

## Vice-Principal Student Experience, Teaching and Learning's report to Senate

### QMUL Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Initiative

A consultation is underway to gather feedback on a proposal to develop a distinctive new model (the "QMUL Model") for our undergraduate education. The model proposed is one that includes a personalised element through which students will be able to develop their social and cultural capital. Alongside the consultation, we are also undertaking an internal audit to establish what existing activities – in modules or otherwise – align with the principles and themes of the proposal. Once information has been gathered, we will follow up with schools, institutes and directorates for more detailed discussion of the Model. Aiming for implementation for the new intake of students in 2017/18 will require approval by Senate at the meeting in June.

In the meantime, we are also conducting an external audit to ensure that the initiative is attractive for students, distinctive, particularly compared with our major competitors, and picks up any relevant best practice. The working group for the proposal has been set up. It has a [QMplus page](#) that will host information relating to the Model, and provide a space for discussion. We will identify a wider reference group for regular communication, but the page is open for anyone to join.

The working group and consultation responses are generating constructive views and refinements already. We will be communicating these as soon as possible after the closing date (Monday 22 February) for the consultation and the responses have been reviewed.

### Update on Green Paper: Queen Mary response

[QMUL's response](#) to the Government's Higher Education Green Paper has been submitted. The response, developed with input from individuals across QMUL, Senate, the Senior Leadership Group and other fora, addressed the possible effects of the proposals on the Higher Education sector, on QMUL specifically, and on current and future students. QMUL will also be contributing to ongoing discussions regarding the proposals via Universities UK (UUK) and the Russell Group etc.

### Teaching and Learning Conference and Drapers' Lecture

This year's Teaching and Learning Conference took place on Wednesday 20 January. Questions of accountability, quality and the purpose of Higher Education came up in most sessions, not least in the debate on the motion "This house believes the main function of university teaching is to ensure students get a better job".

The range of activities and the level of participation was impressive, and this year there was an extended the number of workshop activities, with sessions on preparing students for Higher Education, assessment and feedback, opportunities in the workplace and placements. The opening plenary, delivered by Peter Boyd, Professor of Professional Learning at the University of Cumbria, asked the question "How might students and academics negotiate the teaching, grading and feedback cycle in an age of accountability?".

The conference ended with the annual Drapers' Lecture. This year was the 10th anniversary of the Drapers' Lecture, and Baroness Tessa Blackstone joined us as our guest speaker. Her lecture, "University challenge: can a broader curriculum help create more successful graduates?" offered a response to the proposals in the recent Green Paper. It suggested that the government had missed an opportunity to build greater diversity into student learning, build

in stronger routes into employment, and address widening access through part-time study and the mature-student market.

Materials from the conference, including presentations and the excellent poster displays can be found on the [CAPD webpage](#).

Congratulations to Norman McBreen from the School of Mathematical Sciences, whose poster about the Engagement, Retention and Success-funded initiative, “I<sup>2</sup> Keeping it Real – Creating a Community of Engaged Students”, was voted best of the conference by delegates.

## Student surveys

The 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) is open to final-year undergraduates until Saturday 30 April. Further information about the survey, including promotional materials, can be found on [Connect](#).

The results from last year’s Queen Mary Student Survey (QMSS) were positive, and satisfaction for QMUL services and resources remained high, with a notable 91% of students saying that they were satisfied with the Student Enquiry Centre and library services. As well as this, 90% of participants would recommend the university to others. The [QMSS results](#) are now available via the Business Intelligence Tool, as are the [PTES results](#).<sup>1</sup> Results and reports can also be found on [Connect](#).

Thanks go to schools, institutes and directorates for their work before Christmas to respond to issues flagged in the NSS and PTES last year. This had the added benefit of providing feedback to students ahead of this year’s surveys.

## Mile End Library extended weekend opening hours

One notable good news story for students – and something we are aware students and the Queen Mary Students’ Union (QMSU) have been campaigning for – is the announcement that the Mile End Library has extended its weekend opening hours. The library is now open from 8am until midnight, seven days a week. This will continue up to, and including, Monday 28 March, when the usual extended opening hours for the exam period begin. This is a trial and information will be gathered to monitor use and help shape and cost an effective service, should resource become available for longer hours in the future. All feedback on the extended opening hours can be sent to [library@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:library@qmul.ac.uk).

## Student experience seminar

This year’s seminar took place on Wednesday 10 February. The topic was “Fed up with feedback”. As usual, QMSU have used the results from their Student Experience Survey to inform the structure of the seminar, and the QMSU Vice-President Education, Imran Hussain, led the presentation on student expectations of and satisfaction with academic feedback. The session was very well attended, and the presentation prompted a lively and lengthy discussion on the best ways to provide feedback, the challenges of feeding back in a timely fashion, especially with large student cohorts, and the importance of understanding the responsibilities of both staff and students to engage in this essential developmental activity. The report and results of the survey will be published in due course, and posted on the [Student Experience, Teaching and Learning Connect page](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the Business Intelligence tool should be accessed via Firefox or Internet Explorer browsers.

## New developments: degree apprenticeship and engineering conversion

A new degree apprenticeship with Goldman Sachs has been successfully negotiated. The apprenticeship will be a software engineering pathway within the existing degree programme in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS). We have also agreed a further nine apprenticeship places on the EECS programme for 2016/17 with John Lewis.

We've also just secured funding to develop courses as part of the Engineering Conversion Course Pilot Scheme. QMUL has received £75,000 to help deliver four conversion programmes at master's level: Biomedical Engineering; Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Sustainable Energy Engineering; and Big Data Science as an engineering-related computer science course. These programmes will be delivered by the Schools of Engineering and Materials Science, and Electronic Engineering and Computer Science. They are expected to start in 2016/17.

## Other news in brief

Finally, here are some brief updates on other notable activities:

- **Learning Gain:** the first meeting of the Learning Gain Consortium Project Steering Group took place on Friday 15 January at the University of Cambridge. The draft Collaboration Agreement has been drawn up, and discussions are progressing on which institutions will participate in which projects.
- **Contextualised admissions:** work continues on developing a policy on contextualised admissions, to develop clear principles and guidance on factors other than grades that should be taken into consideration when making and confirming offers to applicants. A paper on the principles for a policy was considered at the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Group in January, and these principles are now being discussed within schools and institutes.
- **Grade Point Average:** the task and finish group is up and running, and the first modelling exercise has taken place, which involved mapping between mark intervals, grades and grade point averages (GPA) of 2014/15 graduates in the School of Mathematical Sciences and the School of English and Drama. More modelling and testing will be undertaken, and we will consult with Schools and Institutes. The aim is to implement GPA for 2016/17, if adoption of GPA is approved and systems requirements are resolvable on that time scale.
- **Engagement, Retention and Success:** finally, thanks go to Mike Robert, who has stepped down from the position of Academic Lead for Engagement, Retention and Success (ERS). Mike has led the programme since the beginning of 2014, and has overseen the expansion of the initiative, the development of a new ERS strategy, and the creation of a dedicated team to facilitate the delivery of ERS initiatives. Recruitment for Mike's replacement is under way. Information about the post is available on [QMUL jobs](#).