

**Candidate election statements – Council elections 2025 – academic staff member  
(all faculties) (three positions)**

**1. Adrian Armstrong**

Robust, well-informed, and transparent university governance has never been so important. I believe I can contribute significantly here, having gained a deep understanding of higher education by exercising major responsibilities within and beyond Queen Mary. As President of the Association of University Professors and Heads of French, liaising with universities across the UK and Ireland, I came to appreciate the different ways in which institutions might respond to challenging circumstances. Through my tenure as Director of our Doctoral College, and several years as a mentor and assessor for our Teaching Recognition Programme, I've developed relationships with both academic and Professional Services staff across Queen Mary. I therefore have a clear sense of the priorities and opportunities that confront us all daily. For my Faculty, as Deputy Dean and Dean for Research, I identified and supported the collective interest, notably in securing Research England funding to upgrade equipment and facilities across five Schools. As a Head of School I was attentive to both staff and student needs, developing EDI training and working with colleagues to improve student experience. In all these roles I've exercised independent judgement, while taking account of wider contexts, in academic and business planning. I've also been able to respond to the unexpected, particularly when supporting doctoral students through Covid. These experiences equip me to convey and interpret academic staff perspectives to Council, and add to its range of voices by offering impartial insights. I'm committed to devoting the necessary time to its operation.

**2. Andrejs Braun**

As a Professor of Genome Regulation within Medicine and Dentistry, I bring deep academic commitment and a clear vision to the QMUL Council. My core principle is research-led education, a pillar of QMUL identity as a Russell Group University. I pioneered the integration of cutting-edge research directly into teaching, ensuring that our students benefit from the vibrant discoveries happening here. My daily role as a mentor and senior tutor provides unparalleled insight into the "on the ground" realities of student life – the support systems working well and the challenges needing urgent attention. I champion adequate student support because I see its impact firsthand. My primary agenda is clear: To drive the development of practice-informed QMUL policies. I will be a dedicated conduit, ensuring that student voices and experiences directly shape leadership decisions and foster policies that are relevant and, most importantly, effective. Furthermore, I am uniquely positioned to champion the essential synergy between Research, Education, and Scholarship. Strengthening these interconnections across QMUL will unlock immense potential, enhancing our academic excellence, student experience, and institutional reputation.

**3. Tribikram Budhathoki**

As a Senior Lecturer in Marketing and Communications with active engagement in teaching, scholarships, and academic leadership, I am committed to contributing meaningfully to the University Council. Drawing on my experience (acquired from the former institution) as a course leader for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, a member of the Research Ethics Committee, and an Academic Misconduct Officer, I bring a strong understanding of academic quality, governance, and ethical standards - core to the Council's responsibilities. I intend to contribute by supporting evidence-based decision making aligned with the University's mission,

strategic vision, and values. With experience supervising PGR students and mentoring new staff, I advocate for policies that promote student success, staff development, and academic excellence. My administrative experience has equipped me to understand institutional priorities, and my lived experience as a member of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community drives my commitment to equity, inclusivity, and the promotion of a diverse university culture. I fully understand the time commitment required and am ready to engage diligently with Council duties, including the oversight of strategic plans, performance evaluation, risk management, and legal compliance. I also recognise the Council's crucial role in ensuring accountability, safeguarding academic freedom, and fostering a transparent and inclusive governance structure. If elected, I will represent the interests of staff and students with integrity, uphold the principles of public life, and work collaboratively to help the University achieve its long-term goals.

#### **4. Liam Campling**

Queen Mary is only as good as its governance, and I would like to feed into and support Council to maintain and improve this where possible. If elected as an academic staff member I will provide independent oversight and input into Council's key functions of establishing the University's vision, strategy and associated policies, and in monitoring and evaluating their implementation. I place particular importance on the Council's role in ensuring that strategy and policy meet the interests of staff, students and alumni, and that Council promotes a culture of safety at work (in its broadest sense) supporting inclusivity and diversity. I've been working at the School of Business and Management (SBM) since 2009 which has given me wide ranging experience with education and research. I was SBM chair of the exam board for three years, where I sought to promote inclusive assessment as well as maintain standards while supporting our students during the pandemic. I was then SBM's research director where we prioritised quality over quantity, fostering a culture of celebration and trust in colleagues' wide-ranging research and engagement activities. I have keenly observed the strategy and culture of successive senior executive leadership teams over the years. UK HEI is going through a highly challenging period at present, and this looks set to continue, good governance is even more important in this period of flux. For example, risk assessment is an important function of Council, including in safeguarding the name and values of the University and balancing this against measures of financial stability. I would be honoured to represent academic colleagues at Council in its crucial role in shaping and overseeing QMUL strategy and governance.

#### **5. Giorgio Chianello**

Hi, I am Dr Giorgio Chianello, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry, Director of the Science and Engineering Foundation programme and Outreach Lead for Chemistry. I am a Teaching and Scholarship academic, working on the enhancement of inclusion, diversity, student voice and employability. My work also focuses on the use and development of innovative technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial Intelligence. Because of my work, I am genuinely committed to the vision and mission of Queen Mary University of London. I am also actively involved in the alignment and enhancement of QMUL Graduate Attributes and Principles of Programme Design. Over the past eight years I took on various roles and have been involved in numerous committees within QMUL such as Affiliate of the Centre for Excellence in Artificial Intelligence in Education, Senior Tutor, Reviewer for the Student Enhanced Engagement and Development (SEED) award, and many more. I also served as an elected member of Senate for the past four years. Therefore, I have strong understanding of the functioning of the institution from various points of view. As my role in Senate will soon come to an end (June 2025), I would love to

continue contributing into shaping the future direction of QMUL, help make our university advance and be a place where everybody can thrive and excel.

## **6. Tina Chowdhury**

I am a Reader in Regenerative Medicine working in women's healthcare developing a life course approach to improve health outcomes and experiences. I collaborate with industry, charities and diversity organisations who share a common goal to enhance and transform lives, making a positive impact on community and the public good. By understanding how conditions like preterm birth or menopause affect women in the workplace, we have raised over £2 million from donations, driven by stakeholders to help every aspect of human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion in the working and learning environment. In 2024, I championed the Athena Swan application in Engineering for the School, developed an EDI framework for Women in STEAMM benchmarked against the UK Athena Swan Charter and I am an elected board member of the Fetal Membrane Society which connects leading clinicians and researchers worldwide. Having worked collaboratively at various sites across Faculties and beyond, I am leading a clinical trial in partnership with UCLH and Barts Health NHS Trust on how climate change affects pregnancy complications and adverse birth outcomes. I believe my professional and academic experiences are diverse and will benefit the Council to ensure long-term plans are relevant and fit for purpose, as we move towards predicting and shaping the future digital AI, economic and social strategy becoming environmentally sustainable by 2040. From student to Reader, I have 25 years' experience at QMUL and the NHS. There have been numerous challenges and testing decisions that have impacted us all. I am a good listener, bringing stories and experiences to life, communicating and liaising between staff and students at all levels, recognising the need to understand different perspectives, enable constructive challenge and direction that can be implemented in the right way. I am passionate about QMUL and want to see us all thrive and flourish. If elected as council member, I will ensure your voice is heard and the senior management team keep the vision ***"to open the doors of opportunity"*** making QMUL the best university in the world.

## **7. Martin Coward**

As Head of School for Politics and International Relations I would offer important operational understanding to council. I work closely with VPHSS and the Principal's office and have a good track record for developing, implementing and advising on, strategic projects. As head of a large social science school I have detailed understanding of the recruitment, operational, research, impact, and engagement landscape that Queen Mary faces. I meet key stakeholders regularly – applicants, students, staff, and partner organisations. I know what problems schools face and what our partners expect from us. As such, I would be an excellent resource for council in understanding the evolving landscape and how QM might navigate it. As Interim Lead for a proposed merger of Geography, History and Politics and International Relations, I also bring experience in change management and an understanding of the flexibility necessary to respond to the challenging landscape of the HE sector. I have completed QM and Advance HE strategic management courses and have a good understanding of the key trends that will define the sector in the next 10 years. While I am a busy Head of School, I would ensure I attend all council events and would prioritise the responsibility to advise senior leadership on the direction of Queen Mary.

## **8. Pedro Elstan**

Having served on Senate for the past three years as a representative of staff, I have developed a strong understanding of governance processes and the importance of ensuring all voices across the institution are heard. I would like to contribute to Council by offering thoughtful, balanced input that reflects the perspectives and concerns of staff, particularly in areas related to strategic planning, academic quality, and institutional accountability. My experience on Senate has strengthened my ability to scrutinise complex documentation, engage in constructive debate, and act in the best interests of the university as a whole. I bring strong communication skills in disputes, the ability to listen, and a collaborative mindset to all discussions. I value transparency, integrity, and inclusivity, which I believe these are essential qualities for the role. I will also bring my perspective as a member of institute leadership, providing a balanced view of the big picture. I understand and support the responsibilities outlined in Ordinance 2 (primary responsibilities of council), including oversight of institutional performance, financial sustainability, and compliance with regulatory requirements. I am fully prepared to meet the time commitment required, including attending meetings, reading materials in advance, and engaging meaningfully in committee work when needed. I am passionate about contributing to the continued success and good governance of Queen Mary, and I would welcome the opportunity to support Council in fulfilling its strategic responsibilities while championing the interests of staff and the wider university community.

## **9. Yang Hao**

As Deputy Vice Principal for Strategic Research at Queen Mary University of London, I bring over two decades of academic leadership, research excellence, and governance experience to Council. My role involves steering institutional strategy across research infrastructure, REF2029 preparations, postgraduate research, and external partnerships, aligning closely with the Council's remit to oversee strategic direction, financial sustainability, and academic quality. I have successfully led cross-faculty and interdisciplinary initiatives, including EPSRC programme grants, Prosperity Partnerships, and the development of University Research Institutes. As a current Council and Governance Committee member, I have demonstrated a strong commitment to informed, responsible decision-making and to advancing Queen Mary's mission with transparency and long-term vision. My experience in international research policy (e.g., EPSRC SAT, Alan Turing Institute, Comin Labs), commercialisation (as co-founder of spinouts), and research equity (through strategic collaborations across the Global South) positions me to contribute meaningfully to Council deliberations, particularly in areas of strategic investment, external engagement, and institutional risk. I also recognise the vital importance of staff wellbeing, equitable opportunity, and a healthy academic culture. As we navigate a challenging external environment, we must continue to champion staff development, morale, and recognition across all roles and grades. I understand and fully commit to the time and diligence this role requires. I will continue to advocate for Queen Mary's values, reputation, and financial resilience at a time of exceptional sector-wide pressure. I would be honoured to serve again on Council and help steward the University through its next chapter of opportunity and challenge.

## **10. Michaela Macdonald**

I am applying for election to Council because I feel strongly about contributing to the effective governance of Queen Mary, supporting the delivery of our 2030 Strategy, while ensuring that our use of resources reflects our values of accountability, transparency, and inclusivity. Over the past two years, as an elected member of Senate, I have gained a valuable insight into how high-level

decisions and policies shape the day-to-day realities of academic life. This experience, together with my role as co-lead of the EECS Equalities Committee, has strengthened my belief in fostering a meaningful dialogue between staff, students, and senior leadership. Council has a vital role in ensuring that diverse voices are heard and that strategic decisions take into account different perspectives. I would bring to Council not only my collaborative approach and experience working across disciplines, but also an awareness of how policies can impact staff on the ground. I believe that my work and experience have equipped me to contribute thoughtfully to Council's responsibilities in areas such as financial oversight, risk management, and statutory compliance. I am willing and able to meet the time commitment required of Council members, including attending meetings, the annual conference, and participating in induction and training. I would welcome the opportunity to serve and help ensure that Queen Mary's future continues to be shaped by openness, integrity, and shared purpose.

#### **11. Sara Mahdi**

Helping to improve

#### **12. Sujoy Mukerji**

I have been an academic for thirty years—mostly in the UK, and for the past decade at Queen Mary. From 2015 to 2020, I served as Head of the School of Economics and Finance. These roles have given me a good understanding of the UK higher-education landscape, particularly at QMUL, as well as the challenges and opportunities we face. I've come to appreciate our institution's greatest strengths: the quality and dedication of our staff and students, the powerful ideas and shared values that unite us, and our pride in diversity. It would be both an honour and a privilege to serve as a member of the Council, contributing to the stewardship of our institution with a view to advancing its collective interests. I understand the time commitment this role demands and am fully prepared to meet it.

#### **13. Swati Nehete**

I am standing for election to the University Council, recognising its key responsibilities under the Charter. My experience aligns with the Council's mandate for strategic direction, robust oversight, and steadfast integrity. I am committed to advancing our University's established excellence, inclusivity and implementation of Strategy 2030. I understand our mission, vision, values, and will consider long-term plans that benefit all stakeholders—staff, students, and alumni. I have experience in upholding rigorous monitoring of performance against set standards, benchmarking against peers, and will apply this experience transferably for the benefit of council oversight. My experience as Vice-Chair of the Dental Academic Staff Group for British Dental Association, affords me the skills to scrutinise safeguards for assets. I have a good grasp on stakeholder risk assessment and will review judicious use of resource within a framework of non-delegable policies like Financial Regulations, Investment Policy, Risk Management, Conflict of Interest, and Whistleblowing, ensuring the highest ethical standards. As one of the longest serving members of HSAG, I bring a wealth of experience for input into policy for health and safety and estates and security. As a Mental Health first aider I will champion inclusivity, protect academic freedom, and ensure legal compliance. I will advocate for a compassionate human resources strategy and espouse for an improved student experience with governance. I am analytical, collaborative, and dedicated. I wish to serve on Council with integrity, diligence, and a focus on its enduring strength. I request your support to contribute to our exceptional institution's success.

#### **14. Chloe Pasin**

I am a postdoctoral research associate in data science and health inequities at the SHARE Collaborative (Blizard Institute), and I am standing for election to the University Council. I am committed to promoting more diverse and inclusive approaches in academia. By contributing to the Council's work, I would intent to ensure that inclusivity and accessibility remain core priorities for Queen Mary University, alongside with innovation and impact. I believe my previous experiences will be valuable assets for this role. During my PhD in France, I was actively involved in student organisations and participated in some administrative meetings, which gave me insights into academic governance. As a postdoctoral researcher at Columbia University, I became an active member of the postdoctoral workers union. I worked alongside others to secure better working conditions for postdocs, including fair salaries and improved childcare support – issues that are central to academic life and equal opportunities. As a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zurich, I served on the Equal Opportunities Commission, where I contributed to developing strategic priorities for the effective implementation of equal opportunities at the university. I initiated a working group that led to free access to menstruation products on campus. I hope to bring to the Council my commitment to fairness, experience in collaborative work, insight from academic institutions in the US and Europe, and the perspective of a postdoctoral researcher – a voice not yet present on the Council. I am willing and able to meet the required time commitment for this role.

#### **15. Eyal Poleg**

At this time of crises in higher education, I will present a strong academic voice at Council to ensure the long-term preservation of QMUL's mission and strategic vision. I will contribute a range of expertise stemming from my in-depth familiarity with the sector, strong affinity to QMUL ideals, and work at the forefront of interdisciplinary research and teaching. I am currently the PI of a large research project, which brings together historians, scientists and technicians from HSS and FMD, as well as other world-leading institutions. Conducting cutting-edge research and research-led teaching will assist in representing academics from across QMUL at council, and ensure the centrality QMUL's core values of research and teaching excellence to support mobility opportunities for our unique student body. I have been at QMUL since 2013. As the Academic Lead for Outward Mobility (2016-19) I worked across QMUL's three faculties to transform student exchanges. Liaising with professional services colleagues I have opened a range of successful new degree programme with a year abroad, which supported admissions while removing financial and academic obstacles to students' mobilities. This has equipped me with a holistic understanding of QMUL, which will support my role in Council. QMUL, alongside the HE sector at large, is undergoing a period of transition. I intend to use my time in Council to rebuild trust and cross-staff collaboration, based on sharing information, evidence-based decision making, and honest dialogues. These are necessary for ensuring QMUL's resilience. I confirm that were I to be elected, I am willing to meet the required time commitment to fully engage with council's activities.

#### **16. Rehan Shah**

Equipped with an extremely avid interest in university strategy, governance, HE policy and administration from my involvement in multiple committees (London Branch Committee, Research Committee, Early Career Mathematicians Committee, Academic Representatives) for professional organisations such as the Institute of Mathematics and the London Mathematical Society, I can make significant contributions to Council, particularly its Remuneration

Committee. As Council member, I will commit to fostering inclusivity and diversity, upholding academic freedom, and ensuring that decisions made by the SET are in accordance with best practices stated in QMUL's Ordinance 2. As an Inclusive Scholarship Lead for QMUL's Centre for Academic Inclusion in Science and Engineering, School EDI Education Champion and QMUL Public Engagement Champion, I lead university-wide education research projects e.g. diversification of STEM curricula, embedding ethics and sustainability in mathematics and community-based learning. As an early-career permanent T&S academic having already attained Senior Fellowship of AdvanceHE, I am also excited to contribute actively by bringing in a fresh perspective for the implementation of the core values embodied within QMUL's Strategy 2030. Since I live locally in London, in addition to meeting all the required time commitments expected of Council members, I will also be able to engage with local communities and external partners to enhance their relationships with QMUL. A meticulous person, I am motivated to strive for excellence in whatever task I engage in. I am therefore confident that my personal qualities such as integrity, responsibility, dedication, humility and optimism will prove to be valuable assets to the Council.

### **17. James Strong**

I have had an unusual career. Before entering academia, I was a tax accountant at KPMG, and spent four years in professional services at LSE, working for the university secretary, overseeing campus space management, organising Senior Executive Team meetings, and, finally, running the Vice-Chancellor's office. At Queen Mary, I have been a Fellow of the QM Academy, academic lead for learner engagement analytics, a member of Senate, and Director of Education and Deputy Head of the School of Politics and International Relations. I have also spent fifteen years as a Trustee of an educational charity. Through these roles, I have developed a clear sense of both the complexity and simplicity of university governance. It is simple because we all share the goal of excellence, in our research and in the education we provide. I strongly believe that. In that sense, governance is about ensuring the university facilitates rather than stifling excellence. It is complex because how we pursue excellence varies, according to the roles we play and the disciplines we sit within. Governance, from this perspective, is about understanding and respecting that variety. You can't run something as complex as a university without simplification, through strategies, policies and KPIs. But simplification is no substitute for understanding, and understanding means engaging with the staff, students, and stories behind the data. That would be my contribution to Council, to ensure its 'big picture' discussions reflect the nuances of how the university actually operates, and respect the different ways we do outstanding work.

### **18. Maria Turri**

As a medical doctor and academic who comes from an Italian working-class family, I embody Queen Mary's mission of inclusivity and cultural diversity. I am proud that Queen Mary, since my joining in 2017, has allowed me to carry out my teaching and pastoral roles with students and colleagues with inclusivity at the core. I will bring to the Council my commitment that everyone working at Queen Mary can be supported in this most important and distinctive element of our mission. Before joining Queen Mary, I worked for 15 years in the NHS as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, including in consultant roles. I have always been passionately committed to collegiality. I have seen too often how openness, listening, understanding different points of views and positions, co-operation and co-creation, can be easily taken for granted or even put aside. I think it is essential that the principles of collegiality that are in our mission statement are not put in opposition to the need for efficiency. I will bring my experience working in challenging clinical

environments to support collegial thinking in all aspects of university operations. As an interdisciplinary researcher who has worked in both the sciences and the humanities, it is my mindset to disrupt conventional thought and respond with imagination. I am a critical and analytical thinker and will put my skills to the service of the Council in all its roles, including establishing and monitoring systems of control and accountability.

### **19. Steve Uhlig**

Among the esteemed Russell Group institutions, QMUL stands out due to its unique strengths: a rich diversity in its student population, a commitment to social mobility and the local community, and a sincere dedication to the quality of education and research it provides. These strengths create both opportunities and challenges in how we operate as a community. The culture at QMUL prioritises inclusivity and diversity among our values. However, what truly sets QMUL apart is not merely the values inscribed in documents but those embodied in our actions. Navigating our values alongside the current challenging financial landscape presents a complex set of uncertainties and difficult decisions for the Senior Executive Team (SET). As the guardian of the University's good name and values, the council's role is particularly critical as higher education navigates turbulent times. The dialogue between the Senior Executive Team (SET) and council members will be vital in ensuring that the best decisions are made for this great University, despite the uncertainty brought about by various external factors. My experience at QMUL since joining in 2012—as a professor and Head of a Research Group, and since December 2020 as Head of one of QMUL's largest schools (EECS)—has made me appreciate the wealth of diversity and potential within our student body, the genuine commitment of our academic staff to their dual roles as educators and researchers, and the unwavering passion of our professional and technical support teams in advancing QMUL's mission. However, it has also made me acutely aware of the many KPIs that must be balanced for a sustainable future for our University. As a council member, I pledge to serve the University community and hold myself accountable for the many responsibilities of the Council.

### **20. Abigail Whitehouse**

As a paediatrician, clinical academic, and an emerging research leader, I am committed to making a meaningful contribution to Council by championing evidence-based decision-making, promoting inclusivity, and supporting the strategic vision of QMUL. My clinical and academic background—spanning paediatrics, respiratory medicine, and environmental health—has equipped me with a deep understanding of healthcare, research governance, and the importance of fostering a safe, supportive environment for students and staff. QMUL has been my home through my PhD, clinical lectureship and now my substantive clinical academic role and I look forward to giving back to the institution that has shaped my career. I bring a track record of collaborative leadership, having served as Principal Investigator and co-applicant on multi-centre studies, managed large research grants, and co-chaired a trainee-led research network. My experience on national committees (COMEAP) and as a reviewer for leading journals demonstrates my commitment to high standards, transparency, and ethical oversight. I work closely with local government, NHS trusts, and international partners, providing me with insight into effective governance, risk management, and stakeholder engagement—core responsibilities of Council under Ordinance 2. I am fully committed to meeting the time requirements of the role and to upholding the Council's responsibilities, including safeguarding the university's assets, ensuring compliance, and promoting academic freedom and equality. I look forward to working with colleagues from across the university, using my skills and enthusiasm to help shape QMUL's future and ensure it remains a welcoming and ambitious place for all.



## **21. Nick Zang**

Looking into contributing to the development and operation of the university, my first objective is to be able to provide experiences and perform necessary quantitative analyses to shape the university's research visions, as a research-intensive, diversity-promoting organisation. Coming from an Asian culture, the second objective is to contribute to the development of a more vibrant community for international students and staff with first-hand personal experiences. My research focuses on engineering design and development of green aerial vehicles, which closely aligns with the sustainable transport and shared mobility goals in UK's research landscape. I have been involved previously in the planning of large-scale experimental facilities and have had experiences liaising with academic, industrial and governmental partners, which can further contribute to the insights into research vision. I am confident to fulfil the required time commitment.