

Quest Radio – New Studio

Jak Curtis-Rendall & Emma Galt, Queen Mary Students' Union



Quest Radio in its current form was founded in 2011 and since then has significantly expanded in terms of membership numbers, broadcasting hours and professionalism. The station is extremely diverse with shows covering everything from pop, rock and grime, to debate, politics and dance. Quest Radio has never been busier, in 2012 the station was broadcasting 3 partial days a week, but increasing popularity has meant it now live broadcasts 9am-9pm, with curated playlists outside of these times. The studio was at 100% capacity during the 2015-16 academic year, and had 118 paid members, with further students involved in shows and listening online.

The station is truly student-led with students involved in scheduling, production, presenting, curating and producing shows, marketing and financial management. Students also lead on the technical support for the station and run peer-to-peer and group training sessions. Quest Radio also operates outdoor live broadcasts for key events such as the Welcome Fair, charity fundraising events such as the 24-hour Questathon broadcast marathon, and student-led regular club nights in Union and other local venues called 'A Night Called Quest'.

The previous studio imposed severe limitations on the student experience and the numbers of students who could get involved. It was previously located up a narrow staircase on the 5th floor of People's Palace with no disabled access. The opening hours of the building, the fact students were in a totally unsupervised space, the inconvenience of having to collect keys from the other side of campus (meaning shows often ran late) and the distance away from the staff support of the Union, all presented further limitations to the station alongside numerous other health and safety concerns – the studio simply could not continue in that setup.

As a result, together with aspirations of its membership to enhance the experience, a Westfield Fund bid was submitted for a new studio.

The New Studio

Westfield funding has enabled a brand new, fit-for-purpose and fully accessible radio studio to be created in the heart of the Students' Union Hub building. After difficulties securing a suitable space, the Union decided to re-purpose two existing rooms for Student Media. The project means that a new Student Media suite is located next to the new studio for print & TV media, as well as enhanced production facilities for Quest. This has removed the isolation Quest previously experienced, developing the Student Media community and allowing the co-creation of projects across multiple channels. The new studio is fully equipped with all the features you would expect of an industry-spec studio, including a variety of new equipment such as new iMac computers, mixing desks, DI desks, microphones and automated recording.

Enhancing Employability

The new studio has enabled Quest to start developing the unparalleled opportunities it offers students to gain a host of transferable and employability skills, with many of the students involved going on to pursue careers in the industry. The enhanced technical specification has begun to improve the quality, production and professionalism of student shows, whilst expanding on what students can do in the studio, improving their skill-set and knowledge.

In addition the new location means direct staff support is available each and every day as and when required. This aids the mentoring and skills development of the students involved, and means that downtime due to technical issues is reduced.

Looking to the future

This Westfield Fund project is one of the first steps in the longer term development of Quest Radio. We anticipate the new facilities will lead to enhanced student engagement with the station through its enhanced visibility and improved studio experience. Future projects being considered include:

- Further development of the studio and the specification of its equipment.
- Live broadcasting in QMSU outlets.
- Enhanced signage for the studio and Student Media in the Union Hub area.
- Development of community partnerships with the Mile End Community Project and other local groups now the facilities are accessible and of a higher standard.
- Developing links and partnerships with academic schools.

118 – Number of Paid Members.

1231 – Number of Facebook likes.

978 – Number of Twitter followers.

£1000+ – raised for charity.

5 – Number of Live Outside Broadcasts this academic year.

£2000 – Amount donated by the Campus Community Fund for enhanced equipment during 2016-17.

