

Staff-proposed projects for Change Makers (2024/25)

NEW project added 19 October: see project J: Summative feedback (Sociology)

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Please note: all projects are open for all students to apply to - you don't need to be studying in that department in order to research it.

A: What does fair marking look like? (Media and Communications)

We're keen to understand what students understand to be 'consistent' or 'fair' marking.

No specific pre-existing data, or pre-defined method have been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

B: Programme coherence (Media and Communications)

We're interested in how students view the programme structures we offer, and how they build coherence for themselves through their choices.

[A "programme" in LSE terminology is a specific degree, such as the MSc Media and Communications.]

No specific pre-existing data, or pre-defined method have been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

C: Academic Mentoring (International Development)

How do postgraduate students in International Development experience academic mentoring? We want to generate insights for Academic Mentors about how to best support students, and develop a resource for future students about how to get the best out of their experience of being mentored. We're also interested in developing methodologies to gather evidence on student experiences of academic mentoring.

No specific pre-existing data, or pre-defined method have been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

D: What promotes experiential learning? (Statistics)

Current teaching materials and practice in data science courses are heavily based on toy or simplified datasets, and curated examples informed by research, which do not necessarily map all the complexities of real use cases. We want to investigate current teaching materials and formative and summative assessments and measure to what extent they promote experiential learning.

We then hope to use this to propose changes towards a more diverse industry-close practice, based on recent developments in the field, including generative AI tools. [\[OBJ\]](#)

Suggested method: Student researchers would collect data on formative and summative assessments, seminar (laboratory) exercises, and homework from undergraduate and postgraduate courses. They would survey the teaching staff and students about desired problems, data, and tools they would like to see incorporated into the curricula. They would look at reference literature and existing datasets and practices across data science-related courses, along with existing benchmarks and other metrics. Finally, they will propose changes towards a more diverse set of problems and datasets, incorporating generative AI tools as one potential methodology.

No specific pre-existing data has been suggested.

E: Student experience of different assessment formats (International Development)

We want student researchers to examine student experience of assessment, and trends in relation to kinds of assessment. Do students opt into, or out of, courses with certain kinds of assessment?

In combination with this, how do students from different backgrounds experience different kinds of assessments? Are students from state schools, private schools, domestic or international backgrounds advantaged or disadvantaged by certain kinds of assessment?

Suggested data : Some data on student demographics, and on course assessment types, may be available from LSE.

No pre-defined method has been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

F: Programme coherence (European Institute)

How does the programme structure of European Institute Double Degrees impact students' learning experiences? How do European Institute Double Degree students experience the connections between courses and years?

The European Institute has recently expanded its double degree offering, and plans to launch new double degree programmes. In the 2024/25 academic year the first cohort from our latest double degree have completed their first year at Columbia University and are now at LSE. It would be a fantastic opportunity to apply findings from a Change Makers project in the development and improvement of existing and future double degree programmes.

Suggested data and method: Data from the Postgraduate Taught Survey is available in a redacted form. We can also supply the researcher with items in minutes from previous European Institute Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) that relate to double degree programmes (in a redacted and anonymised form).

We can provide the students with the programme regulations and course guides relevant to all of our double degree programmes. We will endeavour to connect researchers with current and former double degree students in our department. The researcher can use these connections to gather data through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

G: Women and postgraduate study (Various departments; proposed by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

Why are women underrepresented in certain departments at LSE on PGR level and how can we tackle this? What are the barriers or incentives to study these subjects for women and how can these be addressed? What support, information, advice or guidance would transform the participation of

women in these subjects at PGR level and are there issues with culture or learning environment which is putting women off postgraduate study at this level?

The research is related to an action in LSE's Athena Swan action plan to investigate and research reasons behind underrepresentation of women in specific subjects at LSE on a PGR level. After looking at data of gender representation in the departments of Economic History, Economics, Finance, Government, International History, Mathematics and Statistics, in the last 3 years there seems to be a recurring underrepresentation of women on a PGR level, which would be interesting to research and hopefully find some tangible recommendations to address the issue. We are open to the student researchers proposing further questions they feel would be important to ask.

Suggested available data: The student researchers can use extracted aggregated student data to look at gender in departments by different levels of studies as well as extracted aggregated sector student data by subject level and gender.

No pre-defined method has been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

H: How do students use Generative AI for learning? (Data Science Institute)

Many surveys and much research have been conducted on student and staff perception of Generative AI, and how willing people are to use it. But we need a deeper look into what actually happens, at a cognitive level, when we try to learn while assisted by an AI tool.

What are ways in which GenAI chatbots (ChatGPT, Gemini, MS Copilot) boosts the learning experience of LSE undergraduates? What are the evidences of cases in which GenAI chatbots end up taking students away from the intended learning outcomes of their courses? Also, are there differences between the usage of AI for learning amongst students from different disciplines?

This research could complement the findings of the GENIAL project co-hosted by the Data Science Institute and the Department of Statistics (<https://lse-dsi.github.io/genial>), leading to potential publications with the GENIAL team (blog posts, technical reports, or even academic articles). The findings could be used to develop new departmental guidelines and support resources for both students and educators on the ethical and effective use of these tools.

Suggested available data: Chat logs from the GENIAL project are available, but the Change Makers researchers would also be expected to collect new data.

No pre-defined method has been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.

I: Student engagement with assessment feedback (Social Policy)

To what extent do students engage with the feedback they receive for assessments? E.g. Do they read the feedback that is given to them, or just simply look at the mark? If they only read the feedback sporadically, are there specific times and assessments where this happens more than others? What is their preferred form of assessment feedback? (e.g., would they like a marking frame where their areas of strength and weakness are indicated? Or do they prefer lengthy, qualitative feedback?)

No specific pre-existing data has been suggested.

Suggested research method(s): Focus groups; also open to student ideas.

J: Summative feedback, experiences and expectations (Sociology)

We are interested in knowing more about student expectations and experiences with summative feedback.

For example, are students aware of the Academic Code regarding assessment feedback? Do they think they receive their feedback in a timely manner (and what do they consider timely)? Is the summative feedback form used helpful to them, including the free text comments and the highlighted boxes? Are there alternative feedback formats that would be more useful?

No specific pre-existing data, but the department is happy to share their feedback forms.

No pre-defined method has been suggested. This would be decided by the selected researchers in conversation with the staff partner.