



Senate

Paper Title	Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to approve the Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<p>The strategy was developed in discussion with members of the Engagement, Retention and Success Group. The strategy has been discussed at Educational Quality Board, and has been sent out for consultation schools and professional services</p> <p>The strategy has five main aims.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) To identify factors which contribute to good engagement, retention and success2) To enable academic and professional services teams to identify students at risk3) To equip individual staff and academic and professional services teams to support students to achieve their full potential4) To monitor, evaluate and improve activities for supporting students' achievements at university, school and programme level5) To use and contribute, through monitoring and evaluation, to the evidence base related to student engagement, retention and success.
Strategy and risk	<p>The strategy should be read in the context of Queen Mary's five year strategic plan (Strategy 2014 – the next five years), Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2014 (SETLA), and 2015-20 Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities Strategy. All of these documents can be seen at www.qmul.ac.uk/about/collegeinfo/.</p>
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	Senate to approve before publication.
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Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This is Queen Mary's Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy for 2015-20. It sets out the College's commitment to student retention in the context of its overall mission and strategic objectives for 2015-20. It identifies clear aims, objectives, and indicators of progress.
- 1.2** The strategy should be read in the context of Queen Mary's strategic plan (Strategy 2014 – the next five years), Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2014 (SETLA), and 2015-20 Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities Strategy.

2 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, RETENTION AND SUCCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF QUEEN MARY'S OVERALL INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACCESS AGREEMENTS

- 2.1** Specific objectives in the five-year QMUL Strategic Plan which inform this document are:
- (a) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.2: Support students to ensure that they can succeed and match their own and the university's high expectations for their academic and personal progress, providing both academic support and co-curricular development.
 - (b) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.4: Develop stronger links with our alumni as continuing members of the QMUL community, through enhanced engagement activities and enlisting their support in achieving QMUL's goals.
 - (c) Strategic Aim 3, Objective 3.1: Encourage all students to achieve their potential by ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment, and student support are optimised, with the provision of appropriate levels of resource.
 - (d) Strategic Aim 3, Objective 3.4: Expand educational provision to serve the needs of individuals concerned with their continuing personal and professional development.
- 2.2** Specific objectives in the five-year Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which inform this document are:
- (a) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.1: The quality of the teaching and feedback to students.
 - (b) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.2: The design of the curriculum and its assessments.
 - (c) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.4: The standard of the facilities for teaching and learning.
 - (d) Strategic Aim 1, Objective 1.5: The teaching and learning resources available to staff and students.

- (e) Strategic Aim 2, Objective 2.2: Supporting ‘fair access’ initiatives.
- (f) Strategic Aim 2, Objective 2.3: Providing academic advising and pastoral support to maximise student engagement and retention.
- (g) Strategic Aim 2, Objective 2.4: Encouraging a broad range of extra-curricular cultural and social activities.
- (h) Strategic Aim 2, Objective 2.5: Enhancing student employability through curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and advice.
- (i) Strategic Aim 2, Objective 2.6: Encouraging former students (alumni) to continue engaging with the QMUL community.
- (j) Strategic Aim 3, Objective 3.1: Providing training and staff development opportunities related to teaching, academic support and pastoral support for all staff.

2.3 Strategic priorities in the 2015-20 Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities Strategy which inform this document are:

- (a) Priority 4.1.6: Development of transition activities.
- (b) Priority 4.2.1: Refine the targeting of work to support students at QMUL.
- (c) Priority 4.2.2: Ensure sustained support for disabled students
- (d) Priority 4.2.3: Continuing development of the student retention programme.
- (e) Priority 4.3: Financial support for students.
- (f) Priority 4.4: Careers and Employability.
- (g) Priority 4.5: Widening Participation to postgraduate study.

2.4 Queen Mary Access Agreement for 2015-16 states that “We are committed to supporting student retention, success and progression, and we will deliver a programme of activities to enhance this. In 2015-16 we will build on the knowledge obtained from academic schools through research initiatives to deliver a range of interventions that address retention problem areas”

2.5 The 2015-16 Access Agreement commits substantial resources to support this work. The annual totals for student success and progression activities included in the 2015-16 Access Agreement submission are:

	<i>£000</i>	2015-16	2016-7	2017-18	2018-19
Student Success		554	501	481	481
Student Progression		277	250	241	241

QM contribution to hardship funds	300	300	300	300
Annual total	1131	1051	1022	1022

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDENT RETENTION STRATEGY

3.1 This strategy has five main aims.

- 1) To identify factors which contribute to good engagement, retention and success
- 2) To enable academic and professional services teams to identify students at risk
- 3) To equip individual staff and academic and professional services teams to support students to achieve their full potential
- 4) To monitor, evaluate and improve activities for supporting students’ achievements at university, school and programme level
- 5) To use and contribute, through monitoring and evaluation, to the evidence base related to student engagement, retention and success.

The implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by the Engagement, Retention and Success Group (ERSG) of Queen Mary. The ERSG will:

- Make recommendations on the allocation of resources from within the ERSG budget to support the strategy in accordance with the University priorities as determined by the ERSG.
- Provide monitoring oversight of this expenditure and the progress of Schools in achieving the outcomes designed to measure success of the Strategy as defined within this document.
- Provide cross-university oversight for student ERS activities.
- Provide a central staffing resource through ERS funding to support Schools in ERS activities
- Report to the Education Quality Board

3.2 Objectives for each aim are given as follows.

Aim 1: To identify factors which contribute to good engagement, retention and success

- 1.1 To investigate and report on the contribution of module or programme content and delivery that promotes student engagement, retention and success across a range of student groups.
Outcome: a report with recommendations
- 1.2 To investigate and report on the contribution of financial and pastoral support to student engagement, retention and success.
Outcome: a report on these factors
- 1.3 To establish an effective system of documenting the student experience for those who withdraw or re-sit out of attendance, and to use this data to inform the ERS strategy
Outcome: an effective reporting system
- 1.4 To identify national and international good practice for engagement, retention and success and to use this evidence together with that from our own research and data to produce a good practice guide for Schools. To be used to inform Aim 3.
Outcome: a good practice guide

- 1.5 To work with Strategic Planning to develop and implement appropriate analyses from the ERS data collected by the University to identify factors which contribute to good engagement, retention and success.
Outcome: a report identifying these factors with recommendations
- 1.6 To work with QMSU to collaborate in the use of student feedback and surveys to maintain the best possible understanding of the student perspective on engagement, retention and success.
Outcome: joint recommendations on future use of surveys

Aim 2: To enable academic and professional services teams to identify students at risk

- 2.1 To implement the QEngage programme as a functional tool across all Schools. Specifically to provide an engagement and retention dashboard based upon metrics that combine generic measures that are available across the University and measures bespoke to particular Schools.
Outcome: QEngage operational across all Schools
- 2.2 To provide training support and advice to relevant School staff to use QEngage to optimum potential.
Outcome: All School designated support staff trained to use the system
- 2.3 To provide relevant data via QEngage at individual student level concerning engagement, retention and success to academic and professional services staff responsible for supporting that student.
Outcome: All Schools able to access this data via QEngage
- 2.4 To identify further factors not captured through QEngage which may influence students' engagement, retention and success and to record these using Co-Tutor, or similar, student record keeping system.
Outcome: report with recommendations on sources of information and recording

Aim 3: To equip individual staff and academic and professional services teams to intervene to support all students to achieve their full potential *(to be informed by Aim 1.4)*

- 3.1 To provide a University Policy for student support as a framework for Faculties and Schools to operationalize a student support infrastructure within each School.
Outcome: Policy in place
- 3.2 To provide a training programme that enables staff to support students effectively. To include this programme as mandatory training to all new employees and to encourage participation for all academics.
Outcome: Training programme in place and numbers trained
- 3.3 To develop effective practice in supporting students to transition from school or employment into successful study within their academic programmes
Outcome: report with recommendations
- 3.4 To develop a Support and Advice Pack for those responsible for student support which provides guidance on services available at School level and within the broader University.
Outcome: advice pack

Aim 4: To monitor, evaluate and improve activities for supporting students' achievements at university, school and programme level

- 4.1 For Schools to monitor, evaluate and improve activities for supporting students' achievements at programme and School levels.
Outcome: Each School to provide an annual summary report
- 4.2 For the ERSG to monitor School dashboards for ERS on a regular basis and to report these data annually to the Student Experience Advisory Board.
- 4.3 For the ERSG to provide an annual report on its activities to include a summary of the metrics used to assess the success of the strategy.
- 4.4 For the ERSG to engage with and support Schools to achieve the strategy outcomes.
- 4.5 For the ERSG to host standing agenda items for the discussion of innovation and feedback from Schools, QMSU and the University Student Support Forum.
Outcomes: ERSG to have in place appropriate structures and reporting

Aim 5: To use and contribute to the evidence base related to student engagement, retention and success.

- 5.1 To summarise the factors identified under aim 1 into an evidence-based document of factors relating to ERS with the implications for policy within QMUL.
Outcome: report with recommendations
- 5.2 To identify and share good practice related to engagement, retention and success within the University.
Outcome: evidence of sharing of good practice
- 5.3 To encourage the formal presentation of data and research evidence that originates from the Queen Mary ERS strategy at local, national and international fora in both written and spoken forms.
Outcome: record of achievement
- 5.4 To encourage collaborations with other HEIs that contribute to a greater understanding of the factors which contribute to student engagement, retention and success.
Outcome: record of achievement

Indicators of Progress for success of the Strategy

These indicators are to be analysed for the entire student cohort and then according to appropriate student subgroups defined by OFFA as widening participation students e.g. by ethnicity, and family background. Further analysis by groups the University defines as of importance e.g. students admitted via clearing, students admitted with non-A level qualifications e.g. BTec.

1. Engagement

- % of students meeting predefined levels of engagement as defined by each School for students identified as at risk as measured by QEngage.
- % of students who return NSS questionnaires
- % of students who fail to attend late summer sit examinations
- Extent to which students indicate that academic societies have had a positive impact on their academic experience (QMSS, question 7b)
- Engagement with opportunities (inside and outside QMUL) to develop employability (QMSS question 4)

2. Retention

- % students who progress at end of years 1,2.
 - % of students who progress without detriment i.e. who do not have 'trailing credits'
 - % students passing compulsory modules
 - % of students who take late summer sits who progress
 - % of students commencing their studies who complete their programme (SETLA Strategy IoP 2.3.i)
 - % of students confident that their programme is giving them the skills they need to progress and succeed as a graduate (QMSS, question 6j, SETLA Strategy IoP 2.5.ii)
- Serial measurements over

3. Success

- % of students with 2:1 or higher degree classification
- % students with added value in course ie degree award relating to admission qualifications
- % of students in graduate level employment or study six months after graduation (HESA Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey) Relevant individual questions taken from the QM student survey and from the NSS that reflect student success.
- % Progression to postgraduate study

4 REFERENCES

1. Student Transition and Retention project, University of Ulster

Full report: How to Recruit and Retain Higher Education Students: A Handbook of Good Practice, Tony Cook and Brian S. Rushton, Routledge (2009), 242 pages

Much information available at <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/>.

Includes fairly recent case studies of practice at other universities.

2. Why do first year students fail to progress to their second year? An academic staff perspective, Véronique Johnston, Department of Mathematics, Napier University (1997)

Available at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000453.htm>.

Includes a good list of references pre-1997.

3. Widening Participation/Student retention and success, Dr Robert Jones (2008), 43 pages

Available at [http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/spo/docs/public/Web Retention docs/wp_retention_synthesis%20%28HEA08%29.pdf](http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/spo/docs/public/Web%20Retention%20docs/wp_retention_synthesis%20%28HEA08%29.pdf)

Includes a list of key references from 2003 to 2008 such as NAO and QAA reports.

See also http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/spo/retention/lit_review.shtm for a literature summary.

4. Higher Education Academy resource page

Available at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/retention-and-success>.

Seven projects involving 22 HEIs were due to report on 31st July 2011, these may be available soon.

5. Completing College: Assessing Graduation Rates at Four-Year Institutions (2011), 61 pages
A study from the USA by a team from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.
See <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/~heri.prev/DARCU/CCReportPressCopy.pdf> for an online version.