



Senate

Paper Title	Students' Union President's report
Outcome requested	For Senate to note.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	The report is an update from the end of November to the beginning of March on activity within the Students' Union. It includes the following sections: Key Updates Education Welfare and Liberation Student Opportunities
Questions for Senate to consider	
Regulatory/statutory reference points	
Strategy and risk	
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	
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President's Senate Report

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President's Report

Key Updates

Spring Elections

On 3 March, the winners of the Students' Union Spring Elections were announced. More than 70 Part-Time Officer positions, 6 Executive Officer positions and 3 Student Trustee positions were up for elections, and a total of 105 candidates put themselves forward for a position.

The Executive Officers for 2022/23 will be Adi Sawalha (President), Charlie Sellar (VP Barts and The London), Saynab Sharif (VP Humanities and Social Sciences), Muneer Hussain (VP Science and Engineering), Joanna Croft (VP Welfare) and Radhika Thiagarajan (VP Communities). The full elections results can be found on our [website](#).

This year, we were able to re-introduce many of the in-person events and promotional activities that we were unable to organise last year due to the pandemic. During the voting period, we ran two events on campus (one in Library Square in Mile End and one at the BLSA Building in Whitechapel) to raise awareness about the elections and encourage students to vote. We also offered on-campus breaks for candidates, where candidates could have a quick rest from campaigning and speak to a member of the Elections Team, and the Results Party took place in Drapers.

The promotional campaign included a full on-campus communications campaign in addition to promotion on social media, the Students' Union website and emails. This year, we introduced a new range of incentives and prizes, which were linked to voter engagement – a new prize was unlocked for each milestone that was reached (250 voters, 500 voters, 750 voters and so on). We also worked with colleagues in schools and central services to get their help to promote the elections to students in their areas.

Unfortunately, the voting period was negatively affected by UCU strikes and tube strikes, which meant that footfall on campus was lower than normal. The tube strikes also meant that many candidates were unable to come to campus and campaign. From pre-pandemic years, we know that the candidates' on-campus campaigns play a crucial role in driving up voter engagement, and we believe the low footfall on campus and the barriers to on-campus campaigning led to a lower turnout than previous years – a total of 2459 students voted.

Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group

This is a group that was set up to look at the effects of the strike, the effects of mitigating measures on the student experience, teaching and assessment, academic progression, and award outcomes. Saynab Sharif, Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences, has continued to convey feedback from students who have strong concerns about the impact strikes will have on teaching. We have raised that there needs to be better communication with students from staff and direct instructions on what is happening and next steps. The issue of extenuating circumstances and how missed teaching will be mitigated when it comes to submitting coursework, dissertations, and exams, are part of continuing and ongoing discussions with QMUL.

Education Awards

The Education Awards celebrate and recognise staff members, Course Reps and Part-Time Officers that have made an outstanding contribution this academic year. Nominations for Education Awards have now opened and will close on 11 March, and the awards ceremony will take place on 6 April at Drapers Hall. We are currently working with colleagues in the university to encourage students and staff to submit their nominations. To ensure students are involved in all aspects of the awards, elected representatives will shortlist the nominations and select the winners.

QM Skills Award

Over 290 students have registered for the QM Skills Award. We have offered over 10 different sessions for students including Introduction to Leadership, Problem Solving and Emergency First Aid. So far, over 100 students have engaged with our training offer which has consisted of in-person and virtual delivery. There are several more sessions taking place throughout March for students to meet the engagement requirements, complete the award and have it recognized on their HEAR transcript.

Strategy Data Collection

We are in the process of developing a new strategic plan, and as part of this process, we are collecting feedback from students, which will be used to help us identify key themes and issues that are affecting students.

The data collection will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including an all-student survey, workshops, and group interviews. Six Student Data Collectors (current QMUL students) have been employed to help with the data collection and the promotion of the various ways students can get involved in the data collection.

The all-student survey was launched on the 8th of March, workshops are scheduled for later in March and group interviews are expected to take place in early April. Once the data validation workshops have taken place we will share key findings with the University.

Education

Paris Strategy Group

Saynab has attended and supported the work of the Paris Strategy Group, to ensure that QMUL students studying at the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP) are represented in discussions about the continued offering of teaching provision. In order to represent students in these meetings effectively, Saynab has frequently met with student representatives from ULIP and Queen Mary postgraduates students. These meetings have helped to identify the main priorities of the ULIP student representatives, discuss their projects for the upcoming year and establish a positive relationship through the offering of our Course Rep training and collaborating of activities with ULIP Students' Union.

HSS E-Resources – Services and Support Student Forum

Saynab has also been working closely with QMUL staff to host an IT Students' Forum and invited student representatives to attend and discuss issues they have encountered with teaching and learning tools. The forum helped to establish collaboration between the representatives, IT Services, Library Services and the E-Learning Unit and lay out actions to improve student's experiences with the service based on the representative's feedback. The forum has been positive and the student voice has been critical in identifying and addressing the gaps in service delivery such as access to Wi-Fi, computers, contacting IT services.

Education Board & Humanities and Social Sciences Board

Saynab chaired our HSS Board and co-chaired Education Board with Rob. There were updates on projects, and concerns in different schools were identified, and raised in relevant meetings to university staff critical to addressing the issues. The principal areas of concern for students were the technology in teaching rooms. In some teaching rooms there are issues with camera quality and loud background noise, connectivity, differing experiences online and in-person as well as interaction. There are issues with playback on Q-Review due to quiet audio and microphones, and QM Plus system outages during exams. Furthermore, UCU Strike Action during these meetings asked for feedback on the impact within each school. There were concerns with coursework and dissertation deadlines which have not yet been moved, missed teaching time and when these would be rescheduled. It was also noted that campus engagement in activities has significantly dropped.

PhD Hub

Bilge Kacmaz, Vice-President Science & Engineering, has been discussing PhD student feedback on their academic and working environments. Themes include the accessibility of academic papers which Bilge is liaising with Library Services on.

Issues with the PhD hub at SEMS were also raised and resolved with the Estates team. These included a collapsed ceiling, heating, cleaning, and some other minor health and safety issues. The school will be checking the space more regularly to ensure difficulties with students' learning environment is minimised.

Another issue raised by students was 24-hour access. Before the pandemic students used to have 24-hour access to SEMS. Due to health and safety issues, such as lone working they have limited access now. This is especially affecting 3rd-year students and students who have other commitments in the day, who suit studying overnight. The issue is ongoing, and discussions are taking place with the School Manager with alternative options being proposed, such as giving access until midnight.

Queens' Building Phase 2

Bilge is currently working with the Estates and Facilities team for Queens' Building Phase 2 project. Bilge took part in the architects' interview panel and gave feedback related to specific spaces, and on considering the environmental impact when sourcing materials.

Internships

Bilge would like students to be able to do internal credit-bearing internships. As part of this ambition Bilge is working with the schools to find at least 10 internships across the faculty. Bilge will also look for external partners to create internship opportunities. An internship page will be launched soon on our website with internship guidance and tips.

Welfare and Liberation

Asian Heritage Month

Radhika is currently working with international and BAME reps to organise Asian Heritage Month for March. Part of the planned activities for the month include, food trucks on campuses, a multicultural fair at BL, developing social media content to promote the Asian heritage, and a panel event to highlight Asian leaders.

Welfare Reps

Muneer Hussain, Vice President Welfare, organised an event for welfare reps to network and raise general concerns. The event was well received by those that were present and issues were identified regarding how the range of student groups can place different demands on these reps. Welfare reps for sports clubs and societies often have a much larger role to play and can experience a lot of pressure from students in the role. Muneer is looking to organise a drop-in session for welfare reps to encourage those that have concerns or issues to come forward with them.

Feedback Week

Residences held their feedback week in December to collect student input regarding their experiences in halls. Muneer was the Exec lead, to ensure there was presence from the Student Union. Overall, feedback from the students was positive with the odd maintenance issue being flagged up. Some halls mentioned the lack of spaces and opportunities to socialise and get to know their neighbours.

Friday Prayer Motion

Muneer submitted a paper to the Education Quality Standard Board (EQSB) regarding blocking off Fridays 1-2pm from teaching as per our Annual Student Meeting policy. The paper also outlined further steps to help mitigate the issues faced by Jewish students in regard to the Sabbath. The board agreed with the principles of the paper and actioned a group to look at the feasibility of the steps suggested. Muneer has also contacted the university about Exam timetables to enquire about ensuring no exams/assessments are scheduled for Friday 1-2PM.

Contemplation Space

Muneer has raised the issue about lack of contemplation space within the university. The Nest Kitchen is a space in the Students' Union Hub that is not utilised during the academic year. Currently it is used for commercial purposes during the summer. Muneer will meet with Estates to discuss looking at this issue in general and the possibility of converting the Nest Kitchen into a quiet space that could double as contemplation space during peak usage times.

International Students

Radhika is continuing work on improving loans and bursaries offered to International students in UGT, PGT and PGR. Radhika recently met with the NUS President who has supported this project. Radhika has also spoken to other Student's Union officers who are currently working on similar projects and the Head at UKICSA who is interested in this project. Radhika will organise meetings in the next few weeks with these reps to explore potential collaborations.

Furthermore, there were issues with international students who have failed their January assessments. Their resits do not happen soon enough and by the time results for resits have been released, these students have lost their student permission, which then means they are not eligible to apply for the 2-year Post Study Work permit. For many students, they have committed to financing their education in London, only because of the

availability of the 2-year Post Study Work permit. Accordingly, Radhika is raising the issue in the Global engagement meeting and also with the international advice team to help make arrangements so that these students do not lose their 2-year Post Study Work opportunity.

Safety & Women's Welfare

In light of the homophobic incident in Mile End cemetery and the drink spiking incidents, Radhika is currently working with QMUL to promote Ask for Angela on campus. Radhika has worked with representatives and our team to place the Ask for Angela materials in our spaces. She is also currently lobbying the University to do the same in their venues.

Furthermore, Radhika is working with our Women's Representatives in order to lobby the university to invest in providing free sanitary products for women across the different campuses. The University has now promised to take up this project as a matter of priority and free sanitary products should be made available for all students soon enough across all campuses.

Name Change Policy

Radhika is also working with LGBTQ reps to lobby the university to change its system so as to allow students change their "known as" name on Teams or Email, without having to produce proof or go through complicated processes. This type of a system will be Trans student friendly and Radhika is lobbying for the university to prioritise this matter.

Nightline

Radhika is continuing work on the in-house Nightline project, to promote peer-to-peer counselling service on campus, which has now picked up momentum. Recently, Radhika met with Nightline Association who have encouraged and promised to support the establishing of an in-house drop in service Nightline at QMUL. Radhika is currently in discussions with the University, the Students' Union, Nightline Association and other representatives about budgeting, insurance, safety, training, and other requirements that comes with setting up a drop-in service Nightline. Radhika is also working with Gloucestershire Nightline to get the service agreements and governance documents ready for the Nightline to be set up

Student Opportunities

Student Groups

This year's membership numbers for societies have significantly exceeded membership numbers for last academic year, across all categories, demonstrating students are keen to re-engage in extracurricular activities. The biggest growth rate has been membership to cultural societies- a difference of, so far, +2,109 memberships compared to last year (+185%). Membership to faith societies is at a difference of +576 (+96%) and membership to both recreational and social societies has grown by just under 100% compared to last year.

To best support groups to re-establish themselves and their activities, and deliver high quality activities for their new members, the team have reintroduced drop-ins for society leaders, have proactively reached out to groups with low membership numbers to offer support, and have developed guidance documents and support sessions for large-scale events.

We have also been working with QMUL staff in Malta to support a growing number student-led affiliated societies based in Gozo. We currently support 14 societies based in Malta.

The team are currently facilitating committee elections for 2022-23 committees for Student Media Outlets, Societies, and Volunteering Groups. Training for new committees will begin over the summer. As was the case last year, groups will be required to have a Welfare Officer on their committees, who will receive dedicated training for their roles.

Club Sport

Club sport has had a busy start to the semester. There were 2,497 club sport members at the end of semester one, a large increase from 1,974 members at the end of the 2019/20 academic year. We believe this an incredible level of engagement considering Club Sport activities were unable to run as they usually do for over a year due to the pandemic.

30 clubs attended Welcome Back fair in January, 6 clubs attended BUCS Nationals in Sheffield, there have been multiple competition wins, teams reaching cup/league finals and 4 charity tournaments and events have been run in aid of some amazing charities.

We have had 2 more Club Sport board meetings and one more round of Club Sport Development Fund bids where £5,256 has been spent on equipment, projects, and events. Our internal varsity Merger cup is due to happen at the end of the semester as is Sports Awards where we hope to engage many of our members in celebrating their successes after an incredibly positive year in Club Sport since the pandemic.

Employability

Radhika Thiagarajan, Vice-President Communities, has continued the series of Alumni Cafes events, with an event in February for Computer Science and Engineering students with alumni from Spotify, Braze and Ministry of Justice attending. Like the events in Semester 1, this event was well received and was fully booked the day that tickets became available. The alumni were very enthusiastic to network and share their journey, details about application process, work culture and other experiences. The success of the event was also indicated by students' eagerness to attend more events like this. Accordingly, Radhika is currently working with the Global Alumni Engagement team to organise another set of Alumni Café events for students aspiring for a career in the Arts and the event is set to happen on 30th March.

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. We offer a range of sports such as Badminton, Volleyball, Fencing and Basketball.

At the midpoint of the second semester of the 2021/22 academic year, the Get Active programme has engaged 3131 participants so far. We offer a weekly pop-up in Library Square on Wednesday afternoons through which 503 students have benefited, offering activities such as badminton, tennis, table tennis and cornhole. Get Active has also supported a couple of campaigns such as This Girl Can week where we offered women only sessions across Fencing, Futsal and Basketball. Recently, Get Active has supported the Student Voice department by running pop-ups during the Students' Union elections campaign.

Campus Games

The Campus Games programme provides the opportunity for students to get involved in large scale sporting opportunities throughout the year in order 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 Campus Games has begun a new strand working with QM Residence Life to offer a Campus Games programme specifically for students living in halls. We have run 6 events in activities such as Volleyball, Dodgeball and Badminton, and have engaged 113 students across 16 halls. As this year has been the pilot for the Halls only programme, we are delighted that the partnership with the Residential Life team has been renewed for the next academic year.

Social leagues

The Social Leagues have been running for just over one month in Football 7's, 11's, Netball and Basketball. Working closely with the Community Foundation we have upskilled over 10 student staff, putting the students through their referee qualifications in three different sports. There are currently twenty student staff employed in the Social Leagues. There has been over 30 teams participating in the leagues and 360 participants engaging in the leagues weekly. For the first year ever Social Leagues will be running exam semester leagues in Basketball and Netball along with Football 7-a-side which is run annually.

Student Group Awards

We are very much looking forward to celebrating the successes and achievements of our student leaders and groups this year! The Societies and Student Media Awards will take place at the Whitechapel campus on Thursday, 24 March. The Volunteering Awards will take place on Thursday, 7 April, in St Benet's Chapel. For the first time, an 'Education for Sustainable Development' award will be included in the Education Awards.

Community Volunteering

With support from the Westfield Fund, we have appointed a current student as our Volunteering Intern, who started working with the Student Engagement Team in January on part-time basis. They have already been

instrumental in supporting the team to re-build our volunteering offer after the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and re-engage students in volunteering.

In celebration of National Student Volunteering Week (SVW) in February we put on a schedule of events and activities for students. The week's activities, which included one-off volunteering activities, mindfulness sessions for volunteers, student-led skills development sessions, opportunities to hear more about opportunities from community partners and providers, and more, saw around 100 engagements from students.

Sustainability

To celebrate Green Week in February, the Students' Union brought together student leaders and colleagues from across QMUL to put on an exciting schedule of six online and in-person events and activities to engage students in sustainability. The week, which saw around 100 engagements, featured a sustainability careers workshop through the Skills Award, a sustainability careers panel event with QM Careers and Enterprise, a canal clean-up volunteering opportunity, a student-led Queer Climate Festival, and more!

A new Green Mary Sustainability Fund, funded by the University and administered by the Students' Union, offering £3,000 for staff- and student-led projects, received 11 applications. 7 projects have been granted funding including initiatives on glove recycling in labs, biodiversity projects on campus, NHS Sustainability Day events and research into reusing bike inner tubes.

The January Reuse fair, attended by 221 students, redistributed over 350kg of household items donated by students leaving halls in December, which would have otherwise ended up in landfills.

Graduate Attributes

Radhika is co-leading on the Student Engagement sub-group of the Graduate Attributes work-stream team at QMUL. In January and February, Radhika spoke to students about how their course can be better developed and tailored to help them find jobs, or help them with their lives after university. Focus groups are now being conducted based on the initial conversation with students, to gather more details. Hopefully, the findings of these focus groups will help the academic curriculum adapt so that it matches the skills expected from employers.

Hub, BLSA and Multi-Faith Centre

The Hub and BLSA building have now reopened fully with no Covid measures in place. We continue to monitor our spaces to ensure that they are being used effectively. Room bookings in our spaces are back to pre-pandemic levels. Since September, the team have processed 675 Union bookings and 738 University bookings.

The MFC has maintained high levels of use since reopening fully, with very few issues relating to behaviours that we have seen in the past. Friday Prayer across both buildings continues to be highly attended.

Adi Sawalha
Students' Union President
9th March 2022