

Senate

Paper Title	QMSU President's Senate Report
Outcome requested	To note
Points for Senate members to note and further information	The report is an update from February until the end of April on activity within the Students' Union. It includes the following sections: Key Updates Student Voice Student Opportunities
Questions for Senate to consider	
Regulatory/statutory reference points	
Strategy and risk	
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	
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Sponsor	

President's Senate Report

May 2024

www.qmsu.org



President's Report

Key Updates

Student Liberation Zone

In response to the student-led encampment on the Queens Building lawn, the Students' Union has been working on supporting students' right to peaceful protest and assembly. Our outlet, Ground, has been offering food, water, and hot water for students. Our Executive Officers have been working on facilitating conversations between both the University and encampment students and continue to work towards productive engagement from all parties.

The Exec released a statement the week the protest began. <https://www.qmsu.org/news/article/6965/A-response-from-your-Executive-Officers-on-the-recent-encampment/>

Elections

Our Spring Elections concluded at the end of February. Over the course of the four day voting period, 4,442 individual students cast their vote, and over 52,000 individual votes were cast.

Our six Executive Officers for 2024/25 include a mixture of new and incumbent officers, and our Part Time Officers have been elected based on a wide range of prior experience and manifesto aims. A full list of elected winners is available on our website. <https://www.qmsu.org/elections/winners/>

Our team have begun work towards training and inducting the Part Time and Full Time officers for 2024/25 academic year. A series of winners' briefings have been held in person and online, and work is being done to ensure training builds on officer engagement, community and is accessible to all elected reps. Induction and training of Reps will be done across July and August.

Russell Group Students' Unions (RGSU)

We are a member of RGSU which is a network of students' unions at Russell Group universities. The group brings student officers together to network, share knowledge and come up with joint lobbying priorities, and the ambition is that the group can influence national policy-makers. Serena–Amani Al Jabbar, President and Aisha Qadi, Vice President Science & Engineering attended the recent residential at Southampton University where the RGSUs first manifesto was finalised. Following consultations with all the member students' unions, the manifesto has been launched. It outlines its lobbying priorities, including better cost-of-living funding from the government, improved access to childcare for student parents and strengthening the reputation of UK higher education. As a member of RGSUs, we'll be working with colleagues from RGSUs to achieve the manifesto goals and influence higher education policy at a national level.

<https://russellgroupstudentsunions.org/manifesto>

Postgraduate Research Students

Matthew Beach, Vice President Communities, continues working to increase representation and engagement infrastructure for postgraduate research (PGR) students. We were successfully awarded an Enhancing Research and Innovation Cultures Fund to pilot a PGR Marketing and Communication Assistant student-staff role, alongside an events budget. A PGR has been hired for the role and plans are underway for a summer event series, including culture trips, end-of-year socials, library visits, among others. Matthew also continues to work with our team and the Doctoral College to outline a partnership for shared communications (e.g. elections and events), action tracking, and meeting schedules. Parallel to this work, Matthew worked with the team to create a 3-year action plan for PGR engagement development within the union coinciding with the new strategic pillars.

Awards

Our annual Society and Student Media Awards ceremony took place on 28 March and was a huge success in the newly refurbished Old Library with over 140 student leaders from our broad range of student groups attending. There were incredible applications for both our group awards and our trophy awards. Overall, we had 26 trophy award nominations and 170 group and individual award nominations. It was an incredible evening

of celebration for all the individual work and our groups accomplishments over the year. The winners are available to see on our society awards webpage - <https://www.qmsu.org/awards/>.

On Friday 5th of April, the Sports Awards took place and 103 Club Sport members purchased tickets to attend the event held in the Old Library. It was a great opportunity to bring Club Sport together to celebrate the hard work and achievements of our individuals, teams and clubs. Engagement with the Awards extends beyond the attendance on the evening. We received 393 nominations (109 more than in 2023). The number of awards was reduced to ten this year due to changes in the Recreational Sport Programme that made two awards void. The winners are available to see on our Sports Awards webpage - <https://www.qmsu.org/awards/sport/>.

On Thursday 21 March the Volunteering Awards took place, celebrating the three strands of our volunteering service. This ceremony is a smaller and more intimate event, and attendance was high with 55 people joining, this included student volunteers, members of volunteering groups, and organisations from Give Volunteering a Go and the Community Volunteering Service. It was a great evening hearing student volunteer's stories, alongside the opportunities that organisations have on offer. Across the evening 4 group/organisational awards, 8 individual awards and 2 trophy awards were presented. The winners are available to see on our volunteer awards webpage - <https://www.qmsu.org/awards/studentgroup/volunteering/>.

Societies and Student Media

As we welcomed the third term, our Mile End elections ended, and the handover process is underway for the newly elected committees for 2024-25. Our Whitechapel groups are currently going through their election period. Our summer induction training is currently being reviewed and prepared for the new cohort of committee members. Training will take place in June, with the new committee officially starting their roles in August.

Finally, we reflect on what has been another successful year for Student Groups. We have supported 75 large events and processed £64,000 worth of sponsorships. We have welcomed 51 new groups this year bringing our total amount to 293 groups across our Mile End, Whitechapel and Malta Campuses. To summarise what fabulous work our groups have done this year in a couple of paragraphs is an almost impossible task because they have achieved so much in the short time of their roles and have made a positive impact on the wider student community.

The team are currently collecting feedback from both committee members and society members on their experiences with Student Groups. The feedback gathered will be used to implement changes, consider introducing new initiatives and plan for next academic year.

Raise and Give (RAG)

Student charity fundraising has been at a record high again this year, with Student Groups holding many different activities and stalls this year to fundraise, ranging from a Drag Extravaganza to a charity fashion show to a hockey charity tournament. So far, this academic year, 84 fundraisers have taken place, delivered by different Student Groups, who adopted 65 different charities through adopt a charity this year. The result of this is our Societies, Sports Clubs and other Student Group areas raised a staggering £74,571.52 across the year, with some fundraising still to be received.

Graduation Hardship Fund

Our Graduation Fund provides funding to Queen Mary graduates to help them cover the cost of renting their cap and gown for their graduation, thereby removing financial barriers for participation in their graduation ceremony. Applications for ceremonies to be held in July 2024 were processed and reviewed by Tahmid Khan, Vice President Welfare, in early May 2024. There were 351 applicants, of which 295 were approved.

This was the final application round as part of a three-year funding agreement with the Alumni Fund – providing £10,000 per annum.

Tahmid is analysing the data from this round of applications, as well as from previous rounds, as part of work to ensure that funding is renewed for the next academic year.

Some brief statistics from this round of applications are that:

- 67.2% of applicants were in receipt of the maximum maintenance loan.
- 50.4% of applicants were in receipt of the maximum maintenance loan and had at some point been in receipt of the maximum Queen Mary Bursary.

- 95.4 % of applicants were undergraduates, of whom 43.6% said that without funding, they would not attend their graduation ceremony.

The data demonstrates the clear need for the continuation of such a fund for all students, but especially for students of a lower socio-economic background.

Graduation ceremonies are an integral part of the student experience, with many of QMUL's student body being the first in their families to attend university. The continuation of the Graduation Fund is necessary to ensure that QMUL can achieve its goal to become a truly inclusive university by 2030.

The high number of applicants also shows the ongoing pressure of the cost-of-living crisis on students at the University, highlighting the need for continued action on this area in the coming academic year.

Spring Fest

One of our objectives this year was to encourage students and staff to look at exercise as a tool for their mental health as well as their physical health. In order to demonstrate this message, we decided to run an event for the first time using volunteers from a number of different departments across the Students' Union and University to offer taster sessions for alternative activities.

These activities were hosted across the campus in Library Square, Godward Square, Geography Square, Drapers Lounge, Drapers Bar, the Sports Hall and Qmotion. The day of activities was advertised as a festival style event to encourage students and staff who would typically avoid sports activities to take part and included live music and a BBQ hosted by Drapers Bar and Kitchen.

In total there were over 20 activities on the festival timetable including bowling, inflatable games, table tennis, pop up badminton, garden games, give it a go fencing, women's only lifting workshop and nutritional lunchtime talk, men's only mental health walk and talk, wii sports just dance, spikeball, free access to the gym and many more.

As part of the event, we also launched the Balancing Life Survey to gather more information from students about their experience at university with sport and physical activity. We had great engagement with good numbers of participants on the games and activities throughout the day (even when it started raining).

Godward Square

We are working closely with the university's professional services team, particularly Estates and Facilities directorate relating to mitigation to capital works disruption in Godward Square, but also across the Mile End campus. The preparatory works on the ITL building and the compound begin this summer and take well over a year to complete, impacting on our Sport and Fitness centre, venues, and the multipurpose external spaces. Our focus has been to clearly improve the student experience, but also importantly aid student recruitment in the short and longer term. This will be achieved through;

- Improving the student experience by creating a new destination student space on campus as part of the new "Students' Union Quarter".
- Mitigating the impact of construction works in Godward Square by creating a new key entrance point from Bancroft Road through into a renovated student social space that connects to other student destinations.
- Improving the tired building aesthetic and frontage onto Bancroft Road and view from East / Main campus, providing improvement for both the university and local community.
- Transform a dark "nightclub" space, which is a sub-room of Drapers Bar & Kitchen into a space with natural light, created by the removal of a former ATM Space and opening up windows currently blocked out.
- The existing space will be transformed, with the design celebrating our local cultural diversity and university community. The space will be alcohol-free by day, with a focus on wellbeing and relaxation. By night the space will transform into an important events space for our student groups and traditional nighttime activities.
- A new link will be created between the student lounge space and Union Shop, alongside improved direct access to Qmotion Sport and Fitness Centre. This will contribute to the development of the new Students' Union Quarter (Drapers, Qmotion Sport & Fitness Centre, Lounge Space, Union Shop and

Godward Square). This will aim to be a destination and brand within its own right and enhance the connection students have with our spaces.

Student Voice

EDI Project

Serena has been working on furthering the student voice regarding equality, diversity, inclusion spaces, and concerns. A proposal is being drawn to add an EDI space to the newly started Student Voice Sub-Group. The project aims not just to bring students into the space, but to allow them to research and engage with students on EDI questions, creating a paid project opportunity. This year has made it clear that with a diverse student body, we need to be comfortable with the uncomfortable and keep freedom of speech guidance in mind; this offers opportunity for both the University and Students' Union to facilitate productive conversation.

Study Well Campaign

Tahmid has been organising the summer Study Well campaign, a long-running joint initiative by the Students' Union and the University. The campaign aims to provide support and care for students during the exam period which can be stressful. Events and programmes are held by both the Union and University. Events include a mix of study support and wellbeing activities beginning with pop up stalls, giving out freebies to students to brighten their assignment and study heavy days. We are planning the annual petting zoo, which is always well received, a cold drink giveaway and a Get Active pop up in May. We are also looking to giveaway 40 meal kits which include 4 meals worth of food, giving away 160 free meals.

With the opening of the renovated Garrod Building, Tahmid is aiming to deliver a renewed Barts and The London Study Well campaign for students at Whitechapel Campus. This is to reflect the different schedules and experiences that medicine and dentistry students will have during their degree programmes and have often called for more Study Well events at the campus. To promote a student-led and innovative approach for the updated BL Study Well campaign, Tahmid has also launched a £350 discretionary fund to support existing study or wellbeing events being held during the Study Well period by BL student societies.

Lighting Improvement Project

As part of Tahmid's project to improve lighting across the university, construction work will begin in the coming weeks and months in the following three areas on Mile End Campus:

- Near The Curve restaurant.
- Near the Novo Cemetery.
- The grounds in front of Pooley House – which will be a significant redevelopment of the area.

In total, these improvements will equate to an investment of about £110,000 into the campus grounds, with work expected to be completed by September 2024. It is hoped that the project will result in a safer and more attractive campus for students and staff alike to relax and enjoy.

Postgraduate Taught Students

Matthew has continued to lobby for a university space where postgraduate taught (PGT) student experience is considered. While leads have been identified for undergraduate and postgraduate research students, PGT continues to be a grey area. An interim measure was discussed at the Student Voice Sub Board involving tracking specific action for PGT students. Matthew also continues to work closely with QMUL to increase the response rate for the postgraduate taught experience survey (PTES).

MBBS

Amaan Abbas, Vice President Barts & The London, has worked with BLSA Reps and IHSE senior leadership to ensure that student representation is, and will continue to be, present in the review of the curriculum, and attendance on placements.

Amaan has led the student focused aspect of quality assurance visits to our Trust Partners, including Whipps Cross, ELFT and The Cleveland Clinic. This enabled an open view of student's experiences at our placement sites, and this information can be used, supported by feedback from staff and self-reported data, to improve how clinical placements are run.

Amaan also facilitated clear communication between the Medical School and the student body when delays in exam reporting instructions were identified for final year students. The BLSA Part Time Officers, particularly the IHSE representatives, were vital in making sure that clear information about exams was being shared, and we were able to support students impacted by the delays both informally and through signposting them to student support.

As the exam period approaches for MBBS students, Amaan has been working to reduce issues that may arise around study spaces on an already smaller campus at Whitechapel. This included working with the Life Sciences project team to move works on the Garrod Building to after exams are finished.

Course Rep Forum

The Course Rep Forum took place in April and was open to all Course Reps. The forum was intended as an opportunity to gather feedback across all faculties and courses. Attendees participated in a group introductory session, before dividing into streams for HSS, S&E, SMD and PG groups; facilitated by Jovani Palnoni, Vice President Humanities & Social Sciences, Aisha, Matthew and Amaan. In order to admit as many Course Reps as possible, a virtual conference was held simultaneously.

In total, 38 Course Reps attended the virtual conference, and 23 in person. The main discussion points were on Module Evaluation, SLLCS and Module selection. Feedback from the forum is being circulated to QMUL committees via the Exec.

Decolonise

Matthew is working with our team to extend the Decolonise Queen Mary campaign. Two strands of this work include organising a panel discussion between a member of the archives team and two postgraduate research students who work with external collections (British Library and Natural History Museum), to discuss power dynamics, ethics, and conservation of colonial materials. The second strand involves creating a resource catalogue of various anti-racist initiatives between the University and Students' Union. Matthew is working with faculty and school/institute's equality, diversity, and inclusion leads to map ongoing and completed projects. Within the Students' Union, he is looking at the previous campaign and Student Group activities. The resulting document will be made shareable to relevant University and Students' Union staff.

Balancing Life Survey

We have launched the first annual Balancing Life Survey. The survey has been created through a partnership with Leeds University and will allow us to learn more about our communities activity and wellbeing levels. The insights from this survey will play a huge role in shaping future plans and initiatives and driving the QMSU sport and physical activity strategy.

Student Opportunities

Employability

The Skills Award programme has now concluded and the list of students who have achieved the Gold Skills Award is currently being verified to check they have fulfilled the requirements for the award to appear on their HEAR transcript. We had a total of 355 students register for the Skills Award programme over the course of the year (an increase from 261 in 2022/23), and this brought 431 individual attendances across the 42 Skills Award sessions in both semesters. This session total was comprised of 36 skills sessions where students developed transferable skills, as well as 6 reflection sessions where students are helped to recognise and present the skills they have developed in the Skills Award and other Students' Union activities. So far 55 students have achieved a gold skills award this year, with some submissions still being verified.

The skills covered in the programme included soft skills such as Leadership, Time Management and Public Speaking, in addition to practical skills such as CV & Presentation Design and Interviewing with Impact. For semester 2, we 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. These sessions were popular with participants as 43 individual attendances were recorded across the three courses.

Aisha launched the Employable Education Survey earlier this month with an excellent uptake of 1200+ responses. The survey has now been closed, and data analysis is currently taking place. Aisha is due to present the results in relevant boards such as ECG board, DEAG meetings and the DOE forums.

Jovani has been working hard with our team on the launch of an employability tab on the Students' Union website, with the main goal of making employability relatable and accessible for all students. Currently, Jovani is working on creating articles, blogs, employability curriculum and a jargon buster.

Sustainability

Since Climate Action Week, sustainability work has been focused on completing projects as we work towards our Green Impact Students' Union accreditation. The Sustainability in the Curriculum Network continues to grow as it moves into the first phases of developing the Sustainability in the Curriculum Module. The network will be looking to secure funding from the Principal's Prize Fund to create student roles to develop the module over the summer. Our allotment development Sticky Campus project is moving into mid-stages, with most items now being ordered. It is hoped that improvements will take place in late spring/early summer, making it a space for students, staff and the wider community.

We have worked closely with the School of Business Management over the last few months to deliver a student consult brief and a guest lecture on sustainability and employability to marketing students, which was very well received. The student consult project was a success, providing us with foundational evidence for the need for a sustainability in the curriculum module to upskill our students, preparing them for sustainable workplaces, as every job is a sustainability job.

We are now working towards developing our approach to sustainability, looking ahead to the development of an action plan and a gap analysis based on the upcoming Green Impact Students' Union audit in the summer. Preparation for next year's events, such as the much-anticipated Re-Use Fair, is under way. With wider support from the University Estates Team and other stakeholders, we have taken a more strategic approach, promising to deliver a great event. Relationships with various university teams continue to strengthen as we look towards an integrative, holistic approach to better engaging students in sustainability activity.

Furthermore, Matthew received additional Sticky Campus funding to expand the ongoing temporary exhibition and events programme started during Climate Action Week. The events programme is underway with a gardening event having taken place with medicinal plants from the Mile End canal in April. A second printmaking with plant materials workshop will take place in the Garrod Building in June. Additionally, the team will be presenting at the Festival of Communities and the Peopling the Palace(s) festival later this summer. A trip to the Chelsea Physic Garden's fernery is also being finalised as part of our summer postgraduate research events programme. Matthew also continues to work the team to review Student Council sustainability policies as well as contributing to the Sustainability in the Curriculum Network's initiative to apply for funding to create the prospective module.

Volunteering

The Volunteering Service has had a busy year, offering 6 different Give Volunteering a Go days, supporting 8 active Volunteering Groups and providing a huge variety of Brokerage opportunities. There are 7,809 current students on the volunteering system as active volunteers. The Brokerage service has 189 active charities and at present there are 85 volunteering opportunities available across a variety of sectors.

This year 281 students have submitted hours towards a Volunteering Award. 38 Volunteering Awards have already been received, with 6 students already achieving a Gold Award (100+ hours volunteering), 12 students achieving a Silver Award (50+ hours volunteering), and 20 students achieving a Bronze Award (25+ hours volunteering).

London Marathon

On 21st April, 49 Queen Mary's students volunteered at the London Marathon. Queen Mary was allocated 34 volunteers to marshal mile 19, and 15 volunteers to support with baggage at the finish line. It was a great day and atmosphere supporting the runners, including our selected Queen Mary runner, Pablo Hernan Lapiduz.

Financial Support for Students

The Association Fund, delivered and administrated by QMSU and the BLSA has delivered approximately £3,000 to student groups and individuals for projects that will benefit those studying; including funding for running conferences, entering teams into national competitions or buying equipment to put on shows.

The BLSA have also very kindly received funding from several other organisations, such as the Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital Trust and the Barts and The London Alumni Association that have allowed us to set up a Graduation Hardship scheme for students graduating this year. This means that students will be able to access money for gown and ticket costs, and we are working with local hotels to

reduce prices for those returning to London for the ceremony. This fund compliments the work that Tahmid is doing with the central graduation fund.

The BLSA are also in the process of setting up a new Conference Fund, to allow students to apply for support to attend conferences nationally and internationally, so that the work that our students do can be more easily recognised on a national or international stage.

Events

The BLSA put on the annual Association Dinner for over 130 people, inviting back alumni and staff from both the University and our Trust Partners. Awards were given out based on student nominations, including Lecturer of the Year and Clinician of the Year, to recognise the work that our educators do across the various sites that teaching takes place.

The BLSA also organised the MBBS results day 2024, known as Doctors Day, where we celebrated the successes of the medical students and connected them with medical protection companies in preparation for their electives and future work.

Various members of the BLSA supported the Clinical Careers Fair put on by Stefan Couch, from the Careers and Enterprise team. This event included attendees from the Royal Colleges for Medical and Dental Students, as well as other hiring organisations. This was the first event of its type and was a huge success, with a closer relationship planned for next year's event.

Serena–Amani Al Jabbar
Students' Union President
28th May 2024