



QMSU President's Report

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| Outcome requested: | Council is asked to note the QMSU President's report. |
| Executive Summary: | <p>The report is an update from the end of September to beginning of November on activity within the Students' Union. It includes the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Key UpdatesStudent OpportunitiesEducationWelfare and Liberation |
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President's University Council Report

November 2021

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President's Report

Key Updates

Exec on Tour

With the academic year well underway, the Executive Officer team spent the first week of November touring different student spaces and campuses to talk and listen to students. Student feedback about the UCU ballot and potential strikes was mixed; some students did not know about this, while others were either strongly opposed to or in support of industrial action. Some students who were opposed to industrial action still supported the issues UCU are campaigning on.

The team also gathered feedback about the return to campus and mixed mode education, among other issues. Many students appreciated the return of in-person student society events and activities. Planning is underway on how to replicate and improve Exec visibility and feedback gathering for the rest of the year.

Islamophobia Awareness Month

In November the Students' Union hosts [Islamophobia Awareness Month](#), a month-long campaign to raise awareness of issues affecting the Muslim community and educate students on Islamophobia and its causes. Saynab Sharif, Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences, and Radhika Thiagarajan, Vice President Communities, are supporting the planning and delivery of Islamophobia Awareness Month, including working with a committee of student groups to allocate funding and plan our events programme.

Our 2021 programme includes an exhibition, panel discussions and many other activities. In addition, a range of online content will be shared via our social media channels, newsletters, and the website, including student interviews, influential figures and blog posts.

Drink spiking and student safety

We were deeply concerned about the concerns raised by some of our students and recent media coverage regarding drink spiking and gender-based violence on nights out. In response to the concerns raised, the Executive Officers [released a statement](#) to students that strongly condemned drink spiking and outlined what we would do as a Students' Union to ensure student safety within our venues and to ensure reporting and support options were clear and visible.

While our venues have well-established safety records, as recognised by the Best Bar None and Good Night Out schemes, we know there is always more we can do to provide a safer experience for students. In line with this, the team met with several of our part-time officers, societies and sports clubs to hear their views and consider additional measures we could take. To ensure we were able to fully review our procedures, we made the decision to postpone two of our biggest monthly club night events – Hail Mary and Final Whistle.

We have immediately implemented several additional measures in our venues, outlined in [this article](#) on our website. These changes have been communicated to students and form part of a new marketing campaign regarding student safety and wellbeing on nights out that we will continue to roll out over the coming weeks.

Venues and Events

After huge success throughout September, with over 13,000 students physically engaging with us in our evening events alone, (7800 at Drapers, 2200 at Griff Inn, 3200 external venues) and a productive collaboration with the Residential Life team, the past few weeks have posed several challenges. This has included maintenance issues within our venues, including long-term air-conditioning problems at Drapers and Griff Inn and hot water and power supply problems, which have made it difficult to maintain our core offering. These issues, coupled with changes to how students spend time on campus and national fears over spiking, has led to a clear downturn in student attendees.

This has enabled a time of reflection over what was a record-breaking period in parts. With a new night 'IRL – In Real Life' in our Wednesday slot at Mile End, a new focus on Griff Inn events, the reopening of the Shield Café at Charterhouse Square and a review of our food offering, we plan to build on our successes in the coming months.

Life Sciences

Rob Tucker, Vice President Barts and The London, has been working with the University on the life sciences project between Queen Mary University and Barts Health Trust. He has been focusing on communications to students, access to study spaces, and the project's potential to encourage current students to pursue future research here. This has been accompanied by discussions about the Students' Union's Whitechapel facilities, with a focus on improving what we offer at Whitechapel based on students' feedback.

Postgraduate Engagement and Support

As part of our commitment to improving engagement with postgraduate students, our new Postgraduate Engagement and Insights Assistant (a current QMUL PhD student) is undertaking a research project to understand how postgraduates perceive the Students' Union, which activities they are interested in and how the Students' Union can meet the needs of postgraduates. Students are invited to complete a feedback survey and/or take part in a short interview. The project is currently in the data collection phase, and the expected outcome is a report with recommendations for our future engagement with postgraduates.

On Academic Support, the VP Humanities and Social Sciences has initiated a project focusing on increasing the awareness and appeal of postgraduate study and progression for students. The project aims to support and increase the appeal of postgraduate degrees and help students to understand their options for further study. There will be resources and events demystifying the application process, and engagement with PGT and PGR students and alumni to share their experience with current students. This project will involve support and engagement with the Doctoral College and Careers and Enterprise.

Quiet Study and Contemplation Space

In terms of spaces, the Students' Union Hub, BLSA Building and Multi-Faith Centre fully reopened at the beginning of term and student groups are now able to book spaces in our buildings and the University with normal capacity restrictions in place. Since the start of term, we have confirmed 287 Union bookings, 215 University room bookings and 52 external speakers for student groups.

The Students' Union has seen increased usage of the Multi-Faith Centre due to the increased numbers of students on campus at certain times. Friday Prayer has seen unprecedented numbers of students using our spaces. In addition, social spaces around the Hub and wider University are also busy and there is clear demand for additional quiet study and contemplation space. Muneer Hussain, Vice President Welfare and I have been looking into potential solutions and areas that could remedy the current lack of space.

Student Groups

The team have enjoyed seeing student groups (Societies, Volunteering, Student Media and Raise and Give) active again this year with a mixture of online and in-person activity. As well as delivering their regular activities for members groups are running large events again, such as balls and national conferences.

Requests for space on campus for student-led activity have returned to pre-Covid-19 levels, in some cases surpassing this, and we have worked closely with other Students' Union teams as well as Timetabling and the University Venues team to process booking requests. There is currently more demand for spaces for physical activity (such as dance) and for student groups to provide their own food and drink than we are able to accommodate. We hope to work with colleagues to identify more suitable spaces for this.

Club Sport

Club Sport membership numbers are strong with 2,320 memberships mid-way through semester 1, compared to 1,974 memberships at the end of semester one 2019/20. 16 clubs are taking part in the 'This Girl Can' campaign this month. All Welfare Reps on student group committees have received full training with around 40 officers and reps attending across 4 sessions covering bystander intervention and inclusive leadership.

We have also become a BUCS Football Accredited University for the second year in a row. Through this process, we have secured £5,000 in grant funding and we will receive the second half of this payment in semester 2 to develop our football and futsal offer for students and staff.

Further Club Sport Board meetings have taken place voting on club affiliations, varsity planning and key dates for the year as well as Club Sport Development Fund bids for which 23 bids were funded for equipment, projects and extra sessions for clubs. The Financial Support Fund had its first round of applications with students receiving funding towards equipment, memberships and transport costs enabling them to take part in sport this year..

Open Day

The Students' Union provided support for the University's October Open Day event. We hosted the University Services Fair in the Students' Union Hub building, delivered Student Life and Sport at Queen Mary talk sessions, hosted tours of Qmotion and our sports facilities, provided a Get Active pop-up of sporting activities and opened up our spaces for the event. Many of our Clubs and Societies also added to the event experience by providing stalls, activities, performances and demonstrations throughout the day.

We also developed digital content for the online aspects of the event and are currently working with the Marketing and Recruitment team to update Students' Union and Student Life content for the new University prospectus.

Student Opportunities

Alumni Café

Radhika organised the first in a series of Alumni Café events – in-person networking events featuring alumni in key fields. This event was aimed at students in Law and featured alumni participants from several firms. The event received high engagement, with tickets selling out on the day of release. Radhika is currently working with the Global Alumni Engagement team to organise another set of Alumni Café events for students in Medicine and Finance and Economics in November.

QM Skills Award

Our Skills Recognition and main Employability programme, the QM Skills Award, returns this year with a comprehensive offer of free resources, training, and career reflection sessions for students. Registration is open for this academic year and students will be able to access training from November 2021 to March 2022, followed up with reflection session to help students communicate the skills they have gained to employers. The award also features on the HEAR for those students who complete it.

Volunteering

Our first Volunteer Fair this academic year is happening on 24th November in the Students' Union Hub. We expect around 20 organisations to be there, speaking to students about volunteering opportunities available in the local community.

University Challenge

Queen Mary's University Challenge team, selected in trials held by the Students' Union, reached the second televised round of the show for the second ever time and first time since 1963, before bowing out with defeat to St John's, Cambridge in the episode on 1 November. Trials for the next series are currently taking place.

Sustainability

The Students' Union helped facilitate Queen Mary's Sustainability Week by overseeing the programme of events, supporting student groups and academic schools with event logistics, and running several events including a canal clean-up event with the School of Business & Management and PADi, an allotment planting session, and a campus foraging walk with the Grounds Team.

In addition, several biodiversity improvement projects have been undertaken by student volunteers at regular sessions run by the Students' Union including planting out of winter salad crops in the raised beds surrounding halls and creating bird boxes to put up around campus.

Get Active

[Get Active](#) is a part of our recreational sport programme, offering a timetable of weekly sporting activities that students, staff and alumni can get involved with for just £2.50 per session. So far this semester, Get Active has engaged 1270 participants across a range of sports such as Badminton, Volleyball, Fencing and Basketball. This included pop-ups over Move-In Weekend and the University's October Open Days.

Campus Games

The [Campus Games](#) programme provides the opportunity for students to get involved in large scale sporting opportunities throughout the year to win points for their School or Hall. Previous events have included an indoor triathlon, tug of war and a local park run. This year, we have begun working with the Residential Life team to offer activities specifically for students living in halls and we successfully held our first event for SMD

students on the Charterhouse Square lawn, offering a Sports Day for residents in Floyer House and Dawson Halls.

Social Leagues

Our [Social Leagues](#) started in October, providing a fun environment for students and staff to compete in the sport they love without the commitment required for a sports club. Social Leagues have offered competitions in Netball, Cricket, Football 11-a-side, Football 7-a-side, and Basketball. Across the six leagues, over 400 students, staff and alumni have taken part each week. In addition, 19 student staff have been hired as referees and umpires and we have recently hired a new Social Leagues Intern.

Performance Sport

The [Talented Athlete Programme](#) aims to support high performing athletes who are studying for a world-class degree at Queen Mary. The programme offers support to each athlete to achieve the degree and performance goals whilst at Queen Mary. Six student athletes have been successful in their application to the programme and within the group we have students who have competed at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, represented their country or are in the top 30 of their sport nationwide.

Community Foundation

We have been successful with our bid for £4,740 from the Westfield Fund. This Workforce Development and Employability project will help to provide additional training opportunities to the students that facilitate our sport and fitness offer both internally and in the community.

Internship Project

Bilge Kacmaz, Vice President Science & Engineering has started a project aiming to source additional internal and external internship options for students within Science and Engineering. This project aims to dually help meet the need for compulsory internships within Engineering degrees and support students with non-compulsory internships to support their employability and careers. The project will include reviewing internship options available with support from Careers and Enterprise, gathering feedback from S&E students and organising a workshop on applying for internships.

Education

Course Rep Training

Following the Autumn Elections, newly elected Course Reps are now being trained to enable them to effectively undertake their roles. Based on student feedback, the training is being tailored to each of the faculties, and separate sessions are being offered to postgraduate representatives. The training is delivered as a mix of on-campus and online sessions with a total of 14 sessions scheduled in October and November.

Linear Progression and Online Exam Policies

Rob, alongside two MBBS reps gathered feedback from students on the proposed new exam format being used in Medicine (Years 1, 2 & Graduate Entry Programme) that would follow a linear progression format. The collated feedback was presented at the course's junior SSLC to raise feedback, concerns and questions with staff and students; and it is to be discussed at the upcoming medical assessments committee.

Library Services

The Executive Officer team have started regular monthly meetings with the team from Library Services. From this, the Exec have been supporting a number of projects and initiatives, in particular reviewing and providing feedback on the draft Library Services plan for 2021-26.

The officers presented their feedback, feedback from students and any outstanding questions relating to all sections of the draft plan. The Exec team were especially pleased with the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the plan and are pleased to hear that feedback has been welcomed by the team from Library Services for its positive impact. Responses to the feedback have been discussed in subsequent meetings with Library Services and a further response is expected soon.

Assessment and Feedback

Bilge is supporting the Assessment and Feedback work stream and has supported and represented students in discussions about marking, assessment design and modes of feedback in the regular Task and Finish Group meetings. Bilge has been incorporating student feedback and needs into the aims and actions decided

at the Task and Finish group, including ensuring students are kept up to date by closing the feedback loop and the need to create transparent and clear escalation routes.

SSLC Training

Rob is co-chairing the 'Are you partnership ready?' SSLC training feedback stream, which focuses on the relationship between student representatives and university staff, identifying how reps can work with staff effectively and allowing for more effective discussions at SSLCs; where all members are comfortable discussing problems, sharing responsibilities, and collaborating together towards successes.

The opportunity and ability of student representatives to build relationships with staff has always been important and a rewarding experience for the students, however it has been identified as being difficult to create and maintain these relationships in an online environment, therefore Rob is looking forward to this stream and its' output, which will help aim to reverse this.

By working with course reps Rob is aiming to: improve the escalation of feedback within SMD; identify and address issues early in the academic year; and to find common or frequent problems that course reps are facing, working strategically with staff to resolve them

Welfare and Liberation

Study Well

The Students' Union has started planning for Study Well, a campaign promoting healthy studying habits and providing opportunities for students to de-stress during the winter exam and revision period. The campaign will run from Monday 6th December until Sunday 23rd January and will include a wide range of wellbeing events, study resources and free giveaways. Muneer chaired a meeting involving several teams across the university to co-ordinate activities and identify areas of collaboration.

International Students

Radhika is continuing work on improving loans and bursaries offered to international students. Issues have recently arisen surrounding the timing of resits for PGT students who have failed summer assessments and its impact on students' ability to apply for the two-year Post-Study Work Visa and is engaged in discussions with colleagues about how to resolve this issue.

United Hospitals

Rob has been working with United hospitals (collective name for the 5 medical schools of London) in response to the drink spiking incidents nationally, working on the standards within our bar facilities, and ensuring bars/clubs that our students go to around our universities have key safety measures - working on an open letter & social media campaign for this.

Adi Sawalha

Students' Union President

11th November 2021