

LSE SU Polish Business Society 2020/21

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Key Findings of the Research Unit

The impact of COVID-19 on higher education in Poland and the United Kingdom

Conclusions based on questionnaires analysing administrative solutions, and their impact on the students' sense of belonging, implemented at the Warsaw School of Economics, the University of Warsaw, the London School of Economics and Political Science and King's College London.

Key findings:

- There was a smaller decrease in the number of postgraduate students admissions at SGH and UW than in the undergraduate admissions, this suggests the presence of a “panic master’s degree” phenomenon.
- The online learning obviously caused some technical difficulties for the students, but on the other hand recorded lectures and more digitised administration are much lauded by students and they would like to see them in place even after the COVID pandemic.
- The number of new members in student societies has significantly declined at both London School of Economics and Political Science and King’s College London. This, however, hasn’t been observed at the University of Warsaw. It is also worth noting that the total number of memberships at British universities is consistently higher than at Polish universities.
- In time of the pandemic none of the analysed universities decided to introduce the policy of fees reduction for all of its students. Instead, different, supportive measures have been introduced such as COVID-19 crisis-specific funds.

Below are the findings from the analysis of the survey on the sense of belonging to the university conducted among the students of SGH, UW, LSE, KCL

- There was a pronounced national difference in the indicated sense of belonging, as the UK-based universities averaged a 5.11 out of 10, while Polish-based – a substantially lower 4.2 out of 10.
- It was observed that the self-assessed engagement in student life significantly predicted students’ sense of belonging, in a way that gender and the country of study did not, at least in a statistically significant way. The key takeaway from that finding is that being engaged with student initiatives or being part of student societies may increase students’ sense of belonging.
- The majority of respondents (76.6%) claimed that online learning has had a negative impact on their sense of belonging, a similar proportion (73.3%) of students have agreed that the reintroduction of in-person teaching is something that they are waiting for.
- The results prove the significance of society membership on overall satisfaction and students’ sense of belonging. Students who joined societies expressed a higher average sense of belonging rate at 5.1, compared to 4.0, that of students who did not take part in any societies.
- 83.9% of the respondents stated that it is more difficult to make new friends during online studies. A significant number of students also did not have a chance to meet any other students from their cohort or programme in person (36.5%).
- Respondents have also suggested further measures they felt their universities could implement in an effort to safeguard students’ sense of belonging – these measures included fostering student integration, protecting students’ psychological well-being, as well as the provision of widely understood technical, financial and administrative support.



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