

Annex A - 2020-21 Access and Participation Statement

The London Interdisciplinary School Ltd (LIS) (formerly registered as Odyssey College London Limited¹) 2020-2021 Access and Participation Statement

Assessment of current performance

LIS will be a new higher education provider, receiving its first intake of students in 2020; and our outreach programme to prospective students is in its very early stages. We therefore do not have any meaningful historic performance data that we can evaluate at this time. Therefore, our plan aims to address the gaps in equality of opportunity that currently exist in the UK higher education sector *as a whole*, specifically for:

- Students from areas of lower higher education participation, low household income and/or socioeconomic status:
 - o Socio-economic disadvantage continues to be the most significant driver of inequality in terms of access to and outcomes from higher education²
 - 18 year-olds from the most advantaged groups are 2.4 times more likely to enter university than their disadvantaged peers, and 6.3 times more likely to attend one of the most selective institutions in the UK³
 - The gap between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged students gaining a first or upper-second class degree remains at 10 percentage points⁴
- Students of particular ethnicities:
 - o There is a 22 percentage points difference between white and black graduates gaining a first or upper-second class degree; 11 percentage points difference between white and Asian graduates.
 - o Black graduates have a 69% rate of highly skilled employment or further study, versus a 74% rate for white graduates.⁵
- Disabled students:

¹ Legal name is “The London Interdisciplinary School Ltd”. The organisation was formerly registered as “Odyssey College London Ltd” before a formal change of name, approved by Companies House, was executed on Monday 5th November 2018

² Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*

³ UCAS, *End of Cycle Report 2015*

⁴ OfS; 2016/17 figures, Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) quintiles 1 and 5 gaining a first or upper-second class degree

⁵ OfS; 2016/17 figures

- There remains a 3 percentage points gap between graduates without a disability and graduates with a disability gaining a first- or upper-second class degree.⁶
- Students reporting a disability, particularly those not in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), have lower degree attainment and progression into employment compared to those not reporting a disability.⁷
- Mature students:
 - Mature learners are more likely than their younger peers to have characteristics associated with underrepresentation in higher education, and are almost twice as likely to leave after one year compared to their younger peers.⁸
 - Over the last several years there has been a significant decline in mature participation in higher education.⁹
- Care leavers:
 - Only 6.1% of all care leavers between the ages of 19-21 were in higher education in 2017.¹⁰

Given our small size and our new status, our major focus at the outset of operation will be on the most sizeable disadvantaged groups: students from areas of lower higher education participation, low household income and/or socioeconomic status; black and minority ethnic students; and disabled students. We will also use contextual admissions and an inclusive practice model to support access and participation of mature learners and care leavers. As we expand our student body and gather more sophisticated data, we will extend our focus to other underrepresented groups.

Ambition and strategy

Overview

LIS's mission is to provide a transformational learning experience for individuals *who do not feel that the current university system caters for their needs*. We are seeking to enrol high-potential, curious and engaged individuals with a keen interest in tackling the problems that matter in society.

Fair access and participation of currently underrepresented groups is at the heart of this mission. Many of the individuals we will seek to recruit are from disadvantaged backgrounds that traditionally have fewer opportunities to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education. These individuals are underserved by the current university system; their passion and potential is untapped. Although the number of

⁶ OfS; 2016/17 figures; includes students with or without a Disabled Students' Allowance

⁷ Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*

⁸ HEFCE. Full time, UK-domiciled mature entrants in 2014-15—non-continuation rate of 11.3% after one year compared to 6.3% for younger peers.

⁹ Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*

¹⁰ Department for Education, *Children looked after in England including adoption, 2016-2017*

young people from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university has been increasing (an increase of 78% for the most disadvantaged group since 2006),¹¹ the statistics in the above section show that there is a long way to go in terms of securing equality of opportunity for all. This inequality of opportunity is one of the drivers of our efforts to establish a new institution, which, by avoiding the entrenched structures and incentives amongst current top-level higher education providers, can effectively reach these disadvantaged, high-potential individuals and support them through the admissions process, to succeed in their degree and beyond.

As set out above, given that we are a new provider with no institution-specific historical data to draw on, our aim will be to close the gaps in opportunity for the major disadvantaged groups as described by the OfS.¹² Complementary to our wide-reaching efforts to widen participation for these disadvantaged groups, our access and participation plan will also have a special local focus. LIS will be based in London, which has a relatively higher proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds: just under a fifth of London secondary school pupils are eligible for free school meals (compared to 14% average in England); secondary school pupils in London are more likely to come from a minority ethnic background (70%, relative to 28% in England) or speak English as an additional language (41%, relative to 19% in England); and 14% of pupils in London have an identified special educational need (rising to 17% in Inner London; England is at 13%).¹³ LIS will seek to address the significant educational disadvantage in its local area by forging strong links with local state-maintained secondary schools and colleges, working with them through a set of outreach interventions aimed at raising attainment and improving access.

Monitoring our performance

Our ambition is to achieve equal opportunity for access to LIS regardless of background, and to close the opportunity gap in terms of success and progression for disadvantaged students within and beyond higher education. We see this as key not only in supporting social mobility, but also in ensuring that we are identifying and attracting the very best students. To this end, *we are aiming for a student body that closes some of the major gaps in representation in UK higher education*. In the longer term our ambition is to have equal representation of each MEM quintile in our student body, with equality of success and progression for each MEM quintile.¹⁴

¹¹ UCAS End of Cycle Report 2017 (reporting of entry rates to 2017 using UCAS's Multiple Equality Measure (MEM))

¹² Students from areas of lower education participation, low household income and/or socioeconomic status; black and minority ethnic students; disabled students; mature students; and care leavers.

¹³ Major of London's Annual London Education Report, 2017 (February 2017)

¹⁴ The recent report by the Fair Education Alliance recommended that individual-level data (such as the multiple equality measure quintile) should be made available to HEIs by UCAS at the application stage, as these measures offer the most meaningful information about student background (Fair Education Alliance, *Putting fairness in context: using data to widen access to higher education* (July 2018)). UCAS is currently running a small trial to understand the use of multiple equality measure (MEM) data, which it will evaluate in summer 2018. Ideally, this data will become available in time for our first admissions cycle in 2020

To this end, we will monitor our performance in terms of access, success and progression of disadvantaged students on our programme. We will do this using UCAS contextual data (schools' contextual data and individual contextual data) on all our candidates and enrolled students. We are hoping that MEM data will be available from UCAS by individual student by the 2020 Admissions Cycle, which will allow us to monitor the relative access, success and progression opportunities for candidates and enrolled students with multiple characteristics of disadvantage. MEM data will also enable us to start building a picture of how we are progressing towards our goal of equal representation and opportunity for each MEM quintile.

Once we have enrolled our first cohort of students, we will be able to assess our access performance and determine where the major gaps of representation are in terms of our student body. This information will allow us to set focused, stretching targets for successive cohorts.

The access and participation KPIs we will be monitoring in 2019/20 will be:

- Number and percentage of disadvantaged students we engage in our field outreach programme (using schools as an indicator for whether students are generally disadvantaged [state-maintained secondary, low higher education participation catchment area, poor GCSE/ A-level performance versus national average, high proportion of FSMs])
- Number and percentage of students attending our events that are from disadvantaged backgrounds (by MEM-quintile or disadvantaged group [students from low higher education participation backgrounds and from schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students/ lower academic attainment]).
- Number and percentage of applications to LIS by students from disadvantaged backgrounds (by MEM-quintile or disadvantaged group [students from low higher education participation backgrounds and from schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students/ lower academic attainment]).
- Number and percentage of LIS place offers to disadvantaged students (by MEM-quintile or disadvantaged group [students from low higher education participation backgrounds and from schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students/ lower academic attainment]).

We will evaluate our performance on these KPIs relative to other UK HEIs, national benchmarks, and our long-term ambition to close the gaps in opportunity between MEM quintiles. In the years beyond 2019/20, we will extend our KPIs to include:

- Number and percentage of disadvantaged students not continuing their studies at LIS versus their peers (by MEM quintile or disadvantaged group [students from low higher education participation backgrounds and from schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students/ lower academic attainment; BME; disabled; care leavers]).

- Number and percentage of disadvantaged students on track to receive (or graduating with) a first- or upper-second class degree relative to their peers (by MEM quintile or disadvantaged group [as above]).
- Number and percentage of disadvantaged students gaining professional employment within six months of graduation relative to their peers, or progressing to further study (by MEM quintile or disadvantaged group [as above]).
- Student satisfaction levels of disadvantaged students (by MEM quintile or disadvantaged group [as above]) versus peers.

As we have cohorts moving through our admissions process, degree course, and beyond, we will determine any emerging opportunity gaps and set more granular annual targets across access, success and progression by disadvantaged group to ensure that we are achieving continuous improvement in terms of access and participation. As well as evaluating our access and participation performance against our own targets and expectations, we will also evaluate it against national benchmarks using data from HEFCE, HESA, UCAS, Department for Education destination measures and free school meal statistics, Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes metrics, and Student Loans Company data on students receiving the maximum maintenance loan. This external data will help flag any specific weaknesses in our performance as well as ongoing access and participation trends that will inform our planning for subsequent student cycles.

In addition to capturing and monitoring data on overall access and participation trends at LIS, we will also use individualised contextual data and learner analytics to track our individual disadvantaged students through and beyond the course, to give us an understanding of outcomes for these students, any specific obstacles they are facing, and the areas where our access and participation measures are insufficient in closing gaps in equality of opportunity. This will enable us to better direct our interventions and improve outcomes in terms of continuation, attainment and progression going forward.

We will use the models recommended by OFFA-commissioned research on financial support to evaluate the extent to which our packages are closing the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged students and their peers. Given the small size of our initial cohort, it may be challenging to establish a meaningful set of statistics in our first years of operation; in the meantime, therefore, we will supplement any data analysis with surveys and interview questions to determine the extent to which our financial support schemes are fit for purpose.

Our work to monitor our performance against overall targets, to track the progress of individual disadvantaged students, and to adapt our access and participation activities accordingly will be led by an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, consisting of the Learning Director, Director of Recruitment and Admissions, the Director of Student Experience, and a student representative. This work will be overseen by the Academic Council. The Board of Directors will sign off on LIS's annual Access and Participation Statement; and we will publish an annual Access and

Participation Report setting out our access and participation performance, effective interventions, and ongoing strategic initiatives to close gaps of opportunity for disadvantaged students.

Collaborative working

To support and inform all of our access activities, we are working with access organisations including The Access Project,¹⁵ Unifrog,¹⁶ The Brilliant Club,¹⁷ and Causeway Education.¹⁸ In addition, when Advance HE is established in August 2018, we will open a dialogue with them to input into our development of learning and teaching, equality and diversity and leadership and governance.¹⁹

We are also collaborating with selected state-maintained secondary schools (notably heads of sixth form, dedicated careers leaders at schools and Key Stage 5 students and parents) to develop our access and participation thinking, working with the Big Education Trust, Ark, Oasis and the Harris Foundation to shape and broaden our outreach programme to students at schools with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils. We are working with the Big Education Multi-Academic Trust²⁰ (with whom we have a strong relationship, and of which our co-founder Ed Fidoe is a Board member) to develop strategies to raise attainment in their schools. We are collaborating with Ernst & Young to understand how their success in “exams-blind” admissions can inform our admissions process, as well as with James Darley (Teach First, Transform, Trustee of Think Ahead, Police Now, Unlocked) as we develop our thinking on admissions. We are also working with employers to understand how LIS’s programme can fit with their diversity initiatives, and will continue to work closely with them as we structure our curriculum and internship programme.

Equality and diversity strategy

Our Access and Participation strategy and plan has been developed in alignment with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which states that LIS will:

- Seek to ensure that all individuals are treated equitably, regardless of gender, race or ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, or any other inappropriate distinction.
- Promote diversity of student recruitment and equity of student attainment.

¹⁵ Works with bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing in-school support and personalized tuition to help them gain access to top universities

¹⁶ Partners with schools to provide a one-stop shop where students can explore their interests, then find and successfully apply for their next best step after school

¹⁷ Charity that exists to increase the number of pupils from underrepresented backgrounds progressing to highly selective universities; it does so by mobilizing the PhD community to share its academic expertise with state schools.

¹⁸ Supports children and young people through key educational transitions

¹⁹ Pan-London organization that aims to support the progression of underrepresented groups to Higher Education

²⁰ A trust of state-maintained schools in disadvantaged parts of London

- Promote diversity in our staff body.
- Promote an inclusive teaching and learning environment, where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, and are given equal opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Specifically, our Access and Participation activities will support our Equality and Diversity Strategy via:

- Our strategies for increasing the diversity of our student body through our outreach and schools attainment support activities, our support of disadvantaged students through the admissions process, contextual admissions and bespoke offers policies.
- Our efforts to eliminate bias against black and ethnic minority students, disabled students, and students of low socio-economic status, as well as any other form of bias, via our merit-based admissions process.
- Our plans to monitor individual student progress and outcomes, taking into account contextual information, determining where there are inequalities of opportunity, and making interventions to address these.
- Our inclusive practice model of student teaching, learning and support, including our inclusive use of technology.
- Our efforts to include students in all aspects of institutional and academic governance (via student representatives on the Academic Council, the Board of Directors, and student representation on major working groups, such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group), and our consultation of students on diversity issues via online surveys.
- Our special provision and support for disabled students.
- Our provision of financial bursaries to those students in greatest financial need.
- The embedding of access and participation across all levels of the organisation, including teaching and learning, student marketing and recruitment, student experience and services, and governance.

The activities and provisions above are set out in detail in the following section.

Consultation with students

Student consultation will be at the heart of LIS's widening participation provision. In addition to interviews and surveys, students will have an opportunity to input on the development, implementation and evaluation of our access, success and progression work via:

- Inclusion of a student representative at the Board of Directors, at which the annual Access and Participation Statement will be discussed.
- Representation at the Academic Council, which will be responsible for overseeing the development of LIS's teaching and learning programme, as well as the development and monitoring of access, success, and progression interventions for disadvantaged students.

- An anonymous online reporting service, where students can log any issues of concern, including relating to inequality of opportunity at the School.

Access, student success and progression measures

Overview

LIS will support *access* through our local and nationwide schools outreach programme and our unique admissions process, which is designed to avoid bias and allow for accessibility. We will support *success* via our distinctive teaching model, which incorporates technology and flexible delivery models to create an inclusive learning environment, via targeted financial bursaries, and via a wide-ranging set of mental health and wellbeing services. We will support *progress* through our programme of guaranteed annual paid internships for every student, employer input and involvement in the development and delivery of our curriculum, and employer mentoring schemes.

This set of activities has been developed in line with the advice set out the OfS's *Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans 2019-20*, and in the light of recent recommendations from the Fair Education Alliance.²¹ We have also used research, guidance from schools and widening participation groups, and case studies to develop and prioritise our access and participation measures.

Access

Equality of opportunity begins with access. Recent research suggests that the admissions process itself may be a potential driver of the access gap.²² LIS is putting in place a number of interventions at the outreach, application and admissions stages to support equality of access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given that our first students will begin their courses in Q4 2020, our access activities constitute the most important part of our Access and Participation activities.

Outreach

We are building awareness of our course offering and application process through a targeted outreach programme that has a special focus on Key Stage 5 students attending non-selective state secondary schools and colleges with a high proportion of disadvantaged students. Our outreach programme is conducted by a dedicated field team and is led by our Head of Programmes and Outreach, Michael England, who was the founder of Causeway Education (a charity that improves the life chances of children and young people in the UK by supporting them through key educational transitions). The programme includes: talks with students and their

²¹ Fair Education Alliance, *Putting Fairness in Context: Using Data to Widen Access to Higher Education (July 2018)*

²² Sutton Trust, *Rules of the Game: Disadvantaged Students and the University Admissions Process*

families and with heads of sixth forms; taster problem-solving sessions with students; and attendance of career fairs and higher education days. We are developing special outreach relationships with several local schools, all of which have high proportions of disadvantaged students, and are working with The Big Education Trust, Ark, and Oasis to target more of these kinds of schools. We are focusing on sustained outreach with a small set of schools rather than multiple one-off interventions across a wide range of schools, as we believe this will be most effective.

The majority of these schools will be in London, which remains an area of above-average disadvantage. The city has a higher proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds than the average for England, and higher proportion of minority ethnic pupils.²³ However, a significant proportion of our outreach activities will be further afield in the UK; we have already conducted outreach sessions in Leeds, Birmingham, Coventry, Newcastle and Manchester, and have plans to conduct further outreach activities in the Midlands and the South, including in selected government opportunity areas, such as Hastings.

As a small, new and innovative provider, we will conduct a significant proportion of outreach activities online. This is a cost-effective way of targeting harder-to-reach young people through engaging, interactive content. The Sutton Trust argues that disadvantaged students require better information, advice and guidance throughout the application process to enable them to make better choices; and, further, that this guidance “must go beyond typical ‘passive’ information sources such as websites. Effective information should be customised to the student, timely and interactive”.²⁴ We are working with Ignite, an innovative digital marketing agency, to develop an interactive, customised online outreach programme via platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. We are also exploring the use of webinars in our outreach programme.

Application and Admissions

Unique admissions process

Our unique admissions process is designed to remove bias against disadvantaged groups by reducing the traditional emphasis on GCSE results, predicted and actual A-level results and UCAS points, and ensuring that any consideration of academic attainment takes the candidate’s educational, familial and personal context into account.

Innovative higher education institutions have removed their focus on standardised tests with positive impacts on accessibility: for example, Hampshire College in the United States has moved to “test-blind” admissions (admissions that do not take into

²³ 19% secondary school pupils on FSM on London vs. 14% in England; 70% of minority ethnic secondary school pupils in London vs. 28% in England. Source; Mayor of London Annual London Education Report, 2017

²⁴ Sutton Trust, *Rules of the Game: Disadvantaged Students and the University Admissions Process*, December 2017, p.4.

account SAT/ACT scores) in an effort to widen participation and increase fairness of opportunity, with significant improvements in diversity of its student body. Minerva ignores standardised tests like the SAT in favour of its own three-stage merit-based admissions process, leading to a diverse student body with no national, cultural or ethnic group in majority. More broadly, hundreds of US colleges (900 to date, out of 2,500 accredited bachelor-degree granting institutions) are moving to test-optional and test-flexible admissions, whereby students can decide whether they wish to submit their standardised test scores as part of their application.

Variations on the “academic exam-blind” approach are currently being deployed by the UK’s leading accounting firms as well as other corporate organisations, and have led to a significant improvement in recruitment diversity:

- Since removing all academic criteria on application in 2015, Ernst & Young have seen a 10% increase in recruits from state schools and a 7% increase in the number of recruits who were the first in their family to go to university. Overall, 18% of its 2016 UK intake would have been ineligible to apply before this new recruiting approach.
- Since removing academic screening criteria (instead relying on strengths-based assessment), Nestle has found that 21% of the people they hired would not have been eligible under their previous criteria
- A recent Bridge Group Report describes how employers are increasingly adopting a more inclusive approach to applications, including removing UCAS tariffs or A-level scores from their entry requirements and masking this information during the recruitment process.²⁵

We believe that reducing the emphasis on actual and predicted results and UCAS points and viewing all academic attainment in context is a powerful intervention in removing the entrenched inequality of opportunity in higher education faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Disadvantaged pupils tend to perform more poorly in public exams relative to their peers: in 2017, 69% of disadvantaged pupils achieved an average grade of 3 or above in English and maths, compared to 95% of all other pupils, whilst 7% of disadvantaged pupils achieved a 7 or above, compared with 20% of non-disadvantaged pupils.²⁶ In addition, high-attaining disadvantaged students are more likely to have their grades under-predicted versus their richer counterparts—almost 3,000 disadvantaged, high-achieving children—or 1,000 per year—have their A-level grades under-predicted.²⁷ Research shows that gaps in equality of representation are largest at those providers that have historically accepted applicants who receive the highest A-level grades.²⁸ Given that LIS is aiming

²⁵ The Bridge Group, *Inspiring policy: graduate outcomes and social mobility* (2016)

²⁶ Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2016-17* (where pupils are defined as “disadvantaged” if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years (from Year 6 to Year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day, or recorded as having been adopted from care).

²⁷ Sutton Trust, *Rules of the Game: Disadvantaged Students and the University Admissions Process*, December 2017, p.3

²⁸ UCAS *Undergraduate End of Cycle Report, 2017*

to recruit high-calibre students, we must be particularly sensitive in how we assess students if we are to build a student body that is diverse and representative.

We believe that reducing the focus on exam results and UCAS points during the admissions process and viewing all academic attainment in context will enable us to more effectively reach disadvantaged and under-confident students, as well as enable our admissions process to be more targeted and effective across the board. To this end, we will have no grade threshold for admission, but instead will view the academic attainment of each of our applicants in the context of their background (educational, family, and any other personal disadvantage they have experienced), using contextual data available from UCAS.²⁹ We will then use our own tests to further assess applicant potential, to determine whether they have the range of skills, strengths and motivations required to succeed on our unique interdisciplinary, problem-solving-led curriculum. Traditional exam-results alone are not the best indicator for many of the qualities (such as entrepreneurialism, team-work, intellectual creativity and risk-taking) that we are looking for in our students, and as a small, alternative provider, we do not need to use them to sift the high volume of applications that larger, more established HE institutions receive.

Prospective students will apply via the UCAS system as normal, and will have the option to upload a short text, video or audio file explaining why they are applying to the School. We'll review applications based on the candidate's UCAS reference, their academic achievement in the context of their educational, familial, and personal background, and any submission they've chosen to upload.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to our Discovery Day, which will take place at the School in Spring 2020. The Discovery Day will be run by our world-class interdisciplinary faculty and will include structured interviews, structured team problem-solving tasks, and cognitive tests (numerical, verbal, spatial and abstract). The Day does not require any preparation, and all assessments are optional; however the more assessments a candidate does, the more opportunity they have to demonstrate their potential.

Where two students perform equally in our admissions assessments, preference will be given to contextually flagged applicants. These admissions decisions, and the role of contextual data in making them, will be carefully logged so that we can track and monitor our decision-making process on and outcomes of contextual admissions over time

All successful candidates will be given a contextual conditional offer, based on their predicted grades and their background (educational, familial, and personal). In this

²⁹ The average academic attainment of the candidate's school, its location (POLAR), and the proportion of its pupils who entitled to Free School Meals or education maintenance allowance; where the candidate lives (POLAR), and whether their parents went to university; whether the candidate is disabled, or has been in care.

way, students will be required to push themselves to achieve in their public examinations, but any student that shows very high potential—regardless of historic academic achievement—will be given the opportunity to receive an offer of a place.

Supporting disadvantaged students through our admissions process

Designing our tests to reduce bias against disadvantaged students, and providing disadvantaged students with support and guidance through our admissions process, will be crucial. Conversations with state-maintained secondary schools have highlighted that even those disadvantaged students achieving high A-level grades (predicted and actual) are failing to receive offers from higher education institutions that include non-academic assessments (such as interviews and other tests). In reducing the focus on GCSE and A-level results in our admissions process and relying instead on our own testing methods, we are creating a risk that we are developing a different kind of unfair hurdle for disadvantaged students to overcome.

In designing our admissions process, we are therefore focusing on developing tests that focus on strengths versus competencies – i.e., tests that appraise innate ability and motivations that focus on what students *can do* rather than *have done*, and cannot be practiced or coached for. We will also prepare disadvantaged students and their teachers for our Discovery. To this end, all students who are interested in applying for admission in 2020 will be invited to attend various events during Spring and Summer 2019. These events will consist of workshops and taster sessions to build confidence in preparation for LIS's unique Discovery Day.

In coming years, we aim to extend our admissions preparation programme by offering open days on site, as well as opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to sit in on classes and to attend problem-solving taster sessions at LIS, led by our full-time and guest faculty.

In the future, we are aiming to partner with several local state-maintained secondary schools to support their disadvantaged students through the admissions process. We will work with these partner schools from the beginning of Key Stage 5, informing them about our course, offering advice on application, and offering workshops to build skills in key areas of our admissions assessment (problem-solving, team-work, thought leadership). In due course, this programme will be expanded to include mentoring programmes (delivered by student volunteers, who will be paid the living wage for their time), curriculum enrichment and support, campus visits and taster days from. Over the coming years, we will seek to extend our support to these and other local schools to earlier Key Stages, including to Key Stage 2 and 3 (e.g., via students volunteering for mentoring and homework clubs), to support attainment, which is a crucial factor in enabling diversity in higher education admissions.³⁰

³⁰ Prior attainment at school has a significant influence on the higher education outcomes for young people, with research for BIS finding that GCSE attainment was the strongest predictor of whether pupils went on to higher education (BIS (2015), *Socio-economic, ethnic and gender differences in higher education*); Russell Group: *Opening Doors: Understanding and overcoming the barriers to university access*

Clarifying and communicating our approach.

The Fair Education Alliance report stresses the need to raise awareness amongst disadvantaged students as to how they may be eligible for additional consideration at institutions they may otherwise think are out of their reach.³¹ We will include information on our unique admissions process and our use of contextual data and offers in all of our outreach and marketing activities (digital, in-school, website, physical and online prospectuses), including how we will determine which students qualify as “disadvantaged” and how we use this information to make admissions decisions. We will also include this information on the UCAS application for our courses.

In addition, we will make special efforts to communicate our contextualised admissions approach with designated careers leaders and advisors at state-maintained secondary schools.

Success

Once students have arrived at LIS, various measures will be in place to ensure that all students have equality of opportunity in terms of success in their studies, both in terms of continuation and attainment. Drop-out rates among university students within their first year of studies have increased for the third year in a row (at 6.4% in 2015-16);³² experts suggest that this may be attributable to insufficient support being provided to the rising proportion of disadvantaged students.³³ It is not enough to close the gap in terms of access for these students; we must put in place measures to ensure that they are able to continue and succeed in their studies once they have enrolled.

Inclusive practice model

As we will be a new institution, these measures will follow an inclusive practice model, and include:

- The placement of inclusive teaching and learning environments at the heart of our model. The use of technology and flipped learning will be key in our approach: students will be able to access an extensive range of e-learning materials to supplement and inform classroom learning. This use of technology and flexible learning, and our combination of traditional and

³¹ Fair Education Alliance, *Putting fairness in context: using data to widen access to higher education* (July 2018)

³² Higher Education Statistics Agency

³³ Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, asked why HE non-continuation rates were rising: “We know the higher fees in England have led to lower value for money perceptions among students, so that could be having an effect. But my personal hunch is that it is more to do with the extra students that have been recruited in recent years. There are more students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with non-standard qualifications, and some universities have lowered their entry standards. Some of these changes are welcome but students from underrepresented groups do need more support than others and they may not always be getting it in full.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/mar/08/university-drop-out-rates-uk-rise-third-year>

innovative pedagogic approaches, will create a more inclusive teaching and learning environment. The importance of inclusive learning resources will be included in staff training at induction.

- A small learning environment, which will enable more vulnerable learners to feel safe and supported.
- A sector-leading student-to-faculty ratio.
- The provision of a personal tutor for each student, who will conduct regular one-to-one progress reviews, as well as flag students showing risks of low attainment or non-continuation.
- The delivery of a course curriculum which will include components specifically focused on personal growth, including character education and wellness.
- A dedicated Student Experience department which provides and enables provision of a wide-ranging set of mental health and wellbeing resources and services.

Targeted support for disabled students

We will offer targeted support and provision for disabled students, including the availability of assistive technology, the provision of alternative assessment methods where necessary, and accessibility planning for social/recreational space, teaching and learning facilities.

Part-time provision

As we become more established and grow our student body, we will consider introducing part-time courses, as evidence shows that part-time higher education provision plays a significant role in improving access for students facing inequalities, for example mature and disabled learners.³⁴

Progress

LIS's aim is to equip all of our students with the skills and interdisciplinary knowledge that are required to solve real complex problems in the workplace. This is why practical problem-solving, experiential learning and the development of work-based skills (e.g., teamwork and leadership) sit at the heart of our curriculum. We aim to develop students who are highly employable on graduation, and to this end are engaging external employers in the development of our curriculum. We will also involve employers in the delivery of our programme through workshops and lectures, which will enable all students to interact with employers as part of their studies (which is a more inclusive approach than relying on on-campus recruitment events, where attendance is self-selected and tends to be less diverse).³⁵

³⁴ HESA: 92% of undergraduate part-time students in 2016-17 were mature students (aged 21 and over)

³⁵ Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership enabling social mobility in higher education*

Our internships programme will be crucial in giving our students practical workplace experience and allowing them to forge relationships with employers, thereby better positioning them to progress successfully into the working world. Research shows that 30% of recruiters expect to fill entry-level jobs with graduates who have already worked for their organisations; however, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be able to secure internships, as 68% of students organise internships through friends or family, and only 14% secure internships with help from their university.³⁶ LIS will buck this trend by ensuring that all students regardless of background will be guaranteed an annual paid, structured internship with an employer. These internships will be with world-class organisations from both the private and third sector, and primarily based in Greater London to ensure ease of accessibility for all students.³⁷

Overall, our programme of internships, work-based learning, and employer teaching are intended to ensure that all students are well prepared for entering the workplace when they graduate. Supporting progression into careers will be in the DNA of LIS, which will develop student careers awareness, experience and readiness from the outset of the programme.

This is an inclusive approach; and we envisage that it will provide particular benefit to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, not only through ensuring that each individual is given exposure to top-level employers and support through employer internships, but also through ensuring that internships are paid, which will alleviate the financial pressures that tend to face students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In terms of specific interventions for disadvantaged students, LIS will look to place these students on group mentoring schemes with volunteers from our partner employer organisations. We aim to secure these mentoring schemes for second year students and above.

Finally, in 2021/22 we are aiming to launch a student volunteering programme for outreach into local state-maintained schools. This will not only support our widening participation programme; research has shown that volunteering can be helpful in improving the employability of students from disadvantaged backgrounds by developing skills valued by employers (communication, teamwork, leadership).³⁸ Volunteers will be paid the living wage by LIS to ensure that the volunteering programme does not discriminate against financially disadvantaged students.

LIS will monitor the extent to which disadvantaged students have equality of opportunity in terms of internships, volunteering and careers support through a combination of data gathering and analysis and student feedback. Where there

³⁶ High Fliers Research 2015, National Centre for Universities and Business 2014, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

³⁷ LIS is in talks with world-class organisations who have expressed an interest in hosting internships for our students, including McKinsey, Virgin Galactic, and The Gates Foundation.

³⁸ Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*

appear to be gaps in equality of opportunity, we will undertake swift and specific interventions to address these.

Provision of information to students

Prospective students will receive clear guidance on the following via our online and physical prospectus, as well as at the point of offer:

- Fees (including any information regarding possible changes to the level of tuition fees and how it could affect them).
- Our approved access and participation statement.