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Queen Mary University of London

Senate

Paper Title	**Students' Union President's report**
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to **note** the report.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	The report is an update from the start of the academic year on activity within the Students' Union. It includes the following sections: • Key Updates • Employability • Student Opportunities • Sport and Physical Activity • Student Voice
Questions for Senate to consider	
Regulatory/statutory reference points	
Strategy and risk	
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	
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Sponsor	

Presidents University Council Report

Key Updates

Autumn Elections

As part of the implementation of our Democracy Review, we have now held the elections for the ten new Student Representative positions and one vacant Student Trustee position. A total of 72 students had nominated themselves for the 11 positions, and 568 students cast their votes.

The Autumn Election is traditionally a smaller election than our main Spring Election (where we elect the full-time officers), and we used this election as an opportunity to trial some new approaches. This included a trial of in-person polling stations for students on our largest London-based campuses, with online voting enabled for distance learners and students on our smaller London-based campuses. All students were also able to request an online vote if they were unable to come to an on-campus polling station. The polling stations enabled Students' Union staff to have a more direct presence and foster a more positive campaigning culture, but it took significant staff resources to deliver polling stations on four campuses across the four days of voting. We are currently undertaking a full evaluation of the trial.

Course Rep Elections

We started our Autumn Course Rep elections on the 9th of September, with the nominations window running until 29 September.

At the start of the elections, there were 636 vacancies across 485 posts, including 188 vacancies carried over from the Spring elections, when we typically elect all reps for continuing courses (for example year 2+). The voting period took place from the 1st – 8th of October. Engagement during nominations was highest in HSS, while S&E saw the strongest engagement during the voting period. In total, we successfully elected 254 reps, bringing the number of confirmed reps for the 2025–26 academic year to 388.

Following the elections, we opened a co-opting period to fill remaining vacancies and took steps to make this a much clearer and simple process; utilising a form for staff and students to opt-in to co-opting Course Reps which was then shared through the faculties, and any student who expressed interest was directed to complete it. Through this process, we appointed an additional 197 reps, concluding the co-opting window with a total of 585 Course Reps across all faculties.

This year, we decided to give course reps a deadline for completing the mandatory training module to ensure that all reps were trained before their first SVC meeting. The deadline was the 17th of November. 87% of reps managed to complete their training before this deadline.

All Student Meeting

The first All Student Meeting (ASM) of this academic year took place on 17 November. The meeting is the first ASM under the new structures that we have implemented based on the Democracy Review, and we have been pleased to receive a very high number of motions and ideas for the meeting. The meeting was chaired by the newly appointed Students' Union Chair, Mara Bortnowschi, who is a current medical student. The meeting reached quoracy of 120 students, and several motions were passed, including motions regarding the provision of faith spaces and ethical careers events.

In line with the recommendations from the Democracy Review, we will have at least three All Student Meetings per year, with the next one scheduled for early February.

Employability

Employability

Our main employability programme, the Skills Awards, gives students the opportunity to develop their soft skills, learn from others, prepare for post-graduation job hunting, and earn an award around employability that features on their HEAR transcript. 111 people have already registered for this year's programme. We currently have 39 skills award sessions scheduled for this year's programme, ranging from communication and problem-solving to mental health first aid and cultural competence.

We work closely with the School of Biological and Behavioural Sciences and have recruited five students in partnership with them who have done their placement year and are happy to lead specific sessions as well. This means these student-led sessions give students the opportunity to develop their professional skills and build a supportive peer learning community. To ensure students can commit to this, we have allocated part of our budget to be able to pay for their sessions as well as some preparation time at our student staff rate.

One student spoke about how '*The session went really well, and I felt I gained new skills in presenting'.*

During the 24/25 Academic year, we had 316 students register for our skills award and 182 participated in at least one session, with 68 receiving the Gold Award for their attendance which was a slight increase from the previous year. A total of 36 skills sessions and 6 reflection sessions were offered.

A student attendee at one of last year's reflection sessions said that *'The programme has made them more confident in interview techniques, transferable skills and attempting to enter the professional world after graduating'.*

Sports Employability Academy

The Sports Employability Academy is QMSU Sport's leadership and workforce development programme, supporting QMUL students and external community organisations across Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs. Through the programme, students access a wide range of professional development opportunities, including free UK Coaching Premium Membership, CPD workshops, employment references, one-to-one support from full-time staff, and financial support for a sports-based qualification of their choice. Students engage in both traditional roles such as coaching and officiating, as well as degree-relevant roles including football-focused media and communications and fan-experience positions.

During its debut year in 2024–25, the Academy received over 50 applications, supported more than 340 hours of sports-based delivery, and professionally upskilled over 20 students through CPD opportunities. The programme also secured over £12,000 of external funding to enhance community-outreach activity and student development. Several students who gained qualifications through the Academy have progressed into paid roles within Get Active, Social Leagues and Qmotion, demonstrating clear pathways into employment.

A student testimonial reflects the impact of the programme: *"Being part of this programme has hugely enriched my student experience by giving me opportunities to lead, volunteer, and connect with diverse communities. It has strengthened my confidence, teamwork, and communication skills, which I know will support my future career in medicine. Most importantly, it has allowed me to give back to the student community while building a strong foundation for my employability."*

Student Opportunities

Societies

Since the start of the Academic year, we have had 25 new groups approved and they are now all being set up ready to organise their first events. Our existing groups have raised £80,092.66 from their membership sales income alone so far, this academic year, with 11,648 society memberships sold (compared to 10,007 at this

time last year). Our societies have also secured an additional £30,000 in sponsorships to go towards their group activities.

£13,924.10 of funding was distributed in the 2nd round of the grant fund; this funding is covering items or activities such as 3D printing of remote-controlled boats for the Engineering and Material Sciences Society, Porterage fees for the Game Dev Society, and Pilates equipment for QMBL Pilates Society. Ensuring that our groups are well-equipped for the year ahead and are able to offer their members the best experience possible!

We had more groups than ever in attendance at the welcome fair with 132 groups present at Mile End and 73 at Whitechapel and in general, student group leaders have been super engaged this year with over 800 of them having already completed finance training as well as many of them setting up meetings with the societies team to discuss how they can expand and find new and exciting ways to create great experiences for their members.

Volunteering

We had a very successful volunteering fair at the end of September with 35 stalls and over 200 students in attendance. Our partner organisations gave incredibly positive feedback about their experience at the fair. One respondent said *'It was a great, successful day, and it was a pleasure speaking with so many keen and super interested students. As for the set-up, the space, the voucher and all on the day, all was great!'.*

645 volunteering hours have been logged this academic year. We have hosted 3 Give Volunteering a Go events so far: Race for the Kids, Canal Clean and London Museum Santa's Grotto. Student feedback from these events has been very positive, as all respondents have also rated their experience highly. Our Volunteering Champions are currently working hard to organise a donation drive and care package making session for Haven House Children's Hospice. Planning has also begun for Student Volunteering Week 2026.

There are 12 active volunteering groups with 527 members in total. Our second volunteering board meeting saw the Volunteering Champions meet to allocate £779.53 to our volunteering groups, for items such as funding towards portering costs for Barts Community Smiles and SAMDA's collaboration hosting a Dentistry Taster Day for schools. We have implemented online safeguarding training and revised the system for students to get DBS checks, increasing efficiency and allowing students to start volunteering with our student led volunteering groups without delays. 281 students have completed the online safeguarding training.

We have also opened applications for the QMSU London Marathon Place and are looking forward to recruiting our team of volunteers for the event!

Welcome Crew

We had a hugely successful Help Squad and Welcome Crew programme this year with a total of 99 volunteers over arrivals weekend and the freshers' fairs at Mile End and Whitechapel.

We had a lot of lovely feedback from the weekend itself and the thank you event at Drapers:

'I found the experience refreshing, it definitely helped me get out of my comfort zone and make friends'.
'Rachel and Isabelle were so easy to talk to and friendly and the QMSU staff were very supportive.'
'I loved the thank you event, it has been lovely and a great way to socialise with friends'
'I believe my communication skills have improved, and I have made some good friends who I volunteered with'.

RAG

We have had a hugely busy and successful start to the academic year in terms of fundraising. Over 60 RAG events have been planned and submitted by student groups via the Adopt a Charity Form, and over £22,000

has been raised for charity. This includes a charity football match organised by Queen Mary Men's and Women's Football Clubs, which raised an impressive over £7000. Charity week has also been a great success for our Mile End and Whitechapel Islamic Societies, raising nearly £6,000!

Student media

We held the first board meeting of the academic year with a full turnout from all Outlets and elected a new chair. The new student media outlet 'Fashionably Late' which showcase creative expression through print and digital issues, visual campaigns, blog posts and collaborative projects that combine photography, styling, and film have been set up!

University Challenge

We have been trying to create a team of highly knowledgeable students to take part in University Challenge. We had 72 students sign up to take part in the round 1 trials which will be spread over three days, testing general and specialised knowledge. The highest scoring of these will then move to round 2 where they will practice as individuals and teams to put together the Queen Mary, University of London's 2026 University challenge team. This is a very exciting opportunity for students to show off their knowledge as well as create a feel of community across different years and subject areas. The project has been promoted across the Students' Union as well as the University, engaging all demographics of students.

Sustainability

We run our first Big Green Canal Clean in October. Despite the terrible weather we had 15 students attending, ensuring our Canal and adjacent areas are litter free and save for students to enjoy.

Our Sustainability Intern was elected to represent QMUL as a primary delegate at the 2025 BISA Chatham House climate simulation. Using examples and experience from her internship helped her secure this incredible opportunity.

Sport and Physical Activity

Social Sport

The Social League programme launched in October with a series of 8–10-week leagues designed to provide recreational competitive opportunities for societies, departments and groups of friends. This year's offer includes basketball, 7-a-side football, netball, indoor cricket and singles/doubles badminton. Participation has grown from 2024–25, with 16 football teams compared to 12 last year, and basketball participation doubling from 3 to 6 teams. To further enhance accessibility, individual entry tickets were introduced, enabling students without an existing team to either join established groups or form new teams.

All sessions are delivered and refereed by QMSU Sport Activators, providing students with opportunities to develop leadership capabilities and improve their understanding of the sport. In collaboration with the Sports Employability Academy, Activators also access training and qualifications that build their professional skills and strengthen the quality of league delivery. Volunteers involved in the programme have received additional support to grow confidence in officiating and further develop their existing sport knowledge.

Get Active Programme

The Get Active programme has continued to offer a weekly timetable of 14 pay-and-play sessions for students and staff. Since the start of the academic year, 156 hours of delivery have taken place, attracting 268 unique participants. Engagement remains strong, with 47% of participants attending two or more sessions.

Throughout November, the programme will support both Movember and Talk Club through targeted activity designed to encourage men to engage in conversations about mental health while taking part in physical

activity. This includes a Talk Club archery session delivered in partnership with the QMSU Archery Club, combining sport with peer-to-peer discussion. Additional initiatives include an Introduction to Strength Training session led by a qualified Qmotion instructor and an Introduction to Climbing session at Bethnal Green Climbing Centre, aimed at encouraging men to try new activities that support both physical and mental wellbeing.

Performance Sport

Support for student-athletes within the Performance Sport programme is now fully underway. Weekly Strength and Conditioning sessions have been introduced, reducing financial barriers and providing consistent training support. Academic flexibility and sports therapy services are already being utilised, supported by an updated Academic Flexibility Agreement that reflects recent case studies and best-practice examples for academic staff and personal tutors. This ensures institutional compliance with TASS accreditation guidelines and helps communicate the needs of dual-career athletes effectively across the university.

A new Sports Medicine Clinic for QMUL student-athletes has been finalised in partnership with QMUL and Barts NHS Trust. Accessed through local GPs, the clinic will provide free physiotherapy, rehabilitation and injury management at Mile End Hospital. This service will support diagnosis, treatment and recovery throughout the year, ensuring athletes receive timely and appropriate care.

Student Voice

Engaging with Professional Services, Education and Faculty teams:

Over the past weeks, our staff and officers have been working closely with the AskQM steering group and Faculty of Science and Engineering to collect feedback on the AskQM system. The approach will involve setting a 'feedback focus' for Course Reps to ask about three key areas and bring this to the Student Voice team and their SVCs and then presented to stakeholders in the AskQM team. The areas include: familiarity with the system, navigation/experience; and finally specific questions to gauge the level of 'preferred notification' for students. Similarly, twe have worked with the Student Experience Directorate; VP Education's office and Faculty Education and Experience teams to host three Course Rep workshops, aimed at familiarising Course Reps with senior stakeholders and processes, and providing clarity on feedback pathways and opening up opportunities for networking. In total, 54 Course Reps attended across the three sessions, and took the opportunity to network and meet with fellow Course Reps.

Finally, our staff and Exec have engaged in the Module Experience Steering Group, to support key priorities including closing the feedback loop, driving response rate and the pilot of new response windows' in the MBBS programme.

Study Well

Our bi-yearly Study Well campaign has begun with our Winter edition, after a productive meeting with university colleagues, the calendar has begun filling with a range of events aiming to help our students with their wellbeing during the exam and assignment period. We have a range of hot drinks and hot food giveaways, a petting zoo provided by Spitalfields Farm and chances to let out your artistic side in craft workshops!

Black History Month

We had a busy black history month, with a range of events raising awareness and celebrating our students. For example, we hosted workshops making waist beads and exploring traditional basket weaving techniques, and delving into text written by an Alumni, Caleb Femi in our Black History Month Book Club. One of our largest events was a cultural showcase, hosted by multiple societies which brought over 200 students showcasing their talents and sharing a range of traditional foods.

Islamic Heritage Month

We are currently hosting Heritage Month, looking to finish the month with Friday Prayer in Library Square near the end of November. We have also hosted book clubs, organising Hijab stalls, exploring a range of topics under Islam.

Disability History Month

Our second Disability History Month begins alongside the National campaign on the 20th of November. We are hosting a range of events such as sign-language workshops, movie screenings and sensory-friendly events in Drapers.

Diya Mary Selastin
QMSU President
20th November 2025