

Enhanced Theory of Change (EToC)
Institutional Data Use:
Lancaster University –
Lancaster Success Programme (LSP)

September 2024

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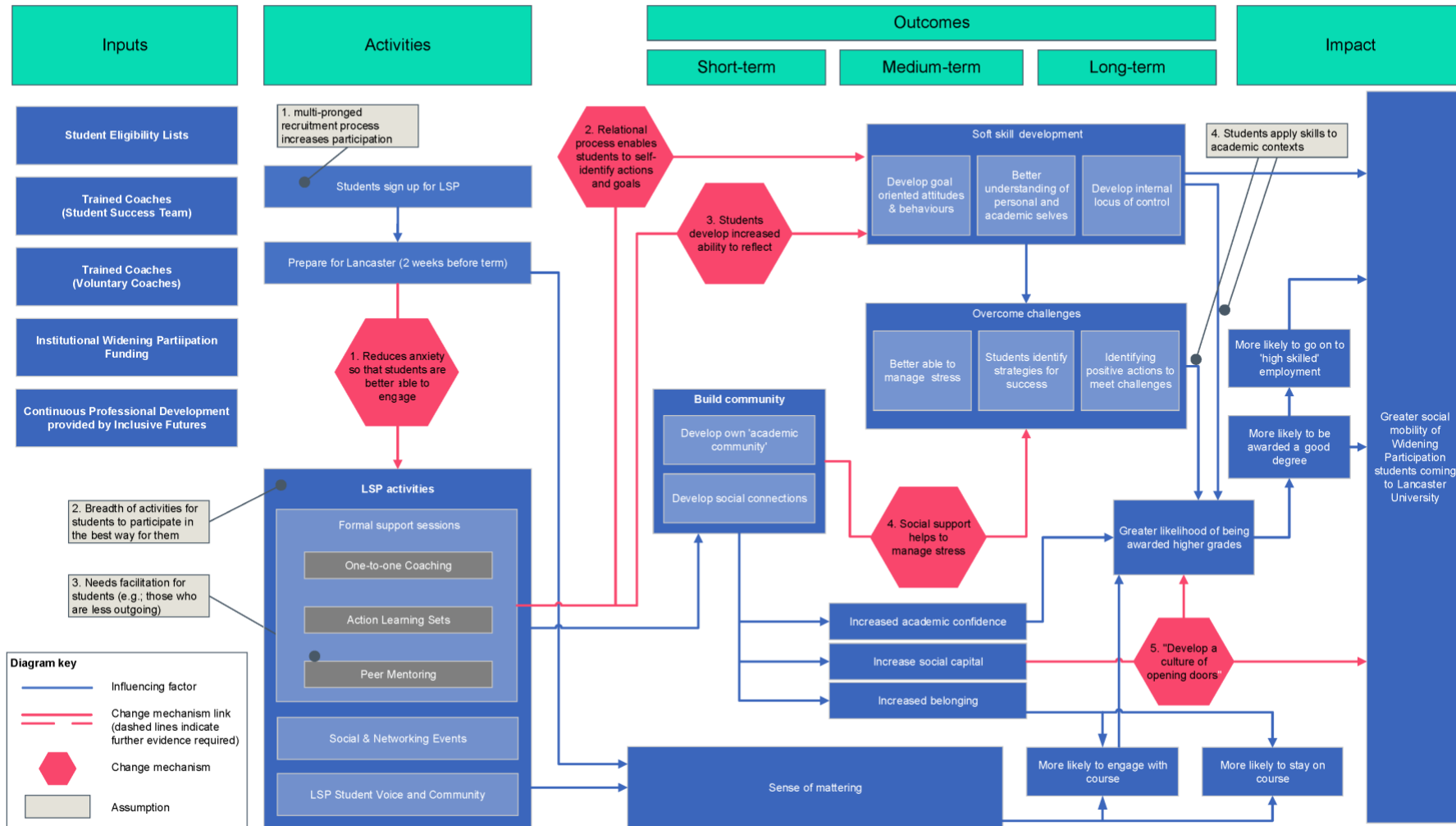
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ENHANCED THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM

Lancaster Success Programme (LSP) Enhanced Theory of Change



SCoLPP
Staffordshire Centre of Learning and Pedagogic Practice



ENHANCED THEORY OF CHANGE UNDERPINNING NARRATIVE
<p>VERSION V2 – March 2024</p>
<p>NAME Lancaster Success Programme (LSP)</p>
<p>WHY IS THE INTERVENTION BEING RUN? The provisional core mission of the Lancaster Success Programme (LSP) is to provide students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds ‘<i>a space to reflect and develop personalised strategies for success.</i>’ LSP has run for several years as an intervention designed to increase retention, completion, and good degree attainment rates for students from key WP groups as well as to improve progression rates related to securing high-skilled employment. The intervention supports the following Lancaster University KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce the gap in the percentage of mature and non-mature students continuing from 1st to 2nd-year study from 10% to 5%; ● To reduce the gap in the percentage of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 achieving a first/2:1 degree from 8% to 4%; ● To remain close to a zero gap between the percentage of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 continuing from 1st to 2nd year.

WHO IS THE INTERVENTION FOR?

LSP is a targeted, opt-in programme which is advertised to students in receipt of a contextual offer from Lancaster University. The contextual offer target group umbrella ensures the programme is accessible to students from a wider variety of WP backgrounds including students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs; POLAR4 quintile 1) and students who are care experienced. Although not an explicit target group, many eligible students are classified as mature, and there is some evidence that mature students are disproportionately more likely to opt-in to the LSP than students who are under the age of 21 when beginning their course at Lancaster.

WHAT IS THE INTERVENTION?

LSP offers a range of support activities for students inspired by coaching models of support and development. The core offer of the LSP is dedicated one-to-one personal development coaching sessions that occur at regular intervals across the entire academic year. The LSP team developed a comprehensive schedule of recruitment for eligible students including online information events, presentations at Further Education colleges, and re-advertisement through academic departments if there is space remaining at the start of term (these are targeted at under-represented courses). Online information events are held multiple times to ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for contextual offer holders to engage. Through these sessions, offer holders will find out more about the LSP and be able to sign up for the programme.

LSP implements several complementary interventions including Prepare for Lancaster, Action Learning Sets, themed peer support as well as a variety of informal networking and student voice events at dedicated times within the academic year. An underlying principle of the LSP is that students can engage in the way that is best for them. For example, some students may not feel like they need the coaching sessions but find the social and networking events invaluable for providing a sense of community.

1:1 personal development coaching: Approximately six one-to-one sessions throughout level 4 (approximately 2 per term). However, the specific number of sessions is determined by the student; what they feel they would want and need

Prepare for Lancaster: Two Welcome events (one online and one face-to-face) that happen approximately two weeks before the start of the academic year. Prepare for Lancaster is designed to familiarise students with the LSP, share information about what activities will be part of the programme and get to know other students opting into the LSP. By holding the event face-to-face students get an early opportunity to experience campus as a student and get introduced to the various support structures that are available to them throughout their studies. It is also held online to ensure the activity is accessible to students who may not be able to attend in person.

Action Learning Sets (ALS): This activity consists of 18 sessions per year (4-7 students at each). At these sessions, one student raises a challenge or issue they are facing related to their studies at LU, and the other students apply coaching techniques to support the student to think about how to resolve their challenge.

Themed peer mentoring: This activity consists of 6 sessions throughout the academic year (2 per term). Peer mentoring was introduced as a forum where students connect (approximately 20-30) and is an informal alternative to ALS designed based on student feedback that students wanted a space to offer advice without the formalised coaching mechanism of the ALS.

Social and networking events: These events are multiple and spread throughout the academic year. Indicative events include: Welcome to Lancaster social (at the beginning of term 1), mature student social events, LSP social events, and a summer BBQ.

Student voice & community events: LSP-specific student voice opportunities are available to students, including a staff-student committee and LSP advocates to feedback about the programme.

WHO IS DELIVERING THE INTERVENTION?

One-to-one coaching sessions and ALS are delivered by a specific team of trained coaches employed at LU within the Student Success Team. This team has been hired specifically for coaching students. Additional one-to-one coaching is undertaken by other staff at LU voluntarily; light touch guidance is provided to colleagues who are keen to engage with coaching voluntarily. Additional activities outlined above are student-led with coordination and additional support delivered by the LSP team.

HOW IS THE INTERVENTION DELIVERED?

Prepare for Lancaster sessions are delivered both face-to-face and online to ensure students have the maximum ability to engage within the pre-arrival stage of enrolment.

One-to-one personal development coaching and LSP portfolio of activities are delivered face-to-face, coordinated by a central LSP team. The team utilises a variety of communication methods to ensure attendance. The interventions of the LSP are delivered using either coaching-led or coaching-informed approaches with the following overarching principles guiding each activity:

- Success doesn't look the same to everybody
- Lived experience will influence someone's idea of success
- Changing nature for students
- What does the student feel is within their control?

WHERE IS THE INTERVENTION DELIVERED?

The LSP suite of activities is held on campus and the LSP team manages room bookings to ensure that one-to-one coaching and group activities are in appropriate rooms and that the facilities and estate available are used effectively.

HOW MANY TIMES WILL THE INTERVENTION BE DELIVERED? OVER HOW LONG?

The LSP is a yearlong intervention delivered annually for incoming level 4 students studying on undergraduate degree courses at LU. The programme continues throughout the year and specific intervention touch points were detailed in the above sections of the narrative EToC.

WILL THE INTERVENTION BE TAILORED?

The programme offered is the same for each student, however, a core principle is that students can engage with the various aspects of LSP to a greater or lesser extent depending on their own needs and wants. The coaching-informed approach assumes that sessions will be personalised and tailored according to student needs.

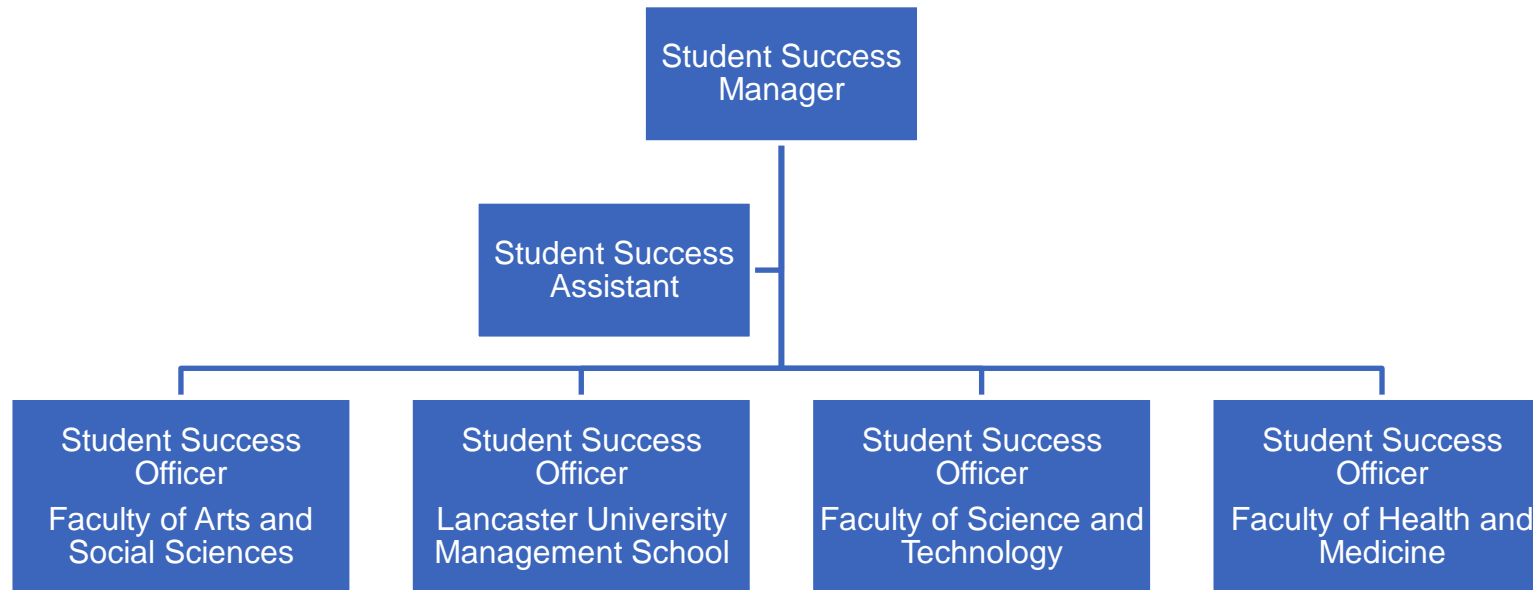
In addition, staff will check-in on students throughout the year if they have not engaged in the programme to understand barriers and challenges, and to explore individualised student needs in accessing the programme.

HOW WILL IMPLEMENTATION BE OPTIMISED?

Optimisation mainly occurs through the comprehensive recruitment strategy to ensure a diverse range of students engage – and particularly those students who may be more reluctant to engage in such programmes. Specifically, offer holders are invited to multiple events held through the summer, so that students have multiple opportunities to engage.

WHO ARE THE KEY ACTORS / STAKEHOLDERS?

The LSP team consists of six staff with organisational representation shown below.



The LSP teamwork with the relevant data team to determine the pool of eligible students upon offer acceptance. They also work closely with all student support teams to provide effective signposting. They actively engage with course teams and communication teams to ensure take-up of the LSP. The team recruit staff from across the institution to provide coaching to students taking part in the programme.

CHANGE MECHANISMS

Change mechanism 1

Positive engagement with Prepare for Lancaster before arrival **reduces anxiety** so that students can better engage with the University. Engaging in this session means that students get to meet people involved in LSP, they can see that the staff are authentic and can see how the programme will fit in with their academic studies. They can also meet other LSP students and explore the campus a little. In combination, this helps to reduce students' anxiety about LSP and LU, so that students are more likely to engage with the programme once term starts.

Change mechanism 2

The **relational process of coaching and engagement with the coaching approach** enables students to self-identify actions and goals as part of coaching conversations which can be applied to present and future challenges.

Change mechanism 3

Through engagement with coaching and ALS, **students develop an increased ability to self-reflect** (e.g. metacognition), ability to engage in problem-solving thinking, which in turn becomes a generalisable skill which students can internalise and adopt away from the formal LSP programme.

Change mechanism 4

The LSP provides **access to meaningful social support** through community-building activities with peers and through the provision of a dedicated coach to contact throughout the academic year, acting as a buffer for stress and enabling students to better manage their stress.

Change mechanism 5

Students will access and become part of **a culture of 'opening doors'** which enables the help-seeking behaviour through the provision of effective signposting to support. This provides important tacit knowledge needed to transition and settle into LU.

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption 1

A **multi-pronged approach to recruitment** maximises the likelihood that eligible students engage with the LSP. Communication regarding the LSP occurs at the point of offer acceptance throughout the access cycle. In order to maximise take up the LSP team works with course teams and professional services to provide referrals to the service based on eligibility and perceived need.

Assumption 2

A breadth of activities is needed as part of the LSP for students to engage in the way that is best for them. This assumption is based on the principles of the coaching approach threaded throughout the portfolio of LSP activities.

Assumption 3

Some student-led activities need effective coordination and facilitation from the central LSP team. This assumption is based on observation of student-led activities and the perception they are less successful.

Assumption 4

Students will apply the coaching skills and outcomes of coaching conversations to their academic context. This assumption is based on the practical aspect of coaching conversations to confirm application.

WHAT IS THE EVALUATION AIM?

The evaluation aims to establish evidence of the effectiveness of the LSP on student outcomes. Research questions and hypotheses are detailed below and in the [LSP trial protocol](#).

WHAT ARE THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS?

1. What is the effect of LSP on successful course continuation at the end of the first year of study relative to students who do not engage with LSP?
2. What is the effect of LSP on successful course completion relative to those that do not engage with LSP?
3. What is the effect of LSP on good degree awarding relative to those that do not engage with LSP?
4. What is the effect of sustained engagement with LSP on course continuation, completion and attainment?
5. What is the effect of engagement with multiple LSP activities on course continuation, completion and attainment?

WHAT METHODOLOGY ARE YOU USING?

The methodology proposed is detailed in the [trial protocol](#) submitted alongside the EToC narrative.