

How do postgraduate students perceive the admissions process at LSE?

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This project analyses how postgraduate taught students perceive the information they were given by LSE before their degree commenced and the extent to which it meets their needs. In particular, the project examines three different time periods (during the application, after receiving an offer and after enrolment) to find:

1. Whether there is a difference in the experiences of international, EU and local students;
2. Whether there is a difference in the experiences of students with work experience and new graduates from undergraduate programmes.

Methodology and limitations

We adopted mixed-methods for our study, running two focus groups to acquire qualitative feedback to inform the quantitative survey design. Focus groups were conducted with students from social policy in the MSc International Social and Public Policy (ISPP) programme and the MSc Data Science at the department of statistics. We then developed our survey and delivered it to three departments: Economics, Social Policy and Statistics, chosen for their different sizes. However, our results are limited by the ongoing pandemic, which may have changed the nature of students' perceptions, especially as the survey was conducted during the lockdown, whilst the focus groups were held in person.

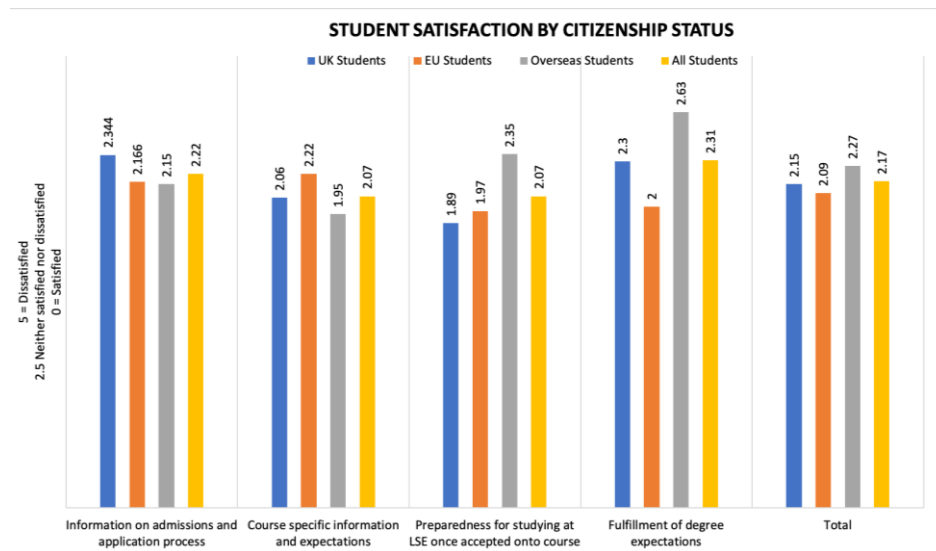
Results & Discussion

In general, overall students were more positive than negative in all areas. However, there are some negative experiences of note:

- During the application, about 20% of students were dissatisfied with the information on selection criteria and the information on the structure of the academic year.
- After students received their offer, more than a fifth said they didn't receive complete and clear information on the course selection process, felt somewhat unprepared to start the academic year, and didn't fully understand the practicalities of studying in the UK. The same range of students didn't find orientation week helpful. Moreover, more than a third of the respondents didn't get any personalised advice on course selection.
- Finally, more than 20% of the students answered that the content of their degree and the content of their courses was not what they expected. In particular, it is the fact that their degree wasn't applied enough in terms of practical skills that didn't meet their expectations.

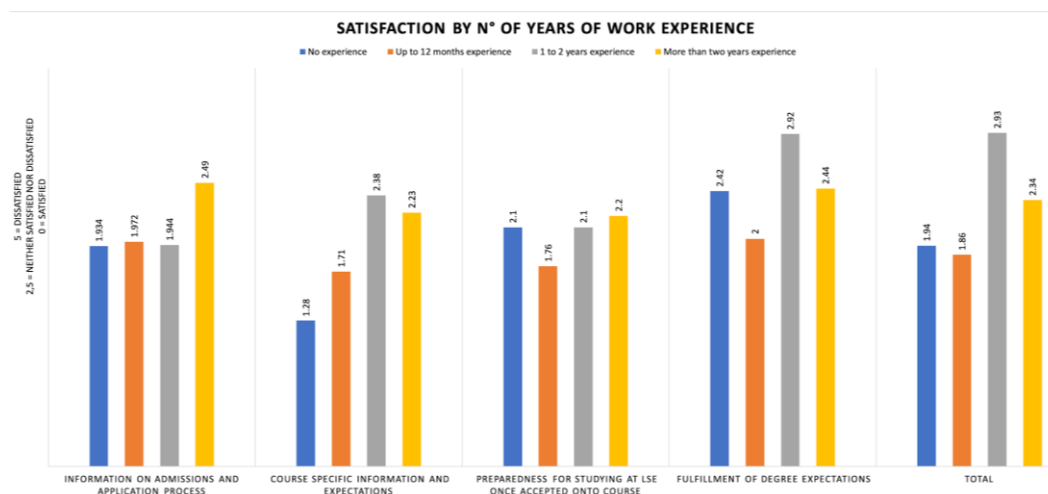
Whether there is a difference in the experience of international, EU and local students

There were no significant differences in regards to satisfaction with the information provided on admissions and course-specific information. However, overseas students were significantly less satisfied with the information provided about being a student at LSE and in the UK generally, with this trend also replicated in terms of general reflections on whether the course and degree content matched their expectations.



Whether there is a difference in the experience of students with work experience and fresh undergraduate graduates

Students with more than a year of work experience tend to be less satisfied in all the areas of our study. This difference is particularly high when we analyse degree expectations. In this category, the majority of students that have between one and two years of work experience responded that the content of their degree and their courses is not what they expected.



Key recommendations

- Separate queries from the Graduate Admissions team so students are not afraid to ask questions fearing it will jeopardise their admissions chances;
- Provide a list of common UK university terminology, information on the structure of LSE terms, and frequently noted differences between study in the UK and other countries on the 'International students' section of the LSE website;
- Provide clearer information about prerequisites and the targeted skill level for different courses;
- Offer more courses differentiated by skill and experience level;
- Highlight courses and workshops that offer applied skill development.