

27 March 2024



SchoolMessage

Dear all,

As we approach the end of term, I would like to share some reflections on the time I've spent as Interim President and Vice Chancellor. I have been at LSE a long time, and I love our School for what it is: a very special place with a very special community of bright people who are passionate about the social sciences. I want to acknowledge all staff and students who have made leading LSE during this interim period an honour and a privilege.

But, any reflections must also acknowledge that this has been a turbulent and challenging time. I started in mid-June, during a marking and assessment boycott, which I was very pleased to see resolved amicably towards the end of September. The conflict in the Middle East, which erupted soon after, has created many tensions within our community that are ongoing. We also continue to be affected by other events that occur outside of LSE and that often have global repercussions. At the same time, importantly, within our own university, there has been much concern, upset and anger focused on how LSE deals with allegations of misconduct.

Update on LSE actions

I fully recognise that all of this has had a deep and sustained impact on our School community, and may have impacted you personally. In various messages and at various venues, I have asked everyone at LSE to always treat each other as we wish to be treated ourselves, namely with dignity and respect. In heated and passionate debates, we should never lose sight of recognising in one another our shared humanity. I firmly believe that doing this will help keep us on course – whatever happens in the world around us.

I want to address concerns about how LSE deals with allegations of misconduct directly, and be

absolutely clear that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct – of any kind – is unacceptable. It can have no place at LSE, and as a School Management Committee, including Larry Kramer as the incoming President and Vice Chancellor, we are committed to eradicating this in all its forms. It is not enough for me to say we take this extremely seriously. Instead, we must, and we will, push forward ongoing change across multiple, connected areas to tackle this – focusing not only on systems, processes, and policies, but also on culture, so that we create study and work environments where everyone can thrive. This will be in close collaboration with our recently appointed Head of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Amy Norton, who has great experience and specialised knowledge in this area, and with the wider School.

This is our main priority and actions have already been identified and set into motion. They will be delivered alongside wider plans to assess and improve our approaches, supported by external expertise. For full transparency, an [outline is detailed below](#). Critically, if you have witnessed or experienced bullying, harassment, or misconduct of any kind, I urge you to [report it, and access specialist advice and support](#) that is available to you and everyone at LSE.

Community thanks and looking ahead

During my time as President over the last nine months, right from the start and up until today, what has struck me the most is that LSE is an intellectual powerhouse where people believe in the ability of ideas not only to shape the world for the betterment of society, but also in using those ideas to come together, hold LSE to account and develop our School for the better too. I remain grateful for the honest discussions, constructive engagement and sharing of critical views we have had with so many of you.

Thank you also to everyone for all you do for LSE, day in day out. That we have continued to excel in our education and research as well as in our support to students, and of each other, is testament to your hard work. I do hope that the recent news of our investment in the [financial reward package](#) for our staff, the biggest in LSE's history, shows just how much you are valued. My special thanks also goes to the colleagues helping to look after our campus and halls of residence over the break and closure period.

At the end of this month, I will officially hand over to Larry Kramer as President and Vice Chancellor. I am excited about the next new phase of LSE that is about to start. Larry's energy and passion have been apparent since his arrival. Until then, I wish you a restful, and well-deserved break. I know we all need it.

Thank you.

Eric Neumayer
President and Vice Chancellor (Interim)

More information and what's changing

Below you will find the latest information on the following areas of action, as well as support resources:

- [Upcoming actions - in progress and planned](#)
- [Independent audit](#)
- [External insights and support](#)
- [Building on structures already in place](#)
- [Sources of support at LSE.](#)

Upcoming actions - in progress and planned

LSE is acting across a range of areas, taking a whole School approach to prevent and tackle the causes of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, as well as providing strong foundations so that there is an informed, robust and compassionate response when such instances occur. This follows ongoing review, where a significant number of areas for improvement have been identified in line with sector best practice.

Actions are in progress or planned with clear timelines for implementation as soon as practicably possible. Focused on culture, systems, policies and procedures to prevent and respond to all forms of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct this includes:

- Replacing 'Report it. Stop it.' with the 'report + support system' which is used by over 100 universities across the UK, so that we can address issues more quickly and consistently, as well as managing cases and ensuring that their end-to-end handling is effective across the institution. It will enable regular updating of all parties involved and give us the information we need to drive preventative interventions and safeguard students and staff. It will also provide better signposting to appropriate specialist support. The aim is to implement this for Autumn Term 2024.
- Improved transparency around bullying, harassment and misconduct cases. LSE will publish regular reports to give numbers and high-level data about reported cases and - where possible – information about outcomes. SMC feel this is an important step to re-building our community's trust in our systems. The next report will be published in April 2024.
- One further critical step, proposed by the incoming President, Larry Kramer, is hiring an in-house senior General Counsel. A new position for LSE, one of their responsibilities – as is normal for such a role – will involve developing and implementing systems that reflect best practices for addressing sexual and other forms of harassment, as well as overseeing the

process by which they are applied and keeping them up-to-date. The General Counsel will work closely with the new President, School Management Committee (SMC), and Council to make necessary changes.

Independent audit

Alongside this, a pre-planned audit is currently happening in the area of sexual misconduct. Overseen by independent auditors, it will critically examine:

- Policies and procedures in place to prevent, report and respond to instances of harassment and sexual misconduct
- Student and staff training, considering awareness and clarity around roles and responsibilities
- The design and operation of governance and reporting arrangements in place, which provide oversight for LSE's approach.

As a School, we will share how we plan to address these findings.

External insights and support

At the same time, we do not want this review to delay the actions we are already taking forward that will make a difference straightaway:

- LSE is working with [Advance HE](#) on a sector-leading approach to training on disclosure, which will be rolled out to all staff to build a greater understanding of policies and expectations. It will equip staff with the skills and confidence to take a disclosure should an incident occur, helping them to support students and each other. This will be in place by September 2024.
- LSE also intends to make greater use of external investigators in the future so that we have specialised, trained experts investigating sensitive cases.

Building on structures already in place

All of this is part of ongoing work to continue to develop LSE's environment, with a focus on community trust. Previous actions that we intend to build on are:

- In 2021, LSE introduced a [policy and procedure on personal relationships](#). This policy has prohibited personal relationships of any kind between staff and students where there is a direct supervisory relationship; a member of staff has direct or indirect responsibility for, or involvement in, a student's academic studies or personal welfare; or interacts with a student as part of their role. The policy recognises the imbalance of power between staff and students, the risks of exploited consent and sets out the behavioural expectations of staff very clearly. It can robustly deal with any activity of this kind, which could be classed as staff misconduct. There will be further extensive work to communicate this policy more effectively to students and staff across the rest of this academic year and into the next, as well as at induction points in both

staff and student journeys.

- LSE is also working with the Students' Union to redesign our consent education programme for Autumn Term 2024, so that students know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable – including our prohibition of staff-student relationships, and where they can go for support from the very beginning.
- LSE previously put in place measures to strengthen its approach around reporting and investigations, and to support the School community further. This included dedicated training which specialist staff and senior leadership undertook, with a focus on trauma-informed investigations, adjudication and sanctioning, delivered to relevant members of SMC and HR partners. We plan to refresh that training this year in summer 2024.
- Since 2021, LSE has employed a dedicated staff member, the Anti-harassment Support Advisor, with expertise in sexual harassment and violence, to provide a consistent point of contact from disclosure through to any other university or criminal processes. A new appointment to this position has just been made and the individual will start in May 2024. We are also looking at other existing internal support roles and actively reviewing these to ensure we have qualified colleagues supporting staff and students.

Sources of support at LSE

- If you have witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment of any kind, any member of our community can speak to [LSE Safe Contacts](#), trained members of staff that can offer confidential signposting for anyone who may be experiencing any form of bullying or harassment. They can help you through the [Report It. Stop It.](#) process or you can report directly through this online tool. Through either of these routes, you can choose for your report to be made anonymously.
- [LSE's Student Wellbeing team](#) are also available to provide support, and any student can get external [mental health support](#) via phone, SMS / WhatsApp, or online chat, 24/7. Support is provided by clinically trained counsellors or psychotherapists, and you can talk about anything in confidence and for free.
- LSE has many [School contacts](#) such as the Deputy Head of Student Services (Advice and Policy) who can provide guidance to students on a range of academic and pastoral matters. If you're not sure who to talk to, use the [Find Support Tool](#) to find a variety of resources, information and key contacts on a range of topics, from housing and finances to health and

wellbeing.

- LSE offers a [Staff Counselling Service](#), as well as confidential telephone counselling through our [Employee Assistance Programme](#) – both of which provide free, dedicated support for colleagues
- In addition to our School's resources, external specialist support on campus is available to all, including from [South London Rape Crisis](#), [Not the Only One](#) and [Survivors UK](#).



This message has been sent to LSE staff and postgraduate research students.