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# NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY LONDON 2023 SUMMER SCHOOL

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Evaluation Report

NOVEMBER 13, 2023

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The report presents insights from the evaluation of the 2023 Northeastern University London (NU London) Summer School which took place in July. This activity aimed to give pupils from under-represented groups a flavour of what it is like to be a university student as well as equipping them with the necessary knowledge to navigate this transition (e.g., information on student finance). The three-day activity was also underpinned by an understanding of the importance of these type of activities in supporting the attainment raising agenda. For example, the activity included a motivational talk developed by an external partner and sessions on study skills and how to write effective essays. In addition, pupils took part in a group activity in which they worked with peers to design a product to improve sustainability at NU London.

### 1.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation aims were:

- To understand the impact of the summer school in supporting development of key skills central to attainment raising (e.g., study skills).
- To understand the impact of the summer school in boosting confidence and motivation in ability to succeed in post 16 education.
- To understand the impact of the summer school in increasing propensity to progress to university, awareness of the benefits of HE and alleviate any concerns they may have about this route.
- To foster a sense of belonging that university is somewhere they would be happy and fit in.
- To generate formative insights into what pupils found most helpful/least helpful.

### 1.3 EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation consisted of a pre and end of event student survey as well as observations, in person student snapshots and a Student Ambassador survey designed to capture their observations:

Tool	Respondents
Pre activity survey	21
End of activity survey	21 (although response rates varied from 19-21 respondents depending on question)
SA survey	4
Snapshots with pupils	10
Observations	NA
In group activity	21
Longitudinal tracking of outcomes	21

## 1.4 PARTICIPANTS

21 Pupils took part in the summer school. In terms of meeting APP criteria:

- **52% of pupils indicated they were living in an IMD Q1-2** postcode, which included 28% (n=5) in a Q1 postcode.
- Only 5% (n=1) of pupils indicated they were living in a POLAR4 and TUNDRA LSOA Q2 postcode, the postcodes with the lowest participation in HE. Given the day time, three-day duration of the summer school, the event understandably attracted mostly pupils living in London which we know has the highest representation in HE.

In addition, to the above:

- **10% were care leavers** or had experience of living in care (n=2).
- **35% (n=7) were eligible for Free School Meals** or had previously been eligible.
- **20% (n=4) disclosed a disability** or selected the 'prefer not to say' category. The pupils who disclosed a disability indicated either a long-term illness or health condition (n=1); a mental health condition (n=1) or a specific learning difficulty (n=1).
- **40% (n=8) indicated they were Black and 25% (n=5) Asian.**

## 1.5 KEY INSIGHTS

### 1.5.1 POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDY SKILLS

The insights from the data suggest that the summer school had a **positive impact on boosting study skills**. For example, in the pupil survey, pupils were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'I feel I have the skills I need to write effective essays'. In the pre survey the average response was 3.3 compared with 4.1 at the end of the summer school. Looking at frequencies, 40% indicated agree or strongly agree at the start compared with 81% at the end, suggesting that the activity had a positive impact. Similar insights were also evident in other data.

### 1.5.2 CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO PROGRESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

In terms of confidence, there was **limited evidence to indicate that the summer school impacted pupil confidence in their academic ability** with one student commenting on the motivational benefits of the Innerscope session.

### 1.5.3 SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN PROPENSITY TO APPLY TO NU

With regard to possible progression to NU London, **at the start of the summer school 20% indicated a positive response compared with 86% at the end of the summer school, indicating that the summer school provided pupils with a really positive experience.**

In terms of propensity to go to university, there was limited difference in survey responses pre and post summer school as scores were already high, for example, prior to the summer school 90% of pupils indicated 5 in the pre survey and the rest indicated a 4. In addition, we know from the evidence, that London has some of the highest rates of progression and this is where the pupils lived. This may explain the limited change in attitudes. The summer school also took place at the start of the school holidays, therefore pupils needed to be motivated to progress to HE in order to sacrifice some of their holiday. Some of the qualitative comments better showed impact and there's evidence that the summer school helped alleviate concerns about HE, especially in terms of financial worries, nervousness about juggling university with other parts of life, being good enough and choosing the right course. In the end of summer school survey, 90% of pupils (n=19) indicated that the summer school helped alleviate concerns about university. Similarly in the snapshot discussions pupils commented that the summer school had reassured them.

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#### 1.5.4 EFFECTIVE IN FOSTERING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

One of the aims of the summer school was to foster a sense of belonging that university is somewhere the pupils would be happy and fit in. In terms of the statement 'I think I would be happy and fit in at university' the mean score increased from 4.1 before the summer school to 4.5 at the end. During the snapshot discussions with pupils, **a common theme centred on how friendly and welcoming everyone at the summer school was and how this made them feel at ease.** This was also mirrored in the observational data.

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#### 1.5.5 WHAT DID PUPILS FIND MOST HELPFUL?

With regard to the sessions the pupils indicated they found most helpful, the top session was the finance and budgeting session. This session received a **mean score of 4.75 out of 5**, indicating that pupils found the session really useful. Scores ranged for 4-5, and most frequently pupils scored the session a 5 (meaning very useful). Similarly, in the frequency analysis, **100% of pupils indicated they found this session useful**, and this was mirrored in the qualitative comments too. They found this session really reassuring.

Pupils really valued the student life session, and this session received a **mean of 4.6**, indicating that they found the session helpful (scores ranged from 3-5, with a mode of 5). This is also reflected in the frequency analysis, in which **90% indicated they found the session helpful** and was reflected in the qualitative data too.

Lastly, the sustainability project was well received by pupils receiving a **mean score of 4.3**, indicating that they found the session helpful (scores ranged from 3-5, with a mode of 5). This is also reflected in the frequency analysis. In addition, researcher observations highlighted the value of the activity in supporting the development of key skills central to supporting attainment, e.g., numeracy, working as a team and communication skills.

The study skills sessions received a **mean and mode score of 4** (scores ranging from 2-5) indicating that pupils found these sessions helpful. Similarly, in the frequency analysis 76% indicated that they found the study skills and writing skills session useful, whilst 5% (n=1) disagreed. The Innerscope session was particularly popular.

Around 50% of pupils indicated that the subject tasters were the most useful part of the summer school. The averages for perceived usefulness ranged from 3-4, lower than the other sessions outlined but still positive. Pupils advised the need for increased interactivity during these sessions as well as a greater range of subject tasters enabling pupils to choose the areas that suited them. However, pupils appreciated having the opportunity to experience university teaching.

## 1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this evaluation suggest that the summer school was highly effective in meeting its aims. Whilst pupils were most positive about the student life, finance and sustainability project sessions, the feedback for all the sessions was complementary, indicating that pupils found the whole summer school a helpful and positive experience. Observations on the final day highlighted how successful the summer school was in building the all-important sense of community and belonging that we know from the evidence is central to supporting progression to university from under-represented groups. **The fact that the proportion of pupils interested in applying to NU London increased from 20% on registration to 80% at the end of the summer school**, highlighted the impact and effectiveness of the summer school in supporting potential applications to NU London. It also highlights how immensely positive the summer school experience was for pupils.

The recommendations are:

1. Targeting: In the NU London APP there is a target around increasing the access of people from postcodes where there is low representation in HE (POLAR4 and TUNDRA). If you are keen to attract outreach pupils from these postcodes, consider targeting the summer school publicity at areas with high representation of these groups. This could however mean increasing the cost of delivery making this financially unviable (e.g., needing to offer a residential option for pupils living outside London). Another option would be to ensure other outreach activities are addressing these metrics instead or considering having a part online offering.
2. Areas of focus covered during the subject tasters: The nature of the subject tasters inevitably make them quite niche. Finding subject areas that interest all pupils is unlikely, therefore a recommendation is to give pupils a choice of subject taster and perhaps collect student interests in the registration form. If appropriate academics are unavailable, consider whether there are any appropriate Student Ambassadors/PhD students available. Another option would be to consider whether any lectures/seminars could be recorded and then shared with pupils that way. Lastly, it might be helpful to be as clear as possible with the pupils about the purpose of the tasters e.g., it's an opportunity to see how you are taught, meet lecturers etc. rather than focusing so much on the subject content.

3. Interactivity of the subject tasters: The summer school caters to a younger age group than NU London lecturers are likely to be used to teaching. Therefore, consider whether there are any training/suggested approaches (e.g., use of games) which the academics could be encouraged to adopt.
4. Choice of sessions: The financial support, student life and sustainability project sessions were the parts of the summer school that received the most positive feedback – therefore ensure to deliver these sessions in a similar way at the next summer school.
5. Duration of the summer school: Quite a few people considered the summer school too short in duration. Whilst it may not be economically viable to extend the length of the summer school, consider whether there are any other low-cost approaches to maintain interest/engagement from these pupils. e.g., offering those who attended the summer school the opportunity to meet with their Student Ambassadors online or offering individualised personal statement sessions. Another option might be to plan a reunion so long after or build in other online activities/social media presence with these pupils which continue to foster that sense of community.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern University London (NU London) Summer School was an interdisciplinary three-day event for Year 11 pupils who met Widening Participation (WP) criteria. During this event, pupils got to experience what it is like to be a university student – they went on a trip, attended subject tasters delivered by university academics, attended sessions on budgeting, study skills and student life. The event culminated in a sustainability group project where pupils were asked to create a product to support a more sustainable university. Working in small groups alongside current students, they designed their own product which they then presented to a panel of judges at the end.

## 3. EVALUATION DESIGN

A theory of change was developed for the summer school, which identified intended outcomes for pupils (appendix A). The evaluation had the following objectives:

- To understand the impact of the summer school in supporting development of key skills central to attainment raising (e.g., study skills).
- To understand the impact of the summer school in boosting confidence and motivation in ability to succeed in post 16 education.
- To understand the impact of the summer school in increasing propensity to progress to university, awareness of the benefits of HE and alleviate any concerns they may have about this route.
- To foster a sense of belonging that university is somewhere they would be happy and fit in.
- To generate formative insights into what pupils found most helpful/least helpful.

In terms of the evaluation design:

Tool	Description	Respondents
Pre activity survey	On registering for the activity, pupils were asked a series of demographic questions. In addition, using a series of Likert scale questions, the survey also aimed to gather baseline data on confidence, propensity to apply to HE and confidence in effectiveness of study skills.	21
End of activity survey	The above Likert scale questions were repeated as well as a series of open text questions intended to gather their thoughts on the effectiveness of the activity, what was helpful and what could be developed.	21 (although response rates differed from 19-21 respondents depending on question)
SA survey	After the summer school Student Ambassadors (SA) were asked to complete a brief online survey which provided insights into student engagement, any differences they noticed in the pupils as the summer school progressed and formative insights.	4
Snapshots with pupils	The researcher conducted ten informal snapshot discussions with pupils on the last day of the summer school.	10

Observations	The researcher attended the afternoon of the final day of the summer school and made detailed observational notes, focusing on how pupils engaged with the sustainability project.	NA
In group activity	At the end of the summer school the organisers asked the participants what they'd learnt over the last three days. The comments were written down by the researcher.	21
Longitudinal tracking of outcomes	Participant data was uploaded to HEAT, allowing for eventual tracking of rates of progression to HE in time.	21

Table 1: Evaluation design and response rates

In terms of the Likert scale survey data, this was analysed using two approaches:

1. Overall cohort analysis – Use of basic descriptive statistics (min, max, mean and mode). In addition, frequency analysis was carried out in which the proportion of pupils indicating 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in the pre survey was compared with the end of summer school survey data.
2. Matched paired analysis – where pre and post survey data for particular pupils was available, this was analysed as matched/paired analysis. For each statement this data was grouped into the following categories: more positive, stayed the same and less positive.

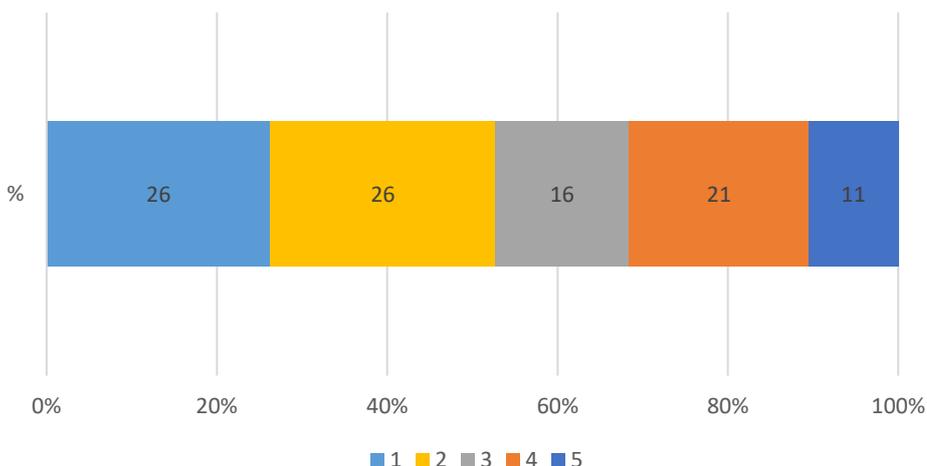
All qualitative data was thematically analysed to understand the main themes in the data.

#### 4. WHO WERE THE PARTICIPANTS?

21 pupils attended the summer school, although one pupil opted not to share their personal data in response to some of the demographic questions. Therefore, the percentages outlined below are based on 20 pupils. In terms of key demographics:

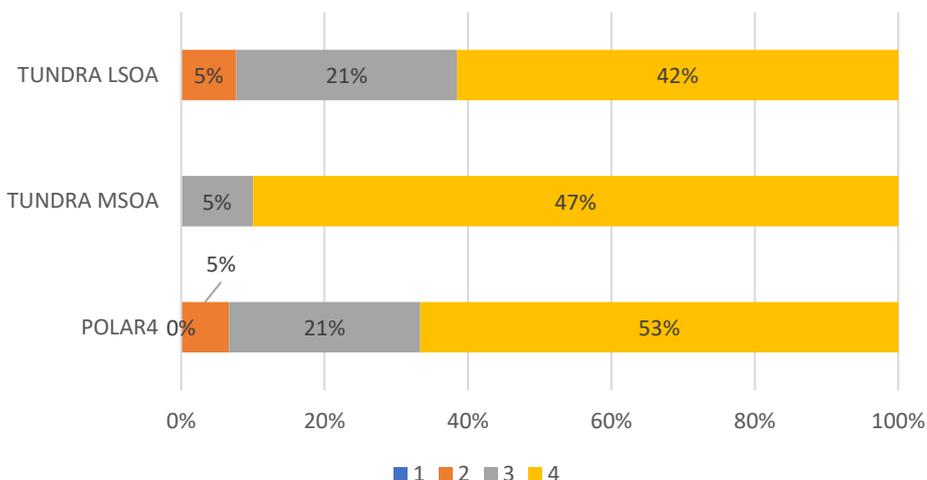
- **33% were male** (n=7)
- **10% were care leavers** or had experience of living in care (n=2).
- **35% (n=7) were eligible for Free School Meals** or had previously been eligible.
- **20% (n=4) disclosed a disability** or selected the 'prefer not to say' category. The pupils who disclosed a disability indicated either a long-term illness or health condition (n=1); a mental health condition (n=1) or a specific learning difficulty (n=1).
- **40% (n=8) indicated they were Black and 25% (n=5) Asian.**
- In terms of IMD, **52% of pupils were indicated they were living in an IMD Q1-2** postcodes:

Figure 1: IMD 2019 %



- In terms of measures of participation in HE, 5% (n=1) lived in a POLAR4 Q2 and TUNDRA LSOA Q2 postcode. The largest proportion of pupils lived in Q4 postcodes. It is however important to note the inaccuracies of these postcode measures, especially for London.

Figure 2: POLAR4 and TUNDRA %

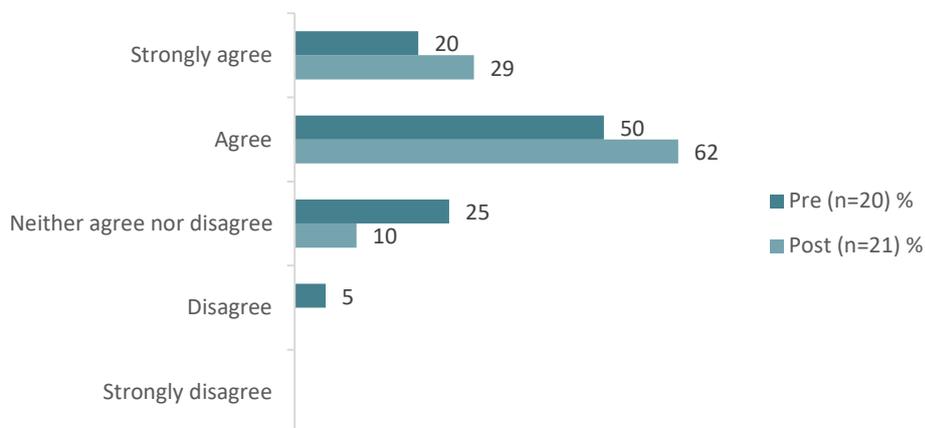


## 5. INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION

### 5.1 THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITY IN SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OF KEY SKILLS CENTRAL TO ATTAINMENT RAISING

Pupils were asked a range of questions which sought to understand the impact of the summer school on key skills considered essential to attainment raising. For example, pupils were asked to indicate their level of agreement towards the statement ‘I feel I have the study skills I need to progress into post 16 studies’. In the pre survey the mean response was 3.9 compared with 4.1 at the end. If we refer to frequencies, at the start of the summer school 70% agreed or strongly agreed compared with 91% at the end:

Figure 3: I feel I have the study skills I need to progress into post 16 study (pre and post % comparison)



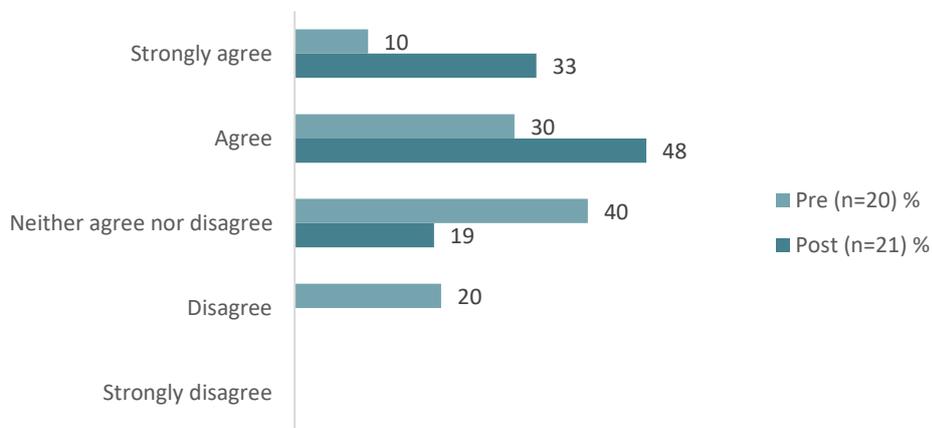
45% of pupils indicated increased positivity at the end of the event compared with on registering. 25% of pupils indicated they now felt less positive about their study skills, which is to be expected in outreach evaluations as pupils learn more about what is expected of them:

Comparison	N.	%
Improved score at the end compared with on registering	9	45
Score stayed the same	6	30
Less positive at the end compared with at the beginning	5	25

Table 2: Comparison of responses – pre and post

Pupils were similarly asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement ‘I feel I have the skills I need to write effective essays’. In the pre survey the average response was 3.3 compared with 4.1 at the end of the summer school. Looking at frequencies, 40% indicated agree or strongly agree at the start compared with 81% at the end:

Figure 4: I feel I have the skills I need to write effective essays (pre and post % comparison)



Around 60% of pupils indicated improved scores at the end compared with at the start, highlighting the value of the summer school in supporting pupils to develop the skills to write effective essays.

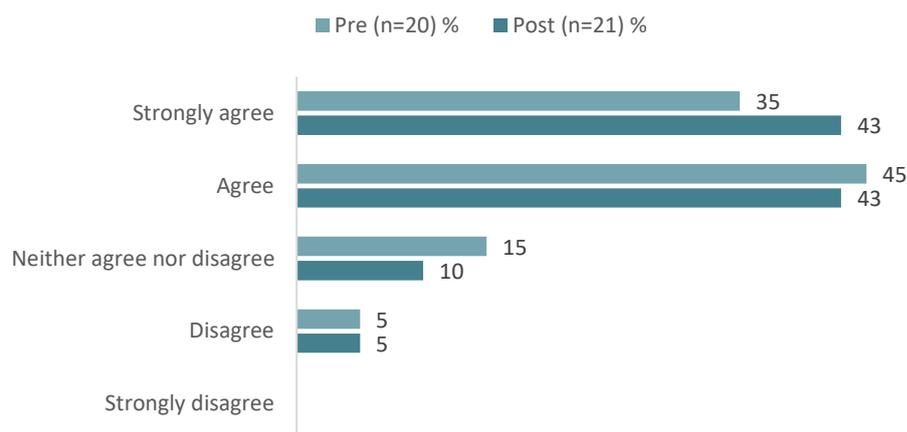
Comparison	N.	%
Improved score at the end compared with on registering	12	60
Score stayed the same	7	35
Less positive at the end compared with at the beginning	1	5

Table 3: Matched analysis – I feel like I have the skills I need to write effective essays

In the snapshot discussions one student commented on how helpful they found the study skills booklet they were given.

The pupils were also asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement ‘I feel I have the skills I need to work effectively as part of a team’. The average increased from 4.1 to 4.2 at the end. Similarly in terms of frequencies, 80% in the pre survey indicated agree or strongly agree compared with 86% in the end survey:

Figure 5: I feel like I have the skills I need to work effectively as a team (pre and post % comparison)



30% of pupils indicated increased positivity at the end of the event compared with on registering. 30% of pupils indicated they now felt less positive about their team working skills, which is to be expected in outreach evaluations as pupils learn more about what is expected of them:

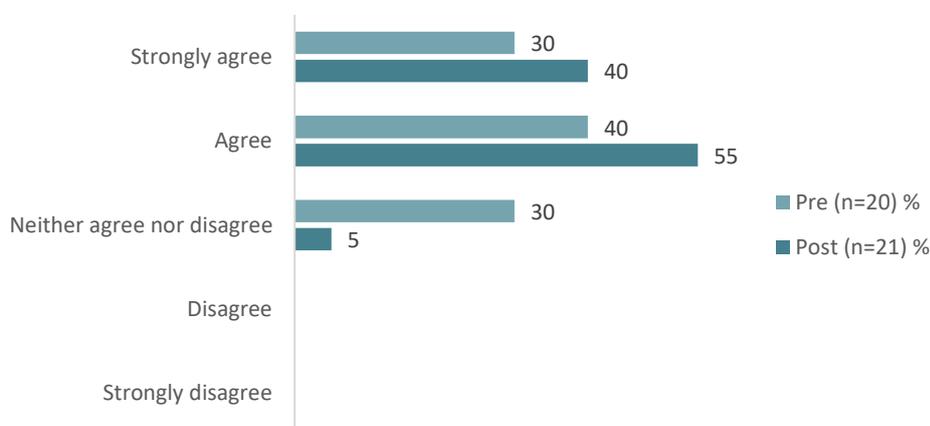
Comparison	N.	%
Improved score at the end compared with on registering	6	30
Score stayed the same	8	40
Less positive at the end compared with at the beginning	6	30

Table 4: Matched analysis – I feel like I have the skills I need to work effectively as a team

## 5.2 THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITY IN BOOSTING CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION IN ABILITY TO SUCCEED IN POST 16 EDUCATION

Pupils were also asked a wide range of questions designed to assess the impact of the summer school in boosting motivation in ability to succeed in further study. For example, in the pre and post student survey, pupils were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'I am confident I can get the grades I need to progress to university'. In the pre survey, the mean response was 4 compared with 4.2 at the end. Looking at frequencies, at the start of the summer school 70% agreed or strongly agreed compared with 95% at the end:

Figure 6: I am confident I can get the grades I need to progress to university (pre and post % comparison)



32% of pupils indicated increased positivity at the end of the event compared with on registering. 11% of pupils indicated they now felt less positive about their confidence getting the required grades which is to be expected in outreach evaluations as pupils become more familiar which what is expected in Higher Education:

Comparison	N.	%
Improved score at the end compared with on registering	8	42
Score stayed the same	9	47
Less positive at the end compared with at the beginning	2	11

Table 5: Matched analysis – I am confident I can get the grades I need to progress to university

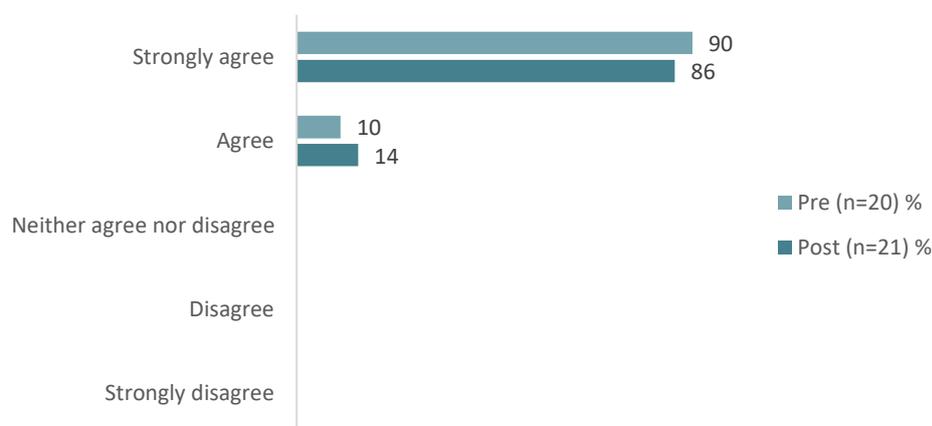
In the snapshot discussions, one pupil commented that the Innerscope motivational speaker 'made me realise I can stand up in a crowd – that I am more capable than I realise.' In the end of summer school survey, three pupils commented that the activity had given them confidence in their ability to succeed academically. For example:

*Before, I was scared that I wouldn't fit in or that I was too dumb, but it made me realise we're all human and in this together, I shouldn't be scared.*

### 5.3 THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITY IN INCREASING PROPENSITY TO PROGRESS TO UNIVERSITY AND AWARENESS OF THE BENEFITS

In terms of propensity to go to university, there was limited difference in survey responses pre and post summer school. This may be due to the summer school attracting pupils who were already interested in attending HE. For example, 90% of pupils indicated 5 in the pre survey and the rest indicated a 4. In addition, we know from the evidence, that London has some of the highest rates of progression and this is where the pupils lived. This may explain the limited change in attitudes:

Figure 7: I would like to go to university in the future (pre and post % comparisons)



It is important to note that the summer school also took place at the start of the school summer holiday – therefore it required pupils to feel motivated about progressing to university in order to sacrifice part of their holiday.

In the snapshot discussions two pupils commented that the summer school had increased their propensity to progress to HE. For example, pupils explained:

*It's made me realise I want to go to university. My parents don't work, and I didn't think people like me went to university. The summer school has reassured me that I can achieve this*

*Before this week, I wasn't thinking too much about university. I now really want to go*

In the end survey, a different pupil commented:

*Yes, I wasn't sure if I wanted to go before and now I do more. This will also give me motivation to do well in sixth form and get the grades I want.*

In the pre survey, pupils were asked whether they had any concerns about going to university. Of those who indicated they had concerns, these concerns most frequently centred on financial concerns (n=4) and anxieties around managing university alongside other aspects of life (n=3):

Concern	No.
Financial worries	4
Juggling university with other parts of life e.g., handling the independence of university life	3
Choosing the wrong course	2
Struggling academically	2
Not enjoying university life	1
Not sure of the benefits of HE compared with doing an apprenticeship	1

Table 6: Concerns pupils had prior to summer school

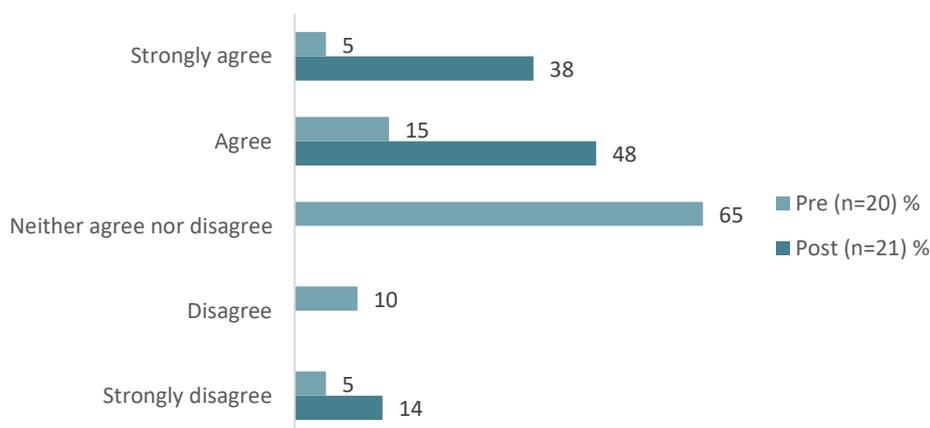
In the end of summer school survey, 90% of pupils (n=19) indicated that the summer school helped alleviate concerns about university and this was mirrored in the snapshot discussions, such as:

*I was really nervous about university. Having only been in this country two years. But come here has made me so much less nervous now about university*

*I'm normally quite shy...coming to this has definitely improved my confidence*

In terms of possible progression to NU London, at the start of the summer school 20% indicated a positive response compared with 86% at the end of the summer school, indicating that the summer school provided pupils with really positive experience:

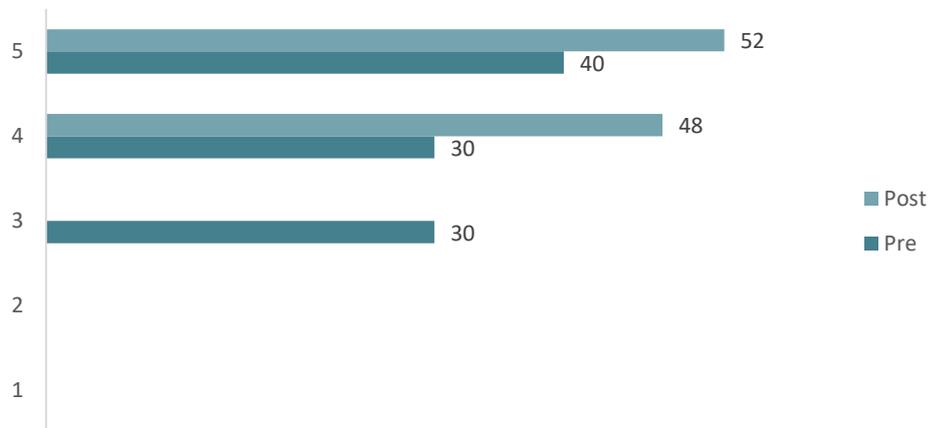
Figure 8: I would like to study at NU London (pre and post % comparisons)



#### 5.4 A SENSE OF BELONGING

One of the aims of the summer school was to foster a sense of belonging, that NU London is somewhere the pupils would be happy and fit in. In terms of the statement 'I think I would be happy and fit in at university' the mean score increased from 4.1 before the summer school to 4.5 at the end. In terms of frequencies, 70% agreed with the statement at the start, compared with 100% at the end.

Figure 9: I think I would be happy and fit in at university (pre and post % comparisons)



During the snapshot discussions with pupils, a common theme centred on how friendly and welcoming everyone at the summer school was and how this made them feel at ease. For example, one pupil commented on how going on the Tower Bridge trip had helped them get to know their peers. Another commented on how playing Bingo helped getting to know their peers. A pupil explained that 'it feels like a community. I feel comfortable here. I've got to know everyone'. The pupils set up their own group chat explaining 'we want to keep in touch with other people after the summer school' suggesting that the event was successful in bringing this group together and fostering connections, something we know is central to supporting a sense of belonging. Lastly, the researcher observations noted:

*At lunch time lots of the boys congregated around the Pool and Table Football tables. They engaged in friendly banter. There was a real sense of relatedness. Hard to imagine these pupils only first met two days ago. The girls gathered in little tables chatting and mingling whilst happily tucking into their lunch. No one was left out.*

Again, this observation further evidences this sense of community the pupils felt.

## 5.5 WHAT DID PUPILS FIND MOST HELPFUL?

### 5.5.1 SUBJECT TASTERS

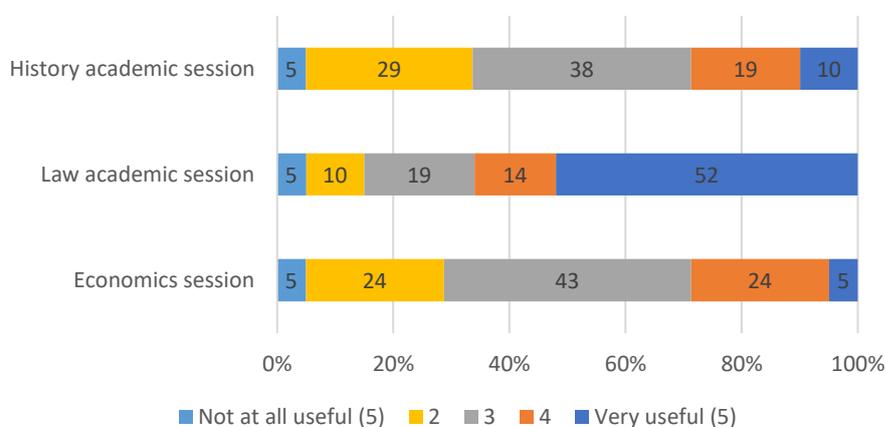
In terms of the academic subject tasters, pupils were asked to indicate how useful they found the sessions on a scale of 1-5 with 1 referring to not at all useful and 5 referring to very useful. Results were very mixed ranging from 1-5. For the history and economics sessions the most common score was 3 and the same for the mean (3). The pupils scored the law session higher, most commonly indicating a 5 (very useful) and the mean was 4:

Taster	Min	Max	Mode	Mean
Economics session	1	5	3	3
Law session	1	5	5	4
History session	1	5	3	3

Table 7: Pupil ratings of the different tasters

This theme was also evident in the frequency data - pupils were most positive about the law session (66% indicated a positive response and 15% a negative response). The history and economics sessions received fewer positive scores with 29% of pupils indicating these sessions were useful:

Figure 10: How useful did you find the academic subject tasters? %



These mixed insights are likely to be due to the niche nature of the sessions and the interests of each pupil. For example, in the end of summer school survey, in response to the question 'what did you find most useful about the summer school?' over 50% indicated one of the three subject tasters, suggesting that some pupils did find them useful:

Taster	No
History taster	4
Law taster	5
Economics taster	4

Table 8: Perceived helpfulness of subject tasters

In addition, pupils commented:

*The lectures allowed me to see what type of classes I was getting myself into*

*They helped me realise and understand how you are taught at university*

In the survey, two pupils commented that the summer school would be improved with greater variation/choice of tasters so that pupils could choose subject tasters that matched their interests. During one of the snapshots, another pupil suggested similar, advising NU London to consider including a list of possible taster sessions in the registration survey and asking for pupils to vote for so many sessions.

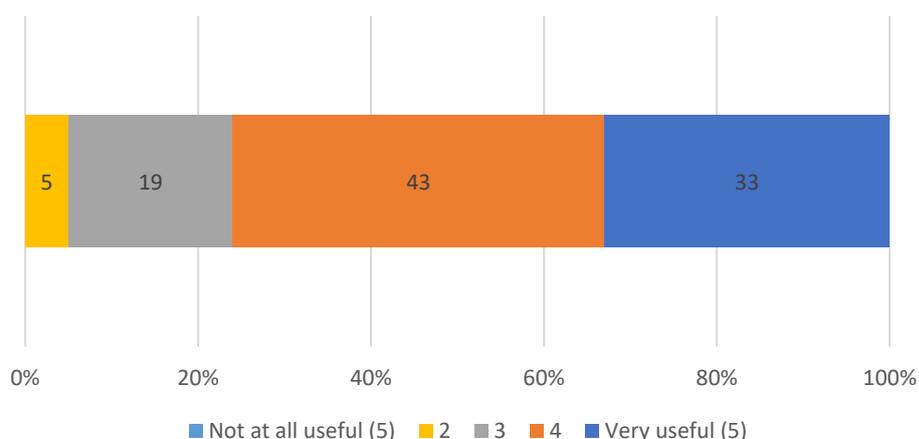
In addition to the choice of tasters, in the end of summer school survey two pupils suggested the summer school tasters would benefit from increased interactivity, suggesting use of games and quizzes. This was mirrored in the Student Ambassador survey, in which one Student Ambassador explained:

*Getting the pupils more involved. The lecture where the professor was speaking more was unsuccessful in keeping the pupils engaged. But when they were asked more questions, involved, and asked of their opinions they were much more interested.*

### 5.5.2 STUDENT SKILLS SESSIONS

The study skills sessions received a mean and mode score of 4 (scores ranging from 2-5) indicating that pupils found these sessions helpful. Similarly, in the frequency analysis 76% indicated that they found the study skills and writing skills session useful, whilst 5% (n=1) disagreed:

Figure 11: How useful did you find the study skills and essay writing session? %

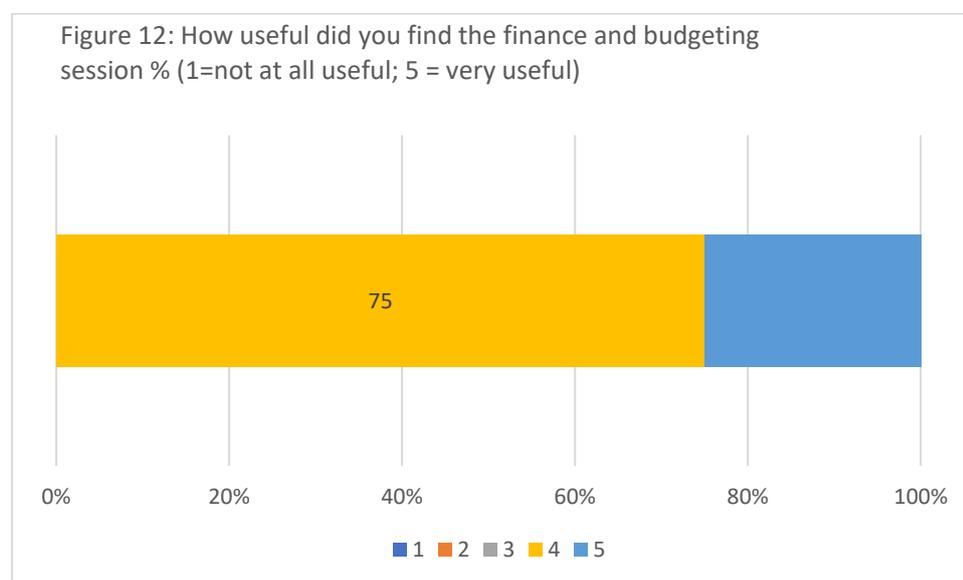


One of the Student Ambassadors explained:

*Additionally, the Innerscope session was a massive hit with the pupils, and I think this was because they could relate themselves to the session and think about their personal motivations. It also set a high note for the three days because they felt they were doing it for themselves.*

### 5.5.3 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

The session on student finance and budgeting received a mean score of 4.75 out of 5, indicating that pupils found the session really useful. Scores ranged for 4-5, and most frequently pupils scored the session a 5 (meaning very useful). Similarly, in the frequency analysis, 100% of pupils indicated they found this session useful:



Similarly in the qualitative data, one of the most common themes centred on how useful pupils found the finance and budgeting session – they considered it to be one of the most useful parts of the summer school.

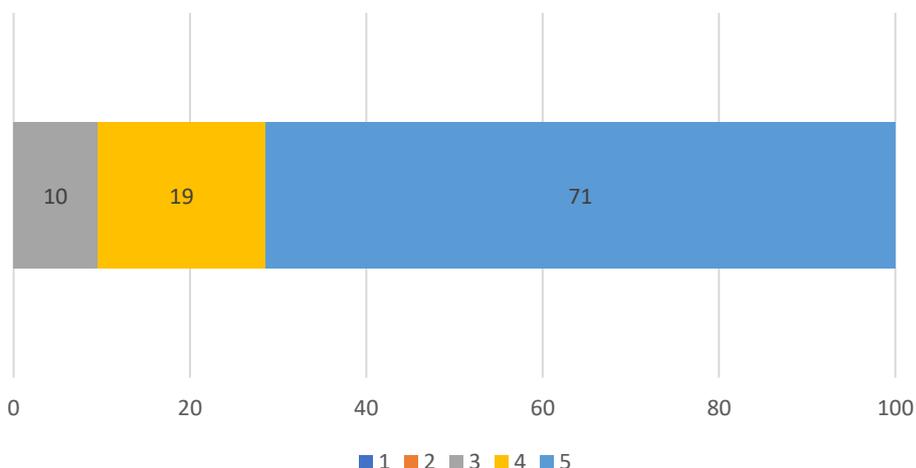
*The student life & student finance and budgeting sessions helped me to understand different ways to earn money and the money I need to spend during university*

In a snapshot discussion one pupil explained how reassuring they found the budgeting activity as it reassured them they could afford to go to university.

### 5.5.4 STUDENT LIFE SESSION

Pupils really valued the student life session, and this session received a mean of 4.6, indicating that they found the session really helpful (scores ranged from 3-5, with a mode of 5). This is also reflected in the frequency analysis, in which 90% indicated they found the session helpful:

Figure 13: How useful did you find the student life talk? (%)



In the qualitative data pupils also commented on the value of this session, for example commenting that they now had a much better understanding of what it is like to be a student.

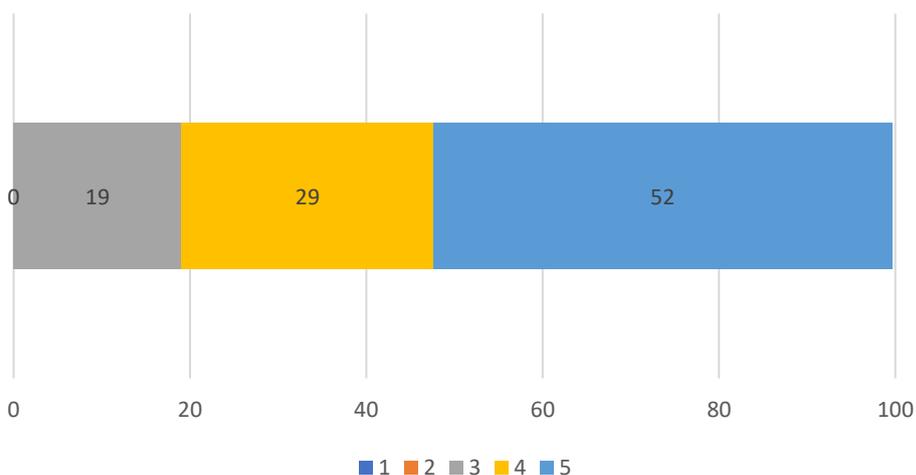
The pupils also really valued the Student Ambassadors as these people are easier to relate to. For example, a pupil explained that the advice from student ambassadors – made it ‘more authentic as they are so close to our age’. Another pupil explained that:

*The student ambassadors were really friendly and engaging and many uni myths were busted.*

### 5.5.5 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Pupils also valued the sustainability project, and this session received a mean of 4.3, indicating that they found the session really helpful (scores ranged from 3-5, with a mode of 5). This is also reflected in the frequency analysis, in which 81% indicated they found the session helpful:

Figure 14: How useful did you find the sustainability project? %



Researcher observations of the activity highlighted the value of the activity in supporting key skills needed for attainment, such as:

*The value of the activity in supporting maths skills: For example, one student was observed calculating how many worms would be needed to fill a space. Another was observed calculating how many bikes they would need. Other pupils were seen calculating how much their initiative would cost and therefore how much money they needed from the university to deliver it.*

*Supported science knowledge: Pupils were seen googling how to build sustainable buildings and looking into the science between why certain building designs were considered more sustainable than others.*

*The value of the activity in supporting leadership skills: Very quickly into the activity certain pupils moved into leader roles quite naturally. They provided encouragement and direction. For example, I overheard one student saying, 'I don't think I can present'. A peer said 'of course you can. We will all be here to help if you need it'*

*Fostering communication skills: Pupils were required to not only verbally communicate as a group to undertake the task, but they were also required to communicate their ideas through visuals such as drawings and drama, highlighting creativity in their communication. At the end of the activity pupils had to all communicate their ideas verbally in front of a panel and their peers. Whilst some pupils appeared nervous they did so eloquently and with confidence.*

*At the end of the activity, most of the pupils opted to take photographs of their work, indicating that the activity meant something to them.*

One of the frequent comments from both Student Ambassadors and pupils centred on the duration of the summer school. Both groups suggested increasing the duration of the summer school as it had been such a positive experience.

## 6. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this evaluation suggest that the summer school was highly effective in meeting its aims. Whilst pupils were most positive about the student life, financing and sustainability project sessions, the feedback for all the sessions was complementary, indicating that pupils found the whole summer school a helpful and positive experience. Observations on the final day highlighted how successful the summer school was in building the all-important sense of community and belonging that we know from the evidence is central to supporting progression to university from under-represented groups. The fact that the proportion of pupils interested in applying to NU London increased from 20% on registration to 80% at the end of the summer school, highlighted the impact and effectiveness of the summer school in supporting potential applications to NU London and university in general. It also highlights how immensely positive the summer school experience was for pupils.

The recommendations are:

1. Targeting: In the NU London APP there is a target around increasing the number of pupils from postcodes where there is low participation in HE (POLAR4). If you are keen to attract outreach pupils from these postcodes, consider targeting the summer school publicity at areas with high representation of these groups. This could however mean increasing the cost of delivery making this financially unviable (e.g., needing to offer a residential option for pupils living outside London). Another option would be to ensure other outreach activities are addressing these metrics instead or considering having a part online offering.
2. Areas of focus covered during the subject tasters: The nature of the subject tasters inevitably make them quite niche. Finding subject areas that interest all pupils is unlikely, therefore a recommendation is to give pupils a choice of subject taster and perhaps collect student interests in the registration form. If appropriate academics are unavailable, consider whether there are any appropriate Student Ambassadors/PhD students available. Another option would be to consider whether any lectures/seminars that could be recorded and then shared with pupils that way. Lastly, it might be helpful to be as clear as possible with the pupils about the purpose of the tasters e.g., it's an opportunity to see how you are taught, meet lecturers etc. rather than focusing so much on the subject content.
3. Interactivity of the subject tasters: The summer school caters to a younger age group than NU London lecturers are likely to be used to teaching. Therefore, consider whether there are any training/suggested approaches (e.g., use of games) which the academics could be encouraged to adopt.
4. Choice of sessions: The financial support, student life and sustainability project sessions were the parts of the summer school that received the most positive feedback – therefore ensure to deliver these sessions in a similar way at the next summer school.
5. Duration of the summer school: Quite a few people considered the summer school too short in duration. Whilst it may not be economically viable to extend the length of the summer school, consider whether there are any other low-cost approaches to maintain interest/engagement from these pupils. e.g., offering those who attended the summer school the opportunity to meet with their Student Ambassadors online or offering individualised personal statement sessions. Another option might be to plan a reunion so long after or build in other online activities/social media presence with these pupils which continue to foster that sense of community.

## 7. APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: THEORY OF CHANGE

## Get Ahead: Year 11 Summer School Theory of Change

