



## Senate Report

<b>Outcome requested:</b>	To Note
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p>The report is an update from the start of the academic year on activity within the Students' Union. It includes the following sections:</p> <p>Key Updates Student Voice and Education Welfare and Liberation Student Opportunities</p>
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<b>Senior Management/External Sponsor</b>	

# President's Senate Report

September 2022

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# President's Report

## Key Updates

### Welcome Fairs

The Welcome Fair events at Mile End and Whitechapel were a great success with over 10,000 students attending and overwhelmingly positive feedback from new and returning students, stallholders and staff. The Mile End Fair took place across the Students' Union Hub, Great Hall, Sports Hall, outdoor spaces, and also the Temporary Building ground floor space for the first time to accommodate more student groups and manage capacities across the event. At Whitechapel the event took place across the BLSA Building, Garrod Building and Blizzard Mews. The events created a fantastic atmosphere on both campuses, and it was brilliant to see people enjoying themselves and engaging with the activities on offer.

The events included over 250 stalls, outdoor festival zones, sporting activities and a performance area featuring over 20 student group performances and demonstrations across the three days. We also welcomed several external organisations and charities.

### Students' Union Welcome Crew and Help Squad

150 students volunteered their time over Arrivals Weekend and Welcome Week across our London campuses. In their standout 'Here to Help' red and black hoodies, these volunteers were a key friendly face welcoming new students, signposting to opportunities and helping students to navigate our campus. The volunteers' dedication to ensuring that new students had a positive experience has been remarkable and we cannot thank them enough for their time, hard work and positive energy! We look forward to thanking them at an event at Mucci's supported by QM Residential Services.

### Welcome Events

The Students' Union delivered a packed programme of events for Welcome Week that has continued into week one. Attendance was significantly up on previous years with over 7142 tickets sold (so far) for Students' Union-led welcome events (excluding the Welcome Fair), with a further 2960 free event tickets also snapped up.

Events have included a series of walking tours (including Harry Potter, East London and Royals & Rulers of Britain), speed meeting, club nights, comedy nights, food & drink tasting events, sporting activities, outdoor yoga, a Boat Ball down the Thames and a Thorpe Park trip. In addition, our programme has featured a series of wellbeing events including online workshops on preparing for university, creating a productive study space and looking after your wellbeing at university. Dedicated events were run for commuters, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students to help them meet others within these communities, with over 350 students in attendance at each, which was great to see.

We also collaborated with the QMUL Residences team to deliver several halls-specific activities including speed meeting events for individual halls, craft activities, pick, paint and plant events and neon life drawing attended by over 450 attendees. Our new Inter-Halls Games programme also started, beginning with an afternoon of Zorb Football.

In Whitechapel, the BLSA hosted a diverse week of events including the BL Families peer support event connecting over 600 new and returning students, comedy nights, alcohol-free Games Nights, an Inter-Institute Quiz and the popular sports club event Tables.

Our events programme was complemented by several welcome events delivered by our student-led Clubs and Societies that continue into October. Further details at [www.qmsu.org/events](http://www.qmsu.org/events).

### Students' Union Whitechapel Campus Re-provision

We are pleased to be moving from the BLSA building to spaces within the Garrod Building. The Union will occupy around 1100 sq m, compared to previous 1300 sq m, which is compensated by the location in this historic building and sector leading space. The move is currently planned for June / July 2023 and the Stage 2 Architects report has been signed off. The timing schedule is limited with building works due to start in January 2023.

The draft Union Operating model document for the Garrod Building will be presented at the next MOA panel meeting, as well as the Life Science Project Board. Charlie Sellar, Vice President Barts and The London, has been working alongside staff to approve designs and the provision will include student informal recreation space in the Old Library, a contemporary café bar (replacement for The Griff Inn), a small fitness area, multi – faith space, clubs and societies facilities, and student officer and staff workplace.

### **Timetabling**

Following on from previous work, Muneer Hussain, Vice President Science & Engineering, has been working with students to understand their concerns about timetabling. The university agreed in January to block, where possible, 1pm-2pm on Fridays from teaching activity to allow Muslim students to observe the Friday prayer and not be disadvantaged academically for doing so. For the majority of students, it appears that this has been successful, although there are some notable exceptions which Muneer has been working to identify and propose alternative arrangements. There are also wider concerns that Muneer is hoping to address this year relating to timetabling balance e.g. lots of hours in a row, or one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Muneer will continue to feedback to the university around this and work towards improving timetabling to match student preferences.

### **Re-Use Fair**

The Reuse Fair was a success once again. 450 students benefitted from the fair, which redistributes household and other items donated by last year's leavers to new students, with around 90% of students, who provided feedback, feeling that the fair helped them to save money. As well as helping new students transition into University, the project has also saved several tonnes of items from going into landfill over the years.

### **QM Skills Award**

We have recently hired an Employability Student Intern to support the development and delivery of the QM Skills Award. There are 12 skill sessions and 2 reflection sessions currently organised for semester 1. We have had over 30 sign-ups through our website and over 100 students from the Welcome Fair have expressed interest in the semester 1 sessions.

### **Talented Athlete Programme & Performance Sport**

Some exciting news - our Talented Athlete Programme, supported by the University, has recently been accredited by the ground-breaking dual career scheme. QMUL is leading the way with supporting talented athletes in education in England, having been accredited by an innovative Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) initiative. The Sport England-backed programme supports young sportspeople on the talent pathway, giving them the opportunity to gain qualifications alongside their sporting pursuits, follow other interests, as well as further their personal development. By formally recognising an institution's commitment to supporting student-athletes, the TASS Dual Career Accreditation Scheme aims to allow athletes to reach their potential in education alongside achieving success in their sport.

The programme has received over 50 applications, and interviews will be taking place over the next few weeks. By mid-October we will be welcoming successful new student-athletes onto the programme.

QMBL Vipers, the American Football team, have been welcomed on to the Focus Team programme this year. The programme aims to support highly competitive teams within the university achieve their performance goals. Their coach, Chris Stone, has recently returned from coaching Great Britain's Women's American Football team. They reached the final of the world championships making history along the way; being the first European team to beat Canada since the championships began.

### **Welcome Talks**

During the welcome period, all the Executive Officers have attended welcome talks to introduce new students to the Students' Union. The talks have included a wide range of programmes at all levels of study, as well as targeted induction sessions, such as the induction for students with autism.

### **Queen Mary Staff Survey**

We encouraged our staff to fill in the recent QM Staff Survey, with 82% of the team completing it. Highlights include high favourable scores in the areas of Management (87%), Behaviours (81%) and Alignment & Involvement (77%) as well as an overall Engagement Score being higher than the QM baseline (62%).

Some individual areas scored significantly highly (90%) such as staff knowing what they need to be successful in their roles, managers respecting and encouraging varied viewpoints and managers being a

great role model for employees. There was a differentiation between some grades on some of the scores such as reward and recognition and involvement in decision making and this is an area for the Students' Union to explore to make improvements. Our Senior Management Team are working with QM Professional Development team on exploring the survey further and next steps.

## **Student Voice & Education**

### **Autumn Elections**

In September and October, the Students' Union is running the Autumn Elections where students elect more than 400 Course Reps (including 23 Postgraduate Research Subject Reps), 7 NUS Delegates (who will represent Queen Mary at the annual National Union of Students conference) and 14 Part-Time Officer positions. Nominations close on Wednesday 5 October, and voting takes place from Monday 10 October until Thursday 13 October. The results will be announced on Friday 14 October, and the elected students will be offered a full training package to prepare them to be effective representatives for the students in their area.

### **Decolonisation**

Saynab Sharif, Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences is working on a decolonisation project to better understand what students want from the University in decolonising the curriculum.

Saynab will be working with students to create a collaborative showcase of creative work on their topics of interest, encouraging them to express their story and highlight the importance of decolonisation for them. Saynab is working to facilitate meaningful engagement, involvement and feedback loops for students to directly input into discussion on curriculum reform.

### **PGR Representation**

Radhika Thiagarajan, Vice-President Communities is currently working closely with PGR students and reps to lobby the University to support PGRs during the cost of living crisis. Radhika is lobbying the University to improve stipends for PGRs and also to provide bursaries/financial aid for parents and carers who may find it difficult to manage on their stipends.

### **Student Representation in Malta**

The Barts and The London Students' Association instated a BLSA Malta Board last calendar year to act as the Student Voice on our Satellite Campus in Gozo, Malta. This year Charlie has been working with this board to ensure that they are able to give appropriate feedback specific to those students studying in Malta. Charlie has been working alongside Students' Union staff to set up better infrastructure to ensure that communications specific to Malta are streamlined through their own individual staff/student meetings and liaisons. This is part of our larger programme to improve student experience through staff/student co-creation on the Malta campus, including Education, Sport, and Events.

### **Supporting Students Into Research**

Muneer is looking to identify ways that QMUL can improve progression of UG students to PG study, particularly home students from a BAME background. The project will aim to identify the existing barriers that discourage students from pursuing a career in research and how those barriers can be mitigated. The first phase of the project will consist of looking at the existing data in regard to UG/PG progression, identify the courses/schools with particularly low progression rates and provide comparisons to those with high progression rates helping to prioritise further research and understand best practice.

### **QM Academy**

Saynab has worked with QM Academy on the Assessment and Feedback workstream. The project is now complete and the resources have been launched on the QM Academy website, which includes content around 'Unpacking Assessment'.

The resources were put together with the aim of supporting students to prepare effectively for assessments and deliver a higher level of guidance including: A presentation with top tips on the skills needed to start an assessment, information and tools on QMplus and a checklist on how to approach assessment tasks.

## **Feedback on MBBS Course**

Charlie has been working closely with the Preclinical and Clinical Representatives to communicate feedback forms across all years of the MBBS A100 Course to accommodate the student voice across our school and faculty reps as we move towards an MBBS Curriculum Change. Charlie has commissioned this feedback survey to understand the complex needs of Medical Students on such a demanding course, and to gain specific feedback about the structure and engagement of the entire course. The response rate has been high, particularly amongst Years 2&3 MBBS, and the data is currently being analysed and a report about student experience on MBBS will follow shortly. The Institute of Health Sciences Education is working closely with the BLSA to co-create the upcoming MBBS Curriculum change, and we have scheduled in sessions run jointly by the Student's Association and IHSE involving students across years.

## **Welfare & Liberation**

### **Black History Month**

October is Black History Month and the student-led Organising Committee has planned a programme of activities and awareness raising content for social media. The Organising Committee is made up of elected student reps and society committee members, and they oversee the planning of the campaign, including funding allocations and creation of content for social media. Examples of activities include a movie night, a discussion panel about black women and mental health, and a social media campaign about influential black people.

### **Visibility of Advice and Counselling Service**

Jojo Croft, Vice President Welfare, is working to increase the visibility of the Advice and Counselling Service through creating an online resource to be used by Academic Advisors when guiding students to the different services. Jojo has also started planning for on campus events at Mile End and Whitechapel campuses to speak to students directly about the services available.

### **Extending Hours of Advice and Counselling Service**

Jojo has started conversations around increasing opening hours and capacity of the Advice and Counselling Service to accommodate the increase in recruited students as well as increased numbers of students on campus. The current barrier to increasing the opening hours of the reception is the frontline staff team being too small. Working on increasing this team is the priority in achieving this first goal.

### **Accessibility and Support Services**

Saynab is also working on a project to encourage inclusive and accessible teaching adaptations and ensuring that advisors are trained in what specific learning differences are and the needs for supporting these students.

This is based on the feedback from student reps and students who are neuro-diverse, the barriers they experience with learning content and the issues relating to the accessibility of services and tools such as QM Plus. Reps have been involved in ensuring accessibility within the Library making E-Books user friendly, raising awareness on disabilities and specific learning differences in general and providing their feedback on services.

Saynab aims to encourage inclusivity and accessibility within teaching, establish appropriate adaptations and ensure that all staff are up-to-date and receive training on how to recognise and support the needs of students.

### **Cost of Living Hardship Strategy**

Charlie has been working with senior SMD staff such as the VP Health and the Institute Director of ISHE, as well as the Student Support Service within IHSE and Dentistry, to collate a Cost-of-Living strategy within the Medical and Dental School. The rising cost of living within London, and the specific costs associated with a vocational course such as Medicine or Dentistry, alongside the deficit in income caused by the NHS Bursary in Years 4 and 5 of these courses has led to the formation of this task force. A survey has been commissioned to better understand the needs of students, and from the results of this a wider strategy will be formed to ensure all barriers to education are removed during this national crisis.



## **BL Families Scheme**

Charlie has been working alongside the BLSA Board to welcome the new students within the Medical School through the mentorship scheme 'BL Families', whereby current students are paired with incoming students to provide them with a permanent mentor throughout Medical School. This scheme, spearheaded by Charlie, the BLSA's Welfare Team, and our Student Voice Team, has been a huge success, and the large majority of the MBBS cohort have now established familiar support networks alongside those provided by the University. The scheme also provided inclusive spaces, including a welcome event for commuting medics, as well as a non-alcoholic event space for all those to enjoy Welcome Week activities.

### **'Wellbeing for Life' Module**

Muneer has begun working on the creation of a specific module covering the continuing issue of student welfare and mental health. Muneer is considering the utilisation of QMPlus for the module, making it accessible for all students, deployed similarly to the existing optional modules that are non-credit bearing. The content will focus primarily on giving students the tools to manage their own wellbeing whilst at university, preparing them for life after university, and providing an awareness of wellbeing for life.

Muneer has been engaging with different stakeholders, such as the Wellbeing Advisors in the Advice & Counselling Service, to gather interest in project as well as ensure there is clarity with regards to oversight, content and syllabus. Muneer will continue to engage stakeholders and set up a working group with those interested and available to start designing and planning the module.

### **International Students**

Radhika is continuing work on improving loans and bursaries offered to International students in UGT, PGT and PGR. Furthermore, the tuition fees for international students who are facing hardship is also currently being considered. For these projects, Radhika is working with other Students' Unions and NUS officers.

Radhika is also working on lobbying the University to encourage Home Office and UKVI to design their Student Visa system to be more accessible and easy for international students.

Radhika is also working with the medical and dental school and the International team at QM in the twinning program where 6 medical students from Ukraine are being welcomed to Queen Mary in December for their clinical placement. Radhika is helping to integrate these students with the Students' Union and also helping in organising an English buddy program to help these Ukrainian students improve their language skills.

### **Name Change Policy**

Radhika has worked with ARCS team to successfully 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 is now live and active.

### **Period Poverty Project**

Radhika has also worked with the University and successfully achieved the availability of free sanitary products across different toilets in different Queen Mary campuses. This is an on-going project as Radhika will continue to work with the University to ensure more toilets in different buildings have free sanitary products to end period poverty amongst students and staff.

### **Nightline**

Radhika is continuing work on the drop-in service, in-house Nightline project, to promote a peer-to-peer counselling service on campus. Queen Mary now has a provisional license for 1 year to promote Nightline and recruit and set up Nightline on campus. We were able to gather a lot of interest for the project during Freshers' week. Currently, Radhika is also working with our team to put together the governance documents and service level agreements for the Nightline. Funding for this project has been applied for through Westfield funding and Radhika is waiting to hear back.

## **Student Opportunities**

### **Club Sport**

Club Sport has started the year with over 350 students attending committee training, all 65 clubs restarting their weekly training sessions and over 200 students attending welfare training sessions. We had 65 clubs in

attendance at both Mile End and Whitechapel Welcome Fair welcoming all new students. The Club Sport Board and Sports Officers have had two meetings already to discuss new club affiliations and key dates this year, with the first round of the Development Fund taking place in October, which will be an opportunity for clubs to apply for extra funding to develop their club. Our first of six Personal and Professional Development sessions is happening at the end of October, where we will be hosting a sponsorship workshop for clubs. 54 teams will be starting their leagues on Wednesday 12 October for BUCS and/or LUSL, with 4 new teams and 2 new sports joining the competitions this year.

### **Community Volunteering**

Community volunteering relaunches with a brand-new image and changes have been made to the functionality of our website to make it even easier for students to find and sign-up for opportunities and to gain recognition of their volunteering efforts. At the time of writing, there are 167 volunteering opportunities for students to choose from and 11 student-led volunteering groups that students can join. The Volunteer Fair is taking place on Wednesday 28 September and is an opportunity for students to meet 44 of our partner charities before signing up to opportunities.

### **Sustainability**

Environmental volunteering opportunities, such as canal clean-ups, start again on Wednesday 28 September. We are also working with the University to pull together a programme of engagement activities for Sustainability Week in October.

The Students' Union has, once again, scored 'excellent' in Green Impact, a United Nations award-winning programme designed to support environmentally and socially sustainable practice in organisations. We're one of less than 25 students' unions from across the country to achieve this level of award, demonstrating our commitment to being an environmentally responsible organisation. We're really proud of this achievement and look forward to taking part in the scheme again this year!

### **Student Groups**

Our 2021-22 student group feedback survey, conducted over the summer, suggested that there was a positive increase in students' experiences of being part of a student group, and the move back to more in-person events/activities has likely contributed to this. For members, just under 80% of respondents said that they felt welcome in their student group and felt part of a community though their involvement in a student group. For leaders, just under 90% agreed that they have developed skills through their involvement in a student group and an increase of 16% of students agreed that their efforts have been recognised by the Students' Union compared to the previous academic year. Whilst many groups were pleased with their engagement last year many also cited the impact of COVID-19 as an ongoing challenge for engagement.

The staff team will continue to support groups to develop their engagement and activities by offering regular drop-ins, expanded induction training for new groups, an extended programme of bite-sized training sessions, and opportunities for leaders to network with each other. We're also continuing to encourage groups to be as inclusive and accessible as possible by ensuring all groups have a Welfare Rep, and by offering EDI, consent and active by-stander training, and sessions on inclusive leadership

### **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.

The programme has had a successful start to the academic year, firstly with the employment of 4 new student staff members. Get Active supports the university by running pop-ups on campus for events and key university dates and supported the Residential Services across Arrivals Weekend. Pop-ups were also run across the 3 days of Welcome Fairs, hosted at both the Whitechapel and Mile End campuses, engaging 552 students across activities such as Badminton, Cornhole, Touch Tennis and Table Tennis. The programme has expanded this year and has brought in new sports such as Dodgeball, Tag Rugby, and a Women's Self Defence course, and has created 2 new partnerships with QMSU Sport Clubs, Cheerleading and Women's Basketball, to offer these club led opportunities.



## **Community Foundation**

We are currently advertising for a Community Foundation Student Intern to join the team and support the development of the Community Foundation. This year we'll remain as a BUCS Football Accredited University with the aim of progressing to a 3-star rating. We have recently submitted a proposal to receive a grant of £5,000 to engage students in recreational football activities whilst signposting student coaches and referees to support community partners.

### **Social Purpose 'Bid Writing Project'**

We have, over the past few months, been leading on setting up a new pilot project to support local charities with grant bid writing. This is a partnership project with Tower Hamlets Council strategic planning office and their Volunteering Community Service (VCS), and social housing landlords the Clarion Housing Group. The steering committee has representatives from the stakeholders. The pilot will include supporting five charities, selected by the TCVCS, with all aspects of new grant funding bidding by matching a QMUL Post Grad student. We have just recruited a post grad student to assist with the coordination, advertising and recruitment of the students, and act as the support mechanism. Clarion House have provided the start-up funding. The Council and Housing association are also providing some specialist training.

### **Inter-Halls Games**

The Inter-Halls Games programme provides the opportunity for students to get involved in large scale sporting opportunities throughout the year as a way to meet other residents and make friends in an active and social environment. It is funded by the Residential Life Team who work closely with the Sport Department to oversee the events.

This summer, the Inter-Halls Games programme had an exciting rebrand ready for the new academic year and was formerly known as Campus Games. Inter-Halls Games is expanding its sporting offer to include a variety of unique and interesting sports this year. Our first event is Zorb Football and the programme is looking to include activities such as an Inflatable Obstacle Course and Archery Tag.

### **Employability**

Radhika is continuing organising the series of Alumni Cafes events, in collaboration with the Global Engagement Team, to improve alumni being more engaged with the University and to improve employability amongst students. The next event is set to happen at the end of October 2022.

### **Social Leagues**

The Social Leagues will commence the week beginning Monday 10 October. This year we will be running Football, Netball, Basketball and Cricket. The leagues will also be recruiting and upskilling student staff as umpires, referees and officials over the next few weeks.

### **Adi Sawalha**

**Students' Union President**

**29<sup>th</sup> September 2022**