

QMUL Rent Strike Campaign Motion: ‘Should QMSU commit to supporting QMUL Rent Strike Campaign in the following specified ways?’

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WHAT DO YOU WANT?

1. That Queen Mary Students’ Union (QMSU) publicly stands in solidarity with those currently withholding rent, either through an inability to pay or as a means to lobby the University to meet all of QMUL Rent Strike’s demands, and that they make an updated public statement of this.
 - a. QMUL Rent Strike Campaign Demands from QMUL:
 1. Queen Mary University of London commit to a 30% rent reduction for all students in halls for the remainder of the 2020/21 academic year.
 2. The University allows no-penalty early tenancy release clauses for home and international students from their rent contracts (and guarantees this for future academic years too).
 3. QMUL ensures no job losses for cleaning, maintenance and teaching staff who work in QMUL Halls or in QMUL teaching, plus better health and safety protection.
 4. A rent refund for all students in QMUL Halls which equates to much we would have paid during the January - February lockdown period.
 5. There is an immediate increase in the support the University can offer for students in QMUL Halls of Residence:
 - Allow students alone in halls to ‘bubble up’ with other houses during lockdowns
 - Sufficient food, laundry and post for flats in isolation
 - Better and more consistent mental health support for students
 6. A total review of standards of living across all QMUL Halls of Residence (when students are not occupying rooms, e.g. over the summer).
 7. The University reinstate the no detriment policy for all students
 8. That the University takes no disciplinary action against rent strikers.
 - No notices to quit
 - No evictions
 - No court orders
 - No interest charged on unpaid rent
 - No negative credit ratings
 - No negative impact on students as a guarantor in the future
2. For QMSU to recommit to its existing mandate “to provide resources and publicity to students wishing to campaign for rent reductions/no penalty tenancy releases in QMUL halls.” which has not yet been fulfilled at the time this motion was written (15th January 2021).

- a. For QMSU specifically to support and provide resources and publicity to QMUL Rent Strike, according to what organisers request in their meetings and correspondence with QMSU (QMUL Rent Strike assures QMSU that requests will be within reason, and not amounting to over £75 in total).
3. That the Executive lobbies the University to adopt all QMUL Rent Strike's demands into policy, and lobbies the university for these demands to be met, prioritising demands three and eight.
4. That QMSU send an email to all students in halls notifying them of the strike and QMSU's total support for it, with QMUL Rent Strike's [sign-up form](#), [linktree](#) and all social media page links ([twitter](#), [instagram](#) and [facebook](#)) too.
5. That QMSU shares approved materials from QMUL Rent Strike's social media pages to all official QMSU social media channels. A minimum of three posts should be shared a month.
6. That QMSU covers the costs of distribution of approved materials, including promotional posters, stickers and leaflets to be distributed safely on campus within government guidelines.
7. That QMSU covers the costs of all the rent strike's social media promotion, such as Facebook adverts.
8. That QMSU notifies management of our continuation of the strike despite the first concession being offered (at the time this motion was written). QMSU should also make management aware that our demands are non-negotiable, and work to the best of their abilities to get all demands met. This can work in conjunction with current initiatives, such as lobbying for demand seven to be met.
9. That QMSU regularly meets with QMUL Rent Strike organisers (once per week) and briefs us on the meetings that they have had with management.
10. For QMSU to commit to working with QMUL Rent Strike Campaign against management, and to not support the strike campaign in order to only advance previous initiatives to lower rent in halls.

WHY DO YOU WANT IT?

In December's meeting of the Student Council, a motion mandating QMSU to provide help for student rent campaigners was passed. At the time of this meeting's motion deadline, one month into the rent strike campaign, there has been no sign of any concrete support from QMSU; QMSU's full-time officers have been ignoring the clear mandate students have given it here. QMUL Rent Strike has only received one meeting with QMSU, and one statement from the VP Welfare and VP Communities acknowledging their support of the campaign. This statement failed to commit to supporting all demands of the campaign, and has not been made accessible enough in order to provide publicity for the campaign either.

QMUL's Rent Strike Campaign has taken off with over 300 students pledging to withhold their term 2 rent. Students in halls are in extremely precarious situations right now. Many of us cannot afford to keep to our contracts, and require early tenancy releases. The scale of the pandemic has had severe economic impacts on us too. It is entirely unreasonable to expect us to have to pay rent for empty rooms during the latest lockdown period.

We have endured a terrible start to our university careers, and this has been alongside no help from the university.¹ We have now called a strike to demand better conditions and consideration for students in halls.

The campaign has received media attention and is working with a national network of strikes happening at nearly 50 different UK universities in order to campaign for rent reductions and no-penalty tenancy releases (amongst other things). QMSU must take this strike as seriously as our strikers and the national media are taking it. Rent strikes at the Universities of Bristol, Sussex and Warwick to name a few have been successfully backed by their respective Student Unions, and this is why we need QMSU's promise to support us to be effectively fulfilled.

This is not just important for the rent strike campaign: it's important to anyone who might want to tell the Student Council to change the way things work in the future. If the six full-time officers ignore Student Council's clear mandate this time, how can students depend on the Executive Officers to represent our interests? This is why we need QMSU to voice their full support of our demands and provide us with total help and guidance until our demands are met by management. We are open to collaboration with you, provided you can fulfil the demands of this motion so our 300+ strikers can feel that their student voices are being heard by the Student Union.

WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS HAVE?

As explained above, this will have two impacts:

The first is to ensure the Rent Strike Campaign gets the support it needs and is entitled to by mandate. This will advance the strike which already has a lot of momentum, but needs QMSU's help in securing its demands.

The second is to ensure that students in halls can feel protected, safe and secure in that QMSU and the strike campaign are working together to secure the demands of the strike. This is extremely important as students' voices need to be heard and represented by the SU. This will be beneficial for the strike campaign, and for QMSU too as at the moment students do not know where the Union stands on this issue, and are calling on them for greater support.

¹ Open Letter,
<https://docs.google.com/document/u/3/d/e/2PACX-1vSwyve6PXJNvilwDdSvfjU0IVJ5-B8U1hu81kFgyMO0wvMj9lo1H22oTVmz35jno0Bp5UBI5n8kwk2E/pub>