21 AY, we proposed to increase the progression rate in the 31-40 years age group from 45% to 50%.

Our data suggests that a good number of students in our sample were in the 31-40 years age group. Of these 62% reported that they were employed compared to only 42% in the 20-30 age band and 72% in those above 40 years. The target for 50% employment rate in 31-40 age band has been exceeded but a lot need to be done to improve employment rate in the younger students.

SUPPORT TO SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG STUDENTS IN PRE AND POST 16 EDUCATION

LSME-Inspire project is designed to support underachieving students or those from disadvantaged backgrounds or experiencing barriers to learning to attain their GCSEs and A' levels, and improve their aspirations with the hope of progressing into higher education. LSME engages with a number of schools from the East London region, Councils and relevant organisations and collaborates to identify eligible students and prepare the interventions.

Through the programme, a group students from secondary and sixth form were offered one-to-one academic support and mentoring support. These students were identified by the collaborating schools, using their level of engagement, attendance, barriers to learning, personal circumstances and academic performance. The students were provided online or on-site tutoring as academic support and career guidance sessions were provided as well. The students' progress were monitored and regular feedback on the lessons conducted was obtained from the students. The project has been proven to be successful in achieving its objectives and raising attainment and aspiration, increasing their chances of accessing higher education.

In order to raise awareness of the opportunities for higher education, LSME conducted and participated in a number of events during the year. The following are such events:

- LSME Promotional Day at Future Youth Zone, Barking and Dagenham (22/06/2021)
- LSME gave career pathway guidance to year 8 assembly of an academy school supported by Access HE (06/07/2021)
- Virtual IAG session for Y10 students from a school in Havering supported by Access HE (14/07/2021)
- What next? - Event for NEETs, Barking and Dagenham (Y11, 12 & 13)

NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET)

LSME partnered with organisations working with young people, not in education, employment or training and designed interventions to raise their level of education and aspiration to join a higher education programme. Some of these students experience Mental Health issues, such as social anxiety and some with offending behaviours. Those who are post-18 were encouraged to take up LSME foundation year as they may be eligible for a fee waiver and bursaries. Depending on their level of engagement, we had to find the most effective ways to support them. Some do better online, given the circumstances, whereas others do better with face-to-face sessions.

CARE LEAVERS

In the AY 2019-20, LSME established a partnership with the Aspire Virtual School of the Barking and Dagenham Council to provide additional academic support for Looked-after children (LAC) within the borough using online learning. As we were able to extend online tutoring to LACs who are out of school and need to complete their GCSEs or A-levels to progress to the next level.

The majority of these LACs were underprivileged and had episodes of mental health problems. The selected students also experienced the following barriers to learning: low self-esteem, missing significant time from education and lack of engagement and support available to help them progress. English as a second language. Moreover, this cohort had some LACs who were identified as having low levels of academic engagement, social isolation and challenging behaviours. The majority of the students had several moves since being in care and, with this, have some major gaps in their education.

Based on the assessments of the social workers and relevant schools, we offered interventions to boost their GCSE Maths, English and other subjects to improve their overall academic performance and eventually push up their grades and pass the exams.

To intensify our efforts for the recruitment of Care Leavers in the AY 20/21 and the next academic year, LSME Access and Participation Team undertook the following actions:

1. Organised two virtual events of IAG for Havering Care Leavers and Care Experienced Students on Student Finance and Foundation Year Progression Pathways and Personal Statement together with Access HE and Queen Mary University of London. The events aimed at providing information about the support available for care experienced students when they're applying for university and while they're at university, including application and financial support.
2. Started working with Leaving Care Team from Barking & Dagenham to promote our outreach projects to the potential Care Leavers.
3. Participate in the Access HE Care Experienced and Estranged Students Forum Meetings
4. Membership of the National Network for Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) to broaden our horizon for learning and sharing our experience in supporting Care Leavers. NNECL has given us a platform to improve our visibility to the Care experienced young people as a College in their locality providing an excellent learning environment and financial support package.
5. Created a College profile on Propel (part of BECOME), charity for children in care and young Care Leavers.
6. Updated information on LSME website regarding Care Leavers, including the support available through our LSME-NTLTL project.

REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS

LSME welcomes applications from refugees and asylum seekers under our Access and Participation Plan and understands that there might be several challenges that prevent them from accessing university or Higher Education.

As such, we have enrolled and supported a few Refugees/Asylum Seekers studying at LSME. They have received discretionary bursaries and all-around support to facilitate their academic journey. In addition, we are collaborating with various organisations who work with refugees and asylum seekers to increase the number of young people we are helping either through direct enrolment or an outreach project called Not Too Late To Learn.

Given that we do not have direct access to this group, we would need to further strengthen and extend our network to organisations that deal with such young people. Hence, we will be improvising our approach and intensifying collaborative efforts.

BLACK CARIBBEAN AND ASIAN STUDENTS

There were a good number of students enrolled from the BAME category, including the Caribbean, during the AY 2020-21. However, during the course of the year a few students had withdrew due to various challenges posed by Covid-19 and changes of circumstances. To increase the number of students from the Caribbean background, LSME had discussions to explore ways of disseminating information to the community with members of the CARICOM.

Though LSME was on track to meet the target of Asian Students, we fell short due to the various challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic affecting the circumstances of mature students in many ways. We have plans to increase our efforts and meet the target for the next Academic Year.

APPRENTICESHIPS

LSME initiated a bid to register its own Apprenticeship programme with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and was successful in receiving the approval for preparing the formal bid later in 2021. We engaged a team of experienced consultants who had worked in the area for over 15 years. The areas covered in the application were areas that have been researched and identified as needed in the East London region and are relevant to our AP target groups.

Despite the formidable proposal and effort, the final bid failed to secure registration in 2021. Therefore, a decision has been made to make another attempt in the next cycle.

DISABLED STUDENTS

During the Academic year 2020-21, LSME met the target to increase the proportion of disabled people entering HE and reduce the gap in participation of disabled people. We have achieved the target of enrolment of disabled students in our academic programmes. However, a conscious effort has to be made to encourage students to disclose their unseen disabilities and attend to their learning needs.

Covid-19 Pandemic related lockdowns, isolation and loss of loved ones have had a despairing effect on some students or their close ones and hence to keep the students aware of the impact of Mental Health on their well-being, special sessions were held on Mental Health and Well-being for all the students. They included Confidential Counselling Support from an in-house Counsellor was offered to the students and those who approached the service. Also, while disbursing the Covid-19 Hardship funds, students' mental health and well-being were taken into consideration as one of the filters.

STUDENT RETENTION & SUCCESS

The Covid-19 pandemic affected student retention and success differently. Some students were confronted with a number of hurdles which they did not anticipate, such as juggling family life, work, study, care for the elderly, loss of income etc. Our retention rate slightly slid down as some students' prioritised work and other critical circumstances over their studies. There were students who experienced mental health issues and social anxiety due to the circumstances posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, surprisingly those who managed their situation well and made the best use of the time saved invested in their studies. That resulted in a rise in the overall attainment of students.

FOUNDATION YEAR STUDIES

In the AY 2020-21, out of 106 students enrolled in the Foundation Year programme, about half of the students benefited from the LSME AP Plan. Some received discretionary bursary and hardship allowance based on their circumstances and some students received fee waivers. The discretionary bursary and hardship allowance are offered following a screening process of the data provided by the students at their enrolment, which includes household income being less than £25,000, ethnic background submitted as being BAME, or having seen or unseen disabilities, belonging to the target group of White British Male or NEET in the age group of 18 – 24 years etc.

Their progress in attendance, attainment, issues related to welfare and individual support are checked on a regular basis. AP Team liaised with the Admissions team and the Lecturers to ensure that the AP students were offered the additional support they needed to gradually raise their attainment and success.

FLEXIBLE AND BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH FOR MATURE STUDENTS

The majority of the student population of LSME at the end of the AY 2020-21, about 89.5%, were mature students. However, this is a fall of 3.2% from 2019 since the start of the AP projects. Since the Covid-19 related lockdowns in March 2020, LSME has adopted a hybrid learning environment, which enabled the students to attend their classes online, especially during the lockdowns. However, we retained the option for students who find online studying challenging and distressing to attend onsite for support from lecturers under Covid-secure measures. However, the teaching and learning environment returned to normalcy following the relaxing of all the Covid-19 related restrictions in England.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support provided to LSME students, especially AP target groups in the Foundation Year, is one of the pillars of AP process. It is a springboard for the students to overcome their barriers and access higher education. LSME re-invests around 60% of its income from the student fee mark-up into the APP projects annually. In the AY a total of £463,647.32 was spent to improve access to Higher Education for the less privileged. As Fee-waivers for students with income less than £25,000, we have disbursed £84,000, while financial support of £77,000 for students from under-represented groups were given out as Fee waivers in the Foundation Year. A hardship allowance was distributed to 40 eligible students to improve their engagement in studies by way of improving their computer devices, access to the internet or other items required for their studies. The total spent on hardship allowance was £10,500. To support improving the attainment of pre-16 through our outreach projects, we spent £64,183.34, while a sum of £64,083.91 was allocated for post-16 young people.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ACCESS, SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

LSME participated in an external survey conducted in the HE sector to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and the general effect on society and the economy. The survey reviewed the provider responses based on the student and staff feedback collected through survey questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions.

The study reviewed the sector-wide general feelings of the students on the Covid-19 situation and the circumstances that affected them in their studies. Some of the LSME-specific observations include:

- Students found the transition to online learning went smoothly and they had high levels of self-motivation to study. They found that the transition had been prompt and communications clear.
- Students found online learning advantageous as it removed the need to travel and thus saved time, and it worked better for students with caring responsibilities and those in paid employment.
- Some students found challenges in terms of online learning as they had trouble staying focused and found group work easier in person. Students with children had difficulties in terms of limited resources and child-care responsibilities interrupting their studying.
- Students were concerned about the pandemic and the impact it had had on family members and loved ones, although several students had devised coping strategies for these times of anxiety and had started making plans for the future.
- Some students recommended that institutions actively seek to improve their communications with students and aim for more clarity and transparency.
- Staff recommended a greater emphasis going forward on student wellbeing.
- Staff recommended a ‘need for more pastoral training and clarity around signposting.”

Student suggestions and recommendations have been taken into consideration for implementation.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION: MEASURING IMPACT

Research and evaluation play an important role in the success of the Access and Participation activities. Since the start of the widening access activities, we have made improvements to the implementation of the activities given the changing circumstances, and they were all based on the outcome and feedback received from the stakeholders. While there is room for further strengthening of systems in place to collect data and stakeholder feedback to improve the delivery, we have been able to assess performance through surveys, feedback and consultations with experts, which we use for guidance and improvisation of our approach. We ensure regular submission of data to the regulators.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD - PLANS FOR AY 21/22

LSME's efforts in supporting and facilitating disadvantaged young people accessing Higher Education have been a learning and rewarding exercise. It has given immense knowledge and understanding of the situations in the various segments of society and the challenges students and young people face in realising their dreams. As there is room for improvement of the implementation of LSME AP Plan, we take feedback and guidance from all stakeholders to further enhance the delivery. Based on the findings, the following are the recommendations for the future:

Access

- Work more closely with Secondary and Sixth Form Schools and expand the network of schools in the neighbourhood.
- Increase the number of partners in the area of working with young people with special needs.
- Improve marketing and outreach to the local areas and communities of target groups.
- Discussion with the potential students during their admissions about the support we provide for students with disabilities and encourage them to disclose any seen or unseen disabilities.

Success

- Participate in Career Fairs of partner schools to increase visibility and raise their aspiration to access HE.
- Increase engagement of LSME AP Ambassadors in outreach activities.
- Creating greater awareness amongst students about AP projects and support available
- Clear communication and signposting for students about the support available, including well-being.

Progress

- Through LSME Employability and Enterprise Hub support, improve the opportunities for graduate-level employment for the progression of our students. Hone their skills to gain a better edge in the job market.

Monitoring & Research

- Improve the data collection, consolidation and looping of the results back to the implementation process.

Making higher education more equitable, diverse and just will always remain a journey, as society is like a dynamic living organism.

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