



Senate

Paper Title	QM Undergraduate Student Support Policy
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to consider the structure proposed in the Student Support Policy and approve for implementation.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is documented that QM has the highest rate of first year undergraduate non-continuation in the Russell Group (HESA). • To address the issue of disengagement and non continuation QM Retention Task and Finish Group have commissioned this document to improve engagement and student success. • This paper defines a positive engagement strategy and support structure for Schools in QM based upon research findings conducted across QM in 2012-13. This research highlighted; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The inconsistency in support offered by different Schools ○ Best practice in student support ○ The causes of student disengagement from Science and Engineering Schools. • The document proposes; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A QM standard for a School student support structure to include an academic (with primary responsibility for student support within the School) and a member of the professional services staff (to ensure consistency in identifying disengagement and monitoring re-engagement) 2. Recognition of the need for Schools to identify and offer proactive support to students at risk of disengagement 3. Recognition by Schools of the role of student support within academic progression and appraisal. • Views on this document have been sought from Faculty representatives, the Pastoral Care Group, the Retention Task and Finish Group, the Heads of Professional Central Support Services and the DTPAG. • Following comments from Senate and further iterations this strategy will be implemented across Schools in the second part of the academic year 2013-14. • There will be a review to evaluate the impact on retention and progression in the academic year 2014-15.

Questions for Senate to consider	Are members able to provide comments on the proposals to implement a consistent support structure within all Schools in QM to enhance the student experience and improve retention?
Regulatory/statutory reference points and links to College strategy	The prioritisation of student experience and support is recognised within the QM strategic and operational objectives exemplified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JA2.2a being in the top decile with respect to NSS • JA 2.2b top in London with respect to NSS
Strategy and risk	The Strategic Plan aims to provide the finest possible education to our undergraduate students. Without a consistent approach to student support throughout QM there is an inequality of experience and frequently students struggle, do not actively seek support and ultimately disengage. Inequalities create dissatisfaction which is noted in NSS scores and loss of student revenue has significant financial repercussions for QM.
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	N/A
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QM Undergraduate Student Support Policy

1.0 Background

1.1 Queen Mary has a responsibility to support the student registered with the College. This policy outlines the key responsibilities of the College and its Schools in providing that support.

1.2 The prioritisation of student experience and support is recognised within the QM strategic and operational objectives exemplified by:

- JA2.2a being in the top decile with respect to NSS
- JA 2.2b top in London with respect to NSS

1.3 This documents sets out a policy based upon national best practice, research conducted at QM_{1,2} and a consensus gained from discussions with those staff and students who deliver support to students within the current QM structures. The policy is designed to both attract students to study at Queen Mary by enhancing the reputation of the College as one which prioritises student support and welfare whilst focussing on student engagement as a mechanism to improve retention specifically amongst disadvantaged students at highest risk of failure to complete.

2.0 Purpose of this Policy

2.1 This policy is designed to provide a conceptual framework to enable the QM student support and retention group to implement a strategy designed to accomplish the following aims:

1. To ensure that all students have access to a minimum standard of student support for both pastoral and academic matters provided at School level.
2. To ensure that all students at risk of disengagement are proactively offered effective support.
3. To undertake regular and frequent evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions offered and made.

3.0 Policy Requirements

3.1 In order to achieve this, the following responsibilities will be required as the objectives needed to support the aims of the policy;

3.2 Queen Mary Should:

- Recognise the relationship between supporting students and retention of students.
- Fully support the strategy of student support and engagement³.
- Allocate sufficient resource to achieve the aims and objectives of the strategy.
- Provide a staff training programme to include basic student support skills for all academic and professional services staff involved in student support. There will be a more specialised training course for lead staff, defined as the Senior Tutor and Student Support officer or equivalent roles, for each School.
- Provide central services to support students and Schools to manage complex needs students. For example the Disability and Dyslexia, Advice and Counselling, Occupational Health, Learning Institute.
- Provide a College IT system that will monitor student engagement. Procure and provide all Schools with an electronic record of interventions and outcomes to support the student engagement process. This system will interface with SITS.
- Ensure that contributions to student support are recognised within academic and professional services career progression, job planning and appraisal.
Provide QA oversight of the student support and retention systems operated by each School.

3.3 Schools should:

- Recognise the importance of providing a consistent level of student support across QM.
- Provide sufficient resource to implement the student support and engagement strategy³.
- Appoint a senior academic lead (Senior Tutor or equivalent) and student support officer to lead and oversee the student support systems within the School.
- Provide an annual report of student support activities and outcomes with specific emphasis on retention and interventions for disadvantaged students.
- Deploy the student engagement IT system as recommended by QM.
- Ensure that student support interventions are documented using the QM IT student support system.
- Ensure that student support systems are co-ordinated with academic progression systems within the School.
- Ensure that staff are provided with opportunities to participate in training to enable effective performance of their support role.
- Recognise staff contributions to student support within their workload allocation.
- Operate a proactive student engagement policy as detailed in the companion operational guide⁴.

- Follow the student engagement and re-engagement processes detailed in the companion operational guide⁴.

3.4 Staff should:

- Provide support to students whenever asked to do so within the limitations of their training and experience
- Engage in training programmes provided to enable them to perform their contracted duties relating to student support.
- Be accountable for the quality of support provided to students.
- Record support interactions with students using the QM IT system designated.

4. Detail

4.1 There is a **QM Student Support Operational Guide for Schools** ⁴ which accompanies this policy and gives full detail of the proposed structures and processes required to provide student support together with documentation of the student engagement processes.

5. Summary

5.1 Queen Mary will undertake to provide high quality student support to each and every student within the College. It is expected that every School will have a designated student support team who will provide proactive support to students to enhance the student experience and intervene proactively with students at risk of disengagement. Staff involved in student support will receive adequate training and their contribution to their Schools will be recognised within their work load and for progression and pay. The system of support and retention will be underpinned by appropriate IT systems designed to detect and alert students at risk of disengagement and to record interventions made to support students.

6. Appendices

6.1 Student Support Roles and Responsibilities

Personal Tutors/Academic Advisers

Every undergraduate student requires a Personal Tutor/Academic Adviser. These tutors/advisers should have a number of tutees such that they are able to actively engage with their tutees/advisees in their first year. As a minimum this should be weekly in student's first semester at university to assist their transition and ensure they have developed a relationship with at least one member of the academic staff. Personal tutors/academic advisers may be called upon to provide pastoral advice and support linked to academic issues. They should be trained to have effective conversations with students but refer more complex issues to the School Student Support team.

School Student Support team

The support team will be responsible for student support within the School. Providing effective support for students requires both a proactive and reactive approach (. The team will work in conjunction with central and student-led support services and ensure their knowledge is current of;

- QM policies with regard to extenuating circumstances, academic complaints, appeals and interruption of studies.
- Student support needs of specific student groups e.g. disabled and dyslexic students, international students, carers, care-leavers.
- QM central professional support services
- Support Services offered through the students union.

These teams will ensure cover is provided throughout the year.

Senior Tutors

This individual will manage student support within Schools. They will ensure student support is quality assured and reviewed appropriately. They will have the expertise to advise academic staff on any aspect of pastoral care. They will meet with students directly if the student chooses to approach them. They will have a broad knowledge of all programmes to understand the impacts of missed work on a student's progression.

Schools will enable this role to be fulfilled without detracting from research commitments.

Student Support Officers

All Schools require a Student Support Officer (or equivalent). The student support officer will assist the Senior Tutor to ensure that student support operates effectively across the School.

The student support officer should;

- be accessible and easily identifiable to students
- have access to private space to discuss issues with students
- provide reactive student support when required₄
- provide proactive student support in line with School's retention strategies₄

7. Definitions

Proactive Student Support – using data compiled from School engagement markers agreed in Faculty Retention Strategies to highlight students at risk of disengagement and encouraging their re-engagement via agreed with their programmes of study.

Reactive Student Support – engaging with students that approach their School directly for support and encouraging their re-engage with their programmes of study.

8. References

1. Roberts, M (2012) Student support survey accessed from <http://connect.qmul.ac.uk/docs/teachlearn/retention/102732.pdf>
2. Jethwa, D (2012) Why do students disengage: Research with first year Science and Engineering undergraduates accessed from <http://connect.qmul.ac.uk/docs/teachlearn/retention/89635.pdf>
3. (2010) Queen Mary University of London Student Support Strategy <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/docs/about/21992.pdf>
4. (2014) QM Student Support Operational Guide for Schools