



**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>President and Principal's Report to Senate</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to note and discuss the attached report.
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	<p>The President and Principal will provide a written report to each Senate meeting. This provides an opportunity to highlight key issues and developments to Senate members, for information and also discussion at the meeting as appropriate.</p> <p>This report covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pensions and pay.</li><li>• Equality, diversity and inclusion.</li><li>• Non-permanent contracts.</li><li>• Updates on senior personnel.</li><li>• Going for Gold project.</li><li>• Development of new University strategy.</li></ul> <p>A paper on the external environment that was written for Audit and Risk Committee is also provided for information.</p>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	N/A
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	N/A
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	Relates to all aspects of QMUL strategy and all sections of the Risk Register.
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	For Senate only
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<b>Sponsor</b>	Professor Colin Bailey, President and Principal

# President and Principal's Report

## Senate Meeting – 1 November 2018

This is my first report of the new Academic Year. The semester has started well, thanks to colleagues from across the University who have worked hard to provide both new and returning students with a smooth and welcoming introduction to the new academic year. The report from the VP Education will provide an update on the position with student intake.

### **1 Pensions**

#### *1.1 USS Pension Scheme*

The Joint Expert Panel (JEP) established by UCU and UUK has produced a report, following its review of the assumptions that underpinned the valuation of the pension scheme that took place last year. Both UCU and UUK are undertaking consultations with their members on the JEP report. Following a call for staff contributions and comments, QMSE provided recommendations on the Queen Mary employer response, which were subsequently reviewed, discussed and agreed by Council on 11 October.

Our employer response, which is being shared with all staff, confirms that Queen Mary will commit to additional contributions of 2.1% (taking contributions to 20.1% in total) over the period of the current valuation. This will pose financial challenges (the extra contributions amount to just under £3m per annum), but we recognise that the JEP recommendations provide a pragmatic way forward and the best option for identifying a resolution that works for all parties. Individual members would also face an increase in contributions of 1.1% in this scenario.

We will need to work across the University to identify approaches to address these higher costs. This challenge should not be underestimated, particularly when there are so many urgent areas where additional expenditure is required. However, the additional contributions will allow for the retention of the existing benefits for members of the USS scheme, and the depth of feeling amongst staff about the importance of retaining these benefits has been very clear.

All parties entered the JEP process in good faith and given the rigour applied by the Panel, it is appropriate that the sector looks to support its outcomes in overall terms. It is therefore imperative that UUK and UCU engage quickly and constructively to identify proposals based on the JEP report that can be taken to the USS Trustee and the Pension Regulator for review. In the absence of any alternative proposal at this stage, USS have started a consultation on implementing the Clause 76.4 mechanism, which would enforce an increase in contributions of 6.9% from employers and 3.7% from members.

#### *1.2 Other Pension Schemes*

It has recently been announced that the NHS Pension Scheme and Teacher Pension Scheme (TPS) will be subject to major increases in employer contributions. It has been proposed by government that employer contributions will need to rise by 7.2% from 1 September 2019. The uplift in the NHS scheme will lead to increased contribution costs of £1.2m per year for Queen Mary, related to our clinical academics who are members of this scheme. This will be in addition to the forecast increases in USS contributions as noted above.

Queen Mary will not be affected by the increases in TPS contributions but many post-92 universities, which have not been impacted by the USS dispute, will be presented with

significant financial challenges as a result. This will be on top of recruitment shortfalls that a number of institutions experienced this year.

## **2 Other Matters Relating to Our Staff**

### *2.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)*

Following discussion at Council, the University's annual EDI report was revised and has now been published and promoted to staff. This report is seen as a starting point and it is fully acknowledged that we have much work to undertake in order to ensure that we provide an inclusive environment and experience for our staff and students.

Work is also in train on an ethnicity pay gap report, which will be brought to Senate for discussion in December.

We have now appointed Professor Kate Malleson as the Academic Lead for Equality and Diversity. This is an excellent appointment and Kate will be supported to devote 50% of her time to work on this key issue and drive forward our activity.

### *2.2 Non-permanent contracts*

There is understandable concern across the sector about the proportion of staff that are on non-permanent contracts and potentially in precarious working conditions. QMSE has been looking closely at the data for our University in recent months in order to clarify the picture and identify where we need to focus our efforts.

In 2013/14, 47% of our academic workforce (on an FTE basis) were employed on non-permanent contracts; by 2016/17 that figure had reduced to 33%. If we compare this latter figure to other Russell Group universities, we had the seventh lowest proportion of non-permanent contracts out of the 24 Russell Group members. Among our peers, therefore, we employ a relatively high proportion of our academic staff on permanent contracts.

The comparison with our peers is important because the type of organisation we are has a direct bearing on the ways in which we employ our staff. As one of the UK's top research-intensive universities, we will have a proportion of our academic staff on fixed-term contracts. This is linked for example to employing researchers on grant-funded, time-limited programmes; providing cover for sabbatical leave; and providing opportunities for our PhD students to gain experience of teaching and be paid for their efforts.

However, although having a proportion of our academic staff on non-permanent contracts is in part a consequence of being a research-intensive university, it is vital that we undertake a thorough review to ensure that we are providing the right contractual arrangements and wherever possible the security of a permanent contract for our colleagues. Accordingly, our HR Directorate is currently working with the Faculties to review the position of academic staff on non-permanent contracts and are already identifying those where a transfer to permanent arrangements is needed. This work will continue and we will extend it to cover Professional Services colleagues as well.

I am due to hold informal discussions with union representatives on this key issue, in part to consider the data and understand the differences between the analysis presented above and the data that has been published by UCU (which presents a much more concerning picture regarding the level of non-permanent contracts for academic staff at Queen Mary). I would like to work jointly with the unions to ensure that no employee of Queen Mary is on an inappropriate contract and that all colleagues are treated in a way that is in line with our values.

### 2.3 Pay

The main unions are currently balloting their members following the recent pay offer, following national negotiations, for staff on Grades 1-7. The unions are recommending that their members reject the offer and vote for industrial action. The UCU ballot closes on 19 October, and if supported by members then industrial action could take place from November.

## 3 Updates on Senior Personnel

### 3.1 *Vice-Principal (Research)*

Professor Bill Spence is stepping down from QMSE at the end of his second term in January. Bill has been a superb colleague and has contributed enormously to Queen Mary during his time on the Senior Executive, as well as through the roles he has held prior to his appointment as Vice-Principal. I am delighted that Bill will remain a part of the University community and will return to the School of Physics and Astronomy to continue with his internationally leading research in String Theory.

We have engaged recruitment consultants to support us in the search for Bill's successor. This will be an international search with a focus on bringing forward a diverse pool of candidates, to support an appointment of the highest quality. As part of this, I have asked any internal colleagues who are interested in the role to contact me to discuss their interest and suitability. We plan to hold interviews in November.

### 3.2 *Other Vice-Principal Recruitment Processes*

Professor Stephanie Marshall is taking forward plans to strengthen our teaching and learning activity as our Interim Vice-Principal (Education). The firm assisting us with the Vice-Principal Research process will provide similar support for the process to find a substantive appointment to Education position, and this will commence in mid-November. The aim would be to have the new appointment in post towards the end of the Academic Year, to allow for a handover with Stephanie.

Professor Wen Wang has taken on the role of Interim Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Science and Engineering) following the departure of Edmund Burke. In the New Year we will look to initiate a search to make a substantive appointment to this role.

### 3.3 *Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships)*

I am delighted to announce that Dr Philippa Lloyd, who previously held the role of Director General of Higher and Further Education at the Department for Education, will be taking up this post and will be joining Queen Mary at the beginning of January. Philippa will provide leadership to our work on policy and partnership development at the local, regional and international level. This will involve helping Queen Mary engage with key figures in central and local government, in business and industry, in local organisations and in national/international agencies. Activity will be focussed on raising Queen Mary's profile and enhancing our core mission of internationally leading education, research and public engagement. The role will also play a critical role in ensuring that Queen Mary is active in national and international discussions about higher education, helping to shape the future of the sector and to retain those key attributes and principles that are fundamental to the purpose and success of universities.

Philippa has been working in the Civil Service for more than 20 years, and has held a variety of policy and corporate roles including acting as Principal Private Secretary to three Secretaries of State. As Director General of Higher and Further Education at the Department for Education, she was responsible for developing and implementing higher and further education strategy and policy. With her breadth of experience across government she is ideally placed to take up this new role with us.

### *3.4 Chief Operating Officer*

Laura Gibbs has resigned as Chief Operating Officer. Laura brought a strong commitment to the University, its staff and students during her time at Queen Mary, and we wish her well for the future. We are currently considering what the longer-term leadership arrangements and structures for Professional Services should look like, in order to deliver the level of support services that we require at Queen Mary. Interim arrangements are also being put in place and I will update Senate on these at the meeting.

### *3.5 Vice-Principal (Public Engagement and Student Enterprise)*

Professor Peter McOwan will be standing down from the Senior Executive at the end of his second term as Vice-Principal for Public Engagement and Student Enterprise. Peter has made a huge contribution to Queen Mary throughout his time at our University, most noticeably during his six years on the Senior Executive. He has been a great advocate of and ambassador for Queen Mary and the central role of public engagement in particular.

I am very pleased that Peter will continue his excellent work and will take on the role of Executive Dean for Public Engagement and Student Enterprise. This role signifies our continued commitment to public engagement and student enterprise activities, allowing Peter to focus on and further develop these important areas across Queen Mary. This will ensure that Peter continues to act as a champion, internally and externally, for public engagement and student enterprise and will allow us to harness his incredible knowledge and passion for these areas of activity. Peter will move to this role after the end of his Vice-Principal term in December 2018, and given the importance of his remit he will continue to report directly to me. I am very grateful to Peter for all that he has contributed and also for agreeing to continue to lead our work in such an important area.

## **4 Going for Gold Project**

This project has been developed and is being led by Professor Stephanie Marshall and is focussed on ensuring that we provide an excellent all round experience for our students. The name of the project refers to the TEF rating that we are aiming for, noting that we currently hold a Silver Award. As previously outlined to Senate, the trajectory of our performance in the metrics that underpin the TEF rating has generally been downwards in recent years, placing us near the bottom of all universities, and achieving Gold will take some time and considerable work. The launch of the project will galvanise and accelerate our important work in this area.

It is important to note that the TEF award in itself is not the over-riding motivation behind this project. It will focus on key issues that are of fundamental importance to us, such as improving student support, reducing non-continuation and enhancing the ability of our students to access employment opportunities that match their talents. The metrics that gauge our progress in these areas do flow into league tables and TEF, and of course we and external stakeholders rightly pay attention to these, but our primary motivation for this project is that we want to do the best for our students. There has been significant collaboration with the Students' Union on the project, underpinning an approach to co-create an inclusive and world-class education at Queen Mary.

Detail on activity under this project is provided in the VP Education report.

## **5 External Environment**

I have attached as Appendix 1 a paper on the external environment, which was written for the recent meeting of Audit and Risk Committee. This focusses on the main external risks facing Queen Mary and the wider sector and outlines steps we are taking to address these.

## **6 New Strategy**

The current institutional strategy is due to expire at the end of this Academic Year and work is well underway on the development of a new strategy for Queen Mary. This will be a collective strategy for our University and it is therefore vital that as broad a range of colleagues as possible engage with this process.

To support this engagement we held a set of events in June and early July, which provided a forum for discussions about the ambitions and priorities for Queen Mary. We also considered potential mission and vision statements for the University, as well as reviewing our values and considering whether these were truly embedded. The events, which involved five all-staff events across all our campuses and a meeting of the Senior Leadership Group, involved approximately 450 colleagues.

The meetings were characterised by the quality of the discussions and insights from colleagues and the very constructive tone at all the events. There was a clear consensus around a future strategy characterised by controlled, quality-focussed growth. Discussions also focussed on (amongst other things) equality and diversity issues; the University's profile and confidence; a requirement for greater agility in operational support and processes; and ensuring parity of esteem between teaching and research.

These discussions have provided an excellent base for the next phase of the strategy development. QMSE held an away day on 5 October to explore what quality and controlled growth might look like across our core areas of activity across a 10-year timeframe, and what the implications would be for resources and our financial position. The outputs from this away day will be further refined and tested, in part via a meeting of approximately 100 senior colleagues from across the institution, which will take place in November, and also through a special meeting with Council in December.

A working draft of the strategy will be shared and tested with staff early in the New Year, with a final draft being presented for discussion and approval at the meeting of Council on 28 March. If approval is secured then the strategy will be formally launched later in the spring.

## **7 Events on Campus and Freedom of Speech**

There have been no issues since the last meeting relating to events on campus and freedom of speech that require flagging with Senate.

## **8 Other Matters**

I will report orally to Senate on other matters that may have arisen between the preparation of this report and the Meeting.

Colin Bailey, 17 October 2018

## **An Overview of External Risks facing Queen Mary and the HE Sector in England**

This report provides an overview of the main risk areas for Queen Mary and the wider sector and outlines some of the responses that are being developed.

### **1 Funding**

- University funding has witnessed a fundamental shift in recent years. Student finance is now largely channelled via student loans (graduation contribution based on their future salary) rather than government grants. This has led to a perception of greater income for universities, when in reality there has been a change in funding mechanism rather than an increase in funding levels. Also often overlooked is the fact that capital funding has been greatly reduced since 2010, with remaining elements mainly linked to certain government objectives and therefore not being available to meet the major ongoing needs of sustaining a university estate. As a result, universities have had to generate more cash internally to maintain and renew their buildings.
- As a result, and despite the popular perception, university finances are not characterised by large unallocated surpluses, but instead are having to be constantly reviewed to absorb rising costs and sustain vital investment. This is against a backdrop where fees for Home undergraduate students remain held at £9,250 (having risen from £9k since 2012 – so an increase of 2.7% over an 8 year period).
- In this context, we have had to watch very closely the political positioning on university fees (note that we refer to university fees, rather than tuition fees, as they cover teaching and a range of other activities/services). The government has established a review of post-18 education funding, covering FE and HE, which was scheduled to report in early 2019. An expert panel is providing input to the review, and members of the panel visited Queen Mary in the spring to discuss aspects of their work.
- One of the pre-conditions of the review is that there will be no increase in the overall level of resource allocated to post-18 education as a whole. A concern within HE is that the review will respond to justified claims of underfunding in FE by reducing allocations to universities and diverting this to colleges. This might be achieved via a mechanism such as differential fees, where these are reduced for arts and humanities subjects. Our interactions with the panel and other key figures have highlighted the importance of taking a holistic view of university funding, particularly for research-intensive institutions such as Queen Mary, which teach across the disciplinary spectrum. We are also being vocal in emphasising the value and importance of arts and humanities subjects, at a time when the Government is prioritising STEMM<sup>1</sup> subjects in terms of policy and funding and when the humanities are declining in popularity in secondary education.
- A complicating factor to the review is the work being undertaken by the ONS to consider how the student loan book (and the assumed write off of loans) should be treated in terms of the government's accounts. It is possible that the loans, and assumed write off, should appear in the national debt up-front, which will lead to a significant increase in the deficit. The Government may then consider how to cut the cost of the student finance system to reduce the impact on the deficit. In addition, if it appears on the national deficit any future increase in fees will be highly unlikely.
- We are maintaining a very close eye on these developments, while also undertaking scenario planning so that we can understand the potential impact of various changes to the funding model. Our approach to budget setting and controls is informed by these scenarios. We have also been planning for the effects of potential significant increases in

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<sup>1</sup> STEMM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine.

pension contributions, which could compound these funding pressures (more detail on pensions is provided later in the document).

## 2 Brexit

- Brexit clearly poses a considerable risk to UK HE, both in terms of student recruitment, student and staff mobility and also in terms of research funding and activity. Student recruitment from the EU has so far remained broadly stable at Queen Mary over the last two years, as the Government has pledged that students enrolling on undergraduate courses in 2018 and also in 2019 will maintain their home fee status for the duration of their studies. The impact longer-term of the UK's exit on flows of EU students remains a concern.
- In terms of research, Queen Mary and the UK generally has been extremely successful in accessing EU grants and there is uncertainty about how we might access future funding streams. The government had pledged to underwrite EU grants up to the end of 2020, which gives a measure of confidence for UK academics submitting bids. However, there is anecdotal evidence of EU partner institutions being reluctant to include UK institutions as leading members of bidding consortia for fear that this would adversely affect the chances of success.
- The government has been indicating its willingness to participate in the next EU funding programme from 2020 (Horizon Europe), and to pay for this participation if necessary. However, the terms from the EU at the moment are that the UK will have to a) pay to contribute; b) cannot take out more than they contribute and c) cannot have a say in how the money is spent. The UK government has indicated that they are unwilling to accept these terms.
- There is also concern about how Brexit will impact on our participation in the networks across Europe that have been key to much of our world-leading research.
- We are also apprehensive about the impact on staff recruitment, where talented recruits from the EU either decide to leave due to uncertainty about their future status (which we can track, although at the moment this involves relatively small numbers) or do not apply for positions for the same reason (which is much harder to determine).
- Preparing for the impacts of Brexit is complicated by the chronic lack of clarity about what our future relationship with the EU might look like. We have been providing legal support to our staff, to help them understand and navigate issues connected with their status. I also recently announced that the University would cover the costs to the individual of certain types of staff visa applications. In addition, we put ourselves forward to participate in a pilot for the registration of non-UK EU nationals (subject to details about how this would work), but were not selected.
- We are working to strengthen our partnerships in Europe ahead of Brexit, to ensure that we have a strong basis for future collaborations. Colin Grant (VP International) has appointed a Deputy with a specific remit to focus on our activity in Europe, to add capacity to this work.
- We are encouraging staff to continue to apply for EU research grants, on the basis that these will be underwritten by the government. We are also working to improve our performance in terms of accessing UK research funding, which is a long-standing objective but will also help mitigate against any decline in EU grants. This objective is particularly important given the significant increases in research funding that have been allocated by the government, which is projected to total an additional £2.3bn by 2021/22.
- If we are to suffer a decline in EU student recruitment, then our non-EU international market assumes even greater importance (see below for further information on



challenges in this area). The recent approval at QMSE of a Global Engagement Strategy will underpin and guide this work.

- Generally, we continue to emphasise at every opportunity the great value we place on the diversity of our staff and student community and the huge benefits that come from the range of views, perspectives and traditions that this brings.

### **3 The Wider Political Landscape**

- Brexit is a significant component of what is perhaps the most unstable political environment witnessed in this country for several decades. The current government does not have a majority and relies on support from the DUP to carry legislation through parliament. This uncertainty impacts negatively on our ability to undertake longer-term planning, as we are faced with the prospect of a potential change of government at any point over the next few years, with the major parties having polarised views and policies. Even if the current government does endure until the end of its five-year term, its strength and ability to push through a legislative agenda is much diminished, which makes it difficult to define a clear direction of travel in terms of policy.
- In this environment, and as noted in this paper, we must undertake scenario planning across a range of issues, such as fees and reductions in EU student numbers, and ensure that we have the capacity to address these adequately and swiftly. We must work hard to ensure that this does not hinder our ability to act creatively and with innovation in our future strategy.

### **4 International Markets**

- One of the risks to the recruitment of international students to our London campuses is the government's immigration policy and rhetoric. The government has created an increasingly unattractive visa regime for international students, and recent figures for the sector as a whole show the UK's recruitment from overseas markets falling behind the rates of expansion seen in countries such as the US, Canada and Australia. Generally, there is a perception overseas that the UK is less welcoming than it used to be to overseas students and also to those coming here to work.
- Concerns in this area were not helped by the recent report from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), which did not include a strong recommendation for taking students out of the calculations for the net immigration target set by the government. There was also a lack of new proposals around allowing students to remain in the UK to work after graduation (post-study work). This is a significant factor in attracting overseas students and the UK suffers in comparison to much more generous and flexible arrangements in other countries.
- Queen Mary has recorded strong overseas recruitment for this new Academic Year, which suggests that our approach to international student recruitment continues to work well. The new Global Engagement Strategy will look to build on this further. This will include looking to ensure that there is a stronger flow of students from our programmes taught overseas (particularly our Joint Programmes in China) onto postgraduate courses here in London. The expansion and diversification of our teaching overseas is in itself a mitigation against this risk area, as is our focus on developing a stronger offer via distance learning.
- Being a London institution also helps to counter-act the impression that is forming of the UK as an increasing insular country, and the international nature of the capital and our campuses feature very heavily in our marketing.

## 5 Demographics

- The number of 18 year olds is declining in the UK and this is creating an issue for the sector (which has generally invested in growth) in terms of recruiting new undergraduate students. This was seen in this year's admissions data for the sector, which saw a drop in applications and very intense competition for students leading to an increase in unconditional offers and generous incentives.
- The strength of our offer and our marketing approach is key to responding to this risk, and the current admissions position (which is still not set as students continue to enrol) is indicating that we have performed well, with undergraduate recruitment slightly ahead of target. This is testament to the hard work of colleagues across the institution.
- Our London location, and the demographics in East London (which is seeing a growth in younger age groups, counter to the national trend) is beneficial. We are not being complacent, however, and will be investing into our marketing and admissions teams to ensure we continue to be well placed.

## 6 Sector Regulation

- The advent of the Office for Students (OfS) is marking a significant shift in the way government engages with universities. The OfS predecessor body, HEFCE, had a 'critical friend' approach, which involved challenge and scrutiny but on a more collaborative basis. The remit given by government to the OfS is much more that of a classic regulator, which is set up to combat the perceived issues in the sector around value for money in particular, but also around a range of other aspects such as social mobility (access), grade inflation, unconditional offers and freedom of speech.
- This more confrontational approach by government creates concerns, not least on the issue of institutional autonomy. This has been the cornerstone of the success of our sector and a gradual erosion of this principle would be hugely detrimental. With a more intrusive approach we would also be apprehensive about an increase in the regulatory burden.
- Our response to these trends is partly to work very closely with UUK and the Russell Group to lobby government on the importance of a proportionate approach to regulatory intrusion and burden, particularly for the very established and successful institutions in the Russell Group. Locally, we are considering on an ongoing basis how we are positioned in relation to these high profile issues. On unconditional offers for example, which we call 'Outstanding Potential Awards', we have reviewed our approach and are confident that where we do make such offers, these are linked to interviews of the prospective students and a careful consideration of their potential.
- A key part of the regulatory picture is the set of accountability and evaluation exercises, namely the Research Excellence Framework (REF), Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The first is a well-established part of the sector landscape and our preparations for the next submission in 2021 are already well underway. We are currently assessing the proposed guidelines for the exercise and developing an institutional response to the consultation, as well as considering the implications for our planning.
- The TEF is a more recent creation but appears to be with us for the foreseeable future. We currently hold a Silver Award at institutional level and Stephanie Marshall (Interim VP Education) is leading work ahead of our next submission in 2020. It is important to note that the metrics that inform the TEF assessment are measures for key aspects of our activity, such as student retention, attainment and employability. It is these core elements of our work with students that is the focus of the VP Education's efforts, but we

are mindful of the impact it will have on our TEF award, and the value attached to that by internal and external audiences.

- Plans for a subject level TEF are being developed by government and pilot exercises are being planned at a number of institutions, which will trial different models for undertaking assessment at this level. The work being led by the VP Education is focussed at School level and is providing TEF assessments by subject, so we are already establishing this approach at Queen Mary.
- The final exercise, the KEF, is still being considered by government, although we expect it to be implemented at some point in the near future. We have identified as a priority the need to improve our engagement with business and industry, and have appointed David Lee to the role of Deputy Vice-Principal (Enterprise). This role, which reports in to the VP Research and Innovation, will lead our work in this area and the development of an Enterprise Strategy is a key early component of this. These steps, which will look to enhance our activity and improve our data capture, will help put us in a stronger position for an assessment via KEF.

## **7 Public Perception of Universities**

- The approach of the OfS, as noted above, seems set in the context of government rhetoric on universities, which is predominately negative on a range of issues. This is feeding into a very problematic public perception of universities as places that (amongst other things) are not offering 'value for money', that are out of touch, and are more focussed on protecting the sensitivities of their students than defending the principles of free speech.
- Both UUK and the Russell Group are working to change the narrative at the national level and create a more positive public perception of the sector. As well as addressing specific issues that are prominent in the public debate, their work is also focussing on emphasising the huge social and economic contributions to the country made by universities. It is vital that this message gets through and that we push back against the increasingly negative perception that is being promoted in some quarters. As an individual institution we will also support this work wherever possible, and all members of staff and our Council and Committee members have a role to play in these efforts.

## **8 Industrial Relations**

- Committee members will be well aware of the significant industrial action that took place in the spring. This was primarily linked to proposed changes to the USS pension scheme, which have been paused while a review has been undertaken of the valuation of the scheme's financial position by a UUK and UCU appointed panel. In the meantime, the pension scheme is taking steps to implement a contingency position in the event that UUK and UCU cannot agree on a way forward. This contingency position would involve employee contributions rising by 3.7% and employer contributions rising by 6.9% (the annual cost of this to Queen Mary would be circa £10m).
- The pensions issue will continue to be a source of considerable anxiety over this new Academic Year, although we are pleased to see that the panel has been able to agree on a set of recommendations that might provide a way forward. In addition, a ballot for industrial action is currently underway regarding the latest national pay offer. The main unions have recommended to their members that they reject the offer and endorse further industrial action.
- Overlaid on these issues of pay and pensions are broader concerns held by many of our colleagues about the general direction of HE and the government approach to creating a more marketised sector, with a detrimental impact on key aspects of the university

tradition. There are also linked concerns about workload and wellbeing, equality of pay and opportunities, and insecure working conditions.

- These are all difficult and sensitive issues and our response as an Executive and University requires careful consideration. On pensions, I have invested considerable time into visiting Schools and Institutes to discuss the issues with colleagues. These visits are ongoing and a new programme is being put in place for the first few months of this new Academic Year. We are also working very hard to engage with USS and UUK to identify an approach that will deliver as good an outcome as possible for members of the Queen Mary community.
- We are focussing closely on equality and diversity and on insecure contracts in this first part of the new Academic Year. On the former, we have strengthened the governance structures around equality and diversity and have just appointed a Senior Academic Lead for this area, who will focus on taking these issues forward through a 0.5 FTE buyout of their time. An institutional equality and diversity report has also just been published to provide a platform for our work.
- On insecure contracts, we have been looking to get a clearer view on the data around staff on non-permanent contracts. This has taken some time but we are now in a position to better identify those colleagues where their contractual arrangements are not suitable and need improving. In undertaking this work, it's important to recognise that we will have a proportion of staff on non-permanent contracts, who will be (for example) covering sabbatical leave, will be linked to research grants, or will be PhD students undertaking teaching. We are currently finalising how best to share these data with all staff and also with the unions, so that we can work together to address any employment circumstances that are not in line with our values.
- In terms of wellbeing, we are responding to concerns raised in staff surveys about bullying and harassment. We commissioned Affinity at Work to undertake some more in-depth analysis of this issue, including interviews and workshops, and HR has developed a set of actions and initiatives in response to this. This is being discussed with colleagues at the Wellbeing Group next month.

Colin Bailey, 24 September 2018