

## LSE's Access Agreement for 2009 entry

### Preamble

The LSE Access Agreement was first written and approved in 2005 for the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006, following discussion with the staff and student body at the School. The Agreement showed how the School would spend around one third of the additional income generated by variable fees on student support. Student support was taken to refer to the proposed bursary scheme, other programmes of financial support and the School's Widening Participation Activities.

In 2006-07, the first year of its operation, LSE made good progress towards its Widening Participation milestones and in awarding over 90% of its financial aid budget in student bursaries and related programmes. This progress was reported in the Access Agreement Assurance and Validation statement submitted to OFFA in July 2007.

In light of the fact that the financial support and the widening participation measures articulated in the first Access Agreement appeared to be working well after the first year of the scheme, LSE will retain the underlying principles of the original Access Agreement in the new Agreement for the period 2008 to 2010.

The key changes are as follows:

- the sliding scale of LSE bursaries will now be pegged to the new residual income brackets (£0 at the bottom end to £60,000 at the top end);
- the funding attached to the Accommodation Awards and the additional in-course hardship funds will be redirected into the main bursary scheme (ie. the LSE Bursary and the Discretionary bursary);
- the programme of Widening Participation activities will be expanded to include all WP activities currently being run by the School;
- the milestones attached to some of the WP activities will be refined.

### Financial Support

LSE intends to charge the maximum variable tuition fee for UK and EU undergraduate students until 2010. In 2009, the tuition fee will be £3,225. This fee will be subject to an inflationary rise until 2010.

The School's overwhelming objective when designing its package of financial support was to maintain and, if possible, to encourage an increase in, the number of applications from good candidates from poorer backgrounds. In a very direct sense, the package is designed to increase access. We were conscious that, although the new national arrangements lift the immediate financial burdens on students, they may, e.g. via debt aversion, dissuade some from applying. We therefore wished, as far as possible, to offset any debt aversion, or other financial inhibitions, by making as generous a provision as was practical.

The first year of operation suggests that the LSE Bursary and Discretionary Bursary schemes are achieving their aims.

The School, therefore, proposes that the package of Bursaries continues for the intakes in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

### The Bursary Schemes

**The LSE Bursary Scheme** is by far the most important component of this draft Access Agreement, absorbing roughly a quarter of the expected increase in income from variable fees. Bursaries will be offered automatically to all students who qualify for full or partial maintenance grant on the basis of individualised information on them received from the Student Loans Company.

The bursaries will be provided on a sliding scale, and those in greatest need will attract the largest grants. On the basis of the information available to us we expect to offer a maximum bursary of £2,500 a year to those who have the lowest residual income. This would taper to just under £1,700 for those with residual incomes of £17,074, and to zero where the income is more than £60,000.

**The Discretionary Bursary scheme** allows students with exceptional needs and European Union students (who are not normally eligible for Government grants and loans) to access financial support. As with the automatic LSE Bursary scheme, bursaries will operate on a sliding scale with the maximum amount of

£2,500 awarded to those most in need. The assessment of need is undertaken in-house by LSE, rather than by the Student Loans Company.

### **Other forms of Financial Support**

The **Job Shop**, which provides information to students on part-time employment opportunities, constitutes a further element of the financial support offered to undergraduate students. The variable fee income has allowed us to put this scheme on a more permanent and substantial basis. It is open to all students, regardless of circumstances, but is of special value to poorer students who require further help to subsidise their studies, so we propose that it continues to be part of the Access Agreement. It is concerned primarily with student retention, though it also has the objective of preparing students for later employment. Although directed at registered students it may also encourage applicants to choose LSE, and it therefore also has a relationship to our outreach activity.

### **Financial implications**

The data presently available to us (e.g. from the Student Loans Company) on the likely number of students who fall into the new residual income bracket (between £38,000 and £60,000) do not permit us to make truly reliable estimates of the costs of the above schemes, so estimates have to remain tentative until the data become clearer. However, we do have data from the first year and the beginning of the second year of the Bursary schemes and this information has been factored into our estimates.

### **Dissemination of information**

The information contained in the 2008 entry prospectus is valid for the purposes of the revised Access Agreement, as it refers to the bursary sliding scale being linked to the residual income of applicants as assessed by the SLC. However, more details of the new thresholds and bursary amounts will be published on the LSE website and in the offer booklet. LSE will publish details of the new bursary scheme in the undergraduate prospectus for 2009 onwards.

### **Widening Participation Activities**

The School expects its financial support proposals to be a powerful tool in maintaining and improving access for poorer students. In addition, however, we are proposing to develop and extend our outreach activities.

The School guarantees minimum funding for its widening participation activities of £200,000 a year (from 2008-09 onwards). This funding is derived from the additional fee income. We will continue to seek external funding (from alumni, donors, corporate sponsors, etc.) to augment the portfolio of widening participation activities listed below. Indeed some of the activities included in the Access Agreement are funded (either wholly or in part) by external donors. However, it is relevant to include these programmes in the Access Agreement as they demonstrate the full breadth of the School's commitment to widening access.

Our WP activities will explicitly target various groups normally thought to be underrepresented in the university sector (eg. poorer students, those from low performing state schools, those from certain ethnic groups, those from families with little or no history in HE, etc.). We have two main objectives;

i The first is to increase the number of people who satisfy the above criteria to apply to study at the LSE; we would also hope that an increase in the number of applicants will also result in an increase in the number of registrations.

ii The second is to help people from the above groups to raise their aspirations to attend university, and to attend universities previously thought beyond their expectations.

Our detailed WP proposals build on our considerable experience in this area and are a mixture of either new or expanded schemes. A brief description of our schemes is as follows:

**LSE Choice** This is our main recruitment scheme to attract students from under-represented and non-traditional backgrounds in the Greater London area. It will build on the experience of the highly successful LSE Saturday Schools but will be more forthright in its aim to recruit to LSE and other excellent institutions. The scheme is designed to introduce the students to life in such universities, nurture their interest in their chosen subject, raise attainment, and guide the student through the application process. There will be preferential access to the scheme to students from state schools who have no history of HE in their family. It will be available for up to 180 year 12 and 13 students from the Greater London region.

**Pathways to Law** This scheme aims to give 50 students and their families the information, advice and guidance they need to succeed in a career in law. Students join the programme at the end of Year 11 and remain on the programme until the end of Year 13. During that time they will be invited to law taster sessions, careers information events, university advice sessions and mock trials. Pathways to Law students will also get the opportunity to go on a law work shadowing (during a half term break).

**Summer School** The School will continue to run its Summer School for Year 11 students.. Students take one of four individual courses and also participate in cross-course activity sessions that focus on team building and study skills. The Summer School will be open to 100 Year 11 from the London region.

**Black Achievement Conference** This conference is for young Black African/Caribbean students, their families and teachers and is designed to encourage them to aim for higher education, through the use of role models and an exploration of different aspects of black history. The theme and focus of the conference will change on an annual basis. The event is open to 200 students, family members and teachers.

**Student Shadowing** Year 12 and 13 students who are considering applying to LSE are invited to spend either a morning or an afternoon accompanying an LSE student to get a taste of LSE student life. The session includes a lecture, a campus tour and a one-to-one chat with an LSE student. The shadowing sessions take place from November to March each year and are hosted by Student Ambassadors. Student shadowing will be open to 100 year 12 and 13 students from around the UK.

**National Mentoring Scheme** The mentoring scheme, which was previously funded by HEFCE but is now funded by LSE, gives students a role model to encourage them to concentrate on their studies and ultimately continue their education to Post-16 and, by association, Post-18. LSE students commit 12 weeks per year to the scheme plus an intensive training and selection process. Mentoring is open to 160 Year 10 and 11 students from under-performing state schools in inner London boroughs.

**ACE and ACE High Days** ACE and ACE High Days are designed to encourage Year 9 to 11 students to remain in education to Post-16 and beyond. Schools can book up to 25 students for a morning or afternoon session which offers a series of interactive sessions led by LSE students under guidance and supervision from the SRO. ACE Days would be open to 250 student in Year 9 to 11 in the Greater London region.

**School visits** The School will continue its programme of visits to schools. These sessions are not necessarily directly recruiting for LSE, although some sessions will focus on information about the School. Sessions will include student finance and budgeting, mock interviews, applying to university, etc. School visits will be made to 10 under-performing schools around the UK.

**Primary/transition sessions** This is a scheme for Year 6 pupils which would dovetail with the .Moving On element of their Citizenship studies. Groups of Year 6 pupils would visit the School and take part in sessions to complement the concept of moving on. This experiencing of HE, at an early stage of their school lives, would be designed to be relaxed and fun, as well as providing a practical example of how older students have 'moved on' in their own lives. The transition sessions would be open to 5 schools initially.

**HE advisers' conference** These sessions take place annually and are designed to inform advisers to 6<sup>th</sup> form students of LSE's application processes and procedures, what we look for in applicants and give them the opportunity to speak to our admissions professionals. This is open to 50 advisers per session.

**Student tutoring** LSE students have been volunteering to work in local primary and secondary schools in 7 London Boroughs since 1988. The tutors work in the classroom, under the supervision of teachers, helping pupils with their work. The project aims to help raise school pupils' achievement and aspirations and to encourage them to aim for higher education when they leave school. We aim to have 200 LSE tutors working across the London region.

### **Access Agreement Milestones/Benchmarking**

The monitoring report submitted to OFFA in July 2007 showed that the School had awarded over 90% of its allocated bursary funding in the first year of the Access Agreement operation and had made good progress towards its WP milestones. We hope to build upon this progress over the next three years.

Both our financial support proposals and our WP activities share the objective of increasing the

number of applications from certain groups, or, at least, to maintain the number of such applications at a time when competition for them is probably going to become more severe.

### **State schools**

As reported in the July monitoring statement, LSE had reached its state school milestone (ie. an increase of 5 percentage points in applications from state schools by 2009) in 2007. We aim, therefore, to further increase applications from state schools (using the 2007 figures as the baseline) by five percentage points by 2010. It is worth underlining, however, that we will not increase the intake of students from such groups unless the applicants meet our highly competitive entry criteria.

### **Social class**

As reported in the July monitoring statement, internal indicators for 2006 entry show that the proportion of low income students enrolled at the School rose to 18% from 14%. Progress towards this milestone is, therefore, on track. As progress is still to be made on this milestone, we aim to retain the original milestone which is to increase the number of students from low social class enrolled at the School by 5 percentage points by 2010, taking the 2005 figures as the baseline.

### **Widening Participation activities**

For our WP activities we have a target figure of pupils or schools to be reached for each of the schemes detailed above. As reported in the July monitoring statement, we have reached over 700 students in the 2006-07 period. We plan to increase these numbers to 1200 students reached by 2010.

LSE is running three WP schemes which focus on encouraging applications to LSE or other Russell Group/94 Group type institutions, rather than merely raising general aspirations. It is possible, therefore, to set milestones for the number of applications we hope to generate from these schemes:

**LSE CHOICE:** of the 180 students on the scheme, we expect that 100-120 students will apply to Russell Group institutions, with 50-80 of these applications being made to LSE.

**Pathways to Law:** of the 50 students on the scheme, we anticipate that 40 to 50 will apply to Russell Group institutions, with 10 to 20 of these being made to LSE.

**Student Shadowing:** numbers taking part in student shadowing vary from year to year. However, we anticipate that 50% of those students taking part each year would make an application to LSE.

As the remaining Widening Participation schemes are aspiration-raising rather than recruitment focused, it is considerably more difficult to set application milestones to these activities. The descriptions of the schemes (under 7.4) assign 'reach' milestones to the activities.

Data on the demographic composition and on the intentions of all participants on our WP activities will be collected, via registration forms and feedback questionnaires. Participants on long-term schemes (such as CHOICE and Pathways to Law) will be surveyed at the beginning of the schemes, to determine their intentions, and at the end of the schemes, to determine the outcomes and their University choices. The data, when processed, will be presented to the Widening Participation Advisory Committee (a sub-group of Council) for discussion on progress towards objectives. The Student Affairs Committee (a Committee of Academic Board) will consider progress towards LSE's objectives to increase applications from state school students, students from lower socio-economic groups and from low participation neighbourhoods, and will monitor the structure of the student body.

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