



Measuring educational gain: London School of Economics and Political Science case study

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[Beyond regulation: LSE's articulation of educational gains as a tool to empower development.](#)

[Introduction](#)

This case study outlines the approach to the articulation of educational gains taken at the London School of Economics and Political Science as laid out in its 2023 submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework. Our approach was informed by the LSE's 2030 Strategy which aims to 'Educate its students for Global Impact' coupled with the recognition that our students learn and develop skills and attitudes both through their core curriculum as well as through the extra-curricular activities they engage in at LSE and beyond. It is also informed by a values-based commitment to develop a notion of educational gains in partnership with students which in time will grow into a tool to empower students to take ownership of their learning journey.

In the remainder of this short case study, first we expand on the rationale behind the approach taken at LSE. We then outline the articulation of educational gains at LSE across four interconnected dimensions. In the third and final section, we outline our next steps for testing the model as well as initial plans to develop and embed the approach in our student community.

[Rationale for the LSE approach to educational gains](#)

As articulated in LSE's 2030 Strategy, LSE aspires to 'equip its students with the tools to become the independent, critical thinkers and thought leaders of tomorrow. LSE Graduates are innovative change-makers: local and global citizens who will shape the world.'

In developing our educational gains framework, we consulted with academics, students, and alumni to understand their views on the real value of an LSE education. Their responses included reflections on excellent disciplinary knowledge, adaptable and inter- and multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving, critical analysis, global perspectives, and strong networks for the future. We also wanted to reflect and respond to the nature of our student body, which is highly international, made up of ambitious, high achieving, intelligent, socially, and entrepreneurially minded individuals who have a broad range of skill sets before they reach us.

Drawing on recent literature (Evans et al., 2018; Vermunt et al., 2018), we situate disciplinary knowledge and degree outcomes as part of our understanding of educational gains whilst recognising the value students can gain from their time at university often extends beyond their degree programmes. These educational experiences beyond the curriculum provide vital spaces to practice, develop, and master these gains in authentic and applied contexts. Our approach to framing and measuring the educational gains of our students therefore takes account of the cognitive, affective, and practical components understood to encompass the breadth of gains to which university experiences can contribute (Office for Students, 2019).

Finally, it was essential to ensure that our framing of educational gains was both individually relevant to each student, supporting individual goals and aspirations, as well as individually adaptable as an active tool to enable students wherever they are on their journey of learning and development.

Educational Gains at LSE

Educational gains at LSE are conceptualised across four interconnected dimensions reflecting the ways our students holistically develop through their degree programmes as well as their multiple opportunities for civic and social engagement (See Figure 1). Four self-focused elements recognise the different ways in which our students develop, ensuring we can support them as individuals with different starting points and aspirations.

- The **Thinking self** reflects the wide range of knowledge and skills students develop on their programmes to become critical investigators and creators of knowledge.
- The **Learning self** reflects the ways we empower our students to be autonomous, self-regulated and confident learners.
- The **Principled self** reflects the values and perspectives of our open minded, globally engaged community.
- The **Connected self** reflects our commitment to supporting students to become collaborative thought leaders and change makers.

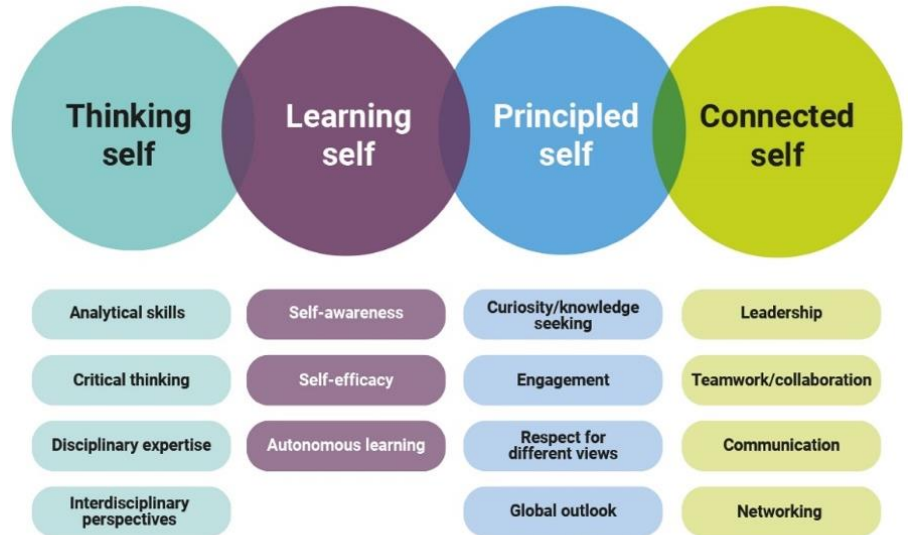


Figure 1 LSE Educational Gains Framework

Bringing the framework to life



Figure 2 Word Cloud based on Alumni Survey, 2022

In developing our articulation of educational gains, we consulted with Alumni, via our annual alumni survey, asking them to reflect on the elements of their LSE experience that had been most valuable to them. (See Fig. 2) This, taken together with feedback from our teaching community and Students' Union, led us to our conceptualisation of educational gains at LSE (see Fig. 1).

Since the TEF submission, we have been working with our [Student Education Panel](#) to further test this framework and understand, through our students, where educational activity contributes to the development of new or existing skills, attributes, perspectives, and values. We will continue to work in partnership with our students to develop a 'Gains Map' of educational activity which will form the basis of how we articulate, quantify, measure, and evaluate Educational Gains at LSE. We will also continue to work with our students to ensure the framework is 'user friendly' for students, speaks to their needs, is an accessible and useful tool and modifying the framework where needed.

Evidencing impact

In mapping student trajectories, we will use existing survey mechanisms to engage with students at various points in the academic year asking them to reflect on the value of or gains they feel they are making through their education throughout their time at LSE. In 2022/23 we had the first round of internal survey

data to analyse and plan to build on this and chart change year on year. We continue to include regular questions in the LSE Alumni survey asking our former students to reflect on the most valuable aspects of their LSE education and engage with employers to reconcile our strategies with their needs and requirements.

In 2023/24 we have undertaken our first tranche of pilot activity to investigate how we can further identify and support all our students to explore the linkages between their academic learnings, experiential opportunities, and their potential futures. Working in partnership with **The Brilliant Club**, we used their validated survey scale to explore how we might understand and quantify student development over time and thus enhance our measures of learning gain. Using this scale we have deployed a 'Starting Points' survey to establish a baseline of students' skills and attitudes based on their own reflections. This survey will be repeated in the Spring term, and we are hopeful that we can maintain similar engagement with this cohort in their second and third years.

Developing a practical tool

It was important to us to move beyond educational gains as a static reporting obligation to the Office for Students. From the outset we have been committed to taking advantage of this sectoral requirement to develop an active approach for the empowerment of our students in their educational journey. Working in partnership with students, we plan to develop a tool that supports self-reflection. By linking this to cross-School activity and opportunities, we can create more space for students to exercise agency in their education, embed their skills and articulate their development. This tool will sit alongside the '[My Skills and Opportunities](#)' programme at LSE which seeks to support students to make connections, enhance their education and make the most of their experiences at LSE.

Through engaging our students, alumni and stakeholders we are developing a clear understanding of educational gains at LSE. We hope that our 'Gains Map', when used in conjunction with existing and new survey structures, continuing input from our Student Education Panel, Students Union and student research projects will provide a powerful frame to articulate LSE's educational gains and demonstrate student development.

References

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Office for students

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