



Executive summary of Senate 15 October 2020

Outcome requested:	Council is asked to note the executive summary of the meeting of Senate held on 15 October 2020.
Executive Summary:	The summary provides Council members with an update on business considered by Senate.
QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1]	n/a
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	n/a
Strategic Risks:	n/a
Equality Impact Assessment:	n/a
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	n/a
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA:	No
Timing:	n/a
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Date:	10 November 2020
Senior Management/External Sponsor:	Jonathan Morgan, Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

SENATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A full set of the minutes will be available online (following confirmation at the next meeting of Senate) at the following URL:

<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/Senate/index.html>

Alternatively, contact the Secretary of the Committee: Jane Pallant

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Date of Meeting: 15 October 2020

Main Items Discussed

1. Education update

1.1 Senate received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education) on the work of two key groups involved in Education planning during the Covid-19 pandemic: Education 3.0 and Education 3.1.

1.2 Senate noted that Education 3.0 had met each week between March and October to develop contingency plans for content delivery, student mobility, student support and assessment for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year. The group comprised a range of colleagues from the three Faculties, Professional Services and representatives from the Students' Union.

1.3 Senate noted Education 3.1 had been formed in May 2020 to have oversight of the transition to blended learning for the academic year 2020-21. The group had strategic oversight of nine workstreams tasked with preparing for the new academic year and included colleagues from across the University and members of the Students' Union.

1.4 Members received an update on the Education Enabling Plan, noting that the latest draft had been reviewed by the Senior Executive Team on 6 October 2020. The Education Enabling Plan retained its focus on the four key pillars of education in the Queen Mary 2030 strategy: excellence in education, excellence in student engagement, excellence in student employability and excellence in the learning environment. Senate members also noted the initiatives proposed in the enabling plan, particularly the portfolio review that would be led by the Deputy Vice-Principal Education (Programmes) and the streamlining of structures for reporting on initiatives, led by the Deputy Vice-Principal Education (Strategic Projects).

1.5 Senate members were advised that a National Student Survey taskforce had been established to provide targeted support to schools and institutes for improving the student experience.

1.6 Senate noted that several strands of the quality assurance framework were under review during 2020-21. Programme approval had been the subject of a university-wide working group earlier in the year, and plans were underway to increase the agility of the process while retaining effective scrutiny of new initiatives. Programme monitoring and review were also areas of focus, and a pilot scheme for a revised approach to Annual Programme Review had taken place during 2019-2; the results of this pilot would inform future planning for the effective monitoring and review of taught programmes.

2. Review of the assessment arrangements for 2019-20

2.1 Senate considered a review of the contingency arrangements that were put in place for assessment during 2019-20. This paper is provided in the background reading for Council members as part of the annual Senate report to Council.

2.2 The documents considered comprised: the report of the External Member of the Degree Examination Boards; the redacted minutes of the two undergraduate Degree Examination Boards which provided a summary of external examiner views raised at Subject Examination Boards; and the lessons learned paper that was provided by two members of the Education 3.1 group.

2.3 Members noted the value of the external review of the assessment arrangements. Members were satisfied that the arrangements had been appropriate and effective, protecting both academic standards and outcomes for students.

2.4 Senate members noted that there had been an increase in so-called 'good honours' degrees during 2019-20, and anecdotal evidence suggested that this had been an issue across the sector. The External Member of the Degree Examination Boards and the majority of external examiners accepted that 2020 was an exceptional year; in developing contingency plans, higher education institutions had rightly erred on the side of generosity towards students, seeking to protect the student experience as far as was possible in the circumstances.

2.5 Senate members would review further the data on student outcomes following the events of 2019-20, and some data on degree outcomes is available in the Senate report to Council. Senate agreed that the information on the contingency arrangements for 2019-20 should form the basis of its annual report to Council.

3. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism

3.1 Senate approved the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism with the additional caveats recommended by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2016.

3.2 Senate noted that a Race Equality Action Group (REAG) had been established to progress the University's race equality agenda. The REAG included representation from across Queen Mary, together with members drawn from the Students' Union. The REAG had identified specific areas of focus: understanding and celebrating race and ethnicity; addressing the ethnicity pay gap and supporting career progression for people from minority ethnic backgrounds; investigating and addressing issues around racial bullying and harassment; reducing the student attainment gap; and developing inclusive curricula.

4. Approval of membership and terms of reference for sub-boards of Senate for 2019-20

Senate approved the membership and terms of reference for its sub-boards for the 2020-21 academic year.

Jane Pallant
Deputy Academic Registrar
November 2020