



## 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Key Updates</li><li>Welcome Week</li><li>Student Voice and Education</li><li>Welfare and Liberation</li><li>Student Opportunities</li></ul>
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<b>Senior Management/External Sponsor</b>	

# President's Senate Report

September 2023

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# President's Report

## Key Updates

### Autumn Elections

The Students' Union Autumn Elections are now open, and students are able to submit a short online nomination form to put themselves forward to become an elected student rep for this academic year. While the 6 full-time officer roles and most of the 70+ part-time officer roles were up for election in March, students can still put themselves forward for 11 part-time officer roles, 2 student trustee roles, more than 400 course rep roles and more than 20 PGR subject rep roles.

To encourage students to become representatives, the roles were promoted during the Welcome Fairs with more than 1000 interested students speaking to the Students' Union team. Colleagues from the faculty education teams in Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Engineering, the Doctoral College and various schools have also contributed to the promotion of the elections, and we are grateful for their support.

Nominations are open until early October, after which students can submit their votes for their preferred candidates. The successful candidates will receive training tailored to their role, and they will hold office for the 2023/24 academic year.

### Rep Handover & Training

Following the Spring Elections in March, our six new full-time officers started their term in office on 1 August. In July and August, the new officers attended a comprehensive training programme covering a wide range of topics such as communication, the higher education landscape, teamworking and representation.

Our new part-time officers also took office on 1 August, and their training is currently ongoing. The training for part-time officers aims to equip them with essential skills for their role, as well as transferable skills such as leadership and inclusivity.

In addition to the training, part-time officers are also having individual meetings with their staff supports to identify their priorities for the year and plan how they will achieve their goals. The officers bring different ideas based on their roles and experiences, with ideas covering topics such as employability, inclusivity, community building, organising social activities and raising awareness about mental health support services.

### Performance Sport

Our Talented Athlete Programme, supported by the University, was last year accredited by the groundbreaking 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 26 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.

We have grown our focus team programme this year and are pleased to be supporting five clubs. QMBL Vipers are returning to the programme and will be joined by QMBL Women's Fencing, BL Netball, BL Women's Hockey and QMBL Water Polo. The focus team programme has been created to support teams who have clear performance ambitions within their competitions. Focus teams and their players will benefit from a support network to help them achieve their performance goals including; Access to performance development workshops, opportunity for Strength & Conditioning support, additional staff support on BUCS entries, admin, and travel arrangements, extra publicity around the team e.g. social media and dedicated webpage.

### Sport Partnerships

We are pleased to announce that we have continued to develop our cross departmental partnerships with the university and will be working with the Advice & Counselling Service to support two wellbeing programmes and initiatives. We will be supporting a pilot exercise referral scheme for ten students in semester one, and

will also be supporting a black female therapy group initiative. Both programmes will aim to collate data, information and relationships between physical activity and wellbeing. In addition to this, we have worked with the HR and benefits team to enable staff the opportunity to apply for a loan to be used against a 12-month membership at Qmotion sport and fitness centre. We hope that in making this membership more affordable and accessible to our staff, we will be able to encourage more staff to take part in physical activity on campus.

### **QM Skills Award**

We have recently hired a new Student Engagement Coordinator within the student engagement team who will help oversee the SU skills award. There are currently 17 skill sessions planned over the first semester, with a couple more still to be confirmed. Currently we have 89 students signed up for at least one skills session, but this number is expected to grow throughout semester one.

### **Introduction for University Staff**

This year we are introducing an introduction to the Student's Union for permanent QMUL staff to attend if they wish. This one-hour session will cover an overview of QMSU, our strategic plan, our people, how we help our students during their time at university and signposting resources as well as a chance to ask questions. This is intended to complement their overall induction and increase knowledge and understanding about the Students' Union. QMUL staff will be able to register to attend via the new CPD Training platform, and we will offer monthly sessions online with the option for an in-person session once a semester alongside a tour of some of our spaces.

## **Welcome Week**

### **Welcome Fair**

The Welcome Fair events at Mile End were a great success with over 10,000 excited attendees attending across the three days of Fairs. There was a great atmosphere across the Great Hall, Students' Union Hub, Sports Hall and outdoor areas, and the whole event went very smoothly. The event featured 250 stalls from our Student Groups, performance and demonstration areas, sporting activities, university services, an inflatable fun zone and several external organisations and charities. We were also pleased to welcome members of the University SET team who toured the event on day two. There will now be a review to ensure the ongoing success of the event. The event in its current format is certainly at full capacity in terms of both attendee numbers and the number of student groups and organisations who can be accommodated across the existing indoor and outdoor spaces on campus, however we need to ensure the current atmosphere and experience of the event is maintained.

At Whitechapel, the event took place inside the BLSA Building. There were some challenges with crowd numbers due to the popularity of the event, poor weather meaning outdoor activity had to be curtailed and the Garrod Building not being open (a space traditionally also used for the event alongside the BLSA Building). Despite this, feedback from attendees and student groups was positive and there was great engagement throughout the day. Thank you to the Estates team who helped our team navigate the various challenges.

### **Welcome Crew & Help Squad**

Over 120 students volunteered their time over Arrivals Weekend and Welcome Week to help welcome new students across our London campuses. In their standout 'Here to Help' red and black hoodies, these volunteers were a key friendly face to help new students feel welcome while they also assisted with move-in to accommodation, moved luggage, signposted to opportunities and supported students in navigating our campuses. The volunteers' generosity and dedication to ensuring that new students had a memorable first week has been remarkable and we cannot thank them enough for their time, commitment and positive energy! We look forward to expressing our appreciation at the upcoming Thank You Party.

### **Welcome Events**

The Students' Union delivered a packed programme of events for Welcome Week, that continue at the time of writing into week one. Over 9000 tickets have been sold for these events so far and many were completely sold out. Hundreds more students participated in free / non-ticketed events.

Events took place across the three London campuses and other off-campus locations and have included speed meeting events, craft & planting sessions, comedy nights, sports activities, club nights on and off-campus and trips & tours to locations such as Thorpe Park and Cambridge and walking tours. Our events team also delivered two Boat Ball events down the Thames which were sold out. Dedicated events were also

run for our commuting, postgraduate and international students – helping these students meet other students from within their community, with at least 350 students attending each of these.

Our Freshers' events programme was complemented by our Try Something New programme that featured welcome events, meet & greets and taster sessions from our student-led groups such as Clubs and Societies, alongside alcohol-free activity and events delivered by our events team. This programme continues throughout semester one.

### **Reuse Fair**

The Reuse Fair was a great success this year. Having trialed a new way of facilitating the event, it was much calmer and smoother. This year we included ticketed timeslots, a token system for individuals to trade for items and dedicated student staff helping with the running of the event. We diverted 1.4 tons of items from landfill and had 427 happy students attend! We are very grateful for the University Sustainability team giving us the budget to have student staff available on the day to ensure the event ran smoothly and we are excited to work with them on ways to keep expanding the Reuse Fair, especially after a large increase in donated items this year compared to last year. Our team will be looking at running a clothes swap event following plenty of clothing donations during reuse collections.

### **Welcome Communications**

The Communications and Marketing team introduced the Students' Union to new students through our Welcome communications campaign. Launching on A-Level Results Day and running through to the end of September the campaign was fully segmented for the first time. All UK home students received a welcome pack in the post, and for the first time this included all postgraduate taught and postgraduate masters students. This was supplemented by a series of email communications split by undergraduate/postgraduate taught/postgraduate research, campus location, home/international and associates. The segmentation resulted in our highest-ever open rate, averaging at over 85% and click-through rates higher than 40%. There was also a strong social media campaign fronted by our student reps and Executive Officers and dedicated online webpages, seeing 18% more page hits than last year, beating our previous highest page views during the welcome period.

### **Welcome Week & supporting the university**

The Students' Union worked in partnership with the university to deliver a successful Welcome Week programme. As well as the activity listed above, this included co-delivering several events such as the Wellbeing Fair and directly supporting other activity such as the Library Square Information Fair and chillout zone.

Due to the challenging weather conditions during Welcome Week we supported university activity that had been due to take place outside. For example, the University Wellbeing Fair was re-located from Graduate Square to the Students' Union Hub on the morning of the event, disrupting our own set-up of the Welcome Fair but ensuring the best experience for students. The International Student Welcome and other school welcome events were also moved from outdoors to the Students' Union Hub with little notice on the day, but we were happy to help where we could and all went well.

Our Venues & Events team also worked with several schools to host social activity and welcome events across our spaces including offering food & drink, games and craft sessions and icebreaker activities. We also worked with the Residential Life team to deliver a series of online speed meeting events for all halls prior to Welcome Week. Over 500 students participated in these online activities prior to their arrival at university, helping them to meet their new flatmates and make connections prior to their arrival.

## **Student Voice & Education**

### **Russell Group Students Union**

In August, Serena-Amani Al Jabbar, President, and Aisha Qadi, Vice-President, Science and Engineering, attended the Russell Group Students' Union first residential of the year in Cardiff. During the event the group discussed the pressing issues students have and continue to face nationally and how to proceed and find solutions. Two of the main topics discussed were the rising cost of living and industrial action. Both attended a follow up September forum in which the group considered what actions were needed by the RGSU and how to lobby to better the student experience nationally.

## **Postgraduate Representation**

Matthew Beach, Vice-President Communities, continues the work of his predecessor, increasing representational infrastructure for postgraduate students (both taught and research). He is working closely with PGR students and reps to continue lobbying the university in areas of struggle during the ongoing cost of living crisis, in particular those students on international scholarships whose stipends do not meet the UK Research and Innovation minimum funding amount.

Matt has also started scoping for a potential overhaul of the SYMPA listservs used across the university by Schools/Institutes to reach their postgraduates, which many postgraduate student representatives use (where possible) to ask for feedback from their constituents. He has also begun facilitating scoping meetings with university representatives and working with the Students' Union Comms team to find ways of increasing his role's visibility for postgraduates.

## **Institute of Technology (IoT) and Degree Apprentices**

Aisha was invited to the IoT where she presented to students about the Students' Union and how they can get involved. Aisha spoke with students about the representative structure and student voice, gathering feedback on how to improve these areas for this unique group. Aisha is working with S&E on increasing engagement between Degree Apprentices and the Students' Union.

## **Authentic Assessments & Academic integrity**

Aisha is working to review and improve the format of assessments within the faculty, ensuring that students get a diverse range of assessments to improve authenticity and gain employability principles. This in turn would improve integrity of assessments. Aisha has been discussing with faculty executives on the challenges academics may face with students using AI, such as chatGPT, and instead work on how students can use it effectively in assessments. To help inform this work, Aisha attended a WonkHE workshop, alongside Jovani, Vice President of Humanities and Social Sciences, that discussed what great assessment looks like, how it might change in light of generative AI, what students might want from assessments, and how Students' Unions can shape the assessment agenda.

## **Employability Curriculum**

Aisha is working on a proposal for her project to embed employability principals onto the curriculum within the faculty of Science & Engineering. The project is to focus on implementing criteria such as graduate attributes, graduate outcomes and more across all schools and course for both undergrads and postgrads. She has had several meetings with QM-Academy, the Careers & Enterprise Team, as well as faculty executives in S&E to discuss this project and how we can begin to review the curriculum to implement the employability principals.

## **Welfare & Liberation**

### **Lighting Improvement**

Tahmid Khan, Vice President Welfare, is working to improve the lighting provision on and off campus. At present, the focus of the project has been on off-site lighting, with a particular emphasis on the areas surrounding Mile End Campus and Whitechapel Campus. Tahmid has met with senior members of Tower Hamlets Council to discuss the project and identify common areas of interest. He has also met with staff from the University of Cambridge Students' Union, who worked on a similar project, to gain insight into developing a long-term project strategy.

Tahmid collected primary data on the lighting provision on and off-campus at Mile End and Whitechapel at the end of August. Using this data, Tahmid is compiling a paper detailing his findings and recommendations for areas of improvement, which will be sent to members of Tower Hamlets Council and relevant members of the University, respectively.

### **Black History Month**

Matthew and the team have begun planning for Black History Month which begins in October with the planning led by an Organising committee made up from Students, Reps and Student Group members who self-identify as part of this community. This committee have been enthusiastic with their ideas, discussing culture and fashion showcases, various workshops on different issues that affect the community and creating content for the month to be used online. Upcoming events include a book club with Alumni Caleb Femi, which will coincide with sharing content, student spotlights and supporting student-led events in preparation for October.

## **Women's Safety on Campus**

Aisha is working to improve women's safety on campus this year. She is currently working with the Sexual Assault Harassment Advisory team at QM to introduce a survey by the Students' Union on women's safety. The data will be used to write up a report for the university on what is needed on campus. The survey content & details will include questions on women's experience on campus, how safe they feel, the support they get, as well as what events/campaigns students would like to engage with when it comes to raising awareness.

## **Accommodation Review Platform**

Tahmid is working on creating a platform that would allow students to review and give feedback on their accommodation and their housing provider. The platform is to be located on our website. The project aims are to provide both the Students' Union and the University a more regular source of information on the student experience within the accommodation sector. Tahmid has begun meeting with Housing & Residential Services staff to discuss the project and to build a collaborative approach for developing the review platform.

## **Improving the Multi-Faith Provision**

Tahmid has been working with the team to write a paper on engaging with the university to develop the multi-faith provision. This is part of a broader push to improve multi-faith spaces on campus, as they have been identified as inadequate for several years. A draft paper, which is to be presented to relevant members of the University for feedback, is currently being prepared.

Additionally, Tahmid has been providing support to finalise the Multi-Faith Centre timetable for the first semester of the new academic year, and this has now been released. It is hoped that reverting back to a semester based timetable will allow for more flexibility in usage times and result in greater satisfaction rates amongst student groups. The new system will be reviewed at the end of the first semester.

## **Cost of living**

Serena and Tahmid Khan, VP Welfare, met with the Higher Education Policy Institute to discuss and contribute to a paper titled 'How to beat a cost-of-learning crisis: Universities' support for students'. The paper allowed the team to reflect on their struggles as students and help shape the means in which we prioritise how to support students during the cost-of-living crisis going forward.

## **Students Who Work**

Jovani has worked with the team to start to gather data for his 'Students Who Work project with Careers and Enterprise providing support. Jovani is aiming to pinpoint the most overwhelming problems that students who work face in order to identify how to narrow any gaps and ensure these students are able to reach their full potential.

## **Student Opportunities**

### **Student Groups**

Our 2022-23 student group feedback survey, conducted over summer, showed a positive increase in student group experiences for both committee members and student members. 87.2% of committee members felt part of a community with 71.6% of student members feeling part of a community and feeling welcome in their student group. 91% of committee members felt they had made a positive impact to student group member's experience. 94% of committee members felt they had developed skills through their committee role. We asked a new question this year to committee members on the impact their role had on their wellbeing with 77% saying their role had a positive impact on their wellbeing. Our Impact & Engagement Intern will be working to improve some key focus areas such as reward and recognition and our social media presence. We are very pleased with the results of the feedback survey, and we plan on retaining such positive results.

This year is already shaping up to be another busy one for all our student groups! We have already hosted extra training this month for all student groups, as well as volunteer group and student media induction sessions taking place recently. Welfare Rep training is currently taking place which is being co-delivered by our Student Engagement Team, Sports Club Team and Student Voice team. The Student Engagement Team have been working on ways to collect success stories from our student groups so that we can celebrate all the amazing work they do in a more visible way. The team are very excited for the year ahead and we can't wait to support all the amazing work our student groups do.

## **Sustainability**

The canal clean ups continue to be popular, with our first Big Green Canal Clean, partnered with Residential Life, taking place at the end of September. Our Sustainability Officers are very engaged, with great projects planned including a medicinal herb garden, creating social green spaces, litter picks and a sustainability hub. Sustainability training has been delivered to Student Groups and will be rolled out to Sports Clubs at the end of September. Teams from across the Student's Union will actively contribute to the Green Impact Accreditation effort this year including Student Voice, Student Engagement, Exec Members and the Events Team.

We have also been working closely with the new QMUL Sustainability team on a variety of projects including a student evaluation of sustainability in the curriculum, creating student roles, a Sustainability Action Network and pulling together a new Sustainability Strategy.

Matthew is working with the team to bid for a Centre for Public Engagement Large Grant to fund a role that would work with external partners to engage the public with the University and help achieve the partners sustainability goals. Matt is also creating links between the Students' Union and other parts of the university, including a collaboration with the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences Environmental Futures Programme Director. Upcoming plans include bringing an arts organisation to speak about photography and environmentalism during Sustainability Week and a Sticky Campus proposal combining tropical and subtropical plant teaching and learning, alumni engagement, and an arts/culture display.

## **Volunteering**

At the time of writing, there are 65 volunteering opportunities for students to choose from on our Community Volunteering Hub, as well as two Give Volunteering A Go opportunities, and nine student-led volunteering groups that students can join. The Volunteer Fair is set to take place the week commencing 2nd October, date to be confirmed due to recent TFL strikes being announced, and this will be an opportunity for students to meet 48 of our partner charities and 7 of our student-led volunteering groups.

## **Get Active**

Get Active is a part of our recreational sport programme offering a timetable of weekly sport and physical activity opportunities for students, staff and alumni. We are excited to introduce a broader range of sessions this year to engage more of the university community to take part in physical activity and will be offering yoga, meditation and dance in addition to our usual sporting offers which include badminton, football, table tennis and many more.

The programme has had a successful start to the academic year, firstly with the employment of 5 new student staff members. Get Active supports the university by running pop-ups on campus for events and key university dates and this included supporting the Residential Services across Arrivals Weekend. Pop-ups were also run across the Welcome Fairs, with 418 students taking part across activities such as badminton, cornhole, touch tennis and table tennis. The programme has expanded this year and has grown its partnership with residential services offering exclusive membership options to our residents.

## **Club Sport**

Club sport has started the year with clubs currently undertaking their extensive programme of committee training. We had 65 clubs in attendance at both Mile End and Whitechapel Welcome Fairs welcoming all new and returning students. The Club Sport Board and Sports Officers will be having their first meetings in October which allows the opportunity to discuss new club affiliations and key dates this year. The first round of the Development Fund will be taking place in October, which will be an opportunity for clubs to apply for extra funding to support and develop their club. Leagues will be starting on Wednesday 12 October for BUCS and/or LUSL, and we are very excited to see how our teams perform this upcoming year.

## **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.

## **Dentistry PTSR Social Responsibility Volunteering**

Inductions have been delivered to Year 2, 3 and 4 UG Dentistry students, as well as Year 1 Dental Hygiene students and some Foundation students. These students complete a minimum of 8 hours of volunteering per academic year for their Professionalism, Teamwork and Social Responsibility module. Students can choose



which of our volunteering opportunities to take part in. Last year a number of these students chose to continue volunteering, including 3 students achieving bronze volunteering hours awards (25+ hours), and 3 achieving silver volunteering hours awards (50+ hours).

### **Raise and Give (RAG)**

Student Groups have already started their RAG fundraising for the year, including Groups fundraising for the earthquake in Morocco. Last year an impressive £64,859.69 was raised across the year, so we look forward to seeing how much is raised this year.

**Serena–Amani Al Jabbar**  
**Students' Union President**  
**28<sup>th</sup> September 2023**