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**LSE 2030 Shape the World**

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**Research for the World
Strategic plan consultation**

January - February 2023

Susana Mourato, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research

Introduction

The School launched its [LSE 2030](https://www.lse.ac.uk/2030) strategy in 2019 to set out

‘the guiding principles and commitments that will help us shape the world’s future, and achieve our ambition of being the leading social institution with the greatest global impact’

The overarching priorities identified in LSE 2030 are:

**Priority 1: Educate for Global Impact**

**Priority 2: Research for the World**

**Priority 3: LSE for Everyone**

This document is a first step in taking stock of what we want to achieve within Priority 2: Research for the World. We have identified three key domains, with aims and objectives and developed a broad framework within which we can structure and group workstreams and activities. This structure will help us to advance the research pillar of LSE 2030 and ensure that it is appropriately resourced.

This work should be seen in the wider context of LSE 2030. Pro-Vice Chancellors are working together across the strategic priorities to ensure our aims and objectives are aligned, integrated and achievable.

We want your input into the key domains and their aims and objectives and to hear what is most important to you and what action/change you think will be most effective in achieving our goals. Following this consultation, we will develop a full strategic plan.

This strategy represents a holistic approach to research excellence and impact, responding to our funding and regulatory environment as well as our core mission to know the causes of things, for the betterment of society. Individual researchers are not expected to contribute to all parts of the strategy nor to follow all routes to impact (for example innovation), but the opportunity to do so should be available to all researchers.

LSE research

The School has a long standing and world class research reputation and makes an outstanding contribution to social science research, recognised most recently in the 2021 research Excellence Framework (REF). We start from a strong position, with clear areas of challenge to focus on for further improvement. There are exciting opportunities to innovate and lead the social sciences, through ambitiously strengthening our research excellence, increasing our global impact and facilitating new ways of conducting research. Our position as the leading global specialist social sciences institution is critical to the overall reputational standing of LSE and forms the foundation of our success across the School’s activity.

### Standing:

LSE ranked third in the world for social sciences and management in the QS World University Rankings by Subject for 2022. It also ranked third in the world for most cited authors (79) in Social Sciences and Economics/Business disciplines in 2020. Of the top 25 institutions, only one other was from outside Europe (Oxford, ranked 17th with 53).

For REF 2021 LSE submitted 651 faculty, 1,589 research outputs and 61 impact case studies. REF scores comprise 3 elements: research outputs (60%). Research impact (25%). Research environment (15%). LSE was shown as the top university (of multiple submissions) in the UK based on the proportion of ‘world-leading’ (4\*) research produced. LSE was also the joint second ranking university in the UK overall, when considering research outputs, research impact and research environment. 58 per cent of LSE’s research was judged to be world-leading (4\*) and 35 per cent was deemed to be internationally excellent (3\*).

On impact, :LSE ranked 24th by weighted GPA (grade point average), down from 10th in REF2014. Qualitaitve feedback indicated that the School’s impact strength is fostered by strong research centres with an explicit policy focus and through effective partnership working with a range of academic, government, and civic partners. However, feedback highlighted that more robust supporting of evidence of impact was needed and that impact was not always fully realised.

On environment, LSE ranked 10th by weighted GPA, down from 6th in REF2014. Qualitative feedback was extremely positive, highlighting exceptional levels of resourcing (including investment in PhD programme and support for postgraduate researchers and investment in seed funding), high levels of research grant success, strong interdisciplinarity and international engagement and good support for early career.researchers. More details were needed on equality, diversity and inclusion approaches across the School.

### Infrastructure:

LSE is organised into 29 departments, schools and institutes. It operates 20 research centres – specialist research initiatives operating under the supervision of the School’s Research Committee and over 70 department research units, inter-departmental research units and recognised research groups.

LSE has 692 academic staff (Faculty), 943 research staff and 6 policy staff, in addition to professional services staff across departments and divisions who support research.

The School has a range of policies in place to encourage and support research activity including provision of personal financial rewards for staff who win research funding (equal to 75% of PI income) – to enhance their salaries, to buy out their time from teaching and/or to provide unencumbered research funding – and research funding for the departments and research centres which host them. LSE provides a staff research fund for NAC staff and a range of seed funding opportunities.

### Research Funding:

In 2021 the main sources of research funding were as follows: QR (quality related) £20.1m (£18.4m recurrent), HEIF (Higher Education Innovation Funding) £5.5m (£4.7m recurrent), Research grants £34.3m, Philanthropy £20.1m, Consultancy £3m. The UKRI operatues a dual support system through block grants (QR) and competitive grants. Grant funding does not cover the full economic costs of research and the UK research funding model assumes cross-subsidy from teaching or other income streams. Currently, LSE covers just under 50% of its research costs through its research funding.

### Challenges:

We face a challenging time for social science research in the UK. The post-Brexit funding landscape remains unclear in terms of its association with Horizon Europe. In addition, the prioritisation of STEM research was starkly seen in the reduction of the School’s QR funding by £1.7 million. LSE had the largest reduction of QR funding of any university, despite its excellent REF results, This was largely due to protection of the proportion of STEM funding, where social science funding was spread more thinly across increased numbers of world leading research in the sector (41% of 4\*- world leading research overall). LSE’s weaker performance on impact may also have contributed to the reduction of QR funding. A growing emphasis on knowledge exchange and impact within research culture provides LSE with a challenge to review and improve its approach.

Internally, initial consultation and review has revealed concerns about: the erosion of research time for academic staff, a lack of incentives to apply for external funding, gaps within the research support lifecycle and systems that cannot support current need or growth in the system. Since 2017/18 there has been a reduction in grant income, whilst the grant application volume has stayed the same. LSE is in receipt of more small awards, but has missed out on large centres and grants.

Consultation

This draft strategy builds on the extensive consultation exercise for LSE 2030, input from key service leads and pro-vice chancellors, and learning over the last twelve months. It upholds the overarching principles of LSE 2030, with a stronger focus on the role of innovation and entrepreneurship and puts in place a framework to shape programmes of work to advance the research strategy and adequately resource it.

The activites set out under workstream areas are deliberately aspirational to support creative thinking about what we want to achieve. At this stage, we want your views on action/change you think will be most effective in achieving our goals.

# Ways to get involved

* Complete a simple survey
* Respond in track changes and comments within this document and return
* Email comments and suggestions
* Participate in a consultation meeting in January/February

All emailed comments to Chloe Parkin, Executive Officer (Strategy Delivery) c.l.parkin@lse.ac.uk

**Consultation end: 28th February 2023**

Research for the World

World class research with global impact is at the heart of LSE’s mission and underpins all of its activity. and its global reputation. We will strengthen further our research environment to nurture academic freedom to research with impact across the breadth of the social sciences. We will use our influence to demonstrate the value of the social sciences to tackle the world’s most challenging questions.

Our strategy focuses on three key areas: **research**, **impact** and **influence**.

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## World class research

Aim: to maintain and strengthen our position as the leading global specialist social sciences institution, through supporting and promoting research excellence across the breadth of our research interests

We will provide our academics/researchers with the environment and infrastructure to support them to produce world class research, taking into account differing needs across departments/disciplines. We will encourage diverse ways to fund research both internally and externally.

**Research environment – Funding – Infrastructure**

Objectives

**Research environment:** Develop a collaborative, supportive and inclusive research environment, at every career stage, to attract/develop/retain internationally renowned researchers and rising stars who can create world leading publications and impact.

**Funding:** Develop a sustainable and effective funding model for LSE research, enhancing external grant-raising, fundraising, partnerships, research commercialisation, consultancy activity, supported by internal seed funding.

**Infrastructure:** Develop an effective professional support infrastructure for all research activity that can respond to the diverse and changing needs of LSE research, and ensure that information about research activity is collected efficiently and can inform and support strategic decision making.

What do think?

## Real-world impact

Aim: to contribute to the betterment of society through increasing the impact of our research and innovation

We want our research to make a difference beyond academia at local, regional, national and global levels. We will increase the impact of our research through strengthening support for research that focuses on impact, encouraging innovation and building wide-ranging partnerships.

**Impact-focused research – Innovation/entrepreneurship – Partnerships**

Objectives

**Impact-focused research:** develop and improve the incentives and the professional support available to our researchers to enable them to mobilise their research effectively for public good and to communicate success; develop effective systems to ensure that information about research impact and innovation is tracked and collected efficiently.

**Innovation/entrepreneurship:** enhance the capacity for entrepreneurship, consulting and commercialisation of LSE research through developing a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, promoting its benefits and impact to the research community and harnessing the innovation potential that a research-rich education fosters in our students and alumni.

**Partnerships:** build new relationships and develop strategic partnerships with policy-makers, alumni networks, private sector, industry to increase the reach and relevance of our research.

What do you think?

# Lead the social sciences

Aim: to take a leading role in ensuring that the social sciences are valued (appropriately recognised, evaluated and funded), including their vital contribution to understanding the world and how/why it changes

We will lead in training the social scientists of the future and use and extend our influence to ensure that the social sciences are valued, and that our research is visible and accessible and engaged with by a wide range of audiences.

**Training – Collaboration and influence – Reach and community**

Objectives

**Training:** develop and train future social scientists/PGR students/early career researchers, building the talent pool for the social sciences

**Collaboration and influence:** develop strategic partnerships and collaborations across universities and other stakeholders to advocate for SHAPE and demonstrate its impact and relevance

**Community and reach:** Increase the visibility and accessibility of LSE research, develop open social science (open access publishing, data sharing and interoperability, and citizen science), grow SHAPE research engagement at community level

What do you think?

Have we got the main areas of focus for the strategic plan right? Have we missed anything significant that isn’t covered by these broad areas of focus? Can we improve the tone and language used?

Workstreams and activities

In the sections below we indicate workstream areas with activities under each. Some are already completed or in progress, some agreed but not started, others are initial ideas and possibilities. Please comment on and add to these areas of activity. What have we missed? What will have most impact? Where are the greatest challenges and opportunities?

Completed – in progress – agreed in principle – ideas stage

World-class Research – workstreams and activities

# Research environment

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| **Strengthen reward, recognition and incentivisation for research-related activities** | **Strengthen access to inclusive support for early career researchers** | **Strengthen intra-institutional partnerships and collaborations** |
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| Consultation exercise to establish how better to support Faculty in all research-related activities (in progress and part of wider consultation into Faculty experience) | Equitable support for early career researchers, including set up of early career researcher network and tailored support for women and BAME researchers (in progress)  | LSE Research Exchange Network (in progress |
| Provide internal seed funding for staff (staff support fund, seed funds) (in progress) | Enhance the support services for non-NAC staff | Development of effective multi-departmental approaches to research challenges |
| Talent fund to reward extraordinary achievement and opportunities | Should the PhD Academy be expanded to support ECRs? Or should we create a new fellows and postdocs academy? Long term project with resource implications. See example from Imperial College. https://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/ |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

World-class Research – workstreams and activities

# Funding

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| **Increase income from external, competitive grants** | **Increase philanthropic research funding that produces world-class outputs** | **Increase impact-led income generation** |
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| Incentivise external grant raising and other sources of external funding (consultation, seed funding, PFR, promotions)  | Raise funding for transformational research initiatives (e.g. wellbeing initiative, DSI) | Selectively grow corporate sponsorship (eg. of research projects, of LSE Press or blogs, Lecture series, conferences, etc.). |
| Increase success in large grant, centre and professorship applications (better institutional support package)  | Increase philanthropic funding from businesses, third sector organisations and foundations |  |
| Develop multidisciplinary research collaborations, including with STEM to enhance funding opportunities | Incentivise departments to invest in early cultivation of new opportunities |  |
| Set up a programme of engagement with funders |  |  |
| Set up ways of working more effectively with other institutions on joined up bids to Foundations and businesses  |  |  |
| Increase awareness of research opportunities (via improving comms function within R&I) |  |  |
| Enhance training in applying for and managing grants |  |  |
| New fund supporting (large) bid writing time for non-permanent staff |  |  |

What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

World-class Research – workstreams and activities

# Infrastructure

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| **Redesign operational support to conduct internally and externally funded research with integrity**  | **Improve innovation in support areas bespoke to the changing needs of social science research** | **Improve strategic and evidence-based decision making for ambitious R & I plans** |
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| Review end to end processes for research management and identify and deliver requirement for optimum service support that can accommodate growth in system.  | Develop a strategic approach for data science including education, skills, research and resources (in progress, via DSI) | Review routine data requirements for effective decision-making in research, impact and innovation and develop a robust analytical monitoring and evaluation function.  |
| To strengthen further LSE’s research standing by reviewing and analysing the outcomes of REF 2021 (from May 2022) in advance of an action plan in 2022/23 | Cloud computing investment plan for all | Implement strategy function within R&I |
| Expand the ethics and due diligence support team (complete) | Explore demand for and requirements of team science at LSE |  |
|  | Invest in new data sets and secure data pods in the Library |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Real-world impact – workstreams and activities

# Impact-focused research

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| **Increase impact-led research activity**  | **Enhance support for monitoring, evaluating and communicating impact** |  |
|  |  | **Invest in public affairs operations** |
| Introduce incentives for the production of impactful research and for tracking the pathways to impact | Analyse local (london) and regional (UK)impact of LSE research and innovation (in progress) | Develop a public affairs strategy |
| Expand the professional support provided for production and tracking of knowledge exchange, impact and ICS – with KEI Integrated Service including comms | Commission the global impact of LSE (incl. research) project (in progress) | Create an LSE@London network of academics engaging in public affairs |
| Raise awareness about KEI (through LSE community initiatives like the LSE Research Showcase) and expand our training | Developing an analytical impact monitoring and evaluation function within R&I  | Incentivise and reward public affairs engagement |
|  | Enhance bibliometric services | Invest and grow the Leading for London Programme |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Real-world impact – workstreams and activities

# Innovation/entrepreneurship

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| **Develop our entrepreneurial ecosystem** | **Develop pipeline of socially innovative commercial activity for research** |  |
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| Create an Entrepreneurship forum bringing together all entrepreneurship strands across the school (complete) | Raise awareness and visibility of research commercialisation opportunities (e.g. information campaign, innovation seed funding) (in progress) |  |
| Investment in our entrepreneurial ecosystem (GENERATE and commercialisation, plus links with Marshall Institute and HSV | Develop a strategy for growth of commercialisation activity |  |
| Develop a strategy for LSE Generate, including for their international expansion and revenue generating activities (complete) | Develop model of a piepline for research journey that might flow through KEI to consulting to commercialisation |  |
|  | Create a commercial ecosystem for consulting (procurement, staff appointments, staff support for consulting) |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Real-world impact – workstreams and activities

# Partnerships

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| **Develop strategic collaborations to strengthen impact of LSE research** |  |  |
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| Develop effective approaches to, and support and incentives for, development and running of knowledge transfer partnerships (including with SMEs and industry) |  |  |
| Work with PAGE and Corporate Engagement Network to increase engagement with corporate partners (via funding, data sharing, training, placements) |  |  |
| Work with business groups and think tanks  |  |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Leading the social sciences – workstreams and activities

# Training

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| **Develop a clear package of support for LSE PhD students including for their journey into further research or beyond academia (‘PhD Offer’)** | **Improve the financial sustainability of our PhD offer**  | Develop support for supervisors |
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| Enhance package of support for PhD students (stipend, conditions, research funds, PhD Academy support) (in progress) | Recommission the ESRC DTP (in progress) | Develop a PhD supervisor training programme and best practice sharing opportunities |
| Increase the number of LSE PhD scholarships | Consider applications for Centres for Doctoral Training |  |
| Increase accessibility and diversity in PhD programmes (BAME access support scheme; UK BAME Summer placement scheme) | Seek donor match-funded scholarships and industry-funded scholarships |  |
| Grow the programme of training for non-academic careers and entrepreneurship (SPRING programme) |  |  |
| Encourage the roll out a new PhD/GTA contract, including extra stipend for teaching (like Economics) |  |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Leading the social sciences – workstreams and activities

# Collaboration and influence

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| **Increase investment in social science alliances to secure future of social sciences** | **Increase UK/Global scientific standing**  |  |
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| Advocate for SHAPE within the Russell Group | Develop strategic international partnerships (with PAGE) |  |
| Investment in the ASPECT network (32 universities, LSE leads, focus on social science research commercialisation) | Investment in the CIVICA alliance |  |
| Strengthen links with the Academy of Social Sciences and other relevant networks |  |  |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

Leading the social sciences – workstreams and activities

# Reach and community

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| **Increase strength of LSE voice in the global debate** | **Develop a civic engagement unit** | **Invest in open social science** |
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| Develop and strategically manage the LSE blogs platform (complete) | Develop a civic engagement strategy (could be part of an expanded Leading for London programme) | Review and update our open science policy |
| Showcase social science research and its impact through public engagement initiatives including the Public Lecture Programme, Research for the World magazine, LSE Festival, LSE IQ podcast, research film series, social media campaigns, media coverage (in progress) | Identify a civic engagement champion to lead activity | Join the UK Reproducibility Network |
| Improve the LSE research on online repository | Create a network of academics and students at LSE engaging in civic initiatives | Introduce training on open science for social sciences |
| Continue digitization programme in the Library |  | Publish a manual on open science for social sciences |
|  |  | Grow LSE Press (in progress) |
|  |  | Invest in an open science post in the Library to coordinate activity |
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What is already happening that we have missed? What other activities would help us to meet our objectives? What do you think is most important and would have the most impact? Where are the greatest risks?

