



## QMSU President's Report

<p><b>Outcome requested:</b></p>	<p>Council is asked to <b>note</b> the report from the QMSU President.</p>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p>	<p>The report is an update from July through to October on activity within the Students' Union.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blended Learning</li> <li>Fees</li> <li>COVID-19 cases</li> <li>Welcome 2020</li> <li>Online "Welcome Fair" events</li> <li>Return to Campus</li> <li>Students' Union Digital review</li> <li>Training for student representatives</li> <li>Autumn Elections</li> <li>SSLC Project and Guidance Review</li> <li>SEED Project Involvement</li> <li>HSS Faculty EDI Committee</li> <li>Online Exams Project Board</li> <li>Project: Doctorate</li> <li>Research Dissertation Threshold</li> <li>Decolonising the Science &amp; Engineering Curriculum</li> <li>Strike Funds &amp; Survey</li> <li>Postgraduate finance clarity</li> <li>Raising concerns</li> <li>Financial Assistance Fund</li> <li>Sexual and gender based violence</li> <li>Mummies and Daddies</li> <li>Welfare Reps and Consent</li> <li>Supporting individual students</li> <li>Safer campuses plans</li> <li>Black History Month</li> <li>Islamophobia Awareness Month</li> <li>Antisemitism Definition</li> <li>University of Sanctuary</li> <li>Supporting our Student Groups</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Club Sport</li> <li>Get Active</li> <li>Social Leagues and Campus Games</li> <li>Community Foundation</li> <li>Employability Project</li> <li>School of Business and Management (SBM) Step-Ahead Programme</li> <li>Return to placements</li> </ul>

	Connecting Practices ULIPSU BLSA Facilities
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# President's Report

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## Blended Learning

The University has been pushing for a blended approach since the outbreak. All communication to students encourages them to be on campus as there will be face to face teaching and physical activities. These were the expectations students arrived on campus with and unfortunately, they have not been met. In the lead up to the first week of teaching, the Executive Officers received a high-volume of queries from students regarding blended learning, as their timetables displayed all teaching was to be held online. This conflicted with the messages that students had been receiving over the summer from central communications that the University was offering 'blended learning'. Other issues were also reported included a lack of content on QMplus explaining module structures and reading lists, and issues with access to Welcome Week content.

The disparity in teaching across the schools is massive and students are not receiving the blended learning they were promised. The Students' Union has been working hard to provide as much physical activity on our campuses as possible and make sure students are supported to the best of our ability with the resources we have, whilst ensuring they are safe. However, if no face to face teaching is timetabled, then a vast number of students will not be on campus in the first place and their overall student experience will be affected.

As a Students' Union, we have fed back to the relevant people, including the Vice Principal for Education and the Faculty Vice Principals. For example, Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) met with Stephanie Marshall to discuss this, who then set out to have every School inform students at a programme level of what on-campus activities they would receive this semester, with a draft email template developed by Christina Perry (Humanities & Social Sciences Dean for Education) sent out to Schools to be emailed to students. At present, both Cameron and Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) plan on having regular meetings with the Faculty Vice Principals and the Students' Union President to highlight concerns and issues with blended learning and teaching to ensure that all students are receiving some form of on-campus educational activity, as promised by the Principal's message to students over the summer period as part of the blended learning experience.

This matter has also been brought up on many occasions, in various relevant meetings. It is concerning that there is such disconnect between central communications and school level communication; students are not receiving the correct level of reassurance and are being fed mixed messages.

Council should be aware that failure to provide the promised quality of education not only increases student dissatisfaction but also could accumulate into a reputational risk to the University.

## Fees

This is another area of concern for students. We are receiving more and more queries about the fees and why they are so high despite the move to online learning, not just from individual students but also representatives of different communities within the student body. Students' Union President, Shamima Akter, has contacted the Principal about this and has yet to receive a response. This was also brought up in the Finance and Investment Committee. She has suggested that the principal directly addresses the students about their fees and give the students a breakdown of what their fees are used for.

It is the belief of the Students' Union that the University must openly communicate why the fees are so high and where the money is going, directly to the students. Our students, especially international students, are growing restless and feel as though they are being taken advantage of. They are looking to the Students' Union to campaign against the fees. This is why it is important that the University, especially the Principal, at the very least address the students' concerns and respond.

Therefore, we urge Council to push the University to be as transparent as possible with students and address them directly. The last thing the University needs is an angry student body who feel the University has

wronged them for their own financial gain. Whether that is the case or not, the students currently know no better, due to the silence on this matter.

### **COVID-19 cases**

With growing cases, communication to students and their safety is a massive concern currently. Students are not receiving communication about the number of positive cases currently reported, and they need to be aware of the accurate information. This is to avoid mass panic and also to allow students to make their own decision around their safety based on facts rather than rumours.

The Students' Union and the members of the University have scheduled regular meetings to look at updates and discuss relevant information. The Students' Union President has also sent out an email expressing these concerns and has asked to see a communications plan to students. It is important the University is prepared to communicate outbreaks appropriately and timely to students. It is also important to tie in the Students' Union in the plans, to avoid mixed messages and to ensure students are adequately supported and reassured. We will keep an eye on the developments surrounding this and hopefully work with the University to support students.

### **Welcome 2020**

The Students' Union was proud to deliver a varied programme of over 50 events during Welcome Week and week one to welcome students to Queen Mary. These events were delivered both on-campus through COVID-secure socially distanced activities and also online. The programme represented the majority of on-campus activities available for students.

Events included the Re-Use Fair, outdoor cinema nights, food and drink-led events, quiz nights, Escape Rooms, picnics in the park, crafters' afternoons and art sessions, Get Active and Sport pop-ups and online events with celebrity guests. We also delivered specific events for commuter students, postgraduate students and students living on campus. There was also an increased effort to ensure events also happened in Charterhouse Square, a space traditionally less utilised during Freshers Fortnight.

In addition to our central events programme, we worked with the Residences team to deliver a curated programme of on-campus and online events exclusively for students living in halls of residence to ensure new residents could socialise and meet new people. BLSA representatives also manned info stalls at Dawson Hall, Foyer House and Albert Stern on all move in days to provide Fresher Guides, answer questions and welcome the new students. Capacity at events was a challenge at times, as well as students securing tickets then not attending the event. Where possible we added additional event slots and will look at what options we can introduce to ensure attendance, or the re-release of tickets for those no longer wanting to attend.

Alongside our events, we produced a strong digital communications campaign to welcome students to Queen Mary. This included providing the new student Facebook group – now populated by over 7500 members, a new Students' Union video and regular social media and email communications to new students. The Executive Officers also introduced a new TikTok channel. Unfortunately, due to the late receipt of new student data there was disruption to our email communications to new students in August, and we were not able to send out our Welcome Pack to new students' home addresses prior to their arrival.

The Students' Union also prepared new online school induction sessions tailored to each faculty, alongside other online sessions such as our Life in London introduction for international students. We also worked closely with the Student Transition Manager to co-lead and deliver the Library Square Information Points and the Welcome Market events. The first Market featured Students' Union activities and services, with the second day showcasing University services. The Students' Union provided operational support on both days, including providing the ticketing solution for both events.

BLSA also successfully managed to move their buddy scheme online allowing new students to be paired with current students to form a support family within the SMD (School of Medicine and Dentistry.) This year, these "families" held quizzes online which focused on introducing members to each other and also provided a fun ice breaker. For those who could and were happy taking part, BLSA also provided a timeslot during which these "families" could go for a socially distanced picnic in a local park. The scheme was a success and will be

a vital part of this year's efforts to ensure all new students don't feel too lonely or isolated and integrate well into the university.

As a Students' Union, we will be completing a review of our Welcome activities, and also providing feedback to the University, informed by the experiences of students throughout the week.

### **Online "Welcome Fair" events**

The Students' Union supported volunteer student leaders to co-deliver a series of online Welcome events. BLSA organised an event for SMD-focussed groups and this was followed by a Clubs & Societies Welcome Event. The event featured video calls with student groups, and this gave them the opportunity to promote themselves, their amazing work and their activities. It also featured videos from the part-time activities representatives and an introduction to volunteering at Queen Mary. With more than 6500 page visits, this event was a huge success and many students expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to meet each other and our student groups. The final event in the current series was the Club Sport Welcome Event held on 30<sup>th</sup> September featuring over 40 of our Sports Clubs, supported by our Sports Development Team. In addition to these events, we have prioritised and increased the promotion of Clubs and Societies due to the lack of an on-campus Welcome Fair. These groups are important in helping students to meet new people, continue existing hobbies or try something new, and are vital in developing communities on campus. We have improved the visibility of student group welcome events and showcased their activities via our social media channels, and will continue to do so over the coming weeks.

### **Return to Campus**

Qmotion Health and Fitness centre reopened at the end of July, as soon as government restrictions were lifted. This was important from a health and well-being perspective and welcoming all back to campus. Care and focus were taken to ensure it felt and was a safe and welcoming space for students and staff. The membership has slowly been returning, however there are fewer students on campus than anticipated from the blended learning. From a cash-flow perspective this is creating challenges. Further cost savings have been made as well as increased marketing.

The Village Shop opened soon after in early August, followed by the rest of the operations in early September. The Draper Venue launched a new street food concept, Burritos cantinas in Godward square. The operating plans and risk assessment have been carefully developed and updated at least bi-weekly, as and when government guidelines change, and other feedback is provided. Lunchtimes on campus are fairly quiet. Our events have been creative and a number are popular. The digital social events have not worked as well, with exception of clubs and societies events. We are actively reviewing and adding to the programmes, and involving students.

The Hub and BLSA buildings re-opened on 7th September. The buildings have been repurposed for staff and students, ensuring that we provide a safe space for everyone. In both buildings, we have created new individual learning spaces for students to study (or eat lunch) at a social distance. We have also reopened our Media and Radio suite at the Hub, and the Music Room at BLSA. We have also reopened both of our Multi-Faith Centres with measures in place. Friday Prayer began on 25th September. Some of our spaces will remain closed until we feel we can open them safely. These include the Fitness Suite, Dance Studio, Games Room and the Nest.

### **Students' Union Digital review**

Over summer the Students' Union had to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19, including moving a significant proportion of our activities and services online. To do this we completed a comprehensive digital review of our existing platforms, and identified areas that needed to move online and required new digital solutions through a needs analysis. We then researched the most suitable platforms that would ensure the successful delivery of our services, whilst reviewing any best practice from across the sector, and industry where relevant. It was important to us that any new digital and online activity adhered to our policies and procedures, met accessibility needs and upheld our values. Due to our financial constraints, value for money or using free, open source software was an important factor in our decision making.

Activities we have successfully moved online include our student leader training, ordering in our commercial outlets through a new mobile ordering app (Wi5), delivering a series of online events and ticketing through a new custom-built online events platform, moving aspects of student voice online (i.e. Student Council meetings now streamed), offering Qmotion classes and training plans online and adapting many of our student group processes.

An important part of the process was upskilling our staff members, developing new online training guidance and ensuring that the aims of our content and activities were still being met in a virtual environment. We completed new online training resources for staff to support them in designing and delivering online content. Many of our staff were involved in collating learning, knowledge and research to put the guidance together to ensure we deliver the best online experience throughout our activities.

### **Training for student representatives**

During the summer, the new Executive Officers and Part-Time Officers have taken office. In July and August, the Executive Officers took part in a comprehensive training programme. The programme gave them an introduction to higher education, and also included skills training, networking and introduction meetings with key contacts inside and outside Queen Mary.

In September, the training for Part-Time Officers took place. The training included sessions on how to be a representative, Student Council and inclusive leadership. To accommodate the needs of different learners, some of the training was delivered as synchronous online training on MS Teams, while other parts of the training were delivered using MS Sway.

Over the summer, a small group of Course Reps from SMD have also been trained. As requested by the SMD reps, the Course Rep elections for some SMD reps have been moved to ensure students are represented from the beginning of the academic year, and following the elections, these Course Reps received training on effective representation.

### **Autumn Elections**

The Autumn Elections include more than 400 positions that students can nominate themselves for. The majority of the positions are Course Rep roles, but a small number of Part-Time Officer positions and NUS Delegate positions are also available. Nominations for the Autumn Elections are open until 30th September, with voting taking place from 6-8th October.

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, we have adapted our elections events and processes to enable students that are studying remotely to fully engage with the elections.

### **SSLC Project and Guidance Review**

A review of the Education Manual, SSLC (Student Staff Liaison Committees) agenda template and Course Rep roles and responsibilities was the first project that Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) was involved with when he started the role. He provided comments on all three documents to make the role of Course Rep easier to understand and to clarify ambiguities within these documents. Working with the Vice President Science & Engineering and Vice President Barts and The London, they have incorporated within the membership of SSLC meetings the compulsory attendance of a student co-chair in order to make the meetings more student-led and place the student voice at the heart of all conversations. The Students' Union also developed an Annual SSLC Report to be completed at the end of the academic year by the staff and student co-chairs that will provide a summary of each Schools' SSLC activity for monitoring purposes, as well as to ensure that substantive actions are carried over to the next academic year.

Cameron presented all the documents for approval and implementation at ESQB (Education Standards and Quality Board) in late September. He has also been working on improving the Course Rep contribution and reward scheme, reworking the awards to account for the fact that representatives are now elected on an annual basis.



Furthermore, he has been drafting and developing a comprehensive handbook for both School Reps and Course Reps that gathers all relevant information that these roles need to successfully carry out their duties.

### **SEED Project Involvement**

Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) and Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) were invited to provide comments on the Student Enhanced Engagement & Development Project, a proposal developed by Louise Younie, Janet De Wilde and Maxwell Ado. They have both attended meetings with the working group to provide feedback on the proposal, ensuring that there is alignment and coherency with the Students' Union. Cameron noted the importance of the work that students would be doing to be formally recognised. They will both attend bi-weekly meetings with the group to move the proposal and project forward.

### **HSS Faculty EDI Committee**

Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) attended the first HSS Faculty EDI Committee of the new academic year. He agreed with the chair of the committee that in future meetings there would be an appointed brief agenda item that would allow Cameron to feedback on developments arising from the student side and to discuss these points with the committee. He is also working on including the School Reps on their individual School EDI committee meetings.

### **Online Exams Project Board**

Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) and Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) were invited as 'senior users' to the Online Exams Project group, led by Project Executive Henri Huijberts, tasked with the developing an effective online assessments solution to deliver efficiencies in grading and feedback response times. They also sit as ex-officio members on the Working Group. They have currently been tasked with finding student representatives, 2-3 per faculty, to sit on the group to ensure there is student representation. They have also contributed to the project requirements, highlighting what they believe is necessary for the project.

### **Project: Doctorate**

As part of their manifestos, Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) and Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) started a project centred on increasing the Students' Union engagement with postgraduate students. They both saw that there was a need to better represent the postgraduate community and make Students' Union events more inclusive.

Tiana is currently focused on organising listening forums and student consultations to gather ideas and ways of improving the Students' Union offering of events for postgraduate students. She is also researching other students' unions to adapt different practices for implementation at Queen Mary.

Cameron is undertaking a review of societies and volunteering opportunities to understand how postgraduate students engage with student groups and to create new opportunities that are more specific to the interests of the community.

They both have also participated in social media campaigns aimed at explaining how the Students' Union works for new students, with a specific section for postgraduates. They will also be working with Students' Union staff to hold a Postgraduate Week in Semester B, reviewing annual campaigns to increase inclusivity and accessibility for students, and supporting PhD students with funding and extension requests issues.

### **Research Dissertation Threshold**

In SET Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) discussed that in the faculty of Science and Engineering students' overall grade must reach a certain threshold (the threshold percentage can change yearly) to be eligible to do a research project in their third year. Aphrodite had a meeting with



Stephanie Marshall to explain that first year grades are not an equitable measure of how competent students will be regarding research in third year. Aphrodite has also discussed this issue with academics, a great majority of whom support the idea to decrease or even scrap the threshold. The benefits to the BAME community and underrepresented demographics in post-grad careers were also discussed, with Stephanie stating this project 'would encourage these communities to pursue post grad and research vocations'. Stephanie organised an introduction between Aphrodite and Andrew Livingstone (Vice President of Research & Innovation) which will occur in October to further action this project.

### **Decolonising the Science & Engineering Curriculum**

Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) attended a meeting with Daisy Crowfoot (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Officer) to discuss decolonising the S&E curriculum. The S&E curriculum is currently very Eurocentric and fails to acknowledge a more diverse and factual version of events throughout the history of science. Both have been compiling research in a shared document. Aphrodite pitched this idea to Tony Michaels (Dean for Education), Henri Hujiberts (Deputy Dean for Education) and Norman McBreen (Faculty Student Experience Manager) who are supporting her in this project. Tony and Aphrodite have been in contact with a student group called POC Squared who run a website and produce podcasts discussing race and discriminatory experiences that have occurred during their studies at Queen Mary. Both are having another meeting with them in November to discuss decolonising the curriculum in hopes of collecting some feedback. Aphrodite will present research and feedback to Sheila Gupta (Vice Principal of People, Culture & Inclusion) to further action this project.

### **Strike Funds & Survey**

Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) has been following up with Stephanie Marshall about the strike funds to clarify how the monies that were ring-fenced will be used. The IASG (Industrial Action Strike Group) went, unanimously with the outcome of the student poll, with the desired solution for the money to go to bursaries. In his meetings with Stephanie, Cameron highlighted the importance that those who were affected by strike action, but were no longer students at Queen Mary, needed to be included in what the money, as set out by Stephanie, was going to be used for: improving the student experience. As such, Cameron noted that the Alumni Team could be a potential option, to ensure that Queen Mary Alumni who were affected by strike action are benefited by the distribution of the funds. Going forward, he noted that it was crucial that the Executive Officer team and Stephanie work together on determining how the funds will be used to improve the student experience and work collaboratively on this.

Furthermore, Cameron has also been in conversations with Trudy Mason and Lesley Green about undertaking a review of the hardship fund to make it easier to access for students. Both parties agreed that the strike fund shouldn't be absorbed by the hardship fund but should instead be dedicated to supporting both students and alumni affected by the strike action.

### **Postgraduate finance clarity**

Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) has been contacted by postgraduate students (primarily studying Masters) regarding the lack of clarity of payment plans for their courses. Some of the students had started a Masters in the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences after having been an undergraduate at Queen Mary. Aphrodite raised a complaint to the University on the students' behalf regarding the transparency of the payment plans. The Queen Mary website deposit was capped at £500, yet Mysis declared the deposit to be £1000 with a £50 admin fee. Aphrodite proposed to Norman McBreen (Faculty Student Experience Manager) that the payment plan was not student-friendly or clear to understand. Moreover, a large demographic of students who use the payment plan do so because they cannot afford full payment upfront. Mysis also required an implied additional £50 due once the payment plan was set up, via Student Finance. Emails received by the students were potentially distressing as they stated that the individual was a debtor and may not be able to complete enrolment due to the process. Additionally, the students highlighted to Aphrodite that there were extended waiting times to receive responses to their queries. Aphrodite wrote a letter compiling these case studies and sent and discussed this with Norman McBreen. They will be reviewing this issue in October once an update has been received.

## **Raising concerns**

As part of their preparation for clinical placements, third year medical students have received a small group teaching session on how to raise concerns and how to deal with incidents of microaggressions and other forms of discrimination in clinical settings. Jack Juckes (Vice President Welfare) has helped to facilitate a number of these sessions with Clinical Skills and Communication Skills lecturers, and helped to provide both a fellow student and a welfare perspective to the medical students.

Mat Robathan (Vice President Barts and The London) has been working with a team of students and staff within Queen Mary to develop a reporting platform for students to use to report any concerns or incidents, be it inappropriate comments, micro-aggressions or harassment that happen on placement.

The platform is hosted on a secure website that is being embedded into QMplus. This has allowed the team to develop unique features such as anonymous reporting, where students can report incidents anonymously but still log in with a unique and random reference number to check the progress of their report and edit or answer any further questions.

The platform is in the later stages of development and almost ready to launch. Mat is now working with the medical school, its trust partners and the Report and Support team to iron out any issues and ensure this platform is well integrating in the Queen Mary Report and Support platform.

## **Financial Assistance Fund**

Jack Juckes (Vice President Welfare) has begun working on a project looking at the University's Financial Assistance Fund. He has spoken with students to get their feedback and experiences of the process, from application through to decisions and receiving funding. Whilst students were very appreciative of the financial support, there were difficulties with aspects of the process such as the application form, supplying required evidence, and the length of time parts of the process take.

Jack has met with Lesley Green (Academic Registrar) to learn more about how the fund and its processes are managed and how funding decisions are made, and had some constructive and promising discussions about implementing student feedback, and ensuring there is a feedback process for students going forward. Jack will also be attending the weekly fund meetings to help award non-standard funding applications.

## **Sexual and gender based violence**

Work has continued on the agreed actions following the allegations of sexual violence and harassment that were made on social media in June. Some highlights include that Bystander Intervention Training has been developed and delivered to elected student representatives and student group leaders, and Students' Union staff have received training on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence. The next stage of the work is a student consultation.

Jack Juckes (Vice President Welfare) has had multiple meetings with various students to gather their feedback and discuss the Students' Union's work. Jack has collected feedback from students on the University's new Consent Matters training on QMplus, and has completed the training himself to generate his own feedback, and will report this to Student Services. He has also collected feedback regarding Report and Support, and will report this to Student Services ready for the Annual Report at the end October.

## **Mummies and Daddies**

Our mentoring scheme for SMD students – Mummies and Daddies – engaged more than 333 new students and 291 returning students. In light of coronavirus, the scheme was adapted to enable students to take part in the scheme online. For students that have returned to our campuses, the pairing process included an option for students to indicate that they would like to take part in meet ups in small groups. The in-person meetings took place outdoors, and all mentors were briefed on safety measures to ensure the meetings were safe for all attendees.

## **Welfare Reps and Consent**

This year we are encouraging all student groups to have a Welfare Rep on their committee. Their role is to act as the main point of contact for students in their student group regarding welfare concerns, signpost students to relevant support services, and to foster a culture of wellbeing, accessibility and inclusivity within their groups. Welfare Reps have been receiving role specific training, as well as bystander intervention training. Bystander intervention training will also be offered out to other student group leaders throughout the year, and all committee members have been encouraged to complete the Consent Matters module.

Jack Jukes (Vice President Welfare) and Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) are connecting all of the Welfare Representatives in a Welfare Network, with an open forum in October for these representatives to raise concerns and ask questions with Jack and Tiana directly, and discuss issues and ideas between themselves.

Jack has also met with the Welfare Representative from the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP), to gain a better understanding of issues affecting students there, what initiatives their Welfare Representative will be working on this year, what support they might need, and how to link up welfare initiatives between the two sites. There are a number of issues affecting ULIP students, such as lack of access to on-site mental health support and counselling, and lack of support for postgraduate students. Jack is working collaboratively with the Welfare Representative to try and find solutions to these issues and see if there are Queen Mary support services that ULIP students can access.

## **Supporting individual students**

Jack Jukes (Vice President Welfare) has had a number of individual students contact him in need of guidance and welfare support for issues such as harassment, stalking, loneliness and trouble settling in. Jack has been guiding and supporting these students to access the appropriate support services they need, and helping to demystify how support systems work. Jack has spent a significant amount of time with one particular student who needed support with submitting a formal complaint to the Students' Union about another student's conduct.

## **Safer campuses plans**

Mat Robathan (Vice President Barts and The London) and Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) are working on a campus safety plan to improve safety on all campuses. They are currently working on a letter to send to the Queen Mary security team and Queen Mary estates team which outlines some of the areas of concern and some suggestions on what can be done to make campuses safer. This has involved contacting non-UK based campuses to ensure their security concerns and needs are also communicated. Following this, they are hoping to work in partnership with Queen Mary security, estates and any other relevant partners on improving safety on all campuses.

Mat has also spoken about some of these safety concerns, particularly those affecting the Whitechapel campus, with local MP Rushanara Ali. He is hoping to continue these constructive discussions.

## **Black History Month**

Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) began planning for Black History Month in August and met with student groups to determine our vision for the month. This year, Black History Month aims to celebrate Black British culture and black heritage; educate students on black issues and the diversity of black culture; and highlight the importance of activism with a focus on the Black Lives Matter movement. The University gave us £3,200 for the liberation fund this year which has been allocated for marketing materials, and to student groups who have made successful applications for their events. Due to COVID-19 implications, students are running online events such as talks from guest speakers, panel discussions, or competitions. There will be another Diverse(ish) event (the anti-racist forum) this time in collaboration with Decolonise Society. Tiana will also be hosting an outdoor cinema screening. The campaign will be very communications based, making use of our social media through Instagram quizzes and media reviews on TikTok; and a

culture list of books, films, television shows and podcasts has been developed to recommend to students. We will also be sharing activism resources highlighting why, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, fighting for justice and equality is important to us.

### **Islamophobia Awareness Month**

Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) has been in contact with various student groups such as Islamic Society to join the organising committee and begin the preparations for Islamophobia Awareness Month in November. Students have been registering their events for the month, with topics including Prevent and Mental Health, Islam and Sustainability, and Unity in the Muslim Ummah. Applications are being accepted until the end of September, when the organising committee will allocate funding.

### **Antisemitism Definition**

Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) has been working with the Jewish Society and the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) in regards to adopting the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism. The Executive Officers attended antisemitism training with UJS and decided as a team that we wanted to go forward with the IHRA definition, however as it would be the Students' Union adoption of a policy, it would need to be passed through council. Tiana has met with the Jewish Society president to develop a motion that will be proposed at the next Student Council in October. Tiana has also been working with the Jewish Society on Antisemitism Awareness Month which the Students' Union will be doing for the first time this year.

### **University of Sanctuary**

Tiana Dinard-Samuel (Vice President Communities) and Jack Jukes (Vice President Welfare) attended the new University of Sanctuary working group which seeks to create and promote initiatives that allow equal access to higher education asylum seekers and refugees, as well as nurturing a culture of welcome and inclusion within our institution. The next meeting will be in October where they will discuss key actions and their strategy going forward.

### **Supporting our Student Groups**

Over the summer the Student Engagement team maintained regular communications with our student groups, going over how changes to government, University and Students' Union guidance affected them. We have adapted our events and health and safety processes and have provided training to student group leaders on how they can continue to run their events and activities safely and successfully. We have been really pleased to see how flexible and creative our student leaders have been. They have also shown resilience and a commitment to continuing to build communities among students, helping to shape a positive student experience at a time when it is more important than ever. We are not facilitating room bookings on campus at the moment, except for some specialist groups such as for our radio station, so groups are mostly running virtual activity, mainly via Teams, or small physical activity for their members, signed off by Students' Union staff.

We are concerned about how membership sales for student groups will be impacted by the lack of physical events or activities being offered and the lack of a physical Welcome Fair. Subs is the main income source for many of our student groups so we will be monitoring sales carefully throughout the semester. To mitigate the risk, we are doing new things to promote our student groups to new and returning students. For example, we've re-launched the societies Instagram, student-led groups now feature on our main events calendar, and we have also sent out a student groups feature email to all students.

### **Sustainability**

Over move-in weekend, the Students' Union and University once again collaborated to deliver our Reuse Fair. With extra precautions in place and a reduced amount of donations owing to the abrupt end of semester 2 we were very happy to be able to give 516kg of items a new home to the 126 students who attended the Fair and

to local charities. Feedback showed that 100% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the event and items collected. 94% of students enjoyed the fair and agreed that the event saved them money, whilst 82% felt it eased their move to University.

For the second year in a row, the Students' Union received Excellent in Green Impact, a United Nations award winning programme designed to support environmentally and socially sustainable practice in organisations.

Following on from NUS Lead and Change, Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) and other members from nationwide Students' Unions formed a group and have had a number of meetings regarding sustainability. We will take part in 'Go Green Week' (8th-14th March 2021) and 'International Compost Awareness Week' (2nd-8th May 2021). Aphrodite plans to engage with the Queen Mary and London community by making short videos about what individuals are already doing and how students and staff can get involved. We planned to do a live Students' Union Sustainability collaboration on social media (Instagram) with pre-planned questions and a live Q&A. Aphrodite had a meeting with Erica McAllister (Senior Curator at the Natural History Museum) to get advice on how to present information on how to protect cryptic species in our local area that she will use in this event.

## Club Sport

- Two online training events for club committees have taken place in July and September with an incredibly high attendance compared to in person events we have run in the past. (The September event usually has a turnout of around 180 students but with the new format around 310 students attended in total).
- Development Plans have been completed by clubs to help them plan their year in terms of development and also financially.
- Welfare Officer training has been adapted to encompass current issues students may be facing with isolation and loneliness and how staff and welfare officers can aid in tackling this within their role.
- Training is starting again from 5<sup>th</sup> October after consultation of National Governing Body, Government and University guidance, and all 70 clubs have some form of training happening this semester.
- Risk assessments have been completed by all clubs and by staff for all facilities to ensure return to play is safe for all those taking part.
- 50 BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) teams and 34 LUSL (London Universities Sport Leagues) teams have been entered due to start in January.
- Sports Officers have received training and have been involved in all finance and training, return to play conversations to ensure the student voice and interest is represented in the decisions we have made.
- The club sport board have had their handover training and their first meeting of the year to discuss BUCS league decisions, grant funding and the potential of friendlies between Queen Mary and Barts and the London teams.
- Specific information and guidance about how to run safe sessions has been formulated for those returning to training and is being circulated next week.
- Discussions about the This Girl Can campaign have started with the BL Sports Officer to ensure we run events throughout this week to encourage women to get involved in sport.
- Our Personal Professional Development programme is beginning again in mid October with 4 sessions planned for this semester to give students another incentive to join sport clubs and gain transferrable skills whilst less sport is taking place (these include sponsorship, first aid and anti-racism workshops).
- An online welcome event is taking place on 30<sup>th</sup> September with 40 clubs signed up to engage students and potential new members.
- An all student email has been sent out to highlight all of our offers within sport and engage as many students as possible this year.
- 42 clubs have signed up to the Sporting Focus which starts again next week to celebrate the success of our clubs.

## Get Active



- A timetable of sports this semester is due to be released next week with as many indoor sports as we can safely facilitate.
- Pop up events have taken place during welcome fair markets.
- Two student activators continuing on with us from last year will be facilitating sessions and ensuring sessions are as safe as possible and social distancing guidelines are adhered to.
- Wellbeing walks are starting again the week beginning 5<sup>th</sup> October.
- The Couch to 5K programme for students and staff is also due to resume this semester.

### **Social Leagues and Campus Games**

It has been a quiet start to the year for Sport, in particular Social Leagues and Campus Games, which in the past have run welcome events. But after a summer of planning by the Sport Development team and a few changes recently by the government we are pleased to say that there will be lots of ways to engage in sport in the upcoming months.

- The Sport stalls had good engagement on 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September, and new students took part in corn hole, table tennis and badminton.
- The Students' Union social leagues will be starting on the week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> October. Leagues will run in badminton, table tennis, netball, football 7-a-side and 11-a-side.
- After the government's announcement on Friday we will also be looking to see if a basketball league can be facilitated.
- Campus Games will be working closely with the principal's office to run a Virtual 5K for students and staff in November.
- Participants' health and safety will always be the priority, and there will be some new regulations for all sport this year to ensure students and staff can participate safely.

### **Community Foundation**

Our existing sport leadership and workforce development programme has undergone a rebrand in preparation for the upcoming academic year. We have moved our induction process online to make the programme more accessible to students. With the expectation that community outreach in the form of practical sport delivery will be significantly reduced this year, we are having a greater focus on personal development. Throughout Semester 1 we will be offering a range of CPD workshop and webinar opportunities through partners such as Disability Sports Coach, StreetGames and Women in Sport. We will be conducting a skills audit and encouraging our student leaders to use personal development plans as we strive to enhance employability through engagement with the programme.

### **Employability Project**

Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (Vice President Science & Engineering) and Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) are working on a two-strand employability project. The employability project is centred on holding a series of events, both workshops and networking sessions, in an effort to raise awareness for the social aspect of employability that isn't a discussion point at university career events, which are generally more presentational style. It will focus less on employability skills and more on understanding the different social aspects to these skills and how they have an influence on a student's employability, to understand how social surroundings can impact employability.

Cameron has been working with the Alumni Engagement Team who will be sourcing different speakers based on the nature of the event. He has also contacted student groups to gather their input and support. The project will also be a platform to highlight certain psychological patterns that people experience in the workplace such as impostor syndrome. In addition, it will look to help students improve their time management and project planning and develop leadership skills. Additionally, there will be several events on education. Presently, Cameron is working with the Students' Union Communications & Marketing team on the branding and design for the event, to be circulated to both the Alumni team and Careers for promotion in mid-

October. The first event 'Race and Sexuality in the Workplace' will be held in late October and will coincide with Black History Month.

Aphrodite is collaborating with degree-apprenticeship staff and Philippa Lloyd (Vice Principal of Strategic Policy & Planning) to plan this project. They aim to provide degree-specific work experience for students in order to improve student satisfaction, employability rates in a specific field and networking opportunities. This project will be utilising the Queen Mary alumni network, business partners and current academics. This also ties in to the dissertation threshold project as Aphrodite has discussed with academics their ability to provide work experience in their own labs on campus. This would also give students an opportunity to try out research prior to choosing their dissertation topic in 3rd year. As this is quite an ambitious and long term project it was advised that Aphrodite email schools in Science & Engineering to find one that would want to take part in a trial run. Data will then be collected from the chosen school to identify underrepresented students within, with the hope to have self-identifying underrepresented students account for at least 40% of the places available to begin with.

### **School of Business and Management (SBM) Step-Ahead Programme**

Helen Green from the School of Business and Management invited Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) to attend a pilot Transition programme for incoming students to SBM with BTEC qualifications, the aim of which was to reduce the drop out amongst this group of students due to challenges many face with differences with teaching and learning. He gave an introductory talk about the Students' Union as well as his main priorities for the upcoming academic year. He also hosted two Q&A sessions, with the main questions surrounding timetable and enrolment issues, and information regarding societies and sports clubs.

### **Return to placements**

Mat Robathan (Vice President Barts and The London) has also been working with staff in the medical school to ease the return to hospital placements for students. This has involved passing on vital feedback, attending SSLCs (Student Staff Liaison Committees) and ensuring Course Reps are well equipped to collect feedback and respond to this.

This has also involved working with the new occupational health partner to ensure students who need vaccinations are processed quickly and fairly to enable them to minimise any missed placement time.

### **Connecting Practices**

A programme is being developed by Mat Robathan (Vice President Barts and The London) and staff at the SMD to provide support for students on placements within hospitals. This consists of online "huddles" where students can share experiences and support one another in the presence of a medical lead.

### **ULIPSU**

At the beginning of September, Cameron Storey (Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences) met with the student representatives at ULIPSU (University of London Institute in Paris Students' Union) for an introductory meeting and to discuss their main priorities and projects for the upcoming year, with the main concerns surrounding how the current coronavirus crisis will impact the student experience, teaching and learning, and mental health. They will have regular monthly meetings to update both parties on any developments. Cameron has also extended invitations to the students to attend the events that will be held as part of the employability project, and to support their Course Reps with training needs.

### **BLSA Facilities**

Mat Robathan (Vice President Barts and The London) has worked with the Students' Union staff to ensure facilities can open safely again for students in Whitechapel and Charterhouse Square. This has included working with students to ask what facilities they need and ensuring any facilities we do open are following



government guidance. The current plan is to safely reopen the Fitness Suite very soon, in time for the return to training for sports clubs on 5th October.

In Charterhouse Square, the shield is open again for coffee and study space. Unfortunately the “Fitness to Practice” gym is currently unable to open due to COVID-19 restrictions but how this and the shield space can be better utilised are currently being considered.

The spaces BLSA provide are vital for students, especially considering the significantly reduced study spaces within the library and other university facilities due to social distancing. These spaces are also usable without any prior booking which is a huge advantage for SMD students whose timetables are less predictable than more traditional courses. However, BLSA spaces are currently not available during the weekend and therefore Mat has been working with the SMD and university to ensure more university spaces, which are open on weekends, are available to students at Whitechapel and Charterhouse Square and that these are better advertised to students. Work is also ongoing to try and reduce the notice period needed to book such spaces, especially as many students within the SMD have such unpredictable timetables so struggle with booking 12 hours in advance.

**Shamima Akter**  
**Students' Union President**  
**October 2020**