

# Strategy to Promote Access and Widening Participation

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The London School of Hygiene &  
Tropical Medicine 2022–2025

LONDON  
SCHOOL *of*  
HYGIENE  
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MEDICINE





## Introduction

This strategy outlines both the overarching aims and the areas of immediate focus that will frame new initiatives at LSHTM that seek to improve access and facilitate widening participation. This is in line with one of the key priorities of LSHTM's Strategy 2022-2027, which focuses on 'The creation of an environment in which all students can achieve their potential by proactively improving access to an LSHTM education, attracting students from a wide range of backgrounds, with different approaches

to widening participation for home and overseas students.'

This work also ties in with and uses definitions from LSHTM's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, published in 2021, where one of its priorities is to 'Close student diversity-related gaps (or inequalities) in admissions, experience, attainment and progression using positive action initiatives where appropriate.'

Supporting and facilitating access and participation for students from all backgrounds is also one of the Office for Student's ongoing conditions of registration.

Supporting access and widening participation at the postgraduate level is a new sector-wide initiative. LSHTM is perfectly positioned to actively contribute to, take a lead in and benefit from this new work that will, ultimately, create a more diverse student community.

## Statement from the Director

It is our moral obligation to improve access to an LSHTM education for students from a wide range of backgrounds; and I'm passionate about ensuring they feel that they belong to the LSHTM community, can thrive academically and go out and make real impact in the world.

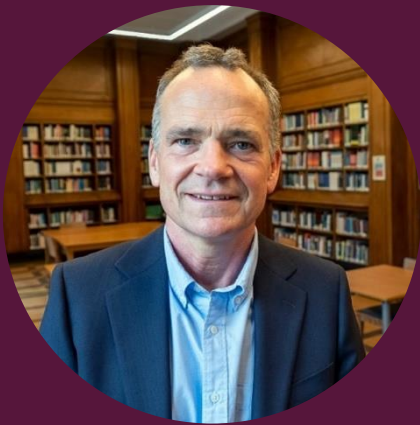
When I was at school, I didn't know that studying medicine at university was the first step towards being a doctor. Once I heard about it, my interest grew and grew, encouraged by a couple of my former teachers. Fortunately, at that time I was able to get a UK Government grant that was enough to live on and that paid my fees. Without this financial support, I am absolutely certain I would not have even considered going to University, studying medicine, becoming a doctor, getting interested in research and teaching – and ended up as Director of

LSHTM. Education quite literally transformed my life.

The world needs us to break down barriers and remove inequalities, allowing more people to benefit from all that education has to offer. Our LSHTM vision is for a more healthy, sustainable and equitable world for everyone, and we need a richly diverse community of students from around the world to bring their wide range of experiences and skills to contribute to and, in the future, lead on this work.

This Strategy to Promote Access and Widen Participation is the product of a great deal of work by colleagues across LSHTM and brings to life the commitments in our new LSHTM Strategy 2022-2027 to foster an environment in which all students can achieve their potential. It is an important step forward in articulating our aims across the postgraduate student lifecycle, which is a new initiative not only at LSHTM but across the sector. It comes just as we

have recently captured [our values](#) – to act with integrity, embrace difference, work together and create impact – and embedding these values across our community will play an important part in creating the conditions for all students to thrive. It will take a collective effort across LSHTM to bring about impactful change and I know that colleagues across our School are as committed as I am to delivering this strategy.



*Liam*

Professor Liam Smeeh  
Director

## Context

Around three quarters of UK postgraduate taught and one third of postgraduate research students are self-funded. Without sector intervention, postgraduate study may become an option only for those from advantaged backgrounds.

Access and Widening Participation activities are designed to address and ultimately remove inequalities in Higher Education for people from different backgrounds. LSHTM recognises the value in diversity and aims to create a community that represents the full makeup of our society and welcomes students from all walks of life.

Our aim is to address diversity gaps identified at LSHTM and, as part of our future cohorts, welcome students who are currently underrepresented, disadvantaged and/or have different needs.

Furthermore, as a global institution that welcomes students from a wide range of countries across the world, it is essential to recognise that applicants face different barriers to learning depending on where they come from. Therefore, a key challenge is the development of meaningful Widening Participation initiatives that adequately distinguish between and positively impact upon home and international students.



# Strategy at a Glance

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The Strategy is set out across the Student Lifecycle, focusing on **Access, Student Experience** and **Attainment**. Each section outlines where we will focus our efforts to support the successful delivery of the strategy.

The LSHTM will be a place where students from diverse backgrounds feel they **belong**, can **thrive**, and are **valued** for their unique contribution.

## Access

Prospective students from a range of backgrounds can see themselves at LSHTM and gain a place.

## Student experience

All students feel they belong and matter to LSHTM.

## Attainment

All students are supported and able to thrive academically.

## **Access**

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### **Students of any background feel encouraged and enabled to apply for a place at LSHTM.**

- ✓ We are aware that educational achievements can be influenced by a range of factors. We aim to consider any barriers applicants may have faced and take account of the circumstances in which their grades have been achieved, rather than relying on results alone. To make the admissions process fairer, and to better assess attainment to date and true potential, we will adapt our current admissions processes so that those with the greatest barriers to learning are encouraged to apply.
- ✓ We will build a scholarship portfolio that enables students, both those who are applying from the UK and overseas, to go on to further study on both taught and research programmes.
- ✓ We will expand and better define the provision of Access and Engagement activities offered by LSHTM alongside other activities offered by the Student Communications and Engagement, Alumni Engagement and Public Engagement teams so that students from all backgrounds recognise that further study is applicable to them.
- ✓ We will work to ensure that any student from under-represented groups who wants to progress from taught to doctoral research programmes feels supported to do so.

# Student Experience

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**Once they are offered a place to study at LSHTM, students from any background feel valued, supported and a sense of belonging, both at the School and in Higher Education more broadly.**

- ✓ We will foster an atmosphere of cultural understanding and exchange so that each individual feels like they are welcome and wanted.
- ✓ We will design transitions and inductions with the needs of under-represented groups at the forefront so that students from all backgrounds are supported.
- ✓ We will ensure our students are heard, understood and supported to complete their studies and that they feel represented and empowered to identify and challenge potential inequalities at LSHTM.
- ✓ We will build upon schemes at both institutional and programme levels so that all students can form meaningful connections with others before, during and after their time at LSHTM.

## Attainment

**LSHTM will create an environment in which students from any background can succeed academically, with the aim to achieve equity of opportunity for academic success.**

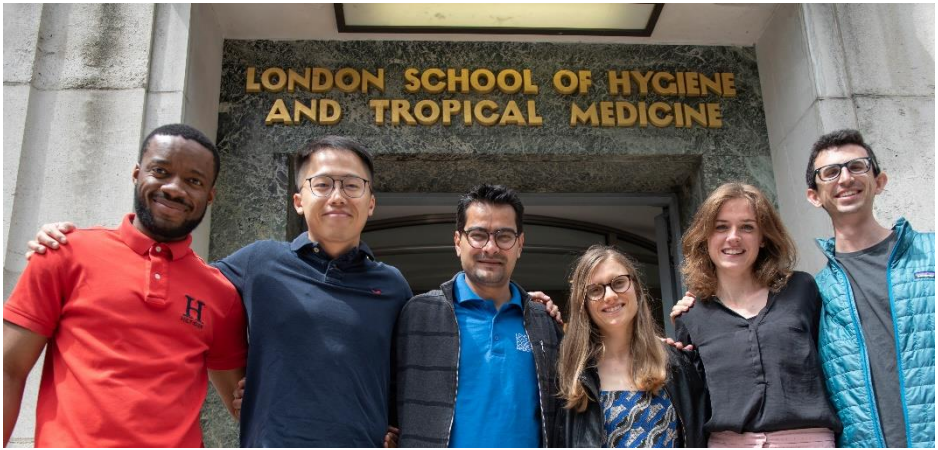
- ✓ We will work alongside our student body and academic community to explore and adapt how programmes are taught, assessed and evaluated at LSHTM so that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed, with a specific aim of addressing the existing attainment gap for people from a minority ethnic background.
- ✓ We will ensure that our research-led teaching and broader pedagogical practices provide rich educational experiences for all learners.
- ✓ We will continue to work on the decolonising of our curriculum so that students feel teaching materials are inclusive and that they do not include racist or colonial perspectives and language.
- ✓ We will expand the training provision for students, particularly those undergoing doctoral research, so that everyone can benefit from a programme that not only enhances their core skills but also enables them to secure employment in their desired field after they leave LSHTM.



**In order to achieve the overarching aims outlined above, we will**

- ✓ instil a culture that prioritises access and student success and fosters a sense of belonging for all
- ✓ continue to use data analysis to identify areas of low representation, disadvantage and different needs at LSHTM and in postgraduate study in general
- ✓ reflect upon available data (from application through to award) that is both internal and from across the sector to inform new emerging widening participation initiatives
- ✓ engage with students to develop and evaluate any widening participation initiatives so that they have the greatest impact

- ✓ continue to update the toolkit launched to assist staff in decolonising their educational materials and approaches to teaching
- ✓ provide staff with multiple opportunities to learn about the challenges faced by students and how they can actively contribute to and enact change in their field
- ✓ enhance and adapt supervisor training and support so that it responds to students' needs
- ✓ continue to form partnerships and connections with other institutions, including engaging in outreach activities
- ✓ actively contribute to the current sector-wide impetus to broaden access to postgraduate study and research
- ✓ have an implementation plan that identifies owners of and deadlines for individual actions that will improve access and widening participation at LSHTM.



Commitment to the Widening Participation agenda must happen across LSHTM. The level of funding will determine the scale and extent of Widening Participation engagement, but it must be recognised that, even with significant resources, major shifts in the student demographic will be a long-term plan. However, embedding Widening Participation into existing practice will be an efficient method for making initial progress. Understanding how LSHTM staff and the student community has, continues to and could further promote the Widening Participation agenda will be a crucial, interactive process.

Staff and students can share their experience of and recommendations for how LSHTM might achieve some of the above aims (both through short- and long-term initiatives) at any time by emailing: [widening-participation@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:widening-participation@lshtm.ac.uk). All ideas are valued and will be considered.

## **Appendix: Definitions**

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**Equality:** Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of their specific protected characteristic.

**Protected Characteristics:** The 'protected characteristics' defined by the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. LSHTM recognises that diversity encompasses and goes beyond protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act (2010) and should include everything that makes us unique, from our backgrounds and experiences to our personalities and ways of thinking. This includes for example, socio-economic status, transgender identity, caring responsibilities or being a care leaver.

**Equity:** While the concepts 'equality' and 'equity' both promote fairness, equality focuses on treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity recognises the existence of systemic social inequalities, privileges and the need for actions to proactively reduce, if not remove, institutional structural and cultural barriers to equal opportunity and inclusion.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is about creating an environment that has the necessary structures to ensure that every individual, regardless of their characteristics and background, has what they need to thrive personally and professionally.



**Diversity:** Diversity refers to recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people.

**Outreach at LSHTM:** Activities that engage with audiences external to LSHTM, which can be split into four groups: Student Communications and Engagement, Alumni Engagement, Public Engagement and Access and Engagement.

**Student Communications and Engagement:** Attracting and retaining high-calibre students from across the world to study at LSHTM, targeting undergraduate students and professionals through activities including (but not limited to) advertising campaigns, open days and other conversion events, representation at scientific conferences and graduate fairs, overseeing LSHTM's student ambassadors scheme.

**Alumni Engagement:** Providing alumni with lifelong links to LSHTM and each other. It is about providing alumni with opportunities to get involved with the LSHTM community around the world and to give back to LSHTM, with either their time or their money. It is also about giving alumni a voice in LSHTM initiatives, for example the current EDI and Widening Participation work, and to be involved in defining our culture, values and next strategy.

**Access and Engagement:** Working with both other educational institutions (including schools and universities) and departments within LSHTM to provide educational opportunities that encourage all students, irrespective of their background and experiences, to apply for and complete studies at university, specifically at the post-graduate level.

**Public Engagement:** Activities, events and projects that allow for open communication between researchers and non-academics involving interaction and listening, with the goal of achieving mutual benefits and extending the reach of research.

