

Amendment to motion: ‘Should QMSU do more to help the PGR community at QMUL?’

Proposer: Cameron Storey (VP Humanities & Social Sciences) and Shamima Akter (SU President).

Seconded: Tiana Dinard-Samuel (VP Communities), Mat Robathan (VP Barts and The London), Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (VP Science & Engineering).

What do you want?

This amendment is seeking to remove the phrase “*and to boycott all meetings with Colin Bailey for the foreseeable future*” in the fourth paragraph of the original motion’s ‘What do you want?’ section.

Why do you want it?

The main reason for this amendment is that the phrase in the fourth paragraph, which reads: “*and to boycott all meetings with Colin Bailey for the foreseeable future*”, suggests that we cease contact with Colin Bailey immediately in all formats for an unspecified amount of time. This will force QMSU to boycott any and all meetings where the QMUL President and Principal is present, signifying our absence, and that of the student voice, from key meetings within the institution. As such, it will render many current policies and Student Union work nullified.

What impact will this have?

On a strategic level, College Council and its sub-committees, including Finance and Investment Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Governance Committee and Remuneration Committee (all of which the SU President is a member) are the decision-making bodies of the institution, in which the QMUL Principal is present.

The QMSU President is an Ex-Officio member who provides periodic reports to the body, highlighting student voice issues, achievements and grievances to them. For example, this was a platform that allowed the President to highlight the student opinion of blended learning, fees and the need for more student centered EDI discussions. This is the space where issues such as the open letter for Black Lives Matter campaign was discussed, presented by the QMSU President (then Vice President Welfare) and productive steps were taken as a result to embed student voice and groups within University discussions.

This is one of the many benefits and outcomes of having a seat at the table, allowing us to influence the core beliefs of the institution. **Also, although the SU is invited to such meetings, it has no power in dictating whether Colin Bailey can be present, as in most cases, he acts as the chair.**

On a departmental level, Senate (which has oversight of academic activity and also reports to Council), and has its own sub-committees; Estates Strategy Board Officer and its subcommittee Residential Strategy Board, are university-wide meetings where institutional policy is decided and where Colin Bailey is present. All Executive Officers are involved and are members of these meetings, where they lobby and influence on both academic and departmental decisions and policy. These platforms are spaces where the SU has had the opportunity to directly inform the EDI agenda which, in turn, has had a direct impact on the University's development of their Values in Action.

More recently, conversations relating to the 'no-detriment' policy will be put forward later in the timeline at Senate for approval, and our seat at the table allows us the space to continue to support the student voice. Furthermore, attendance at Residential Strategy Board meetings allow us to hold the university to account on issues faced by student residents. Especially with the ongoing rent and housing issues, this is a key space where we are able to relay concerns raised by the QMUL Rent Strike such as the unacceptable maintenance issues experienced by residents in campus halls.

Thanks to these discussions with the University, a 30% rent reduction for most students living in QMUL Halls has been agreed. Our influence on such policies and our ability to raise issues and concerns at a departmental level are crucial in incorporating student voice and feedback into university-wide decision-making.

To summarise, the governance structure within the University means that each and every meeting and decision will eventually feed into larger boards for approval, all of which will then be reported to College Council. It is vital that QMSU therefore have a seat at the table of these larger boards on which the Principal is present. Otherwise, it would be counter productive to do such good work on the ground but not have the ability to support and protect those initiatives further up the decision making ladder, because we are not at the highest level meetings to voice that support.