

Study of the scope and relevance of the LSE career guidance offer with regards to BSc Management students

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LSE Change Makers

Background

LSE management students are extremely ambitious and most of them are interested in launching their careers early. LSE offers help in that regard with LSE Careers and Dept of Management Careers, Alumni, and Employer Relations (CAER) services. However, during everyday conversations, we discovered that familiarity with the service is surprisingly low and many students believe that the guidance isn't relevant to their future career plans. Management students often have diverse interests and backgrounds, which makes it challenging to create well-catered career guidance. Therefore, we conducted research aimed at assessing familiarity with, the relevance of, and perceptions of career services by BSc Management students. We also studied how sociodemographic backgrounds and career plans affect students' perception of LSE Careers/CAER.

Literature review

Research suggests that participation in well-fitted career guidance increases students' career readiness (Dodd et al., 2021), but it doesn't explain how to make it relevant for them in practice. For this reason, we consulted representatives from LSE Careers, CAER and the Department of Management before the research to understand the biggest issues they face. Conversations revealed that the services struggle to get clear feedback from students and have a problem with grasping students' expectations. We made sure to implement the proposed questions into our methodology so that our findings address problems that heads of LSE's career guidance services face.

"I find that feedback doesn't often come my way, in that if students are satisfied or service has met their needs, they don't often tend to report back. Personally, and in line with my role, I would like to understand where the students find the most value in the provision."

Dr Stephanie Lambert, Academic Mentor, Department of Management

Methodology

Our data collection method was a Qualtrics survey conducted during bi-termly Mentoring Sessions for BSc Management students. The survey collected 171 responses, which accounts for around a third of all BSc Management students. It was divided into 3 sections:

- Background questions.
- Overall familiarity with career services and participation in events.
- Subjective relevance and rating of the students' experience.

The analysis of the dataset included:

- Statistical associations between students' backgrounds and their familiarity with and opinion on career guidance at the LSE.
- Qualitative analysis of open-ended questions.
- Logistic regression – did not yield significant results.

Findings

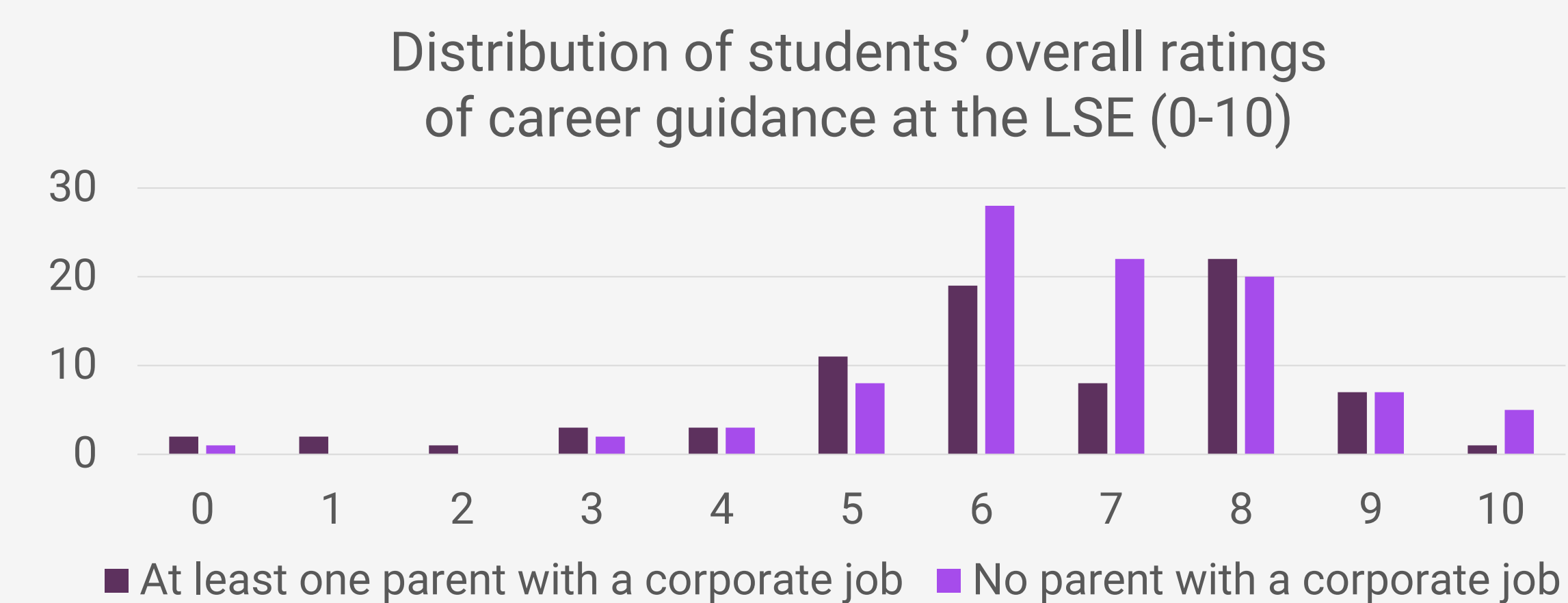
BSc Management students strongly focus their career plans on corporate paths (64% of respondents) and entrepreneurship (13%). 2nd-year students are the most eager to follow the corporate route (77%), while their 3rd-year peers consider it much less frequently (48%). Women are more likely to plan a corporate career than men (70% vs 53%). Interestingly, students who claim they planned a corporate job when starting their studies rarely change their minds (only 18%); the initial target is not related to the student's gender, nationality, or parent's education occupation.

The BSc Management students regard career guidance at the LSE moderately well (average 6.5 on a 0-10 scale, 70% rate within 6-8). This is moderated by students' participation and familiarity with the School's offer – people that have used the career service rate the guidance significantly higher. Parent's occupation is a strong experience factor – students who have at least one parent in professional services find the offer less attractive. Students seem to rate the service similarly when controlling for gender, year of study, home status.

Overall, 85% of students are familiar with some LSE Careers' specific services. The services that were indicated as least known by students are global careers (30% not familiar), further study (22%) and sector and themed events (19%). **The most often cited reason for attending is 'To find out about my target job' and for not attending 'Too busy with other commitments'.**

Findings (continued)

Considering CAER, students are familiar with the offer apart from the BSc Case Competition (46% not aware) and Careers Club (44% not aware). Moreover, students who target a corporate job are more likely to be familiar with CAER's individual events, especially Employer Skills seminars, and Sector and Themed events. Again, students provide the same reasons for attending and not attending CAER's events as for LSE Careers.

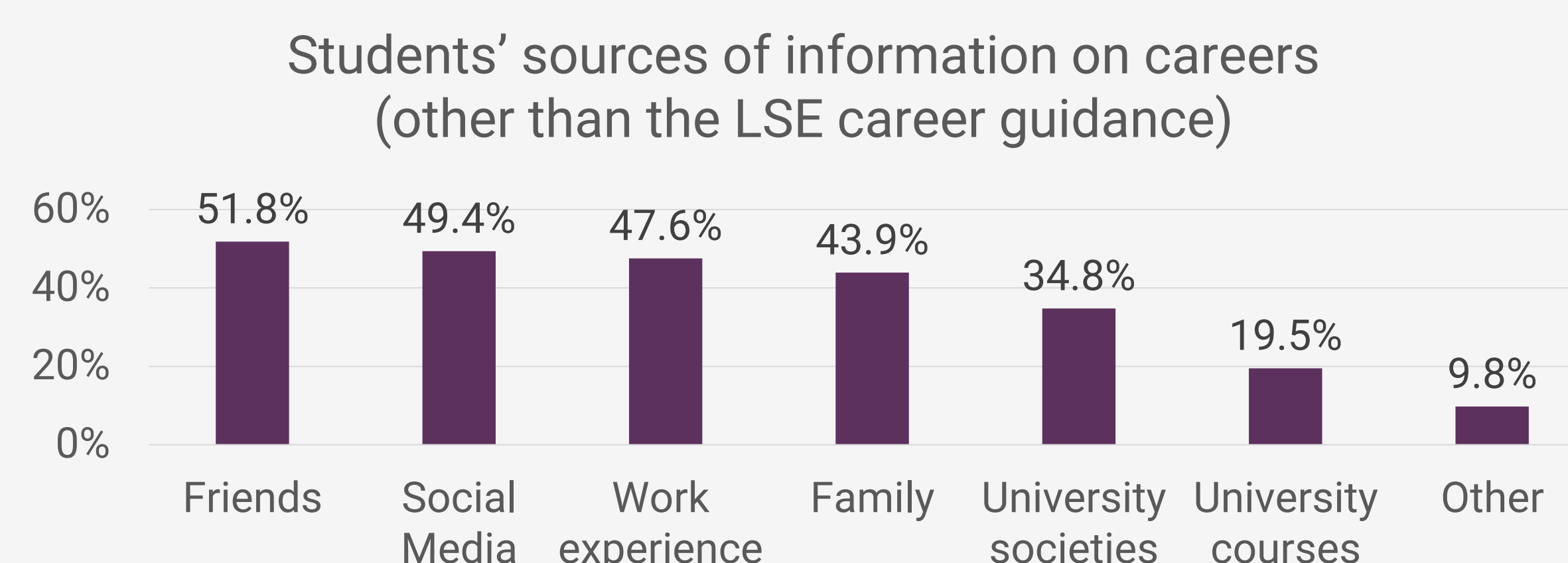


Despite the lukewarm reception of the offer, BSc Management students find it relevant. Only 13% of students feel it does not meet their expectations at all in relation to their target job. In comparison, 33% of students that do not plan corporate careers find the offer not relevant in relation to their target job. Only 9% of BSc Management students feel the offer does not meet their expectations related to the exploration of graduate options. Like with service rating findings, students that have participated in LSE Careers' events feel the offer provides everything they need to explore graduate options more often than non-participating peers (27% compared to 15%).

However, qualitative analysis has shown students would like to see more events related to industries other than professional services and entrepreneurship. **A third of all the answers suggested events or services already offered by LSE Careers or CAER, which indicates low familiarity with them.** Additionally, 40% of answers suggest that students would like to:

- Attend networking events
- Meet alumni
- Obtain more specific knowledge on applications.

Finally, the most popular sources of information on careers apart from university-led guidance are friends (52%), social media (49%), work experience (48%) and family (44%).



Recommendations

LSE Careers

- Introduction of customisable, modular newsletter: students indicate limited familiarity with very broad offer of LSE Careers, while at the same time are overwhelmed with multiple newsletters. A modular approach would allow students to customise the newsletter and receive a self-selected portion of it.

CAER

- Increase marketing efforts: the creation of CAER's website and increased social media activity through departmental profiles (very low awareness of the services, only students with corporate target jobs are well familiarised with certain services).

BOTH SERVICES

- Introduction of more interactive events in which students can participate with their friends or meet new ones through networking (students indicate a desire for networking and state 'friends' as the most common source of knowledge on careers apart from university-led guidance).
- Mandatory introduction (kick-off) sessions that showcase all available services and present potential opportunities in a short form, e.g., during the BSc Management mentoring sessions. Once students attend the events they rate them highly, but some are hesitant/afraid to start.
- Introduction of more events addressing alternative industries and entrepreneurship (final-year students gravitate towards non-corporate career paths; expanded career offers could help them understand it earlier).

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the cross-sectional approach – we cannot be sure whether the differences between student cohorts are caused by their time at the LSE or some inherent differences. Therefore, follow-up research that tracks changes through the years could be carried out in the future. An additional issue is the low response rate of students with some specific backgrounds that do not yield statistically significant results – further qualitative research is necessary to better understand their needs.

References

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