



<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>Welcome Week</li><li>Other Key Updates</li><li>Student Voice and Education</li><li>Welfare and Liberation</li><li>Student Opportunities</li></ul>
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# President's Senate Report

September 2024

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# President's Report

## Welcome Week

### Welcome Fair Events

The Welcome Fair events at Mile End and Whitechapel were a great success with over 11,000 excited attendees joining us across the three days of Fairs. The first of our fairs took place at Whitechapel, and this year across the ground floor of the Garrod Building and, thanks to the weather, a large portion of the Blizzard Mews. More than 90 of our student groups were ready to speak to new students and feedback from attendees and student groups has been positive.

At Mile End, there was a great atmosphere across the Great Hall, Students' Union Hub, Sports Hall and outdoor areas throughout the Thursday and Friday. The event featured over 200 stalls from Clubs and Societies, performance and demonstration areas, sporting activities, university services and several external organisations and charities. Despite the significant construction works across campus, including the loss of the whole of Godward Square normally used for the event, the event still went very smoothly with positive feedback received from attendees and stallholders. However, the event was at capacity and additional space will be required in future years, especially if campus disruptions continue. Notably, key university spaces such as the Queen's Lawn Marquee, remained largely underutilised during the event despite requesting to use it. The Estates & Facilities team were a huge help across the campuses, in setting up and clearing down the event, their support along with the hard work of our staff team and student volunteers is appreciated.

### Welcome Crew & Help Squad

Over 80 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' energy and dedication to ensuring that new students had a memorable first week has been exemplary 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 event.

### Welcome Events

We delivered a packed programme of events for Welcome Week and Week 1. 9005 tickets were sold for these events, and many events were completely sold out. Hundreds more students participated in free / non-ticketed events throughout the two weeks.

Events took place across the three London campuses and other off-campus locations around London. Activities included speed meeting, commuters socials, craft sessions, pick paint and plant, sports activities, day trips to Thorpe Park and Cambridge, club nights and much more. Our Events team also delivered two Boat Ball events down the River Thames which were both sold out. Other highlights included our Postgraduate Mixer event with over 450 attendees and our pre-arrival online meet & greets with over 400 attendees. Whilst late-night club nights and events saw a slight decline in attendance, alcohol-free and daytime events saw strong growth across a range of events.

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, alongside alcohol-free activity and events delivered by the Students' Union events team. This programme continues throughout semester one. Finally, the Reuse Fair was also held on Arrivals Weekend, reaching over 300 students and diverting nearly 1 tonne of items from landfill.

### Welcome Communications & University Partnerships

Our 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 again for this year. All UK home undergraduate and postgraduate students received a welcome pack in the post. 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 very high open rates, averaging at over 85% and click-through rates higher than 30%. These are far above the expected average in our sector and more generally in the marketing sector. There was also a strong social media campaign fronted by our student reps and Executive Officers and dedicated online webpages to welcome new students.

The Students' Union also worked in partnership with the university to help deliver their Welcome Week programme, including having a presence in Library Square throughout Welcome Week, supporting the Wellbeing Fair and by working with several schools to host social activities and welcome events across our spaces including offering food and drink, games and craft sessions and other icebreaker activities. We also worked with Residential Life to deliver a series of online speed meeting events for residents prior to Welcome Week.

### **Club Sport**

Welcome Week was a great success for the clubs, with 34 clubs present at Whitechapel and 39 at Mile End. Following Welcome Week, clubs ran trial and taster sessions, with official club training not starting until the 30th of September. This allowed clubs to welcome prospective members into their sessions to try the club before purchasing a membership and before competitive training commenced. Training has now begun, and clubs are preparing for their first competitive fixtures in the coming weeks.

Prior to this, in the summer, club committees completed a new style of Club Sport Development Plan. The plan was broken down into three parts, allowing clubs to be more specific with their information without this task being daunting. This improved the amount of contact we had with clubs throughout the summer, which has benefitted communication when students returned in September.

### **Societies**

The year is truly underway, with societies being incredibly busy and excited to take on the year! We hosted over 150 groups at our Mile End and Whitechapel Welcome Fairs. Memberships across societies are up by 640 (4,140 total) compared to last year. The increase in sales is only a positive sign for the rest of the year. To celebrate this, as well as all their hard work over the summer and September, we will be having a committee member social on the 9 October.

We also had our first society's board, giving out £11,200 to our groups to help them fund their new initiatives and events.

### **Welcoming International Students: Pre-Departure Briefing for Late Arrivals**

Hassam Naeem, Vice President Liberation, International and Postgraduate, hosted a pre-departure briefing session for international students in collaboration with five other part-time officers to welcome our new international students. This initiative specifically targeted late-departure students. For those arriving on time, we provided comprehensive information on how the Students' Union can support them, how to make the most of Induction Week, and which key places they should explore on campus.

### **BLSA**

The BLSA has had an amazing Welcome Fortnight this year with over 18 events to welcome our new students. BL Families is our student led support scheme, where a new student is "adopted" by an older year student. This year we had a total of 150 families. Now the new students have a contact to ask for advice and support as they start university. Our part time reps led the Help Squad for both Floyer and Dawson Accommodations. We had over 50 students volunteer their time over the weekend to help with Move-In's.

## **Other key updates**

### **Liberation Campaigns**

Over the years, our liberation campaigns have grown to six taking place each academic year, with requests and mandates from students wanting to add more. These campaigns primarily happen in Semester 1 and 2,

and with the continued growth and increased demand, there has been concern that these campaigns would overlap with each other as well as clash with other events and activities. This led us to reviewing our model and trialling a new approach this year.

We will continue to deliver six core campaigns, and they will now be facilitated by employed student Community Organisers with support from our staff and Hassam. They will be responsible for delivering a baseline set of activities within a shorter and focussed period and liaise with our interested student communities about their ideas and add those to the campaign.

So far, we have hired three community organisers for our first three campaigns; Black History Month, Islamic Heritage Month and Disability History Month. They have already been instrumental in leading brainstorming meetings, reaching out to charities and planning events.

### **Sport Employability Programme**

The launch of the Sports Employability Academy (SEA) represents a significant new initiative for QMSU Sport, designed to help students gain up to £300 towards professional qualifications in return for their volunteer work within the sports industry. This programme, which replaces the Community Foundation, has already gained significant interest from students, and the recently revamped website is driving further engagement. We have forged strong internal and external partnerships to ensure students have access to coaching and officiating roles both on campus and in the local community. Our connections with grassroots organisations and professional clubs, including talks with Leyton Orient and QPR FC Community Trusts, offer pathways for students to progress from volunteers to paid coaches. Additionally, our partnership with UK Coaching enables us to provide free premium memberships to eligible students, supporting their development in the coaching profession. SEA has also secured £2,500 in funding from BUCS and the FA to develop female football and futsal coaches, a significant investment in the future of women in sport.

### **Volunteering**

There are currently 112 opportunities up on our 'Browse Opportunities' page for students to apply to, with over 8,100 students signed up to volunteer at these opportunities and receive our newsletter. Our Give Volunteering A Go event on the website has 40 sign ups. We are planning a further 3 Give Volunteering A Go events this semester. We have successfully recruited 10 Volunteering Champions to lead these events.

We have 9 active student-led Volunteering Groups, 6 Barts-based groups and 3 Mile End-based groups. So far, 413 students have completed Safeguarding Training to begin volunteering. We are currently working with the team out in Malta to help support the new volunteering group there.

We had our Volunteering Fair on the 25 September at the Students' Union Hub, where 36 of our partner charities, two Students' Union staff teams (Skills Award and Sports Employability Academy), and two Volunteering Groups had stalls at the event. We will be looking to organise a second Volunteer Fair in the second semester.

In addition, inductions have been delivered to Year 2, 3 and 4 UG Dentistry students, Year 1 Dental Hygiene students and some Foundation students. These students must complete at least 8 hours of volunteering per academic year for their Professionalism, Teamwork and Social Responsibility module.

### **Qmotion**

The new academic year at Qmotion has started with great success, building on the momentum from last year. Significant reinvestment in the facility has seen the introduction of new equipment, including 3 cable machines and 4 assault bikes. These additions not only improve the student experience by optimising space but also enhance both regular gym sessions and classes. The expansion of the group exercise timetable to include 5 new classes, making a total of 18 unique offerings, reflects a commitment to variety and inclusivity.

Alongside these operational developments, the recruitment of 15 new student staff has boosted our team to 20, offering valuable opportunities for students to enhance their employability through continuous professional development (CPD) and upskilling initiatives. Our collaboration with Queen Mary services, such as Advice and Counselling, continues to support key programmes like the exercise referral scheme and black female therapy groups, reinforcing our broader community engagement.

## Student Voice & Education

### Student Council Review

We have commissioned an external organisation [Counterculture](#) to review some of our democratic structures, primarily focussing on Student Council. The model has been in place for many years and it's time to look at modern effective and engaging democratic student voice mechanism that is relevant to this generation of our students and also fits alongside the variety of our student voice touchpoints.

The team from Counterculture have worked with a variety of Students' Unions, H.E. Institutions and regularly collaborate with WONKHE, so have a broad view of the sector and understand our needs, what best practice looks like and can provide valuable insight, and we hope innovative solutions. The desk-based research and stakeholder interviews were completed before the start of term, and we are currently in the drafting and feedback stage. Following this we will engage with the wider team, student representatives and University colleagues.

### Autumn Elections

The Autumn Elections are currently ongoing, and students can put themselves forward to represent their peers. The elections include more than 300 Course Rep positions, 13 Part-Time Officer positions and more than 20 PGR Subject Rep positions. Voting will take place 7 – 10 October, and the elected candidates take office immediately.

### Officer handover and training

On 1 August, the new officers for 2024/25 officially took office. The six full-time executive officers started their induction and handover a few weeks before that to prepare them to start their roles on 1 August. The induction and handover included training on the Students' Union, QMUL, the higher education sector and key skills. They also received a full handover from the outgoing officer team, and they met key contacts in the university.

The part-time officers have also received training on key skills and knowledge areas, including an in-person training day that included networking with the other officers.

### Whitechapel Library

Rahma Hegy, Vice President Barts and The London, is working closely with the library team to provide feedback and suggestions for the upcoming renovation. Our focus is on ensuring that the redesigned space meets both the academic and well-being needs of students. Key proposals include the creation of additional silent study areas for those seeking a quiet, distraction-free environment, more group study spaces and the introduction of a dedicated contemplation room for students. This space would offer a place for reflection, prayer and relaxation, supporting mental health and overall student well-being alongside academic work.

### Enhancing Postgraduate engagement with QMSU

We have hired a Postgraduate Engagement Assistant to engage and increase involvement among our PG students. Additionally, for the first time, we have collaborated with the Residential Team to host a bingo night event for our PG residents.

### Employability in the Curriculum Working Group

One of our significant successes this past year has been the Employability in the Curriculum Working Group. This initiative has generated impactful results, particularly following the recent survey, which gained over 1000 Student Responses. Jovani Palnoni, Vice President Humanities and Social Sciences, and Al-Habib Mraish, Vice President Science and Engineering, are working together to drive this project forward, focusing on areas that align with their respective employability goals. Together, they have updated the group's terms of reference and are actively working on implementing actions based on the group's previous work and are ready to move forward with future meetings.

### Summer Research Internships

Al-Habib is working on implementing a new internship scheme in Science and Engineering for students from low economic backgrounds/in poverty. The internships will have a research background, and the students will do the projects with an academic from the faculty as a supervisor, and the project focus will be in a topic/field

of the student's choice. Al-Habib is working with University teams to discuss logistics, funding, and sustainability.

## **Welfare & Liberation**

### **Cost of Living**

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis and supporting our students during it is still a priority for the Students' Union. We have been continuing supporting students through giving out Supermarket Vouchers (a £25 online voucher for supermarkets students can access once per academic year) and Welfare Loans (up to £100 loan for students to access in short-term need). We still have our food pantry offering to help students facing food poverty. The supermarket vouchers have been helpful for students with nine students accessing it since our offering launched in June. We are planning to continue to expand our offering this academic year.

Nabihah Ali, Vice President Welfare, continues measures to tackle the impact of increased cost of living on students by working to expand food support provisions to Whitechapel campus, advocating for the removal of late penalty fees and reassessment of payment deadlines for self-funded students.

### **Campus Spaces**

In response to student demand, Nabihah is working to launch a female only space on campus to provide a safe space for relaxation, study and community building. We also are working to provide phone booths for students to provide suitable spaces for online meetings and interviews.

### **Academic Welfare**

Nabihah and Al-Habib are working to understand student opinions and priorities surrounding the academic advisor scheme to collaborate on current work taking place in this area to improve consistency and student fulfilment with the scheme.

### **QM Bursary and Medics & Dentists**

Rahma has been advocating for the extension of the QM bursary to include all Medical and Dental students during the years they are funded by the NHS bursary. The current NHS maintenance bursary is insufficient to meet students' financial needs, particularly considering the ongoing cost of living crisis. Our goal is to ensure that all Medical and Dental students receive the necessary financial assistance to alleviate these pressures, allowing them to focus fully on their studies. Rahma will put forward a formal proposal.

## **Student Opportunities**

### **Skills Award**

The Skills Award is now accepting registrations and session bookings for 2024/25. There are currently 21 skill sessions planned over the first semester. We are piloting a new initiative this semester which will see five returning placement students deliver a session they have designed based on the skills they have acquired on their placement. These student-led sessions will cover areas such as professional networking, research beyond academia and scientific writing. Four of these sessions are planned for the first semester and a fifth next semester. In general, there are 89 students registered for the Skills Award, and we have 123 individual session sign-ups at the time of writing.

### **Sustainability**

The Re-use Fair kicked off this year's sustainability offering, reaching over 300 students, diverting nearly 1 tonne of items from landfill and receiving fantastic feedback. With efforts being made to secure storage, it is hoped we will be able to run one on a smaller scale in January for incoming students.

Our team of student representatives are planning their first events, including the Hog Friendly Litter Picking Competition and gearing up for the first Sustainability Board on Thursday 3 October. The Exec are also working closely with the Sustainability Officer to ensure that they are considering sustainability within their projects.

The first Big Green Canal Clean, turned Mile End Park litter-pick, was not deterred by the heavy rains. Students headed out and collected 3 big bags of litter, enjoying well-earned hot chocolates. We are continuing to work closely with the university sustainability team, we are currently supporting the October Energy Campaign and working to embed sustainability in the curriculum.

### **Performance Sport**

In Performance Sport, we have refined our approach to better serve both Focus Teams and Talented Athletes, fostering an inclusive environment for high-level performance. This year, we expanded access to performance development initiatives to all members of our focus clubs, offering online workshops and discounted Qmotion gym memberships. The Performance Sport Programme website is also undergoing a final revamp to enhance user engagement.

Retaining our Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) accreditation has been a key achievement, allowing us to recruit top-tier athletes, such as national and international competitors, while offering them the opportunity to balance academic pursuits with their athletic careers. The success of last year's Strength & Conditioning (S&C) services has led to its continuation, with a notable increase in both participation and student satisfaction. We have expanded the Focus Team programme, adding Women's Hockey (BL), bringing the total to six teams, each benefiting from S&C support, additional training, and other performance-enhancing resources. A new part-time S&C coach is being recruited to support these efforts.

### **Get Active**

The Get Active programme is set to kick off next week with free pay-and-play sessions, introducing an exciting new partnership with Club Sport to lead some of these activities. This collaboration not only strengthens ties across the department but also offers clubs funding and employability academy opportunities in exchange for their involvement. The initiative promotes cohesion and provides students with diverse opportunities to engage in recreational sports. The programme features seven hours of pay-and-play sessions, with plans to expand further, alongside five introductory sports courses led by club members. These offerings cater to students keen to develop new skills or explore different sports. Social league entries have also opened, with a focus on encouraging mixed-gender teams to promote inclusivity. Additionally, we've launched Game On nights at Drapers, with activators leading the events, enhancing student engagement and promoting the broader Get Active programme. To support these initiatives, 15 new sport activators have been hired to facilitate the social leagues, pay-and-play sessions, and Game On nights, ensuring a vibrant and accessible recreational sports environment for all students.

### **Student Media**

We have four student media outlets active this year who are The Print, Peach Magazine, Quest Radio and Circadian Magazine. To start the semester, we organised an Introduction to Student Media event in Week 1, which created the opportunity for new students to learn about the opportunities available, as well as hear from a guest speaker, Sawdah Bhaimiya, who is a Queen Mary alumna currently working as a reporter at CNBC. We worked with the university's Alumni Engagement Manager to facilitate this connection. Students were able to gain inspiration from Sawdah's valuable insight into her career pathway from student media to working in the media industry as her profession. We look forward to continuing to work with the Alumni team to facilitate more sessions like this.

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

Student Groups have already started their RAG fundraising for the year, including the first BL RAG Officer event of the year for their nominated charities and BL Oncology's bake sale for Macmillan Cancer Support. Over the last few years, the amount our students have raised through RAG has increased, so we are looking forward to seeing if last year's impressive £74,571.52 can be exceeded.

**Tahmid Khan**

**Students' Union President**

**3 October 2024**