

Bye Law-20

Staff Student Protocol

Introduction

Queen Mary University of London Students' Union (the Union) is the recognised representative body of the students of Queen Mary University London (QMUL). It is a democratic organisation which is led by students as laid out in the Articles of Association and Byelaws. The objects of the Union are outlined in the Articles of Association.

QMSU is a member-led democratic organisation and the relationship between members of staff, students and elected Student Officers is a valuable and important one. QMSU employs staff to support Elected Officers and provide professional advice, managerial expertise and continuity and to provide a range of services and support to students of QMUL.

Definitions

This protocol seeks to clarify the relationship between the roles of:

Students

All Union Members and any QMUL student who has opted out of Membership of the Union but excludes Executive Officers.

Elected Representatives

Those holding elected positions within the Union, comprising:

- Executive Officers (as referred to in Byelaw 6)
- Part time Officers and Student Representatives (as referred to in Byelaw 8), including the Chair of Council
- Students Union Media Group Editorial Team (the Executive Editor, Managing Editors and Station Managers as referred to in Byelaw 13)
- Clubs' and Societies' Representatives (Principal Officers and
- Committee Members as referred to in Byelaws 14 and 15)
- NUS delegates
- Any others from time to time holding elected positions within the Union, whether on a cross campus basis or whether as a representative of Mile End students or of Barts and The London students

Charity/Company Officers

The Trustees/Directors of the Union, and the Directors of QMSU Services Limited acting as such.

Staff

Includes employees of the Union and/or QMUL working for the Union or QMSU Services Limited (including Student Staff whilst at work) and individuals working for the Union or QMSU Services Limited under a contract for services but excludes Executive Officers. For the purpose of this document, the term 'Staff' is used to encompass both Salaried Staff and Student Staff.

Salaried Staff

Staff who have been recruited from outside of the QMUL student body to work for the Union or QMSU Services Limited. Though a Salaried Staff Member may, on occasion, also be registered as a student at QMUL, they are not recruited due to their status as a student and their primary role is as a staff member.

Student Staff

QMUL Students who work for the Union or QMSU Services Limited on a casual basis, but whose primary role is as a student of QMUL.

In clarifying the relationships between these roles it draws on a distinction between **representative policy** and **operational policy**:

Representative policy is led by officers; developed, debated and approved by the student members within QMSU's democratic structures, such as Annual Meetings, Referenda, Student Council

Operational policy is led by staff and provides a framework, in accordance with the Strategic Plan, for carrying out the day to day running of the Union.

The Board of Trustees are legally responsible for ensuring that the political and operational policy of the Union is consistent with the advancement of education of students at QMUL for the public benefit. They are responsible for the budget, governance and strategy of the Union. Commercial and Trading activity is run through QMSU Services Ltd, the subsidiary company wholly owned by the Union which is overseen by the Board of Directors of QMSU Services.

Purpose of Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to provide clarity over the relationship between the Elected Representatives, Students, Charity/Company Officers and Staff/Student Staff who are employed to provide professional advice, support and continuity. In order to achieve this, this protocol will be issued to all Elected Representatives, Charity/Company Officers and Staff. It aims to provide general guidance and broad principles, and to provide avenues for the resolution of problems as and when they arise. The complex nature of QMSU naturally leads to an element of ambiguity in terms of the relationships between Salaried Staff, Student Staff, Elected Representatives and Charity/Company Officers that are, in most cases, managed informally. These relationships are expected to change periodically as new Officers are elected, new policies developed, and new initiatives are begun. Staff and Elected Representatives are expected to take personal responsibility for the continuous development of an effective working environment, and to approach new or challenging situations in a professional, proactive and reasonable manner. Elected Representatives and Staff are expected to behave courteously towards each other at all times.

The aim of this protocol is to ensure that there is a positive and empowered relationship between the student members, officers and staff. This protocol is intended to complement the QMSU governing documents by providing guidance on raising issues and seeking solutions where these arise. The nature of the staff/student working relationship can be complex and this protocol is in place to provide broad principles to enable best working practice. There is an expectation that all members, officers, Trustees and staff are treated with respect and courtesy at all times.

Expectations/Obligations of Elected Officers and Staff

The Union expects there to be a close working relationship between Elected Representatives and Staff. The work of Staff is determined via the organisational staff structure which is in place and will be informed by the aims of the Executive Officers via the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team. This does not exclude relatively minor requests for advice and support by Elected Representatives, especially where it might be impractical to first consult the relevant Senior Manager. However, in general, Elected Representatives should not give direct instruction to Staff. In turn, all Staff will respond positively to reasonable requests from Elected Officers to ensure a harmonious working relationship.

In order to preserve the democracy of the Union, Staff, including Student Staff whilst on duty, will not comment on the representative policy of QMSU (although they are bound by it and may reasonably be expected to factually outline it). In providing guidance for Elected Representatives related to political

policy, this will include advice on processes, balanced options and similar policy which may be relevant and conducting and presenting research that might help to inform it but will not include personal views and will remain neutral. Similarly, Elected Representatives will be expected not to encourage Staff to become involved in political policy other than in the way described above.

Salaried Staff may not participate in, or seek to influence, the democratic processes of the Union with the exception of salaried staff who are also registered students of QMUL who may vote in elections.

Salaried staff should not publicly comment on political policy or political direction, including: in University or external media; on online fora, social networking sites or websites; in formal and informal QMSU meetings.

Outside of their working hours Student Staff enjoy the full rights and privileges of membership. These students should not be prevented from exercising their democratic rights as Members of the Union because they are also members of staff. Therefore, Student Staff may take a full and active part in the democracy of the Union.

In their role as staff members, student staff are protected by the Staff/Student Protocol in the same way as all other staff.

Staffing matters, including negative comments and criticism of Staff Members are to be treated as confidential and will not be discussed or communicated at committees, forums or in the media. In the same way Staff will be expected to refrain from criticising the actions of any Elected Representatives.

Raising issues and complaints

Courtesy between Elected Representatives and Staff is expected at all times; however, the Union acknowledges that despite the principles laid out in this protocol, issues can arise between Elected Representatives and Staff. Every effort will be made to resolve any such issues following an informal route and issues should be raised as follows:

Issues with work delivered by Staff

If a particular piece of work does not meet the expectation of a Student or Elected Representative, they have a right to comment on that piece of work as a whole, whereas they are not within their rights to pinpoint any staff member or their performance as being a contributing factor as to why these expectations were not met. Students may criticise the work of the Union in a political or public forum by holding elected officers and the Union as an organisation to account, rather than commenting on the work of individual staff or staff teams.

Issues with Staff

Any Member or Elected Representative who wishes to raise an issue regarding a Staff Member should do so via an Executive Officer or Senior Manager in the first instance. That person will then direct the issue to the relevant Manager who will discuss the issue and seek to resolve it informally and proactively. Where the issue concerns the Chief Executive Officer, this should be raised with the Chair of the Trustee Board. Where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Procedure and/or Staff Disciplinary Processes as appropriate.

Issues with the work of Elected Representatives

Any Member wishing to raise an issue or complaint concerning an Elected Representative should do so as outlined in the Complaints Procedure.

Any Staff Member wishing to raise an issue concerning an Elected Representative should do so with their own Line Manager in the first instance. Where the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the Line Manager should refer the matter to the relevant Senior Manager. Where a formal complaint is lodged

at this stage and concerns an officer, the matter will then be investigated where appropriate in line with the Union's Complaints Procedure.

Where the issue relates to the contractual obligations of an Executive Officer it will be addressed using the Officer's Contract and/or the Union's Code of Conduct.

Issue with Members

Where the issue concerns a Member, it should first be directed to the Students' Union President. The matter will then be investigated by the relevant Staff Member who will again seek informal resolution where appropriate; where this is not an option the matter will be referred to the Union's Complaints Procedure.

Issues with Charity/Company Officers

Any Student or Staff member wishing to raise an issue or complaint concerning a Trustee or Director should be referred to the Chair of the Trustee Board or Board of Directors of QMSU Services Ltd or, if the issue concerns that individual the Deputy Chair who will seek informal resolution where appropriate; where this is not an option the matter will be referred to the Union's Complaints Procedure.

Any questions relating to the Staff/Student Protocol can be raised with an Executive Officer or Senior Manager