

1. INTRODUCTION

Going for Gold is a student-staff research initiative, that aims towards achieving excellence in various aspects of education and student life at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). This particular paper is focused on research carried out by the commuter students branch of this programme. To ensure that a wide variety of student voices are captured, we have one student from each department at QMUL within the team: Sally Mohammed (School of Medicine & Dentistry), Mohamad Elerian (School of Humanities & Social Sciences) & Salve Raquel Salvana (School of Engineering and Materials Science).

The definition of a commuter student varies from one institution to the next and tends to be synonymous with 'living at home'. It also greatly varies due to the fact that educational institutions are situated in locations with a diverse amount of geographical, societal and transportation factors.

Commuter students are a group often overlooked with little prior research having been completed in this field. The press is drawing more attention to this issue with headlines such as '*Students who commute to university are getting a raw deal*' (Morris, 2018) and '*Forgotten, isolated and ignored: the rise of the commuter student*' (Caulton, 2018), highlighting the need to ensure that commuter students are at no point disadvantaged during their educational tenure at various institutions, and more precisely, at QMUL.

This report addresses the topic of the repercussions of commuting on university students while addressing the array of issues they face. We then finalise the report by highlighting solutions brought forward by students while suggesting our own recommendations and possible solutions to be implemented at Queen Mary.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review draws from academic and online resources from national and international papers as this particular topic has not been thoroughly explored by UK institutions compared to their American counterparts.

Cars are a common form of transportation to American colleges with massive parking lots on campus and public transportation having a rather bad reputation in various cities. Comparatively, Transport for London is well-renowned for its service and is what many people in the capital rely on, with 1.38 billion annual passengers (TfL, 2019).

There are also significant differences in the commuting culture across the UK, with London universities having more than half of the student body being commuters whereas the University of Bath only has roughly 2% (Donnelly et al., 2018). London being a highly connected and populated metropolis, it is understandable that there are more commuting students.

The general consensus is that commuter students are generally unhappy and not as engaged due to external commitments. It is noted that there are also commuters that are highly involved in the University life (Miah, 2019).

Most UK universities have a substantial proportion of commuters, some more than half of their undergraduates (Lightfoot, 2018). Interestingly enough, it is only recently that university funded research projects have been implemented to tackle issues faced by this particularly under-represented group (Thomas and Jones, 2017).

There is a magnitude of influences that suggest the *sense of belonging* of commuting students is affected, though drawing upon biographical narrative method and cross-case analysis, from attitudes to social university interactions to their cultural background, displays that certain students feel more ostracised than others (Pokorny et al., 2016). It is extremely difficult to point out a particular factor that causes them to feel this way as there is a lot of overlap between ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds that cause them to stay at home. All of which have a great impact on their university experience and can cause them to generally feel as though they are not as well integrated as others, according to the Student Academic Experience Survey (Neves et al., 2017).

It seems as though this topic has a lot in common with BAME students and encouraging inclusivity branch of the Going for Gold programme. Commuter students tend to have a conflict of commitment between obligations at home and their university experience.

Queen Mary University of London has already implemented suggestions from the student body from the last academic year by creating more locker spaces that may increase the levels of participation and engagement (QMUL, 2018). Kingston University has also been holding fewer academic sessions early in the morning or late afternoon for commuting students (Lightfoot, 2018).

3. QUANTITATIVE METHODS AND RESULTS

i. Reasoning behind our quantitative research method:

With regards to quantitative research, the aim of our research proposal was to collect data from over three hundred students who consider themselves to be commuters.

In terms of collection of our quantitative data, we used a web-based questionnaire, powered by Survey Monkey, to collect the data, through the use of a Likert scale with a range of responses and then included a free text box for participants to develop and explain their answer. This method of data collection, whereby each participant answered identical questions, allows us to execute our correlation research through examining the sets of data, and directly comparing them so as to draw out conclusions about the effects of commuting on students.

In addition to the general recommendations that we collected from the students, both from web-based questionnaires and our qualitative data research, we also used the data collected from the web-based questionnaire to identify what the biggest disadvantage faced by commuter students is as compared to non-commuter students, and we will provide focused recommendations regarding this area.

The web-based questionnaire was anonymous, as we expected this to make the collection of sensitive information (particularly surrounding grade attainment) easier. We did however ask for the following information:

- Gender
- Department of Study
- QMUL Campus
- Age Group

By obtaining this information, we would be able to consider whether there is any correlation between one of the above-mentioned factors and students being more likely to commute. In the case that we did identify such a correlation, we would also be able to focus our recommendations towards a particular sub-group.

Although we had originally set an aim of 150 students completing our web-based questionnaire, we have had an overwhelmingly positive response and have successfully collected 313 individual responses. We believe that the better than expected uptake of our web-based questionnaire has been a result of the use of a simple layout and a Likert scale, which has made the survey easier to complete, with the average time taken to complete the survey standing at one minute. With regards to spreading our web-based questionnaire, although we did not allocate any of our budget towards incentives for completing the questionnaire, departmental emails were sent out, and the web-based questionnaire was shared across social media, through our personal accounts and different Queen Mary societal accounts.

ii. Analysing our responses

Figure 1 clearly sets out the gender dynamic of our respondents, with an overwhelming 76% identifying as female. Although a slight imbalance would have been expected, as there is a larger female study body population, 54% female and 46% male (QMUL, 2018), this was significantly larger in our survey. Unfortunately, due to the fact that only 0.01244% of the QMUL student body population completed our survey, we cannot conclusively determine whether this is due to a larger number of commuter students being female, or whether our survey simply attracted the attention of more females than males. However, due to the significance in sample difference, we will run on the assumption that there is a larger body of female commuter students than male commuter students. As will be seen later, we will recommend for students to state whether they self-identify as commuters during their enrolment process, so as to be able to determine the extent of the gender imbalance inherent within the commuting student body population.

Gender	Responses	
Female	75.96%	237
Male	24.04%	75
	Answered	312
	Skipped	2

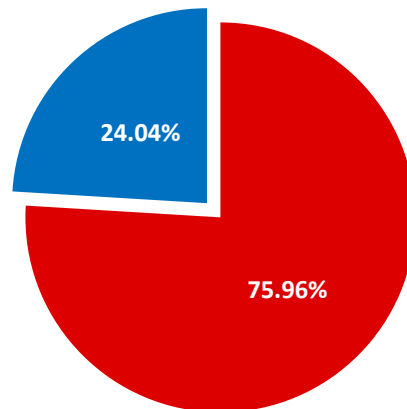


Figure 1. Survey Participation according to gender

Unsurprisingly, since the large majority of students at QMUL are undergraduate students, 91.69% of our respondents were between the ages of 18-24. This piece of data will be significant when determining what sort of events should be held for commuter students.

Age Range	Responses	
Under 18	1.28%	4
18-24	91.69%	287
25-34	5.75%	18
35-44	0.64%	2
45-54	0.64%	2
55-64	0.00%	0
65+	0.00%	0
	Answered	313
	Skipped	1

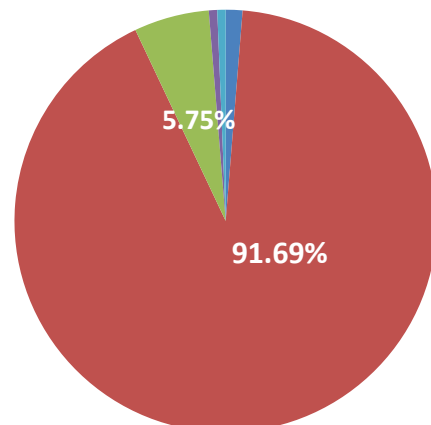
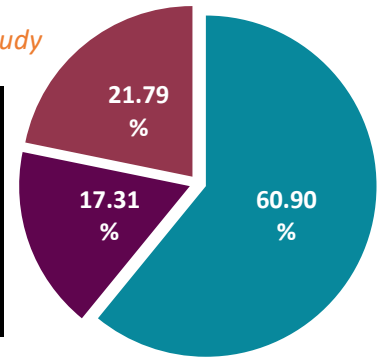


Figure 2. Survey Participation according to age range

As with Figure 1, it is difficult to measure the validity of this data, as we have only collected data from a tiny proportion of students at QMUL. Having students determine whether, or not, they are commuters during enrolment would significantly reduce any such error.

Figure 3. Survey Participation according to department of study

Department of Study	Responses	
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	60.90%	190
Faculty of Science and Engineering	17.31%	54
Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry	21.79%	68
	Answered	312
	Skipped	2



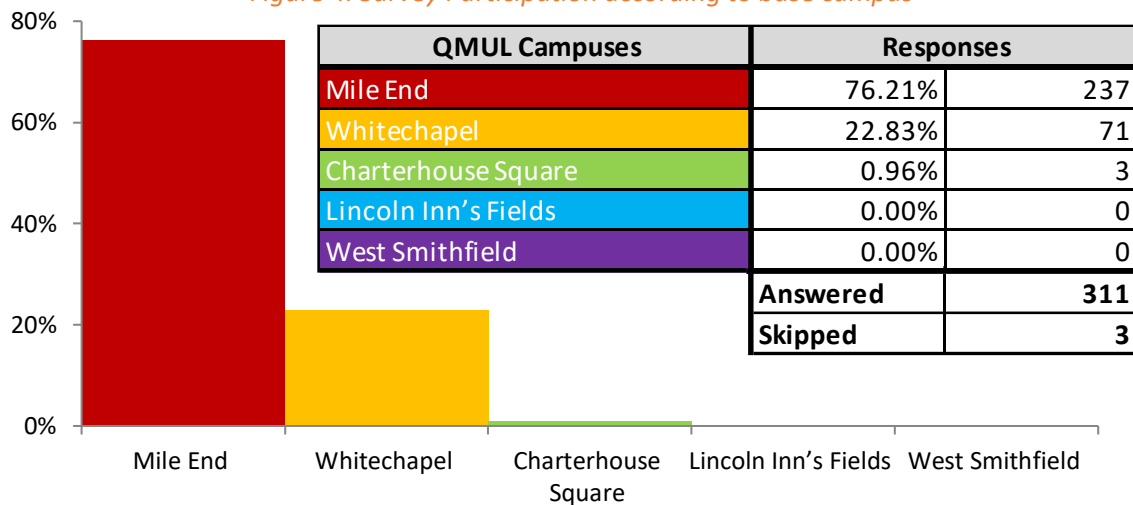
As evident from *Figure 3*, there was a clear imbalance in our data collection, with regards to the department of study of participants. This was the case even though there was an identical method for distributing the web-based questionnaire across all three faculties.

Although it is expected that fewer students would originate from the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, due to the lower number of students in that department when compared to the other faculties, the very small turnout from the Faculty of Science and Engineering has been difficult to explain.

After identifying this issue, we did send out further departmental emails to the faculties of Science & Engineering, and Medicine & Dentistry, however, this barely improved our data collection.

Once more, collecting data regarding commuter students at the stage of enrolment would fix this imbalance.

Figure 4. Survey Participation according to base campus



The majority (76.21%) of respondents study on the Mile End Campus, which is something we found unsurprising, and quite representative of the student body. One thing that can be noted is the lack of involvement from Postgraduate and PhD students who might be situated in the Charterhouse Square/Lincoln Inn's Field/West Smithfield's Campus.

This data will be quite relevant when determining the recommended events to be held for commuting students.

Although we had originally considered setting a qualifying measurement regarding the time/distance needed to qualify as commuting, through using the relevant literature to find a widely agreed upon minimum travel time/distance for commuters, we then decided to allow each participant to determine themselves whether or not they considered themselves to be commuter students.

Time Range	Responses	
0-15	1.28%	4
16-30	8.63%	27
31-45	17.25%	54
46-60	26.52%	83
61-75	20.45%	64
76-90	17.25%	54
>90	8.63%	27
	Answered	313

Quantitative Data	Values
Total Commuting Minutes	19433
Number of Responses	313
Mode	60
Median	60
Range	100
Average	62
Standard Deviation	22

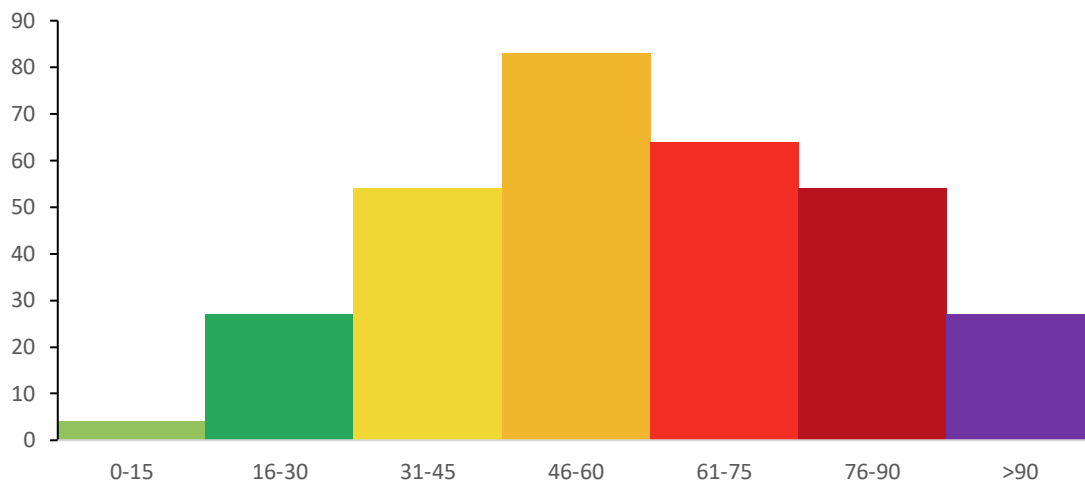
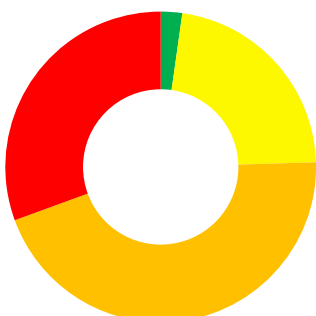


Figure 5. Survey responses according to commuting minutes

We then collected an average time required to reach university using a Likert scale. What this data allows us to determine is that on average, a QMUL student is considered to be a commuter if they travel for at least 62 minutes to reach university. This would be a good starting point in defining who is to be considered a commuting student at QMUL.

To be able to gain an understanding as to how much students felt that commuting had an effect on their overall university experience, a 4-point Likert scale including a variety of options was used to try and give us an insight into this. We were careful not to assume any opinions, so we did not attach any negative or positive connotations with the answers that we provided.



Degree of Impact	Responses	
No bearing on my university experience	2.23%	7
Little bearing on my university experience	22.29%	70
Moderate bearing on my university experience	44.90%	141
Large bearing on my university experience	30.57%	96
	Answered	314

Figure 6. Survey responses to "What bearing, if any, does the distance you commute have on your overall university experience?"

Figure 6 shows that a significant majority of respondents, being 97.76%, stated that commuting had some bearing on their University experience, with just over 45% stating that it had a moderate bearing on their University life and just over 30% stating that it had a large bearing. From solely these results we cannot tell if the effect on University life for commuting students is positive or negative, however what can be interpreted is that for most students who do commute it does impact their experience of being at University and therefore the University has a responsibility to ensure that any negative consequences are minimised and any positive effects are maximised. We plan to explore more specifically the effects that commuting has on students during qualitative data collection in order to find specifically the areas of University life that are affected and what particularly about commuting impacts on this.

	Negative influence		No influence		Positive influence		Total	Weighted Average
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count		
Academic achievement	38.34%	120	53.67%	168	7.99%	25	313	1.7
Extracurricular involvement	83.28%	259	15.43%	48	1.29%	4	311	1.18
Social life	72.76%	227	24.68%	77	2.56%	8	312	1.3
							Answered	313
							Skipped	1

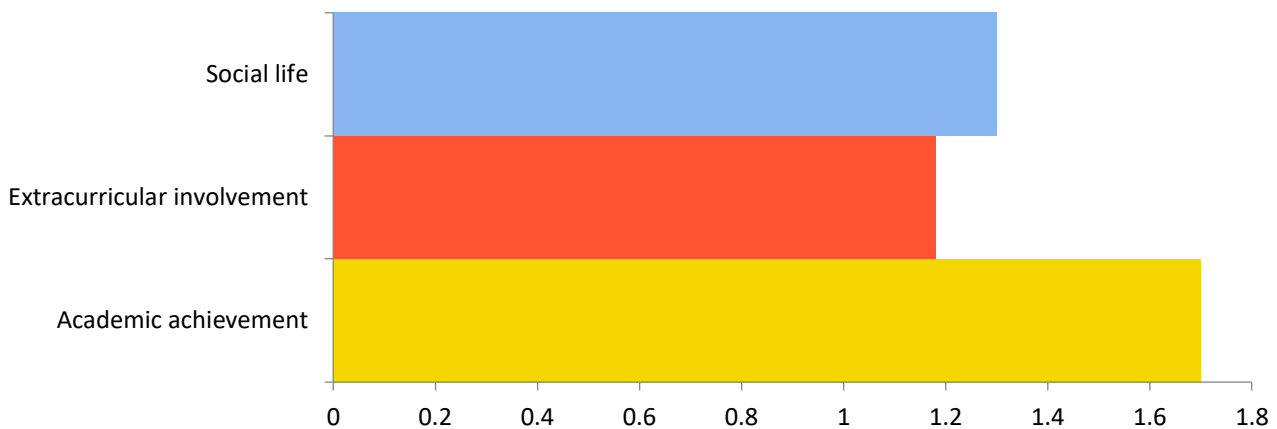
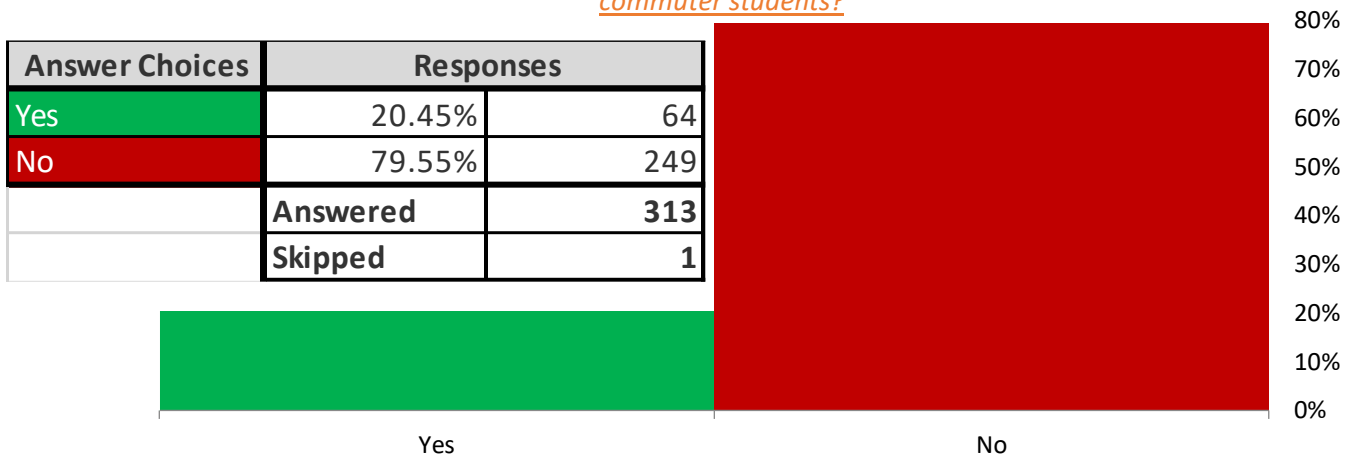


Figure 7. Survey responses to "What aspect does commuting have the largest influence over?"

We wanted to explore further what parts of University life are affected the most by commuting for students. We did this by splitting 'University life' into three aspects, these being academic achievement, extra-curricular involvement and social life. We again used a three-point scale to get a more generalised view as to how commuting impacts on each aspect and asked if commuting influenced these aspects of University life in a positive or negative or in no way at all. Figure 7 shows the results of this question and it can be seen that the vast majority of responses are either no or negative influence. From the results it can be clearly seen that the two most affected areas of University life for students is extra-curricular involvement and social life, with a huge 83% and 72% respectively, stating that these aspects were negatively influenced. These are two very significant parts of the University experience and it is important that all students feel that they can participate and contribute to these areas as much as they want to. However, it is obvious that commuters are experiencing a reduction in satisfaction and involvement in these particular areas, and the University working alongside the Student Union should ensure that these students are being accounted for and their needs addressed.

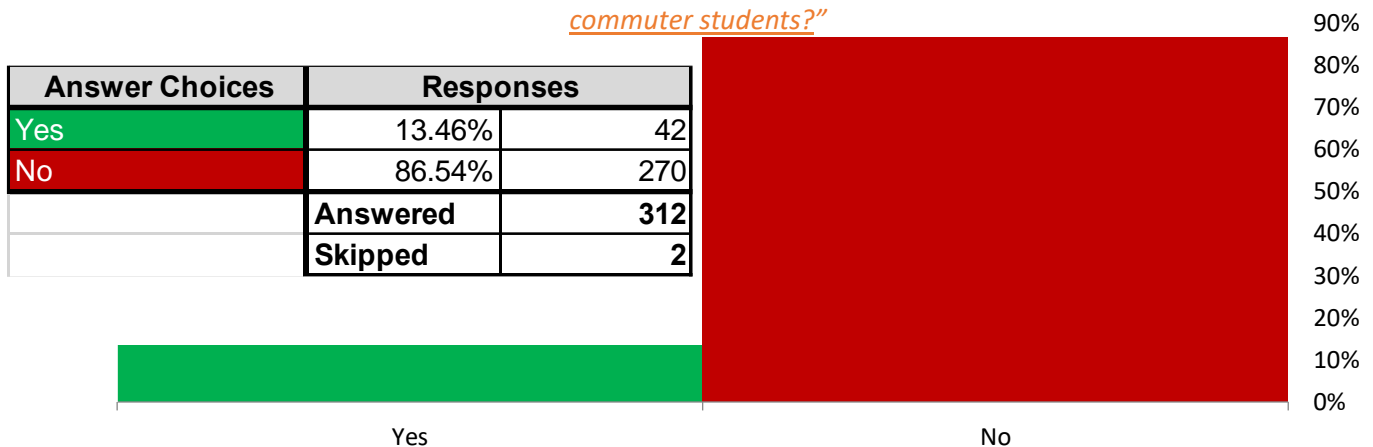
With regards to academic achievement, the results for the negative influence option are comparatively more positive, with 38% saying that commuting had a negative influence on their academic achievement and 53% stating that commuting had no influence. Although 38% is a better result than that of the social and extra-curricular aspects, it is still a very significant figure and one that cannot be shrugged off. This is of course the main objective of University and it is concerning that nearly 40% of commuters feel that as a result of commuting their academic achievement is negatively impacted. More has to be done to try and reduce the impact that this is having on students' academic life.

Figure 8. Survey responses to “Do you feel that the University is aware of the difficulties faced by commuter students?”



In addition, we also felt it was important for us to get an idea as to whether commuting students felt that the University is aware of the difficulties faced by commuter students. As can be seen there was an overwhelming response, of just under 80% of responses, saying that they feel the university is not aware. This is worrying as it highlights that students feel that their voices aren't being heard or listened to and this is necessary in order to ensure that the student experience can be improved as much as it can be.

Figure 9. Survey responses to “Do you feel that the University currently does enough to support commuter students?”



Finally, we also asked students if they felt that the University is currently doing enough to support commuter students. This had a more negative response than the previous question, with just over 86% of respondents saying that they felt the University does not currently do enough. This shows that any actions the University is currently doing to aid with commuter students specifically is not adequate enough to fulfil the needs of commuter students, and more is required from the University regarding this issue.

5. QUALITATIVE DATA RESPONSES

In order to gather qualitative data on the topic, we intended to hold 3 focus groups over the required campuses. Our inclusion criteria for these groups was more focused towards commuting students, however we were of an approach of not wanting to turn away anyone who wanted to be part of the focus group. We intended to hold these focus groups over a one-hour period with ideally approximately 10 people per group, with one researcher interviewing and one recording and taking notes during the process. Our intention was to use the first 10 minutes of the interview with the group, going through confidentiality and listening expectations as well as the concept of respecting other people's ideas and times to speak.

We intended to recruit for the focus groups via the posters we had send out via emails through schools and faculties. In addition, we also added the information to the survey we released and in social media communications among students. We gave students two options of how to sign up to a focus group, either by filling out a doodle poll with which campus they were at and what times they were available or to email us at an email address that we had set up specifically for the project and that all researchers had access to. We also offered an alternative option for those students who potentially couldn't make focus group sessions. This was a one-on-one online interview, so that they could contribute even if they were not on campus, in order to try and stay in line with the purpose of our research project and to encourage engagement and empowerment of students.

Despite our efforts with recruitment we struggled to get any responses to the focus groups at any of the campuses, even though there was an offer of refreshments during the session. This was surprising to some extent as, in contrast, we were pleasantly surprised by the number of responses and engagement with the survey. As an alternative we opted for approaching known commuter students for one on one interviews. The response rate for this was more successful, however quantity of interviews completed was not as high as we would have ideally liked due to time constraints. Overall, we managed to carry out 10 one on one online interviews and the responses from these enabled to us to gain a greater insight into some of the ideas initially explored in the survey.

i. **Time of Commute**

The first question was how long the students travel to get to the University campus. Answers from the interview were similar to that of the survey, with the most common answers being between 45 minutes and 1 hour. We then followed this up by asking them how they generally felt about the journey, regarding whether the journey is particularly good or bad, and if travelling for this amount of time is something new to them or if they are used to it from previous education. For this follow up question, most of the responses we got were a mixture of being negative or neutral. Several students mentioned that initially travelling this distance was new to them and they had struggled with it at first, however over time they had adjusted to it. Many of the students stated that their main problem with the physical commute was that it was tiring. A few other students mentioned that they had previously travelled a similar distance to their secondary school, so the physical commute to University wasn't really a problem for them. In parallel with this, one student mentioned that it made University feel similar to their school experience, however this particular response will be explored in more detail later. There was one student who was new to commuting this distance on a daily basis, whose travel time was on average between 50-60 minutes, that stated *"now I enjoy having this time because I can get a lot of things done during the commute"*. These responses highlight that although travelling these distances daily can be tiring and take out a decent amount of time from the day, especially if not previously used to it, something that can be done

from the University's perspective to help with this experience is to create the webpage "Making the Most of your Commute" that will be discussed further in the recommendations section. On this webpage, suggestions of how to make students' commute more efficient and enjoyable can be made, rather than solely seeing the negative aspects of the commuting experience.

ii. Cost of Commute

The next question that we asked was what their average weekly cost of travelling into campus was. This varied quite substantially, with the most common response being approximately £30 weekly, however for some students this increased to £60 and for one student the cost shockingly was just under £80 per week. This highlights the financial impact that commuting has on students and often exceeds the equivalent weekly amount received from Student Finance England (SFE) loans. For students who are from families with a lower household income, this can put students in a situation in which they having to ask family for financial aid, instead of solely relying on their SFE loan to cover these costs and can potentially have an impact on the families' financial situation.

iii. Effect on University Experience

The next question that was asked explored if students feel that commuting affects their University experience. All respondents, in one way or another, stated that commuting does affect their University experience, although the answers were somewhat varied. Most of the participants stated that for them their University experience had been affected from a social and extra-curricular point of view. A few mentioned that commuting had affected their academic life, with another few students stating how commuting had taken away the "typical University experience" from them and they felt they were missing out on this. In addition, some participants also mentioned that commuting affected their sense of belonging and connection with the University. As a follow up question, we asked something similar to question 7 from the survey, asking "What was the biggest aspect of University life that had been affected by commuting for them?" Responses reflected those of the survey, with the majority of the students stating that their social life within the University had been impacted the most, followed by involvement with extra-curricular activities. How commuting affects these aspects of University will be discussed in more detail below.

For the next section of the interview, we wanted to gain a greater understanding of how certain areas of University life are impacted by commuting, so we asked all participants, regardless of previous responses, how (or if) commuting affects each of three areas we identified (social life, extra-curricular involvement and academic life). Regarding social life specifically, all of the participants said that their social lives within University and among their peers had been negatively affected. This was for the most part mainly due to limitations around transport timings and ensuring that they got home at a reasonable hour. Many of the students interviewed say they do not get to socialise with friends as much as they would like and a few stated that not living in student accommodation in the first year made it increasingly difficult to form friendship groups. For the students interviewed this did not have a particularly long term effect on their social situation within University, however it is not difficult to imagine how some people may struggle to put themselves out there, leading to quite a large effect on their overall University experience.

Similarly to social life, extra-curricular involvement for all but one of the participants had been negatively affected. Most of the participants had mentioned that they were not able to be involved as much as they would like with extra-curricular activities, such as University societies, mainly as a result of the difficulties of timings.

Again, in parallel to the responses received from the survey, not as many of the students stated that commuting affects their academic achievement. Several stated that as a result of the long distances and time taken involved with their commute, they are often tired by the time they get home, so especially during exam times this makes it more difficult for them to revise. However, none of the interviewed students stated that commuting in general negatively affected their academic performance. One of the students mentioned that commuting actually had a positive overall impact on their academic achievement in University, as the commute had forced them to become more organised and time efficient.

Most of the students also stated that commuting affected their attendance, as this meant they could be late to lectures. This was most often as a result of transport delays outside of their control, which was frustrating for both the students, as they would miss part of their lectures or seminars, and for tutors who felt the students were interrupting their teaching session. Some of the students also stated that for some shorter teaching activities that were non-compulsory, they often did not attend. One student referred to the cost-benefit ratio, stating that for shorter teaching sessions they did not feel that the benefit outweighed the cost, with the cost being both financial and in terms of time. Students in these situations typically resort to teaching themselves and relying on any uploaded material on QMplus from the relevant session in order to stay up to date.

As 9 out of 10 of the students interviewed are medical students, we felt that this would be a great opportunity to explore the issues related to the location of clinical placements further. All of the medical students were third years or above, meaning that all of the students had been on both short-term and long-term clinical placements in both a GP and hospital setting. We asked the students what the longest time taken to get to a clinical placement was. Responses ranged from 1 hour to over 2 hours, with 8 out of the 9 responses being over 1 and a half hours, hence meaning that in these situations students can be spending an average of 3 hours travelling per day, in addition to being on clinical placements where students are normally expected to attend 9am-5pm. For many of the medical students the concept of having to travel so long to clinical placements is one of the more challenging aspects of commuting, not solely as a result of the above, but also because they are aware that the medical school currently does not take into account students' home address when allocating clinical placements. In addition, all of the students spoken to were unaware of any financial aid provided for the cost of travel to and from clinical placements for commuters. One of the medical students was aware of some reimbursement for travel to and from GP placements, but this was only in certain zones and the student stated that they were not too sure of the process, and said that other students were confused by this or simply didn't apply as they were aware that it was a long and convoluted process. All of the students spoken to were aware that the medical school allocates placements of students as though all students are based and live in Whitechapel. Of course, this is not the case and the students interviewed were frustrated by this. Many agreed that it would be a logistical challenge for the medical school to take home addresses into consideration, however some of the students felt that this should be a necessary step, as the length of travel in some circumstances is long, costly and, in some cases, has an effect on the students' ability to perform and general wellbeing. One of the students specifically highlighted that when students in the final term have clinical placements that are further away, before the academic year final exams in July, revision can be incredibly difficult. These issues and suggestions from students will be discussed further in a following section.

iv. University Awareness and Support

Mirroring some of the questions in the survey again, we asked students if they felt that the University was aware of difficulties that commuter students face, with 8 out of the 10 students stating that the University was not. One student here specifically referred to the problem of clinical placements again, mentioning that they felt the University definitely was not aware of the issues for those who travel much longer distances than themselves (this particular student travelled on average one hour to campus). Contrary to many responses from both the interviews and the survey results, one student from the Mile End campus felt that the effects that commuting has are not a particular issue and stated that they "don't understand how or why commuters should be given special treatment". This view is important to highlight and this may be the case for some students who commute, but, as evidenced by both the survey results and the interviews, is in contrast with the views of many other commuter students.

We also asked students if they feel that the University is currently doing enough to support students. All but one of the participants stated that they did not think so and felt that more needed to be done by the University to support students. In addition, we also asked the participants if they were aware of any current support in place specifically for commuter students, with all but one of the students being unaware of any current support. One student cited the Commuters society and the few events provided for commuters during freshers' fortnight.

As a result of the answers to the few questions above, we asked students what ways they thought the University could provide further support for commuter students. Several of the students were unsure as to how the University could help with some of the difficulties they were facing, obviously aware that many of the issues are outside of the University's control, such as transport delays for example.

Mirroring some of the responses from the survey, some other suggestions included subsidised travel or specific funds or grants for commuter students from lower income households. It was also suggested that in general, funds and grants available for students should be more readily advertised and an increase in transparency would be welcome regarding this, as some students mentioned only finding out about funds through other students and that they felt there was almost an atmosphere of secrecy surrounding University loans and grants. In addition, the respective students suggested that the process for receiving grants from the University should be shortened and simplified.

Regarding social and extra-curricular events, the student who is based at Mile End suggested a common room and felt that this would be beneficial for commuter students. It was also suggested that the Commuter's society should be more active throughout the year and that non-commuters should also be encouraged to attend these events, in order to help friendship groups to form, especially during freshers' fortnight. Students also suggested there could be weekend events that commuter students would therefore be able to attend more easily, as well as ensuring that weekday events try to start on time, or earlier, and hence finish earlier, enabling commuter students to get home at a reasonable hour.

Regarding the clinical placements issue for medical students, it was suggested that a fund could be started for commuter students, to help with some of the financial costs of travelling the long distances for further clinical placements. Additionally, it was also stated that even though the University has access to students' term time address via Mysis, this information is not used when it comes to clinical placement allocation. It was suggested that at the point of enrolment, or soon after, students are automatically placed into one of several "tiers" based on their term-time address. This tier could be based on travel time to the Whitechapel campus from the student's address, or the cost of travel to Whitechapel campus from the student's address, and hence be used to

influence the distance of clinical placements for students over their coming years at medical school. This would enable the effect of commuting to be reduced for many of the students who are affected by this particular difficulty, as well as ensuring that students' voices are being heard. This solution would also take into account the logistical workload that the administrators face by dealing with the main logistical problem at the point of enrolment rather than at the transition of second to third year.

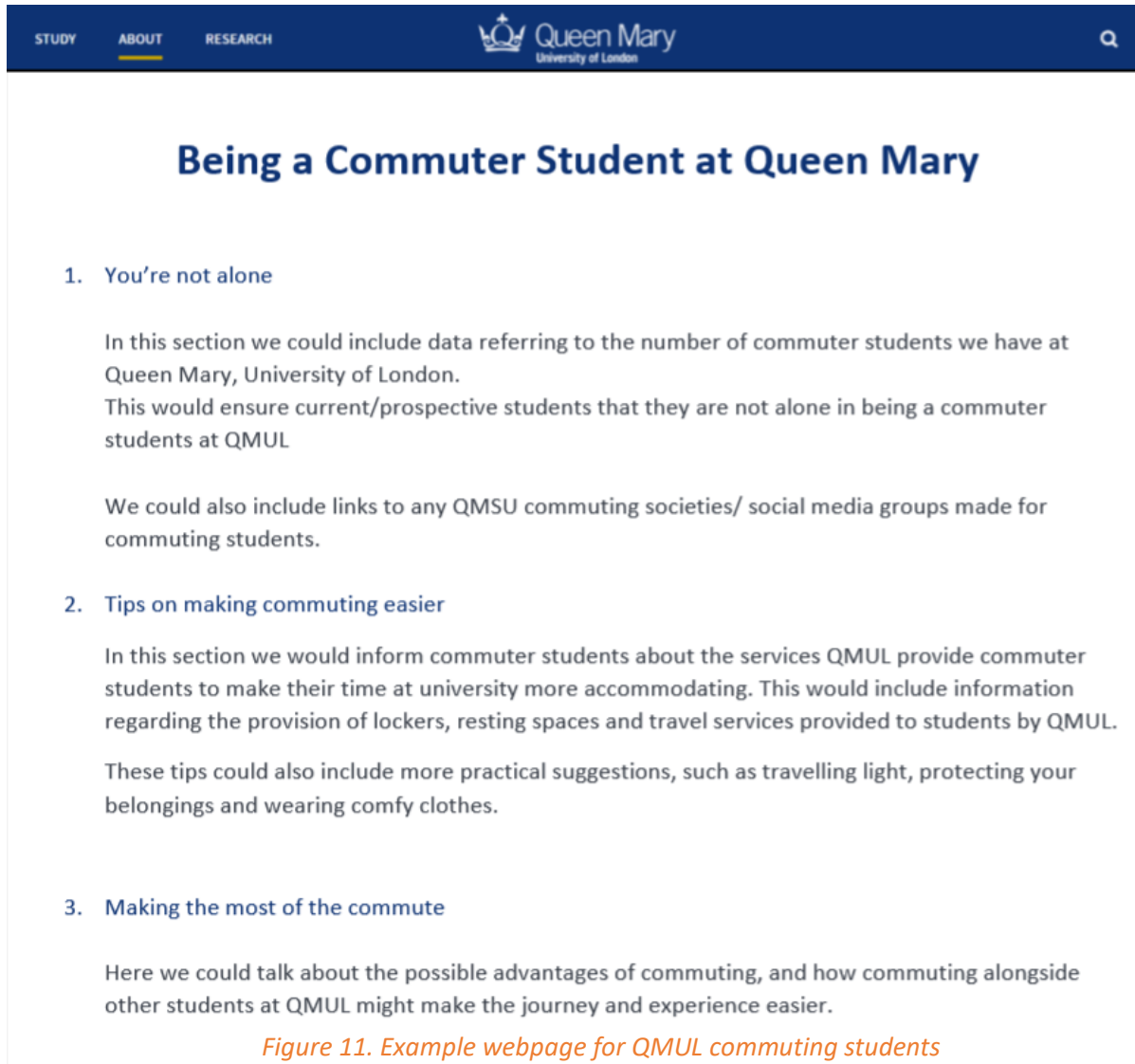
v. Benefits to Commuting

After asking students if they felt there were any benefits to commuting, all of the students felt that there were some benefits. All of the students felt that being able to live with family was positive, that they saved time and money regarding household chores, cooking and the financial costs associated with these. Finally, we asked students if they felt that commuting affected their wellbeing at all. Most of the students stated that overall it had a positive effect on their wellbeing, as they were living with family, so they had their normal support system in place and were not experiencing the upheaval of leaving home that other students were. Some students also stated that being able to leave the bubble of University at the end of the day was helpful and that having close contact with old friends outside of University was also advantageous. For some students this was not necessarily the case, and the types of responses were split equally among the students. The group of students who felt the opposite way, felt that not being as involved with social and extra-curricular activities affected their sense of belonging and identity within the University, and that this had a negative effect on their wellbeing. These students found it increasingly difficult to organise social activities both inside and outside of University time and as a result, some felt a sense of exclusion. In addition, a few students discussed the impact that the financial strain had on their wellbeing and mental health and that the tiring effect that commuting had at times negatively affected them as well.

6. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The addition of a section regarding whether enrolling students consider themselves to be commuters (with the definition of commuting students being set at students that travel for more than 60 minutes to get into their respective campus), to the enrolment process on MySIS.
- II. Include a web-page on the QMSU and QMUL website which includes tips for commuting students, as well as further information regarding events that are to be planned throughout the year, for commuting students in particular.

We have included a sample web-page providing an idea of what could be adopted. We would also suggest that a commuter student writes this section, and constantly updates it, so as to give it more of an authentic feel. Information regarding additional QMUL and UoL faculties that students could access will also be highlighted here.



- III. A blog run by an active commuting member of the Queen Mary student body could also be a relatable and digestible way for others to implement strategies to make the most out of university. A member of the team, Salve Raquel Salvana, would gladly offer herself for a writer position as she is a commuter herself that is deeply involved in university life and would like encourage others to do so.
- IV. The reboot of a QMSU Commuter Students Society that is overseen by QMSU and QMUL and is monitored yearly, so as to prevent the society from falling out of use as it did a few years prior. Additional meetups would occur as students find out they live in the same area.
- V. Possible short stay accommodation for commuting students having trouble getting home and unable to find a friend to lend a hand. Check-outs should be at 9AM to ensure that the

rooms are then free for students requiring an urgent afternoon nap as commuting adds additional stress and fatigue to a long day at university.

- VI. The creation of events for commuter students in particular with an earlier start time (e.g. 6PM) particularly during Welcome week, so as to increase the sense of community between commuting students. These events should also be held monthly, not only during Welcome week, and can either be organised by the QMSU itself or the QMSU Commuter Students Society.

In addition, we would request for some afternoon events to be added to the Welcome week calendar, so as to ensure that commuter students are assimilated to the wider QMUL community.

- VII. Ensuring that all students are made aware of any cancellations of the teaching faculty as early as possible, except during cases of emergency. It is particularly important to reduce any lag in time between the teaching faculty sending the information of a cancellation to the administrators, and the administrators then releasing that information to students. It would be beneficial to speed-track the ability of lecturers/tutors to email their students regarding cancellations. An idea is that a prepared signature could be made available from the teaching faculty on Outlook.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the data collected and presented in this report, one can clearly see the negative effects of commuting on the social and academic life of students. Having said that, we do believe that the commissioning of this report has constituted a step in the right direction towards ensuring that all students are given the opportunity to reach their full potential during their time at QMUL.

What this report has importantly done is define 'commuting' for Queen Mary students. This definition can possibly be used as a base for beginning a systematic collection of data on whether incoming students consider themselves to be commuters or not, as explained in 6I. However, we would suggest for the mark of traveling 60 minutes to provide a guideline for what QMUL considers to be a commuter student, rather than an absolute definition.

In addition, Figures 8 and 9 clearly highlight that there is a perception amongst students that the University does not do enough to accommodate commuting students. It is of the utmost importance for this perception to be tackled, both through implementing long term and short-term solutions, as well as advertising how the University is one of the first educational institutions within the UK to tackle the difficulties faced by commuting students. Students no matter their situation, culture and background should have access to tools that they could utilise to make university a place for learning, not just academically but also personally through interactions with other students, clubs and opportunities. These recommendations are aimed towards boosting accessibility, so as to allow the students to enjoy, grow and give back to the QMUL community.

Programmes such as Going for Gold are just the start of working collectively to improve the cohesion between students and staff, therefore opening a dialogue between the two as a gateway towards implementing meaningful changes.

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