

Widening Participation gave me the opportunity to develop skills and help young people achieve their potential

LSE Widening Participation provides an opportunity for students to develop key skills by inspiring others. Here, Matthew Pennill, BSc in Government and Economics, tell us about his involvement in Widening Participation and its positive impact on his university experience.

The LSE's **Widening Participation** (WP) scheme aims to help London school pupils from less privileged backgrounds raise their aspirations. It runs a variety of projects for school pupils from ages 11 to 18 across a whole spectrum of academic subjects. In the last academic year alone, the scheme worked with over 2500 pupils from 260 schools across the capital.

I initially became involved with WP during my first year at the LSE. The opportunity to help younger people with their studies was the primary reason I wanted to participate, but the programme also gave me the chance to develop skills in teaching, leadership and communication. The project I worked on was the **Student Tutoring Scheme**, which saw me spend a couple of hours a week at a London school over the course of 3 months. As a Government and Economics student, I was delighted to be assigned to tutor in A-Level Politics, a subject I'd take at school myself.

It was incredibly rewarding to think that I'd helped raise the aspirations of the pupils I'd worked with or even helped them attain a higher exam grade. Most of all, I found tutoring thoroughly enjoyable, so much so that I repeated the experience in my second year and also participated on other Widening Participation schemes. These included **Moving On**, which helps Year 6 pupils make the transition to secondary school, and working as a Student Ambassador.

Most recently, I've been able to combine my academic passions of Economics and Politics with WP activities. For the past two years, the **Government Department** has been involved with the annual **Year 12 Politics Conference**, the latest of which focused on this year's UK general election. At this most recent event, A-Level Politics students from across London got the unique chance to hear from some of the Government Department's world-leading faculty, including Professors **Tony Travers** and **Simon Hix** – a fantastic opportunity and a great insight into what life is like at the LSE and within the Department.

However, the largest Widening Participation projects I've worked on have been this summer. Following my graduation, I helped out with the **LSE Year 11 Summer School**, a week-long programme that gives pupils an introduction to the social sciences after they've finished their A-Levels. This highlights some of the disciplines on offer at the LSE and is a perfect way to get young people interested in the social sciences.

In August I also served as a course assistant on the **LSE CHOICE** summer school on the Economics stream. Here, pupils about to enter Year 13 focus on a specific social science that is of interest to them (mostly the one which they are planning to apply to study at university) with choices ranging from Economics to Sociology to Mathematics. The week also includes an off-site



Matthew Pennill, BSc in Government and Economics.

trip, where the participants get to see their subject 'in action'. Our economics group this year took a trip to Barclays in Canary Wharf, where the students learnt about the career opportunities available in the financial sector and were able to hear from current interns about their experiences. Working on this programme was particularly rewarding for me. Not only was I able to offer students my advice on university applications, course choices, UCAS applications and personal statements, I also solidified my personal understanding of economic concepts such as behavioural economics and game theory by helping students learn about these subjects.

My involvement with Widening Participation has definitely enriched my three years at the **LSE**, and I would wholeheartedly recommend becoming involved with the scheme. Whether you want to develop your teaching skills as a student tutor, earn some money on campus as a student ambassador, or inspire and encourage young people to achieve their potential as a student mentor, there are plenty of worthwhile opportunities available!

LSE is committed to recruiting the best possible students with the highest academic and intellectual potential, regardless of their economic or social background. For more information on Widening Participation, its activities, and ways you can get involved, please visit the [Widening Participation webpages](#).

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