



Senate Report

Outcome requested:	To note the Students' Union President's report
Executive Summary:	<p>The report is an update from the end of November until the end of February 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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President's Senate Report

February 2024

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President's Report

Key Updates

Students' Union Elections 2024

Our Spring Elections have taken place in January and February. During the elections, students can put themselves forward for a leadership position in the Students' Union, and all students can vote to decide who they want as their leaders for the upcoming academic year. The elections include 6 full-time roles and more than 60 part-time roles. More than 120 candidates have nominated themselves for the roles. The Elections Voting Week also include two Candidate Debate and Question Time events, and VoteFest - a fun day on campus featuring giant inflatables, games, sport, freebies and giveaways. Results can be viewed on qmsu.org/elections from 1st March.

NSS (National Student Survey)

We are supporting the marketing and promotion of the NSS (National Student Survey) again this year. We have also worked with the university to offer an improved range of incentives, including £5 vouchers, that can be used on campus or donated to a club, society or one of our nominated charities. The Exec selected Bow Foodbank as the nominated charity for this year's campaign, alongside the BLSA nominated charities for 2023-24 (Providence Row, Redthread, MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders).

Course Rep Conference

On Saturday 3rd February, we hosted the Course Representative Conference, following the successful conference in 22/23 academic year. The conference featured a range of group and presentation sessions, focussed around: current issues Course Reps are facing, Public Speaking, Leading a Campaign and Skills Development. These sessions also can be credited as part of the QMSU Skills Award, ensuring attendees receive proper recognition on their HEAR transcript.

Responding to feedback from attendees in 2022/23, the Students' Union provided a catered lunch, ensuring that attendees were able to congregate during the break and recharge for the afternoon workshops. The afternoon sessions included a presentation on turning Rep experience into a career, which was delivered in collaboration with QMUL staff; as well as Exec led workshops regarding Sustainability in the Curriculum, Employability and Postgraduate Student Experience. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to host another Course Rep event in semester 3.

Employability

In the Skills Award, we have had 320 students register for the programme since September which represents a 23% increase on last year's total. We saw 162 individual attendances across semester 1's 18 skills sessions which each focused on a different transferable skill. During the first semester, 20 students already managed to fulfil the requirements to achieve the Gold Skills Award by each attending at least three skills sessions and one reflection session.

There are 18 skills sessions scheduled for semester 2, with these featuring new topics such as Resilience & Wellbeing, Interviewing with Impact & Embracing Your Inner Professional. These are being run alongside a selection of repeated sessions from last semester which are aimed at students who were not able to attend the first time around. These sessions cover key transferable skills such as Public Speaking, Communication and Leadership. For semester 2, we have also expanded our offering of Mental Health First Aid courses by arranging increased capacity in two full-day courses and adding a Suicide First Aid half-day course. Furthermore, we have scheduled three reflection sessions for semester 2 where students are helped to recognise the skills they have developed in the Skills Award and other Students' Union activities, while helping them further understand how to present this to employers.

Cost of Living Crisis – Tackling Food Poverty

Tahmid Khan, Vice President Welfare, has continued to work on tackling food poverty on campus. The expanded QMSU Food Pantry on Mile End Campus opened at the beginning of January 2024. Since then, it has seen regular usage from students, highlighting the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our campuses. A

communication strategy is being developed to signpost the Food Pantry service across ours and the University platforms.

Additionally, through the Cost of Living Working Group, Tahmid has pushed for the placement of more microwaves in heated indoor spaces throughout the university, making it easier for students to bring their own food from home and reducing their food costs. A campus walkaround has now been completed with locations identified. The initiative is also intended to have the added benefit of attracting students to some of the lesser-known social spaces within Mile End Campus. We have also given out meal kits for the Study Well winter campaign, which students received well.

Serena-Amani Al Jabbar, President, has been working with our team and the University Comms team to begin a virtual ambassador program, which will bring students into the forefront of our communication. This student-led approach will hopefully break email fatigue and increase the productivity of our communications to students on pertinent cost of living resources.

Improving the Multi-Faith Provision

The Multi-Faith Centre (MFC) Usage Data Survey that Tahmid was leading on came to an end in early December 2023. The survey was a large-scale data collection exercise to determine MFC usage on Mile End Campus.

Footfall data was collected at 10-minute intervals in one room from 11am–6:30pm every weekday for a month, and for three weeks in the other room used by women for Muslim prayer. The data is beginning to be analysed and should provide a highly detailed insight into usage and behaviour patterns of the Mile End Campus MFC. So far it is apparent that the MFC often saw overcapacity usage at multiple points throughout every day during which the survey was conducted. Pictures were taken throughout the month showing that students often pray next to shoe racks and in corridors due to the lack of space. Headcount data of regular prayer is currently being processed.

Headcounts were also conducted at Muslim Friday Prayers held during the survey period, with initial data showing attendance ranging from 600–700 people each week. It is important to note that this survey was conducted towards the tail end of semester 1 in late November–early December 2023, meaning that it was likely that numbers for both regular and larger prayers (such as Friday Prayer) would have been greater if the survey were to be conducted at peak on-campus attendance periods, such as during October–early November 2023.

This survey was conducted as many faith societies, as well as individual students, had over the years and recently expressed high dissatisfaction with current provisions. The data is beginning to highlight the reasons as to why and is showing that the development of faith and contemplation spaces has been neglected during university infrastructure projects over several years. The data will eventually feed into the multi-faith and contemplation spaces strategy paper we are developing.

January Welcome Fair

The January Welcome Fair was held on Thursday 25 January in the Students' Union Hub, Library Square and surrounding outdoor areas. Over 1,500 students visited the event to learn more about the Students' Union and the range of activities and services we offer students. There were over 100 stalls from our student groups, and these were complemented by additional stalls from external organisations and Students' Union services. This is an important event and provides our groups with an opportunity to showcase themselves, whilst giving students the opportunity to continue an existing hobby or try something new, learn new skills and meet new people.

Garrod Building

All of our new spaces are now open in the Garrod Building. The building was formally opened at the end of February, with two joint launch events run by the School of Medicine & Dentistry and Students' Union. At the launch event Sir Mark Caulfield, VP Health, Colin Bailey, President & Principal, and Amaan Abbas, Vice President Barts and The London, delivered speeches, followed by music recitals and performances, student group demonstrations and student-led tours of the new building.

The Griff also opened in January. By day it operates a café space and is alcohol-free with alcohol not on sale or visible before 5pm. By night the space transforms into a bar and events space with a series of live sport screenings, student group events and club nights held so far. Since opening, the daytime has proved particularly busy and popular with students.

The Garrod Building Stakeholder Partnership Group, initiated and chaired by the Students' Union, has also started, and is currently meeting fortnightly to deal with initial snags and to work together on new ways of working. The group brings together representatives from the Students' Union, School of Medicine & Dentistry, Estates & Facilities, IT, Security, QM Venues / QM Food and the project team.

We continue to work with the project team to resolve a series of difficulties and issues in the new spaces, particularly with IT/AV. There is also more to be done to make the spaces more user-friendly, particularly during events. Further works are also scheduled for the summer that could not be completed to date, including new doors, curtains and blinds being fitted and completion of other snagging works.

Student Voice & Education

Employability in the Curriculum

Aisha Qadi, Vice President Science & Engineering, has chaired several meetings of her Employability Curriculum Group and has made great progress on the discussions as well as maintaining stakeholder engagement. In early February, Aisha was part of the course rep conference where she delivered a successful session on employability in the curriculum. During the session, Aisha collected qualitative feedback from the course reps on questions relating to confidence in employability, engagement of services and assessments. The results have then been reported back on ECG and this allowed Aisha to provide an estimated soft launch date of the Employable Education Survey, which will launch in March. The ECG will now report into the new Student Voice Sub Board.

Extenuating Circumstance (EC) review process:

Aisha has been lobbying the university to improve the extenuating circumstances system and has followed the work being done in the wider EC review, aiming to introduce a separate extenuating circumstances process for students with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and mental health conditions. This suggestion has been approved and taken into consideration as a 'quick win' aim, alongside other improvements.

Geography Building

Students raised concerns about the accessibility of the doors of the Geography Building, due to the weight of them with Jovani Palnoni, Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences, and our Geography School Representative. Jovani followed up with the School and Estates who have replaced the doors. Making the campus as accessible as possible remains a primary objective for Jovani and the Students' Union and we are happy that we are able to be part of positive change within the university.

HSS

Two additional schools have agreed to start implementing pre-submission Turnitin options for assessment, having these options has been praised by students, and one of Jovani's priorities is to ensure initiatives such as this takes place across all schools in order to provide a consistent and improved student experience. Following student feedback Jovani is working with the faculty on ways to collect anonymous feedback.

Postgraduates

The Postgraduate Consultation Group continues to be well received, with the first three meeting discussing community, teaching, and feedback channels. The next session will discuss communal spaces. Matthew Beach, Vice President Communities, has worked with our team to launch the postgraduate events programme, and received funding from the Enhancing Research and Innovation Cultures Fund. This will fund a pilot Postgraduate Research Communications and Marketing Assistant student role and additional postgraduate research student-specific events.

Sustainability

Following feedback from a staff and student networking event, Jovani has been working with our staff on how to co-create a module on Sustainability and Green Skills that would be relevant to all students.

MBBS Curriculum Review

As part of the MBBS Curriculum Review, Amaan has actively participated in workshops, ensuring the inclusion of the student voice. Amaan's efforts involve organising focus groups through the BLSA representative structure, where staff can engage with a diverse range of students. He's attended regular meetings of the MBBS

Curriculum Working Group, contributing to the ongoing conversations and facilitating connections between specific departments and student cohorts.

Diversity and Inclusion in IHSE

Amaan is collaborating with staff at IHSE and is committed to improving the representation of minority groups within the MBBS curriculum review and IHSE in general. These groups that have been created aim to create a more diverse and inclusive academic environment, ensuring that all voices are heard and considered. Currently, the BLSA are working on integrating these newer groups into the current governance structure while still maintaining their ability to act as a safe space for those who need them.

Malta Student Experience Enhancement

Amaan is collaborating with part-time officers and QMUL staff in Malta to enhance the educational and pastoral aspects of the student experience. Currently, this includes addressing concerns and advocating for changes at meetings in London which directly impact Malta. A key focus of recent meetings has been improving spaces for students to self-organise events. Amaan continues to work with staff at the London and Malta campuses, to ensure medical students have the best education and student experience possible.

Welfare & Liberation

International Students

Matthew and Aisha continue to work to increase international student representational infrastructure. At the newly formed International Student Experience Working Group they discussed issues such as student stipends on some international partnerships not meeting the UKRI minimum threshold and excessive waiting periods for academic misconduct allegation results, which impacts on visa application timelines. They have also raised support for the remaining of the semester such as financial support, accommodation support, and curriculum support. Matthew and Aisha also wrote an update to students detailing the state of international student representation at Queen Mary.

Reforming the Financial Assistance Fund (FAF)

Following Tahmid raising several concerns earlier this academic year about the current (FAF) programme, a full governance review of the programme has been launched. The review will include a full audit and bias review of previous funding decisions made. The review's conclusions are expected to come within the next few months of the academic year.

Tahmid has also continued to work with the Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships Team to improve accessibility features on the FAF information website and MySIS portal. Initial website testing of the new accessibility features is now taking place and this should be completed by mid-March 2024. The process of providing supporting evidence is also being adjusted as a result of Tahmid's feedback so that students can upload all of their documents at a single upload point rather than multiple points, as it is at the moment, which has made the process more difficult for students to navigate.

Lighting Improvement

Tahmid's project to improve lighting has now received approval from the Sticky Campus Working Group. This project aims to improve lighting both from a conventional safety perspective and an aesthetic standpoint. It is envisaged that light features (potentially to be designed by or with student input) would be placed across the university campuses, representing the heritage and culture of their locations.

Approval for improvements has been given for the following locations on Mile End Campus:

- Next to Novo Cemetery – where a potential light feature could be placed nearby.
- The pillars outside The Curve.
- The pillars outside the Graduate Centre.
- Outside the Pooley House residences - a larger project that will require more planning.

Further locations for improvements are planned. It was decided during a walkaround with the University Estates Team that improvements would not be made on Whitechapel Campus in the initial stage, as other infrastructure works are planned to occur soon. However, the situation on Whitechapel Campus will be kept under review.

Jewish Heritage Fortnight

We had a packed two weeks with events such as a talk on the Novo Cemetery, a walking tour of East London and an event commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day. These events were well attended and the fortnight was a great success and really show-cased student involvement.

LGBTQ+ History Month

There has been a broad range of activity cross the month including many student events, such as a queer waking tour, sex education talks and the BL Drag event taking over Liard Hall. We have also been able to share some interesting content, including a deep dive from our liberation intern into the queer history of Queen Mary to bring LGBTQ+ History Month alive and shine a light on our university's history.

Asian Heritage Month

Aisha is part of the organising committee and is hosting a mukbang taste test video to engage in discussions with the volunteers in the video about Asian heritage and promote asian culture from various countries.

Student Opportunities

Volunteering

The Volunteering Service continues to engage students through its three strands, supporting 9 active Volunteering Groups, delivering 2 Give Volunteering A Go activities per month and providing a huge variety of Community Volunteering opportunities. The Community Volunteering service has 189 active charities and at present there are 94 volunteering opportunities available for students, across a variety of sectors and locations. Alongside this, the Volunteering Team are working with the Dentistry School supporting their students to complete their Professional, Teamwork & Social Responsibility module which involves a minimum of 7 hours of volunteering per student. Additionally, the team are working with a group of students from the School of Business Management on a project looking at student engagement in Volunteering.

Student Volunteer Week took place the week of 12 February. 15 events took place across the week, which included a Volunteer Fair with 26 Community Organisations attending and many students coming along as well as skills event sessions led by Community Volunteering partners, a Street Clean-up, a Volunteering Social and many other events. It was great to see so many students and Community Organisations engaging with the week and helping make it a success.

Club Sport

Our teams have performed well in their League and Cup fixtures so far with their hard work leading to two confirmed BUCS South-Eastern finalists due to play at the regional conference finals at Surrey in early March (QM Men's Table Tennis and QM Men's Badminton 2s) and one more semi-final to go (QM Men's Rugby). One team has already won their BUCS league (Table Tennis), securing a promotion with hopefully more to follow suit that are currently 1st or 2nd in their respective BUCS leagues.

Events have also been taking place in semester 2 with over 40 Club Sport members participating in BUCS Events over a number of sports (Fencing, Badminton, Karate, Boxing) with one member bringing back a BUCS victory in Boxing! Clubs have also organised and run their own events with showcases (QM Cheerleading) and competitions (QM Dance) being put on to show off their hard work and skills.

The second round of the Club Sport Development Fund received 15 applications with 10 being successful, being part or fully funded.

A continued issue from semester 1 is facility closures in schools. We are reliant on the local schools for their sporting facilities but the schools close for exams and often give very little notice, leaving clubs with nowhere to train or play their fixtures.

Sustainability

Climate Action week (previously Green Week) was a great success. With over 12 different activities delivered, the week was a collaboration between departments, students, universities and local organisations. The BIG Green Canal Clean was a great community event with free vegetable soup for volunteers made from Angry Monk veg from The Curve. As part of a network of 10 London Universities, we played a role in organising and running the London Student Sustainability conference. With over 950 people signed up to attend and one of our own students securing a top 3 position out of over 100 presentation applications.

We continue to work closely with the university, engaging with the careers, enterprise, academy, law, SBM, SBBS and grounds teams, as well as the sustainability team. Projects include the growing sustainability in the curriculum network, the student incubator, and allotment developments, which are now confirmed.

Strong partnerships are being built with local organisations, including the Canal River Trust, Fast Fashion Therapy, Recycle you Cyle and Wick Thrift store and the local council. Through the Tower Hamlets biodiversity network, we can link directly into local biodiversity policy and actions.

Matthew has supported several events including the recent greenhouse planting workshop in Climate Action Week, creating a space for students to appreciate the connection between humans and nature. The workshop aided in the launching of an exhibit in the Garrod's Old Library space as a second iteration of Cabinet Cultures, a project Matthew co-produced last year with the help of a Humanities and Social Sciences Collaboration and Strategic Impact Fund. This edition was funded between the Sticky Campus programme and the Students' Union and furthers the original research as well as that of two Computer Science PGRs, and our Sustainability Officer's interest in expanding biodiversity knowledge around our campuses. The exhibit and accompanying events programme will continue through July 2024.

Other projects the Exec have supported include the Planetary Health Report Card for Barts, the Sustainability in the Curriculum Network and the development Student Sustainability Action Network. More and more students are beginning to see the connections they have to sustainability. Looking ahead, we are currently pulling together the report for Green Impact Students' Union.

RAG

Student fundraising continues to be busy, with students using an increasingly varied mix of activities to fundraise for charity. Student Groups have fundraised £42,000 across 50 RAG activities and Islamic Society Charity Week so far this academic year. This includes events like balls, bake sales and shows.

Societies

Student groups have been busy so far this year, with over 350 events registered with us. These are a mix of events in conjunction with our Liberation campaigns, showcases, balls and general celebrations. We will recognise and celebrate the hard work of the student leaders organising these and running their student groups during our awards ceremonies in March. These comprise of our trophy awards and our individual/group awards in the newly refurbished Old Library in the Garrod.

Serena–Amani Al Jabbar
Students' Union President
29th February 2024