LONDON SCHOOL®
OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

IMPACT SUMMARY REPORT

2021 – 22

www.lsme.ac.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

At LSME, we have a proud culture of promoting and facilitating access to higher education for under-represented groups in society since our inception in 2007. Our niche programme areas are in Education, Business, Hospitality Management and Health and Social Care, which are accessed by young and mature people from different backgrounds, many of whom have various challenges, including barriers to learning, socio-economic disadvantages etc. The majority of our learners are mature and from Low Participating Neighbourhoods, not in employment or in employment but considering a career change or progression within their existing careers to improve their future job prospects.

This annual report covers activities delivered in the academic year 2021-22 in support of our 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan (APP). The APP approved by the Board of Directors is reviewed by the Academic Board, with oversight of progress and delivery by our Access and Participation Committee. Students are engaged at every stage, and they help shape our activities through their involvement as Student Ambassadors.

The AP team, Academic team and collaborating partners have worked together to make a material difference to the life chances of under-represented students through access, retention and achieving successful outcomes for our foundation year students while supporting aspiration and raising awareness of HE within selected schools and individuals in our local communities.

Our programme of activities, from outreach and access to retention and success, is robustly measured through qualitative and quantitative evaluation. This ensures we can provide evidence for the impact of our activities, the value of our investment and inform the future strategic direction to continue to evolve and improve.

Going forward, we commit to continuing to make good progress against our ambitious Access and Participation Plan. We remain fully supportive to the national commitment to improving the lives of learners from the perspectives of students' access, success and progression and we look forward to enhancing our practices, making a material difference in their journey.

2. PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

The targets of our plan are based on gaps in our internal baseline data, research studies and the national data pointing at the subsets of our community who are unlikely to progress to Higher Education. The targets are set ambitiously high for maximum impact over the plan period.

However, at the onset of the rolling out of the plan, the global pandemic of Covid-19 played a significant factor in inhibiting the progress. Covid-19 pandemic not only affected the delivery but the students and society changed in ways that presented a number of hurdles seriously hampering the momentum of our projects. It is important to assess the progress made in the context of these challenges and apply our learning over the past year to plan for improvements in the future.

2.1 ACCESS TARGETS

ACCESS TARGET – 1: WHITE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED MALES

This target is aimed at improving the participation rate for economically disadvantaged White British Male students to ensure an increased proportion of White British among the white student population. We aimed to raise the percentage of White British Male students by 10% in the AY 2021-22; however, we could only recruit a few students in this category due to various challenges. Some of the reasons for lesser participation include the lack of wide-ranging programmes, especially creative media, tech and IT. Also, many White British males would like to move away from home for their further studies. We gather this from our discussions with partner organisations and the students themselves during outreach programmes and career fairs.

However, we were able to enrol a good proportion of White British Male students on the LSME-Inspire outreach project to provide academic and mentoring support in the Secondary and Sixth Forms. The project aimed at improving their attainment and removing barriers to their access to higher education in the near future. This is part of the preparation for better prospects in higher education. They may not necessarily join LSME, however, would stand a greater chance of accessing and succeeding in higher education.

Given the continued challenge in reaching the target group of White British Males, we have conducted a study on accessing hard-to-reach populations, including NEETs and White British Males, through our membership with the SEER (Specialist Evidence, Evaluation and Research). The study reviewed sector research, practices and case studies and made recommendations for future approaches, such as exploring the development of new programmes that reflect the needs, interests and aspirations of students in the target group, engaging with community outreach networks working with such target groups and others.

ACCESS TARGET - 2: CARE-LEAVERS

We set the target to increase the proportion of Care Leavers in the entire student population by 2.5% over the course of five years to improve the overall outcomes for this group of students. For the AY 2021-22 we set a target of 1%. For this year, we have no care leavers within our student population. However, we were able to support several young people in the category of in-care or Looked After Children (LAC), who would become care leavers upon reaching the age of 18. The LSME-Inspire outreach project is expected to develop the pipeline for care leavers to enrol in LSME programmes; this would need to be coupled with the development of wide-ranging programmes to cater for their interests.

Factors such as the limited number of courses on offer and particularly those attractive to younger cohorts such as ICT, technical, media and creative disciplines can limit LSME's ability to recruit care leave students. We gather this information from our interactions with care leavers and some of the partner organisations supporting looked-after children. Furthermore, mostly preferences are to go to Universities with residential accommodation, which is important for them as by the age of 18, they would have left residential care. A better way to support our target group of Care Leavers is to help them before they become Care Leavers so that their prospects of getting into Higher Education and picking up their choice of programme and profession are enhanced. Hence, Looked After Children (LAC) is an important category of students we support under the LSME-Inspire project.

ACCESS TARGET - 3: DISABLED LEARNERS

This target is to increase the proportion of disabled students entering higher education to reduce the existing gap between LSME and other HE Providers in the sector. We exceeded the target of 2.5% and increased the proportion of disabled students to 2.6%.

In the AY 2021-22,2.6% of students on our roll had declared their disabilities and special needs, while there may be other students with unseen disabilities, who did not disclose their status. We are making a conscious effort to discuss with the potential students during their admission process the support we provide for students with disabilities and encourage them to disclose any seen or unseen disabilities. We plan to include further details on disabilities and special needs, such as dyslexia, mental health, long-term health conditions affecting their studies and others in the Equality of Opportunities Form that the students have to fill in, which would enable them to understand the support available for them if they disclose their condition. In addition, flyers will be developed to encourage prospective students to disclose their status confidentially during the enrolment process.

LSME is an inclusive learning environment and hence a number of adjustments have been brought in to facilitate support to disabled students. We surpassed the target of enrolling and supporting disabled students at LSME and continued our efforts to support pre and post-16 groups of students in partner schools through the LSME-Inspire project. Also, we jointly prepared a proposal to work with a SEND-specialised school in Redbridge during the year; however, the project is put on a halt from the side of the School. We hope to take the project elsewhere to run as a pilot project during the next AY.

ACCESS TARGET - 4: OTHERS (REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS)

We aim to increase the proportion of refugees/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 1%; however, we reached 0.2% of the group within the entire student population. We would need to intensify our efforts working with some organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers to improve the numbers in the next academic year.

Through our work with relevant organisations, we were able to reach some young people with refugee status. But it does challenge working with refugees and asylum seekers due to the lack of documents required to enrol them on formal courses. This is an area of review for future programmes. The matter of lack of papers and additional financial support would have to be contextualised.

ACCESS TARGET - 5: ETHNICITY (BLACK CARIBBEAN STUDENTS)

We set out to increase the proportion of Black Caribbean students in our entire student population and reach a target of 5%. In the AY 2021-22 we were able to raise the percentage to 1.05%. We need to further expand our network to access the Caribbean diaspora and find ways to support this community. We plan to hold briefings to CARICOM and individual High Commissions of the Caribbean countries.

While the number of students from the Caribbean diaspora has increased over time, we are not able to meet the incremental proportion of the target percentage. However, we are optimistic that we will reach the target gradually over time.

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 17.5%. Though we were on track with this target, due to various challenges posed by Covid-19, we achieved 14% of Asian students within the entire population. Plans are in place to increase efforts for this target to be met in the following years. We will work hard to make greater access to the Asian communities through networks and some leaders in their communities in the next year.

Asian students have been steadily increasing but the changes in circumstances caused during the transition from Covid-19 restrictions back to normalcy pushed a lot of students to go for full-time employment. Their new job roles often did not allow flexibility to continue their studies as before. The obvious choice for the majority of those students would be to pause their study programmes. However, we see this as a temporary shift in the trend before it returns to normalcy.

Furthermore, the second largest group of pre- and post-16 students supported under the LSME Inspire Project are Asian students.

2.2 PROGRESSION TARGETS

The progression target achievements are calculated based on the latest available Graduate Outcomes (GO) data generated by HESA for the2019-20 academic year. We do not have GO information for the 2021-22 academic year so this analysis utilised information from the previous year.

PROGRESSION TARGET - 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC

We proposed 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 from 15.6% to 11% by the 2021-22 academic year.

Our data suggest that 67% of the high earners are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 neighbourhoods as opposed to 33% from affluent neighbourhoods. Similarly, 61% of graduates in low-level employment are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2. Since approximately 63% of all the graduates are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2, we can conclude that there are no differences between IMD quintile groups in terms of highly skilled employment and hence our proposed target has been exceeded. The difference in the proportion of graduates from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and those from quintiles 3-5, progressing into higher education also reflects the structure of the overall graduate population.

PROGRESSION TARGET - 2: ETHNICITY

We 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 the 2017-18 academic year. This is to improve to 55% by 2021-22 AY.

Our analysis suggests that from the entire sample, 15.6% are of Asian origin. Only 28% of the group of Asians are in graduate-level employment or further studies compared to 50% of the entire graduate population. Hence, we have not achieved our target of 55% employment and further studies rates for Asian graduates in the College, and their numbers still fall behind the graduate employment rate for the rest of the graduate population by about 22%. Rather a small percentage of the Asian population of graduates progressed to further studies compared to a slightly higher proportion of the Black population of graduates. Hence, we plan to intensify our efforts to ensure that the Asian population of graduates are supported to reduce the employment gaps between them and other ethnic groups in LSME.

PROGRESSION TARGET – 3: MULTIPLE

We proposed to reduce the progression gap between LSME and the HE sector as a whole, from 7% in 2017-18 AY to 5% by 2021-22. 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. A recent GO survey result published by HESA for the 2019-20 academic year suggested that 80% of graduates were in employment and further study at the national level[1] compared to 88.5% of LSME graduates in the same academic year. Hence, LSME has outperformed the national average in the 2019-20 academic year. However, in terms of graduate-level employment, LSME is still trailing behind the national average by 5.2% which is slightly above our target of 5%.

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

PROGRESSION TARGET – 4: OTHER

We proposed to reduce the gap in progression for the different age groups identified in LSME. The progression rate for our mature students between 31 to 40 years was to increase from 45% in 2017-18 to 55% in 2021-22 academic year. Our data suggest that a good proportion of students 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 proportion of 31-40 year group in graduate-level employment is 55.5%. The target for 55% employment rate in 31-40 age band has been exceeded but a lot needs to be done to improve employment among the younger students.

3. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES 2021-22

Our outreach projects, which comprise the LSME-Inspire and the Never Too Late to Learn (LSME-NTLTL), are central to the institution's mission and vision to promote equality and diversity. Irrespective of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, within the first and the second year of its implementation, the Inspire project has shown considerable potential to become an excellent outreach intervention for underperforming Secondary Schools and pre-16 and under-18 pupils from deprived neighbourhoods. The LSME-NTLTL project, which is aimed at supporting young adults, who have left mainstream education and are not in employment or any form of training (NEET), was greatly affected by the lockdown imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we continued to progress by marching ahead with partnership development and establishing collaborative networks with independent organisations that support young people who fit the NEET category. We succeeded in introducing our Foundation Year programmes to these potential students with plans to conduct career development events. Our internal students achieved consistently good results with a 96.5% retention rate in the Foundation Year. About 95.5% of Foundation Year students who were eligible for completion at the end of the 2021-22 academic year progressed to the BSc (Hons) Business Management or Health and Social Care Management programmes.

Our Disability Outreach programme resulted in forming a collaborative partnership with the Sycamore Trust in London. This resulted in our academic staff receiving training in Autism Spectrum Disorder and the organisation of online taster sessions for prospective learners. As most of the disabled learners were interested in other programmes, we did not manage to admit any of them at LSME. However, we have reached out and supported a number of students with disabilities and some care leavers via the LSME-Inspire project.

SUPPORT TO PRE AND POST-16 STUDENTS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING THROUGH LSME-INSPIRE PROJECT

LSME-Inspire Project aims to support underachieving students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain their GCSEs and A' levels, and improve their aspirations to progress into higher education. The project targets socially disadvantaged and underperforming young students from Y9 to Y13.

We work with a few schools in the adjoining Burroughs, including Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham and Havering. In this academic year, we have about sixty students who were enrolled for one-to-one academic support with LSME Maths tutor and online lessons of Maths, English and Science.

Though there is a gap in meeting the target of White British Males in LSME student population, we supported over thirty White British Male students through the Inspire outreach project with a total of over forty White British students. Similarly, while we are challenged to receive Care Leavers in our student community, we have been able to support over thirteen Looked After Children, who would eventually become Care Leavers upon reaching the age of 18. Through the LSME-Inspire project, we raised their academic attainment and provided mentoring support through online sessions. Amongst the students supported, there were over ten students on Pupil Premium and some students with severe barriers to learning disabilities and mental health issues.

During the course of their participation in the LSME-Inspire project, they provide feedback and complete their exit surveys to enable assessing their attainment and destination. In addition to the information provided by the students, the designated teachers, carers and social workers' feedback is assessed as well.

RAISING AWARENESS AND ASPIRATION

LSME aims at raising awareness of HE among the student population (Y9 to Y13) by conducting virtual IAG events, promotional days, assembly talks and career workshops. The following events were conducted or attended by LSME in the academic year 2021-22:

1. Virtual Employer Engagement Day, partner School - 18th November 2021
2. Careers Fair, partner School - 10th December 2021

3. A closer look at alternative routes into HE – Foundation Routes Workshop at LSME for NEETs & refugees with a partner organisation, 9th December 2021
4. A closer look at alternative routes into HE – Foundation Routes Workshop at LSME for NEETs & refugees with a partner organisation, 3rd February 2021
5. Career Fair for Y9 pupils, partner School, 28thFebruary 2022
6. Careers Fair, partner School - 8th March 2022
7. Career Fair for Y9 pupils, partner School, 28thFebruary 2022
8. Careers Exhibition, partner School, 22nd March 2022
9. Careers Fair, partner School, 29th April 2022
10. Career Fair, Barking and Dagenham,7th July 2022
11. Speed Networking Career guidance session, partner School, 6th July 2022

4. IMPACT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

While financial support to students is crucial in bridging gaps in improving their learning outcomes and timely meeting of assignment deadlines, it is also an important incentive to progress. Some students find it difficult to invest in their learning requirements such as a good broadband connection or stationaries or a digital device to produce their assignments and do research. Based on the assessment process, AP students receive a mix or a one-time financial support of a discretionary Bursary, a Hardship fund and a Fee-waiver for the Foundation year.

In the AY 2021-22, LSME committed a substantial sum of funds for Access and Participation and the total expenditure exceeded the committed amount. Also, the total allocation for financial support to students for the year was exceeded. The other areas in which financial commitments are made and expenditures incurred include Access Support to pre and post-16 age groups working in the partner schools and outreach projects. Also, expenditure has been made in Access – Adults and Community Support, related human resource capacity development and both physical and online resource development.

To assess the direct impact of financial support on students whom they received the benefits, a survey was conducted by SEER service, of which LSME are members.

The findings of the survey show that recipients value financial support very highly and that it makes a big difference to their capacity to continue their studies at LSME. Respondents also report using their financial benefits to pay for essential living costs and study materials, as well as to support their families. This suggests financial support is reaching students who are particularly in need.

5. CHALLENGES

Being an ambitious project and faced with various challenges posed by the unprecedented Covid-19 Pandemic, LSME AP plan fell short of meeting some of the Access targets. Some of these challenges are summarised below:

- Efforts to work with SEND schools have not progressed well due to partners' internal matters.
- Despite the ongoing marketing and promotional efforts and networking, we do not see a marked improvement in the target numbers.
- Focussed efforts to usher in target students through the UCAS admission platform did not do well in the first round.
- It has been challenging to enrol White British Males and younger groups as they would prefer ICT, tech, media and creative programmes, which are not on offer at LSME.
- We are not able to attract Care Leavers as we have found they prefer a wider range of courses and that, most importantly, their natural first choice would be universities with residential accommodation.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We are in the process of gradually adopting a theory of change approach to evaluation, which will inform our efforts yielding in narrowing down the gaps in access, success and progress that are aligned with national policies. The monitoring and evaluation process is gradually evolving to pave the way for a systemic and holistic approach encompassing a few methods. These include a robust data strategy to strengthen, collect, collate and manage internal data. We are increasingly, strengthening the internal survey and feedback collection systems.

LSME is a member of SEER. As an external evaluator working in partnership with LSME, SEER supports the development of our data capacity, evaluation activity and undertakes bespoke evaluation, research and data analysis. In 2021-22, SEER delivered a number of studies and surveys to help us understand better the reasons for some activities have a substantial impact while others faced challenges in meeting the desired outcome. The studies were particularly important in identifying factors affecting the attainment of some of our targets and providing recommendations for adjustments in the implementation of the activities for better results.

7. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD - PLANS FOR AY 2022-23

The second year of the plan was saddled with challenges. The disruptions of the Covid-19 Pandemic gradually settled, but the path ahead was still patchy and needed a lot more groundwork. We have been building momentum since the Covid-19 restrictions came down and rebuilding the partnerships. We have laid more groundwork on restructuring our data systems and re-strategising the operations. Based on the challenges we faced and the internal discussions, we have the following recommendations:

ACCESS

- Work more closely with Secondary and Sixth Form Schools and expand the network of schools in the neighbourhood.
- Reach out to more SEND schools, as we have faced non-starters.
- Re-strategise marketing and outreach to the local areas and communities of target groups.
- Re-strategise the promotion of AP target groups through UCAS application process.
- Work with gatekeepers of certain communities.
- Engage more Student Ambassadors in outreach activities.
- Discussion with the potential students during their admissions about the support we provide.
- Review the contextual admissions policy.

SUCCESS

- Maintain academic, pastoral, welfare, mental health and other support for students.
- Creating greater awareness amongst students about AP projects and the 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.
- Expand employability and enterprise support through employer engagement.
- Create more opportunities for placement and exposure.
- Register and commence the LSME Apprenticeship programme.

SUPPORT TO PRE AND POST-16 STUDENTS

- Maintain the momentum of the high-impact LSME-Inspire project.
- Participate in Career Fairs of partner schools to increase visibility and encourage them to access HE.
- Increase engagement of LSME AP Ambassadors in outreach activities.

MONITORING & RESEARCH

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

PLANNING FOR FUTURE

- Prepare and submit the variations to the OfS.
- Based on the lessons learnt and the challenges faced, make a thorough assessment to draw up the next AP Plan.

It is incumbent upon all educational institutes to make every effort to ensure that education remains the backbone of society. In order to make education more equitable, accessible and reachable to all different groups in society, every provider has to implement measures that are ambitious and to the top of their capacity. Hence, LSME is determined to go that extra mile to reach quality higher education in every corner of its local community. This is only possible through partnerships and the support of all stakeholders who represent the community.

Though the progress has been slow, we continue to learn from every experience, improvise and lay a stronger foundation for every step leading to our targets.

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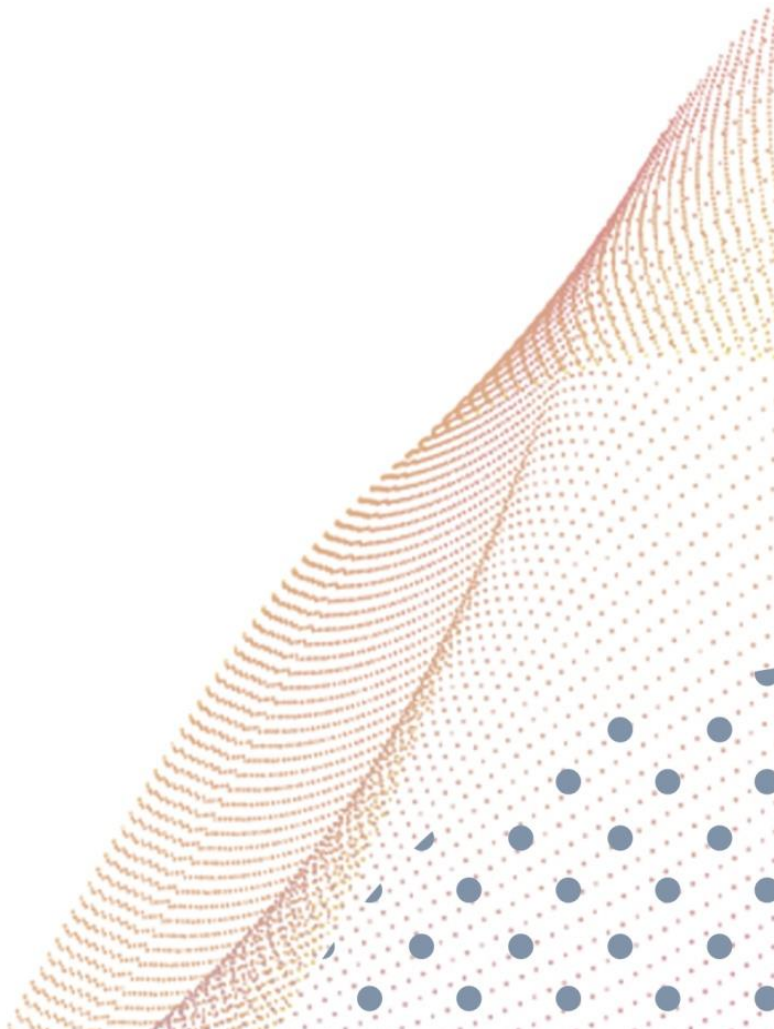
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