



# The Milestone Access Programme



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## The Milestone Access Programme

Over the first ten years of its operation, the Milestone Institute has created internationally acknowledged educational programmes of Advanced Studies for secondary school students. Based around the three pillars of university level subject tutorials in modules, individual pastoral care and educational pathway development in mentoring, and thematic society life based around self-governance, Milestone has nurtured over a thousand of the brightest students in Hungary.

Through the Milestone Access Programme (MAP), the Institute sets out to push the limits of its reach, making the benefits of the Milestone method and community more widely accessible. Each year in the Admissions process, we encounter several promising candidates who share Milestone's founding vision and are susceptible to our educational approach, yet could not fully bring their talents to fruition in the Institute's Advanced Studies programmes.

The Access Programme has been created to respond to the needs of these students, offering them step-by-step support in developing their abilities and skills necessary to successfully progress through the Institute's programmes. By participating in MAP, students experience the joy of academically rigorous thinking and are encouraged to develop and widen their range of interests. In addition to making progress with their orientation, participants also develop their individual identity and emotional readiness, which are essential to thrive in an international environment.

Access offers a unique educational and community experience, where, in line with the Institute's commitment to social responsibility, a key aspect is the participation of talented scholars from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in the programme. This yields mutually beneficial encounters, through which students can gain hands-on experience rather than purely theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon of social inequality and successful social mobility.

In the long term, prospective students will need to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world, where burning social and environmental issues will require highly adaptable leaders. Accordingly, core elements of the Access Programme include the strengthening of resilient and action-focused personality traits, individual self-expression, combined with inclusive project-based teamwork. Thus, the programme lays the foundations for the long-term development of participants and introduces them to the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

This new initiative is deeply rooted in the Milestone community's conviction that the forming of our future is best placed in the hands of a talented, inclusive, globally-minded and committed new generation.





## What does the Access Programme offer?

- Intellectual confidence through experiencing the joy and impact of learning
- Academic orientation, the development and widening of academic interests
- The development of thinking and academic skills
- Self and life management skills to foster autonomy (e.g. planning, time management)
- Personality development with a focus on confidence, resilience and adaptability
- Emotional maturity at both individual and community level through reflection
- The ability and willingness to act and work as a team through social and business projects
- Developing new and internalised aspirations and extending horizons of possibility
- Solidarity and social responsibility
- Milestone readiness, developing students' preparedness to progress to the Programme Year (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior) best suited to each individual participant's age

## Students on the Access Programme:

- Form a part of Milestone's student community together with participants in other programmes, taking part in Student Life and Student Governance
- Become accustomed to the trimester-based academic calendar followed throughout the programmes
- Familiarise themselves with the Institute's Learning Management System (Canvas)
- Can benefit from Milestone's academic infrastructure (e.g. library, lectures, competitions)
- Have to meet pre-set academic requirements in a credit-based system
- Have an opportunity to cooperate with students from other Programme Years in Student Life and project-based modules
- Upon successful completion of the Access Programme, are offered an opportunity to join the Programme Year best suited to them based on their age, maturity and academic progress achieved through the programme





## Overview of the Programme

- Thinking Pathway: aims to expose students to the power and rewards of looking at the social and natural world in a scholarly way, developing related skills.
- Reflection Pathway: invites each student individually and in small groups on a journey of discovery, supporting personality development and strengthening practical skills necessary for the Core Programme.
- Action Pathway: provides an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge and skills gained in the other two pathways, through projects with gradually increasing levels of responsibility and impact.

The Access Programme follows the basic structure of other Programme Years at Milestone, composed of three Academic Terms (Summer: May to July, Autumn: September to November, Spring: February to April).

### Term Timeline

|            | Month 1           |                            |             |                | Month 2     |                        |                         |     | Month 3     |                      |                 |     |
|------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----|
|            | W1                | W2                         | W3          | W4             | W5          | W6                     | W7                      | W8  | W9          | W10                  | W11             | W12 |
| Thinking   |                   | Journal Club (90m)         |             | JC             |             | JC                     |                         | JC  |             | JC                   |                 |     |
| Reflection | Supervision (60m) |                            | Supervision |                | Supervision |                        | Supervision             |     | Supervision |                      | Supervision     |     |
|            |                   |                            |             | Advising (30m) |             |                        |                         | Adv |             |                      |                 | Adv |
|            |                   |                            |             |                |             |                        | Cohort Building Weekend |     |             |                      |                 |     |
| Action     |                   | Project Team Meeting (60m) |             |                |             | Project Team Meeting   |                         |     |             | Project Team Meeting |                 |     |
| Parents    |                   |                            |             |                |             | Parent-Teacher Meeting |                         |     |             |                      | Progress Report |     |





## The Thinking Pathway

The Journal Club helps form students' identity as thinkers through experiencing the joy of applying an academically rigorous approach. It increases intellectual self-confidence and helps discover new areas of interest as well as develop engagement with existing ones.

Biweekly, 90-minute sessions are organised around topics deeply rooted in the scholarly traditions of natural and social sciences, combined with current topics. Thus, the US presidential elections lead to a debate on political philosophy or economics, researching genetic modification is transformed into a study of molecular biology, and investigating the phenomenon of climate anxiety provides an opportunity to review alternatives to build resilient cities.

What does Journal Club facilitate?

- The discovery of new areas of interests and the development of existing ones
- The formation of study skills and habits necessary to undertake Advanced Study modules
- The gradual attainment of autonomous work and research skills
- The development of critical thinking skills and the ability to read and understand academic pieces, starting from popular science texts and leading to engagement with more rigorous inquiries
- Familiarisation with assignment formats used at Milestone and at top universities, from content summaries through reports to argumentative essays

Thematic selection

Themes serve to raise intellectual curiosity and develop thinking skills at the same time, as illustrated by the examples below:

- Laws of history. Is making predictions based on the analysis of historical data, trends and patterns a scientific innovation or mere fortune-telling?
- Resilient cities. A growing proportion of the world's population lives in cities. At the same time, centres of technology and civilisation are also often the places most affected by climate change. What is needed for the survival of cities?
- Democratic communities in the age of fake news. Is it possible to form a society that acts in a united way from people living in the parallel realities of the echo chambers of social media?
- The scientific bases of eye witness testimonies. Are our memories images saved on a hard drive or fragments shaped in the course of recall?
- Ecological thinking and agriculture: an irreconcilable conflict or a search for synergies to resolve the issue of feeding the world?
- Relying on the immune system in medicine. From vaccines to cancer, the prospects of immunotherapy.





## The Reflection Pathway

### Supervision groups

Supervision groups are made up of 4 students and constitute the elementary unit of community experience in the Access Programme. Supervision time is structured into participant-driven and prompt-driven activities, encouraging reflection and fulfilling its dual role as providing a space for sharing and inducing personal growth.

Examples of activities and assignments:

- Diary: observation of self and environment
- Reading journal: based on reading selected from a curated list
- Reflections on art: engaging with film, theatre and music
- Autobiographical and creative writing

Goals and outcomes:

- Providing practical and emotional support
- Strengthening planning, time management, work ethics and life skills
- Personality development with a special emphasis on resilience, confidence and adaptability
- Forming identity through interacting with art and culture

### Individual advising

The lower number of participants in the Access Programme compared to other Programme Years allows for a direct and personal relationship between the Programme Manager and each individual student. In the one-to-one advising sessions, taking place three times in each trimester, students are given personal attention and support tailored to their individual needs.

### Cohort building weekend

Cohort building weekends take place once a term, offering all students in the programme an intensive, out of the ordinary experience. Travelling together to a place surrounded by nature and the immersive experience frees participants from ingrained inhibitions and roles, offering the chance to develop new personal and social identities in a safe environment.





## The Action Pathway

In secondary school systems, the notions of knowledge and skills development and taking action are often separated, creating a chasm between theoretical and practical approaches and personalities. Based on the life and career paths of Milestone students and alumni who succeed in the long term, it is clear that the synergy of these approaches provides students with an enormous advantage on the labour market. The Action Pathway integrates intellectual and personal development into value-based, impact-driven projects, allowing students to experience this synergy of theory and practice.

### What happens in the Action Pathway?

- Students work in project groups of 4-8
- Project Team Meetings are held three times in each trimester
- Students set goals for the project, plan the steps for implementation and agree on individual roles and responsibilities
- With the support of their Programme Coordinator, they bring in the resources and expertise necessary for implementation
- The Project is presented at the end of the Access Programme Year

### What does the Action Pathway facilitate?

- An in-depth understanding of the challenges of the 21st century
- Research skills, critical and creative thinking
- Negotiation and presentation skills
- Planning, resource and project management skills
- Leadership skills
- Experience in the business planning and operation of social enterprises

### Project example 1: Rhetoric, Debate and Advocacy

One of the key competences that separates social classes and thus undermines trajectories of social mobility is the ability to reason, think critically and communicate effectively in a range of situations. Children growing up in care homes are used to developing communication strategies based around dominating one another, while intellectual pursuits typically do not carry status in such communities. The aim of the project is to provide possibilities for youngsters living in such communities, by strengthening their debating skills, critical thinking and self-assertion. The participating Milestone students (from Access Programme and upper Milestone Years) will develop a sustainable program with the







support of Milestone lecturers and mentors. The main elements of the program will be the establishment of stable contacts with partner institutions and the development of an educational material, with the involvement of external experts as necessary.

### Project example 2: Urban Food Forest

Reports regarding the way modern agricultural practices are contributing to climate change as well as rising inequalities in terms of access to good quality food have placed increasing emphasis on developing autonomy in growing organic food. Simultaneously, food poverty is a clear and visible problem of Budapest's underclass with NGOs providing such services stretched to the brink.

This project involves the reusing and refurbishment of vacated or unused urban spaces for the purpose of developing agricultural produce by the local community for locals and the urban underclass. Participants involved will have to research, survey and negotiate the use of such an urban space with local decision makers, property owners and expert practitioners. Jointly with these stakeholders, they will develop a viable plan for urban food production that can be both sold at local markets as well as given away to those in need.

