

## Senate update: VP, Policy and Strategic Partnerships – June - September 2020

### COVID-19

As the senior lead responsible for the relationship with Tower Hamlets, and given the rising cases of COVID-19, we have ramped up our interaction with Tower Hamlets, and connected with the other local authorities where we have sites/residences. I represent Queen Mary on the Tower Hamlets Health Protection Board, the Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group, and the Silver Local Economy Group. Meetings of the Health Protection Board are now at least fortnightly with regular briefings and updates from the director of public health, and other key partners in the borough including social care, schools etc. The latest data, key messages and interventions are shared and considered.

### Public engagement and civic responsibility

Universities are being called upon to recognise their place and role within society and the economy in which they reside – a growing call in light of the impact of Covid19. The 2019 Civic University Commission, led by Lord Kerslake, recommended that universities develop Civic University Agreements as a way of outlining their local commitment and partnerships<sup>1</sup>.

Communities connected to Queen Mary's research and teaching can be found across the world, but this particular Commission calls on universities to reflect on their place geographically. Queen Mary already plays a considerable role as an anchor institution in east London, and has a strong reputation in public and community engagement. But there remains significant opportunity to build on what we have done so far and develop our profile and reputation considerably, in east London and London more broadly.

The growing civic agenda within the Higher Education sector can be found in the Knowledge Exchange Framework, the Higher Education Innovation Fund, and the Government's R&D Roadmap – and Queen Mary committed to developing a Civic University Agreement in 2019. A robust and unique Civic University Agreement (CUA) will help to solidify and enhance our reputation in East London, and enable us to form partnerships in east London at a time when other universities are growing their presence in the area. The Centre for Public Engagement will lead this work under my sponsorship. We will need to work across the institution, but conscious of the pressures everyone is under, we aim to phase the work appropriately, with the aim of having a finalised CUA summer 2021.

Locally, I am actively involved in conversations with Tower Hamlets Council regarding the recovery of the borough post-Covid19, with the Council focusing on economy, community and mental health. The proposition of a local Anchor Institute Network has been raised by Barts Health NHS Trust, with the potential of exploring the development of employment and procurement agreements – to boost our joint impact within the local economy and society. Queen Mary has also been invited to conversations relating to Covid19 recovery with Newham Council.

### Civic Universities Network

Following the publication of the Civic University Commission report, the UPP Foundation launched an open call to universities wishing to lead the development of a Civic University Network – designed to support universities as they establish their own understanding of civic engagement and commitment

---

<sup>1</sup> [Truly Civic: Strengthening the connections between universities and their place](#); UPP Foundation 2019

in their prospective areas. Sheffield Hallam University was successful and was awarded £145,000 to establish the Network – working alongside the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) and the Institute for Community Studies. Queen Mary University London was chosen as one of the supporting partners, alongside Universities of Glasgow and Birmingham, and Newcastle University.

Professor Colin Bailey was subsequently invited to join the Advisory Group and I am a member of the Partners Group. As a Partner member of the Network, Queen Mary is expected to support Sheffield Hallam University in establishing and leading this new Network, develop its own CUA, and participate in national conversations around civic responsibility and place – for example, the recent [BEIS R&D Roadmap Consultation](#). More than 60 universities have signed up to develop CUAs. For example, the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University recently [published a joint agreement](#); agreements are near completion at [Newcastle University](#) (led by a new Dean of Place) and [Sheffield Hallam University](#); and other signatories already have civic strategies or charters

### **Degree apprenticeships/Institute of Technology**

The latest on the Institute of Technology is that since the last meeting of Senate, the Mayor of London announced a consultation on plans to move at least some of the GLA offices to the Crystal facility. A firm decision has yet to be made, and it will take some time for the position regarding the Crystal to become clear. We are therefore urgently looking at other possible sites, one of which is at London City Island (not far from the Crystal). It has promise, but we are awaiting some further information. We should know in the next few weeks whether it is a realistic option for us.

In July 2020, with my encouragement and sponsorship, we put in a bid in response to a public tender issued by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for comprehensive project support to design, deliver and assure a new Economics Masters Apprenticeship Programme across multiple Government Departments and Agencies. BEIS committed to act as the lead Department responsible for supplier management and in August 2020 awarded the contract to the School of Economics and Finance at Queen Mary University of London. This contract represents Queen Mary's largest and most high profile Degree Apprenticeship programme to date. It is a great opportunity for us to build our relationship with a number of Government Departments. The contract value is between £4.4 and 6.6m, and the contract will run for 4 years with the possibility of a 2 year extension. The Government Departments involved so far are: BEIS, HM Treasury, MHCLG, DIT, DfID, Defra, DfE, DWP and the National Infrastructure Commission. The first cohort will start in February 2021.

### **Executive Education/CPD/Enterprise Activities**

The Enterprise Process Improvement and Change (EPIC) project is now under way covering: short courses and executive education, degree apprenticeships, consultancy, and summer schools. The aim of the project is to produce transparent policies, processes, and guidance with a clear financial model and proportionate quality assurance to make it easier for academic colleagues to take ideas for new enterprise initiatives forward successfully the institution and with adequate support. I and others are working closely with Gideon Shimshon, Associate Principal Digital Learning and Director of QM Online.

## Sustainability

An environmental sustainability action plan has now been developed, submitted to and approved by the Sustainability Committee in July and the Estates Strategy Board on 24<sup>th</sup> August. It has also gone to SET, where after some minor revisions, it should shortly be approved. Our 2020 – 2023 environmental sustainability action plan (ESAP) has been developed as an immediate response to the current and emerging environmental risks and challenges. We know we need to do more, and through this action plan the aim is to establish strong foundations for the development of a longer-term, more ambitious strategy and plan. We will engage staff and students across the institution in the development of this longer-term strategy and plan over the next 2-3 years.

## Other items

The Industry Forum has met once during this period to share intelligence and information on engagement with industry. The business development team are doing detailed sector analysis as part of identifying potential partners who we should focus on to target to develop collaborations and partnerships with. Life sciences were the subject of the June meeting, and as a result of this work, the team have started conversations with BenevolentAI, Abbvie and Oxford Nanopore.

The **Student Knowledge Exchange Through Community Hubs (SKETCH)** project has kicked off, with the social venture fund component launched on Friday 17 September. It's a student-led social venture fund aiming to support long-term social change. It's the first student-led venture capital fund investing in student-led social enterprises in the UK.

Under my sponsorship, we are in the process of developing a relationship with Donmar Warehouse: we are working with them on student consultancy opportunities and also on some ideas for training harnessing their creative expertise and talent in performance, communication and presentation.

In June 2020, Queen Mary launched a digital lecture series to explore "People and Pandemics", and I chaired one panel of our leading academics to discuss COVID-19 and its Global Impact (with Professor Tim Bale, Professor David McCoy and Dr Magda Osman) over two episodes, and a second panel discussing "People and Pandemics – A Better World?", with Professor Barbara Taylor, Professor Norman Fenton, and Dr James Bradley).

I represent Queen Mary on the Living Wage Foundation Advisory Council, which meets quarterly. Partnerships Board has met in July and September and an update is provided separately. I chair the Memorandum of Agreement review panel which keeps under review and oversees the operation of the memorandum of agreement between the Students' Union and the University, which meets at least once a term. I have also continued to chair the Charterhouse Square Projects Board, which meets monthly; this board oversees a collection of separate but interdependent estates projects on that campus.