

# Student Council

**Tuesday 4 February 2025 6.00pm to be held online via Zoom**

## **Agenda**

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

#### **Members are reminded:**

- The meeting will be recorded and also live streamed.
- Please be respectful towards each other at all times.
- Please use the 'raise hand' function if you wish to speak during the meeting.
- Please remember to keep yourself muted during the meeting, unless asked to speak.

### **2. Chair's Introduction**

#### **Ratification of the Appointment of an Additional External Trustee**

Student Council is asked to ratify the appointment of a new External Trustee, **Funmi Ogunlusi**, in accordance with the Union's Articles of Association.

Funmi's appointment was unanimously recommended by the Appointments Committee which met on Tuesday 25 February and interviewed five candidates (from a field of eight applicants).

Funmi is a development executive working in the world of film, with extensive experience across the industry, including Endemol, Netflix, STV, Banijay. Funmi currently works for Immoveable Studios, a Banijay-backed production company co-founded by hip hop artist and Sunday Times bestselling author Akala.

Funmi has a BA in Politics and International Relations from the University of York, and a MSc in African Studies from Oxford.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*appended at end*)**

- 4 February 2025

### **4. Minutes from Sub-Committees (*appended at end*)**

- None to consider

### **5. Reports from and Questions to the Executive Officers**

The Executive Officers will be invited to give a brief verbal report highlighting any particular matters of interest, or concern. Council members and any students attending will then have an opportunity to put questions to the Officers.

Any students wishing to ask questions are asked to notify the Secretary ([b.coales@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:b.coales@qmul.ac.uk)) before the meeting so that they can be given access to the meeting as participants, rather than just watching the live stream.

## 7. QMSU Democracy Review

The QMSU President will present an updated paper on the outcome of the Union's Democracy Review, and Council will be asked to vote on the recommendations.

## 8. Bye-Law Changes

None submitted

## 9. Motions

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### a) Should the Union lobby the University to provide Enhanced Financial Support for International Students?

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**Proposed by:** Tanisha Srivastava

**Seconded by:** Pranav Premchand Somwanshi

#### What do you want?

The Union to lobby the University provide Enhanced Financial Support for International Students (e.g. Undergraduate scholarships, any loan provision by QMUL, further splitting of total fees over more than just 2 terms, etc.)?

#### Why do you want it?

International students contribute significantly to the cultural and academic diversity of our university, country, and its economy. However, the financial pressures on international students have grown considerably in recent years, with limited access to scholarships or government aid, especially for undergraduate students. Many students need more support in paying their fees, who otherwise have to make tough compromises that can adversely affect their academic performance, well-being, and overall university experience.

This motion could address these challenges by advocating for increased financial aid and support services, if not possible to reduce or cap fees, for international students especially undergraduate students.

#### What impact will this have?

International students play a key role in supporting the local and national economy through tuition, living expenses, and cultural engagement. Increased scholarships, financial aid, and

loan provision would reduce the financial stress faced by international students (without reducing tuition fees if not possible), allowing them to focus more on academics and personal well-being. Alleviating financial burdens would enable students to avoid overworking in part-time jobs, leading to improved academic engagement and outcomes. Demonstrating a commitment to supporting international students would enhance the university's reputation globally, attracting more deserving and talented students. Financially supported students are more likely to feel connected to the university and contribute back as successful alumni, both financially and through mentorship. This motion could also set a precedent for other institutions or governments to prioritise international student support, leading to broader systemic change.

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## **b) Should The Students' Union pass a vote of no confidence in the QMUL Principal?**

**Proposed by: Ahmed Kassem**

**Seconded by: Hiba Daoud Salameh**

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### **What do you want?**

This motion calls for the amended renewal of the no-confidence vote into the Queen Mary University of London Principal, Colin Bailey. In light of the lapsed motion that saw a no-confidence vote being instituted against Principal Colin Bailey from the furlough issues that arose during the coronavirus pandemic, we propose an amended renewal of that very motion with additional information necessitating its renewal. Many of our concerns encompass numerous avenues that we believe Colin Bailey has not acted in sufficiently acceptable or genuinely to, amongst which are the recent nursery closure and the urine attack encampment members sustained last year.

### **Why do you want it?**

For one, Westfield Nursery shut down on August 16th 2024 with less than three months notice. As a sole decision by the Senior Executive Team, the impact of the nursery closure has had a wide spread cost on the wider community and has impacted childcare arrangements as well. Even amidst protests from parents, students and staff alike, as well as nursery staff, Colin Bailey and the SET saw fit to provide 5 days of paid leave for parenting employees and ultimately disrupt what has been, for many years, a reliable nursery within the university community for those that parent.

Secondly, Colin Bailey has failed to address any real action towards the urine-attack that took place at the encampment last year. Then, two students came and intimidated members of the encampment and returned to cause battery through bodily fluids they had previously readied in plastic bottles to throw. Instead of addressing this issue, the SET assumed that because the offenders were graduating sooner or later, it would be less of a hassle to quietly let them take their degrees and go – unpunished. Instead, it was noted that the university had sent out notices to protect the offenders “for their safety”, absolving them of wrongdoing

and assigning victimhood to their name. This set a dangerous precedent on campus that anyone, irrespective of their political beliefs or identity, could be subject to any attack so long as the offenders do not trouble the University management themselves.

Thirdly, it was only this year that our all-muslim sabbatical officer team was subject to islamophobic attacks by a GB news pundit. Whilst the Student Union and many societies have publicly dismayed such attacks, the University has, again, failed to defend its students. In what should have been a dismissal of the hate crime and a re-affirmation to the core values the University stands by, it has failed to act in proper manner.

In regards to these affirmed points and the previous furlough incident that has initiated the previous no-confidence vote, we have seen, repeatedly, the principal neglect the voice of the students and fail to act when needed. Therefore, more than ever, we believe this no-confidence vote into Colin Bailey is a necessity.

### **What impact will this have?**

This motion will ensure the Student Union consistently acts with the Student's voice in mind in holding the University accountable to ensure they commit to their due diligence. This will likely increase student safeguarding measures, allow for more transparency to occur in relation to University management and ensure this precedent remains to prevent similar concerning events from taking place in the future.

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### **c) Title: Should QMSU adopt an Islamophobia definition and lobby the university to do the same?**

**Proposer: Jovani Palnoni**

**Seconders: Rahma Hegy, Nabihah Ali, Hassam Naeem, Tahmid Khan, Al-Habib Mraish**

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### **What do you want?**

1. QMSU to formally adopt the following definition of Islamophobia (MEND 2018):

*"Islamophobia is a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, discrimination, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."*

2. QMSU Sabbatical Officers to collaborate with Islamic Societies, external Muslim organisations and/or advisors to:

- a. Provide Islamophobia awareness training to all its staff.
- b. If necessary, refine or expand upon the adopted definition of Islamophobia in the coming months or the next academic year, ensuring it remains responsive to the needs of both the organisation and its students.

3. QMSU to lobby QMUL to adopt the above Islamophobia definition or work in collaboration with QMSU Sabbatical Officers, QM/BL Islamic Societies and external Muslim organisations/advisors to develop a new one.

### **Why do you want it?**

Islamophobia has been on the rise both nationally and within our university. Over the years, QM/BL Islamic societies have faced Islamophobic comments and harassment. More recently, Muslim students participating in the encampment on the Queen's Building lawn were subjected to a vile Islamophobic attack, where they were sprayed with urine. Earlier this year, our sabbatical officer team was also targeted in an Islamophobic attack online, and distressingly, reports of Islamophobia through the university's Report and Support system have been increasing.

On a national level, we have witnessed deeply concerning incidents, including the far-right riots in August 2024, where Muslim communities and mosques were violently targeted.

Muslim students, staff, and student groups at QMUL have the right to feel safe, respected, and protected from Islamophobia. Establishing a clear definition of Islamophobia is a crucial and necessary step in tackling this issue. It is imperative that we take this step to demonstrate a firm and meaningful commitment to protecting Muslims on our campus.

### **What impact will it have?**

Adopting a clear definition of Islamophobia will enable QMSU to take concrete, meaningful action to tackle discrimination, foster a safer and more inclusive environment, and rebuild trust among Muslim students and the wider student body. It will reinforce our commitment to advocating for all students and strengthen our ability to hold the university accountable in addressing Islamophobia on campus.

This step aligns directly with QMSU's charitable objectives and core values of inclusion, ethics, and student welfare. By taking a firm stance, we are not only safeguarding the wellbeing of our students but also setting a precedent for good practice that other students' unions can follow.

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## **9. Policy Renewal**

### ***Policy Renewal***

- 8.1 *Policy passed more than two academic years earlier shall be presented to Student Council with a recommendation from the Executive Committee to renew, embed or lapse.*
- 8.2 *Any policy that is renewed will be debated again after 2 years.*
- 8.3 *Any policy that is embedded will be considered permanent policy until Student Council brings it back for debate to retain or lapse.*
- 8.4 *Recommendations shall require the approval of a simple-majority of Student Council to be passed and should be done in 1 vote for all policies at the same time.*
- 8.4.1 *Student Councillors should make clear to the Chair any individual recommendations they would like to be debated separately, the Chair shall bring these forward for debate before being voted on. The rest of the recommendations shall then be voted on in 1 vote.*
- 8.5 *A Union member may, at any time, bring policy that is considered to*

*be out of date to the attention of Student Council to be debated.*

- 8.6 *Policies which exceed the 2-year limit for any reason shall be brought forward for debate at the next meeting of Student Council.*

The following policies are now due for review and may be lapsed, renewed or embedded:

*These will have been discussed by the Executive Officers, who will have made recommendations for each - Serena can lead on this and the Executive Officers can take any questions.*

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Approval of Letter re. BL Rebrand - as per motion passed at AMM	Renew
QMSU expresses no-confidence in QMUL's Principal and President, Professor Colin Bailey	Lapse
Changes in Queen Mary Campus – Library in Mile End Opening Hours	Lapse
Queen Mary Students' Union opposes the change in internal naming from 'Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry' to 'Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry', and will prevent any efforts to further this change in University Structure and Governance	Renew
"Queen Mary University of London to end ties with companies/brands complicit in Uyghur forced labour"	Renew
Separate EC/Assignment Deadline Extension Process for Disabled Students and those with SpLDs	Embed
Should QMSU be more generous in using its Liberation funds, society funds and other funds to allow students to spend on food (and not just cultural food) when QMSU events are organised? QMSU reps and reps that sit on boards to make financial decisions should also do the same	Embed
Should QMSU do more to help the PGR community at QMUL?	Renew
Should QMSU publicly support QMUCU in the current industrial dispute?	Lapse
Should QMSU support QM UNISON's campaigns on pay?	Lapse
Should Queen Mary University of London support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement?	Lapse (superseded by new policies)
Should the Students' Union lobby for postgraduate research students to get automatically assigned to an external "personal" academic mentor for the duration of their PhD?	Lapse

**QMSU Student Council - Tuesday 4 February 2025 - Record of Outcomes**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Chairs' Welcome and Introductions</b>	21 members present and meeting quorate - 18 required. <i>(Numbers in brackets below indicate members present at the time of the vote).</i>  No apologies were received.
<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 were approved.
<b>Minutes of Sub-Committees of Student Council</b>	The minutes of meetings of the Sub-Committees (as included in the circulated papers) were noted.
<b>Democracy Review</b>	The Students' Union President led a discussion on the recommendations from the Union's Democracy Review. A pare detailing the Review process and the Recommendations had been included in the circulated papers. The recording of the discussion would be reviewed, and final proposals would be brought to the March meeting of Student Council for consideration.
<b>Student Council Members for Appointments Committee to recruit a new External Trustee</b>	The Secretary and Governance Officer reported that applications had been received for the vacant External Trustee position and that it was proposed that interviews for short-listed candidates would take place on 25 and 26 of February. However, none of the Student Council members who had put themselves forward as potential members of the appointments Committee had responded with their availability on the proposed dates. AK confirmed his availability at that point, but no others responded. The Secretary would endeavour to secure a further member outside of the meeting.
<b>Byelaw Changes</b>	
There were no Bye-Law changes to consider	
<b>Motions for debate:</b> Please note that policies passed will be subject to review/approval by the Union's Board of Trustees where required.	
<b>a). Should there be Gender Neutral facilities provided in QMotion?</b>	For: 13 Against: 2 Abstain: 3  The Motion was <b>Passed</b> (18)

**QMSU Student Council - Tuesday 4 February 2025 - Record of Outcomes**

<p><b>b). Should QMSU lobby the University to mandate that within any lecture/teaching session, staff contract Q-Review recordings, either visual or audio, for all lectures across all courses and years, including those delivered in person</b></p> <p><i>NB This motion was taken out of agenda order before the Democracy Review item as the proposer had to leave the meeting early</i></p>	<p>For: 21 Against: 0 Abstain: 1 The Motion was <b>Passed</b> (19)</p>
<p><b>c) Should the Union lobby the University to provide Enhanced Financial Support for International Students?</b></p>	<p>This motion was not debated as the proposer and seconder were unable to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the motion should be carried over and that they be invited to attend the next meeting.</p>
<p><b>Policy Lapse</b></p>	<p>Policies which were due for review were not considered as the meeting had become inquorate with only 17 members present. Therefore the policies would remain in force and would be brought back to the March meeting,</p>



# Review of the Students' Union's democratic structures

## Introduction

The Students' Union is a democratic membership organisation, and we are led by elected student leaders. Our democratic structures have been designed to enable students to lead and direct the Students' Union in a democratic way. We do this through the election of student leaders that represent different cohorts within the university and through our democratic meetings, including Student Council, the subcommittees and the Annual Student Meeting (ASM).

During summer and autumn of 2024, the Students' Union has worked with an external consultant to review our democratic structures to ensure we that offer students a range of ways to engage with our democratic structures and that a wide range of students can be part of shaping the Students' Union and our policies.

This paper outlines the background and rationale behind the review, the review process and the recommendations from the review.

## A quick note on terminology

In this document, we use some words that we know some students may not be familiar with or may mean different things to different people. We want everyone to be able to understand and give feedback on the proposed changes, so we've explained some of those terms here.

**Exec/Executive Officers:** These are the 6 full-time officers (President, VP Welfare, VP Liberation, International and Postgrads, VP Barts and The London, VP Science and Engineering, VP Humanities and Social Sciences). They are current students that have interrupted their studies or students who've just graduated.

**Part-Time Officers/PTOs:** These are the 55 part-time volunteer officers. The PTOs cover a range of areas, including school/institute reps, activities reps, liberation reps and operational non-reps. The PTOs are current students that volunteer alongside their studies.

**Annual Student Meeting/ASM:** The ASM is an annual meeting that sets policies, approves the Students' Union's account and affiliations and receive updates from the Executive Officers. All QM students can submit motions, attend and vote. It usually takes place once per academic year, but more meetings can be arranged if requested.

**Student Council:** Student Council is the main policy-making body of the Students' Union. The members are the PTOs (except the operational non-reps), and the meeting is attended by the Exec (although they can't vote). The meetings take place 5 times per year, but more meetings can be arranged if requested.

**Subcommittees:** Subcommittees are specialised sub-groups of Student Council. For example, Science & Engineering Board is a specialised sub-group that is only attended by PTOs within Science & Engineering and considers matters relating to Science & Engineering.

**Democratic meetings:** The Annual Student Meeting, Student Council and the Subcommittees are democratic meetings. Decisions are made democratically – first, a debate takes place, then votes are casts.

**Democratic structures:** This term refers to the processes, meetings and roles that allow students to have a say and get involved in the Students' Union in a democratic way. This includes the elected representatives, the democratic meetings (ad outlined above) and the elections.

**Quoracy/quorum:** Quoracy/quorum is the minimum number of members that must be present before a democratic meeting can go ahead. For example, quorum for the Annual Student Meeting is 120, so the meeting can't start before 120 members are present. If a meeting isn't quorate, it can't go ahead.

**Barts and The London Students' Association/BLSA/BL:** The BLSA is a division of the Students' Union and represents students that study medicine, dentistry and allied subjects.

**Humanities and Social Sciences/HSS:** HSS refers to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the students that study in the schools that are part of this faculty.

**Science and Engineering/S&E:** S&E refers to the Faculty of Science and Engineering, and the students that study in the schools that are part of this faculty.

## Background, rationale and aims of the review

Over the last few years, we have seen varying levels of engagement with the PTO roles and the democratic meetings. While some representatives are highly engaged, we have also seen reps that have low levels of engagement. Feedback from the last few cohorts of PTOs suggests that some PTOs feel that the workload is unmanageable, leading them to disengage from (parts of) their role. Similarly, some democratic meetings are well attended, but a significant proportion of meetings fail to meet quoracy, in particular in the spring term of each academic year.

The inconsistent engagement causes a number of problems:

- Inactive PTOs mean that some students are not well-represented in practice.
- It is disappointing and a waste of time for PTOs that have turned up to meetings when meetings can't go ahead because quorum hasn't been reached.
- When meetings aren't quorate, agenda items have to be postponed to the following meeting, causing delays.
- It is difficult for the Executive Officers to lobby the university to make changes when motions have been passed by a very small number of votes, as they lack democratic credibility.
- Filling PTO vacancies after the by-elections (which is done by an online vote among Student Council members) can take several months to receive the required number of votes, leaving the students unrepresented during that time. In some cases, it also causes the candidates to lose motivation, and it can give them a poor start to their experience of being a PTO.
- Significant staff time is spent on welfare checks and regular check-ins with disengaged PTOs. The impact of this is compounded by the fact that the number of PTOs is high and has been increasing in recent years.

In addition to the problems caused by inconsistent engagement, student feedback has also indicated that the current democratic structures are complex and difficult for students to understand, the PTO roles don't appeal to many students, and it's hard for students to get involved in the democratic process outside of elections.

The last review of the Students' Union's democratic structures took place in the autumn of 2019, and the review was approved at Student Council in December 2019. The implementation of the review started shortly afterwards during the spring elections in 2020, where the new roles were elected, and the review was fully implemented from the beginning of the academic year 2020/21. Since then, several smaller adjustments have been made in response to feedback from Student Council members and in accordance with policies passed at Student Council (for example, multiple new roles have been added since the last review and the number of subcommittees has been reduced to make the workload more manageable for elected representatives).

The 2019 review was designed to emphasise regular in-person meetings, relying heavily on sustained engagement from a large group of unpaid volunteers. Since 2019, several external factors have significantly changed QM's student body and the way students engage with the Students' Union. Firstly, the COVID-19

pandemic caused a shift to increased online and hybrid learning, and many students are no longer on campus every day. Secondly, the cost-of-living crisis has made it necessary for more students to work alongside their studies, making it harder for students to find time to volunteer for the number of hours required of the PTOs. Finally, the University's strategy has been to diversify the programmes that are offered, which means that our democratic structures need to work for a wide range of students, including an increasing number of postgraduate taught students (such as Master's students), students who start their course in January, degree apprentices and students that are based on satellite campuses (such as the Institute of Technology). Given these changes driven by external factors, it's necessary for the Students' Union to offer a range of ways for students to get involved in democratic decision-making, even if they are unable to commit to a PTO role.

With these points in mind, the overarching aim of the review has been to identify ways to make it easier for students to engage with our democratic structures in a range of ways that appeal to different parts of the student population, thereby increasing democratic engagement.

## Review process

The review process began in spring 2024 and was initiated by the Students' Union President for 2023/24, and the Students' Union President for 2024/25 has been involved in the review from the initial stages. It was agreed to hire an external consultant with expertise in working with students' unions to undertake the review, as an external is well placed to take an objective look at the existing structures and bring knowledge of best practice from other students' unions. The consultancy firm CounterCulture<sup>1</sup> was selected due to their experience with students' unions in general and democracy reviews in other students' unions. CounterCulture started the review in June 2024.

As part of the review process, CounterCulture gathered input from the following stakeholders:

- The Executive Officers for 2023/24
- The Executive Officers for 2024/25
- The Student Council Chair for 2023/24
- Students' Union staff, including staff that work directly with Student Council, the subcommittees and the Part-Time Officers
- Chris Shelley, QMUL Director of Student Experience

In addition to the input from stakeholders, CounterCulture also considered a range of other information, including minutes from Student Council and the subcommittee, the Students' Union strategy, results from recent student feedback surveys, terms of references for democratic meetings and the Students' Union's bye-laws.

Due to the timing of the stakeholder interviews (July and early August 2024) it was decided to not conduct interviews with the PTOs, as the PTOs for 2024/25 would not yet have any experience of the Students' Union's democratic structures, and feedback had just been collected from the PTOs for 2023/24 as part of the handover process. Further, several of the Executive Officers have previously been PTOs and were able to draw on their experiences of being PTOs in their feedback. To gather input from the PTOs for 2024/25, the first Student Council of 2024/25 was used to identify volunteers to give feedback on the first draft of the proposed structures. A feedback meeting was held in November 2024, but only three volunteers attended the session (two current PTOs and one former PTO).

In September 2024, CounterCulture presented their analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats based on the information they had received from stakeholders and relevant documentation. The analysis included a wide range of opportunities to improve democratic engagement and reduce barriers to student engagement. Following this presentation, CounterCulture has refined and further developed the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.counterculturellp.com/>

findings and recommendations into a proposal for a new democratic structure. The new structure provides a framework, but the operational details (for example, how often meetings should take place) have been left for the Students' Union to decide.

The proposed structure was presented to the Executive Officers and staff members in November 2024, and since then, we have considered how the proposed structure can work in practice.

The findings and recommendations were presented to Student Council on 4 February, and this paper has been updated in response to the feedback we received. At the Student Council meeting, a range of questions were raised, and we have provided additional explanations to address these points. Student Council members also shared a range of opinions about the findings and the recommendations, and some of these were in direct opposition to each other. Where possible, we have tried to identify compromises based on the feedback. We have also identified a number of areas where further student consultation is needed before a final decision is made.

## Findings

In their review, CounterCulture identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the current democratic structures.

### Strengths

- **Diverse Representation:** Students might value the diverse structures, such as BLSA, that cater to specific groups.
- **Active Policy Development:** Students likely see the Union's proactive policy-making as a strength, as it provides a platform for voicing concerns.
- **Established Voice Channels:** The presence of formal channels, like course reps and councils, is appreciated for enabling student input.

### Weaknesses

- **Low Engagement and Participation:** Students often feel disengaged from Union activities.
- **Overwhelming Structure:** The complexity of the Union's structures may seem daunting and inaccessible, deterring involvement.
- **Follow-Through on Policies:** Students are frustrated by the gap between passing policies and the possibility of making changes.

### Opportunities

- **Simplification of Processes:** Students would likely support efforts to simplify the Union's structures and processes to make them more accessible.
- **Enhanced Representation:** There's an opportunity to make representation more meaningful by ensuring that all voices, particularly marginalised groups, are heard and acted upon.
- **Increased Digital Engagement:** Students may see the potential to enhance digital platforms to facilitate broader participation.

### Threats

- **Continued Apathy and Disengagement:** If the Union continues to feel irrelevant, student participation might decline further.

- **Burnout of Active Representatives:** Overburdened reps might disengage, reducing the effectiveness of student advocacy.
- **Perceived Irrelevance of Union Activities:** If the Union fails to deliver on key issues, it risks being seen as irrelevant by the student body.

## Recommendations

The review has led to the following recommendations that have been designed to enable the overall aim of making it easier for students to engage with the Students' Union's democratic structures in a range of ways that appeal to our diverse student body. The recommendations have mostly been taken directly from the CounterCulture review, however, the Executive Officer team has given feedback on the recommendations and helped to spot gaps in the recommendations (in particular recommendation 9, which was not part of the CounterCulture recommendations). In response to feedback from Student Council on 4 February 2025, the recommendations have been refined, and further clarifications have been made.

### 1: Remove Student Council

Given the lack of engagement with Student Council and the number of inquorate meetings in recent years, it is recommended to remove Student Council and replace it with a more direct way for students to engage in democratic decision-making (see recommendation 2).

### 2: Hold more frequent all-student meetings (3-4 per academic year) and have this as the policy-making body

Building on the high engagement with the Annual Student Meetings, it is recommended to hold more frequent all-student meetings and have this as the policy-making body of the Students' Union. This will allow a larger number of students to directly influence the policies of the Students' Union. Given the higher number of attendees compared to Student Council, the all-student meetings also make it easier for the Executive Officers to lobby for change, as the university can currently be reluctant to make changes based on motions passed by a small number of reps in Student Council.

The format of the all-student meetings would be updated to make the meetings more accessible and engaging for participants. The current Annual Student Meeting is required to cover agenda items such as approval of affiliations and accounts, but as this is only required once per year, the majority of the all-student meetings would not need to cover these agenda items, freeing up time for more engaging agenda items.

### 3: Replace the current part-time officer roles with 10 Union Officer Committee members

While a PTO role is attractive and accessible for some students, the current system relies very heavily on this form of engagement. By replacing the 55 PTO roles with 10 Union Officer Committee members (title TBC), better support and rewards can be given to the 10 Union Officer Committee members, while freeing up resources to offer other ways for students to engage if a part-time volunteer role isn't accessible or attractive to them.

The 10 Union Officer Committee members will be new roles that are different from the current PTO roles, and they will work closely with the Executive Officers to implement policies from the all-student meetings and lobby the university for change. The 10 Union Officer Committee members would not be expected to cover the full workload of the current PTOs, as parts of the work currently done by PTOs would be covered by other roles and/or subcommittees (further details included in the points below).

### 4: Create a new Union Officer Committee for the 6 Executive Officers and the 10 Union Committee Officers

To increase collaboration and coordination, a new Union Officer Committee will be created. The members will be the 6 Executive Officers and the 10 Union Officer Committee members (part-time volunteer roles). The committee will be responsible for coordination between the officers, oversight of the subcommittees and implementation of policies. The committee will also review student feedback (including feedback from surveys and ideas/feedback from individual students) and take action as necessary.

## **5: Change the rules for subcommittees to make them more flexible and less homogenous**

The current subcommittee structures operate on a 'one size fits all' approach. The current structures do not allow much flexibility in terms of membership and terms of references, and it does not take into account the needs of different areas. The process for creating or removing subcommittees involve a bye-law change, which makes it difficult to change subcommittees based on student need and interest. It is recommended to change the rules for subcommittees to make them more flexible and less homogenous.

The principle of flexibility means that the current subcommittees could still continue to operate in the way they currently do if there's good student engagement (for example, the BLSA Board could continue to operate as it currently does), while also offering enough flexibility to allow other formats to exist. This could include temporary campaigning groups (for example, a campaigning group against tuition fee increases) with open membership (all students can join without going through an election) and the Postgrad Consultation Group (membership is selected and rotates between meetings to ensure a wide range of postgrad research voices can be heard).

The subcommittees would be provided tailored training, access to funding and staff support based on the needs of that group. For example, a campaigning group against tuition fee increases could receive training on campaigning, while the members of the Postgrad Consultation Group are unlikely to need any training. Training needs and timing would be agreed with the relevant groups to suit their needs.

## **6: Devolve activities subcommittees and reps to the relevant activity areas**

The subcommittees that cover activity areas within the Students' Union (Societies Board, Volunteering Board, Club Sport Board, Sustainability Board, Student Media Board) are currently tied to the same format as the other subcommittees of Student Council. However, the activities subcommittees' remits and memberships are different from the other subcommittees, and it is therefore proposed to release the activities subcommittees from the central democratic structures. These subcommittees (and elected student rep roles) will still exist, but there'll be more freedom for students within these areas to decide which format fit their area.

Similarly, the activities reps (Societies Officers, Volunteering Officers, Sports Officers, RAG Officers, Sustainability Officers) would sit under the relevant areas, refocusing those roles on the relevant activities (as opposed to general representation at Student Council) and enabling more freedom for students involved in those areas to shape the officer roles. The roles would only be open to students within the relevant area (nominations and voting).

Devolution of these roles would give more freedom for students in the relevant areas to change the role descriptions and number of reps in accordance with the needs of that specific area, as such changes would not need to be approved by Student Council and wouldn't impact on the wider democratic structures (which is currently the case).

## **7: Hold more meetings in a hybrid format**

Recognising that many students live busy lives balancing their studies, paid work and other commitments, we know that in-person engagement can be a barrier. At the same time, many students also enjoy in-person activities that allow for community building. To accommodate both of these needs, it is recommended that the Students' Union should improve our ability to deliver a hybrid experience for students that engage in our democratic processes. Further research and student consultation will be undertaken as part of the implementation process to determine how this can best be achieved in practice.



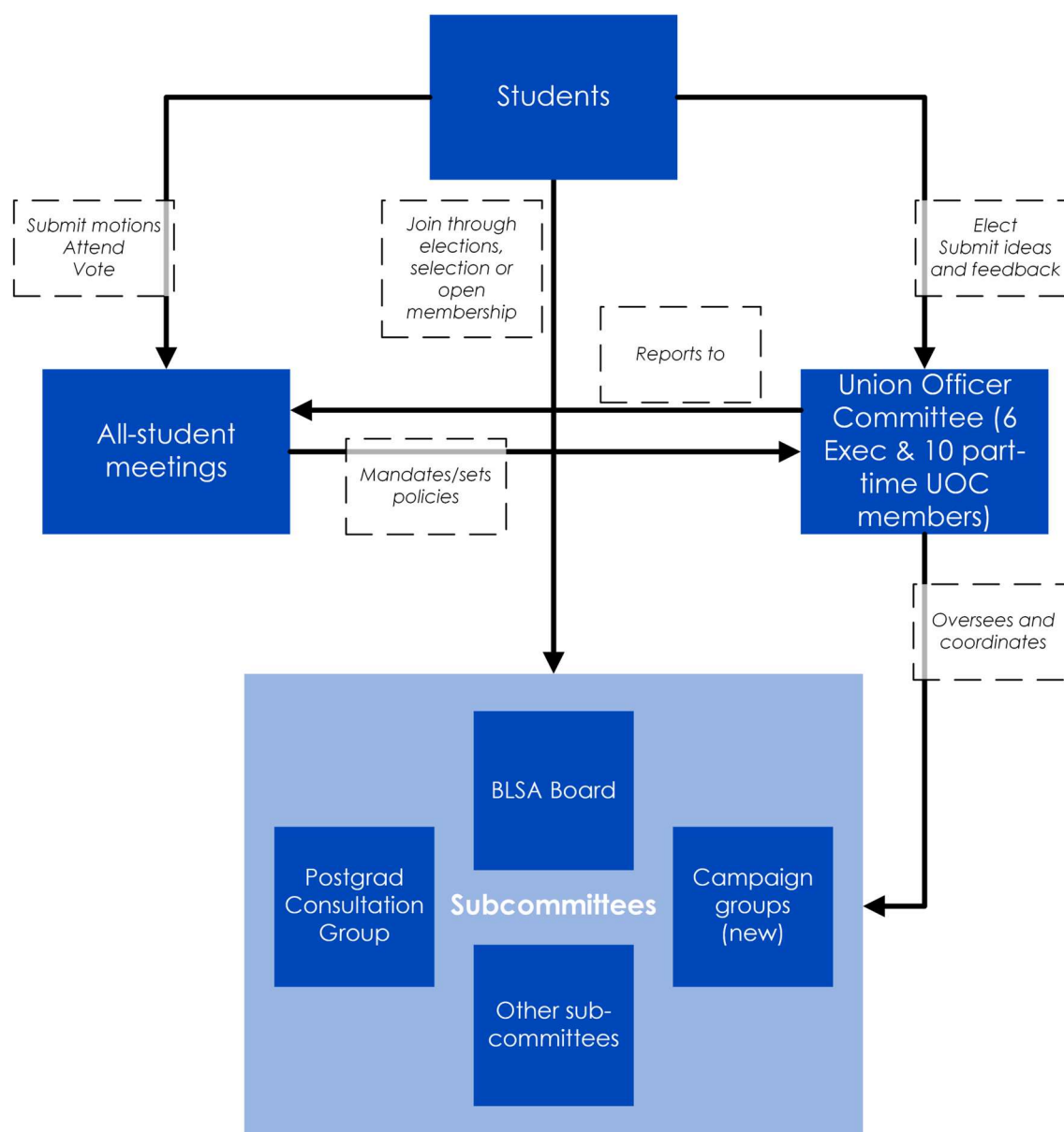
## **8: Make it easier for students to suggest ideas and give feedback and have clearer pathways for how this feedback is acted upon**

The current Make a Change form provides some opportunities for students to raise issues, give feedback and share ideas, but there isn't a clear framework for how such feedback (and other forms of feedback) is actioned within the democratic structures. It is therefore recommended to further develop the Make a Change form (maybe under a new name) and to formalise that feedback goes to the Union Officer Committee for consideration. Similarly, other feedback sources (for example, feedback surveys) will also be considered by the Union Officer Committee to ensure different forms of feedback are part of a coherent system. Where necessary, the Union Officer Committee can redirect ideas and feedback to an all-student meeting under the normal policy-making process.

## **9: Update School Forums to enable effective collaboration between Course Reps and elected officers**

With the changes to the PTO roles, it is important to maintain a simple pathway for Course Reps to escalate issues. Currently, School and Institute Reps chair the School Forum for their school, which is made up of Course Reps from that school. At the start of the year, a Course Reps can volunteer to be the Deputy Chair of the School Forum, in case the School Rep becomes unavailable or resigns. To ensure School Forums can continue to provide a clear escalation pathway for Course Reps, it is recommended to allow Course Reps to volunteer to be the Chair and Deputy Chair of the relevant School Forum. This would also provide an opportunity for experienced Course Reps to take on more responsibility and their leadership skills.

## Visualisation of the proposed democratic structures



## Conclusion and next steps

The recommendations in this paper have been designed to offer more ways for students to engage in the Students' Union democratic structures and be part of setting the direction and priorities for the Students' Union. While students will still have the option to become part-time volunteer officers and participate in democratic meetings, the new structures will offer a range of ways to engage:

- Direct influence through all-student meetings (increased role in the new system)
- A range of elected rep roles (Exec, Union Officer Committee members, members of (some of) the subcommittees, Course Reps, School Forum Chairs)
- Participate in (some of) the subcommittees without having a rep role (for example, by being selected for the Postgrad Consultation Group or joining an open-membership campaigning group)



- Give feedback through surveys or new feedback pathways, and have this feedback considered by the Union Officer Committee

By providing this range of pathways to engagement, we want to offer every student a pathway that aligns with their needs. Students that have time to volunteer in a sustained way over the course of a year will still be able to run for traditional rep roles. Students who can't commit to a rep role or want to get involved outside of the elections cycle will have opportunities for one-off engagement (by submitting feedback or taking part in an all-student meeting) or get involved in the subcommittees that have open membership.

The changes to the democratic meetings will simplify the structure and move away from a one-size-fits-all approach, making it easier for students to influence the areas they are passionate about.

## Next steps

- 4 March 2025: Final proposal to be presented at Student Council for approval.
- After 4 March 2025: Further student consultation on operational aspect (for example, how all-student meetings can be made more engaging and rewards for engaged students).
- Spring and summer 2025: Preparation for implementation of new structures (for example, updating processes, role descriptions, training and information for students).
- 1 August 2025: New structures implemented.

## FAQ

### Are there any changes to the Exec roles?

No, the Exec roles remain unchanged.

### What will the 10 new part-time roles (Union Officer Committee members) be?

This is yet to be decided. The Executive Officers have discussed various models:

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HSS UG Rep</li><li>• S&amp;E UG Rep</li><li>• BL UG Rep</li><li>• HSS PG Rep</li><li>• S&amp;E PG Rep</li><li>• BL PG Rep</li><li>• International Rep</li><li>• Welfare Rep</li><li>• Communities/Liberation Rep x2</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HSS Rep</li><li>• S&amp;E Rep</li><li>• BL Rep</li><li>• PG Rep</li><li>• International Rep</li><li>• Welfare Rep</li><li>• LGBTQ+ Rep</li><li>• Women's Rep</li><li>• BAME Rep</li><li>• Disabled &amp; SLD Rep</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HSS Rep x2</li><li>• S&amp;E Rep x2</li><li>• BL Rep x2</li><li>• PG Rep</li><li>• Welfare Rep</li><li>• International Rep</li></ul>

These options are intended to be a starting point for further discussions, and feedback and ideas are welcome. Based on the feedback we have received so far, it has not been possible to identify a widely-agreed model, and we will therefore undertake further student consultation to identify the preferred option.

### Is this a cost-saving exercise?

No, this is not an attempt to save money. The same amount of funding and amount and types of staff resource will be available, but it will be distributed differently and more responsively. Students involved in the Union Officer Committee and the subcommittees will continue to have access to funding, training and identified suitable staff support from across the Students' Union staff team.

### How often will the Union Officer Committee meet?

This is yet to be decided, but it is likely to be every 4-6 weeks. The timing of the meetings will be selected to accommodate the schedules of the officers (avoiding clashes with teaching).

### What happens if there's an urgent issue in the periods between the all-student meetings?

We recognise the need for prompt decision making when urgent issues arise between the all-student meetings, and there'll be a number of pathways to take such issues forward. Urgent issues can be brought to the Union Officer Committee or a relevant subcommittee for discussion and action, or if required, an extraordinary all-student meeting can be called. The most appropriate pathway will depend on the scale of issue (for example, if an issue only affects students within a specific subgroup of the student body, a relevant subcommittee would usually be the most appropriate pathway).

## **Can any student join the subcommittees?**

No, some of the subcommittees will hold elections to determine the membership (for example, BLSA Board members can continue to be elected in the way they currently are). Other subcommittees will use selection (for example, the Postgrad Consultation Group membership is selected based on demographics to ensure that the members represent a cross-section of the postgrad research community). Some subcommittees will have an open membership that can either cover all students or students within a specific part of the student body (for example, an open-membership subcommittee could be restricted to degree apprentices if this is the target group of that subcommittee).

## **How can new subcommittees be created?**

New subcommittees can be created by the Union Officer Committee. All students can submit ideas for new subcommittees as part of the feedback and ideas process, however, the Union Officer Committee would assess the need for the subcommittee before it can be approved as a new subcommittee.

All-student meetings can also pass a motion to create a new subcommittee.

## **How can subcommittees be dissolved?**

Subcommittees can be dissolved if they become inactive or they've achieved their goals (only applicable to campaigning groups). The Union Officer Committee would be responsible for approving the dissolution of subcommittees.

The BLSA Bye-Law would still apply to the BLSA Board, and the BLSA Board can only be dissolved in accordance with that bye-law, so the process outlined above would not apply to the BLSA Board.

## **Will the number of Union Officer Committee members limit the number of people that can be involved in the subcommittees?**

No, the number of members a subcommittee can have isn't linked to the number of Union Officer Committee members. Currently, the members of the subcommittees are almost exclusively PTOs, but with the new flexible subcommittee structures, subcommittee members don't have to be Union Officer Committee member (although there may be cases where Union Officer Committee members are also members of the subcommittees). For example, BLSA Board could continue to have the current number of BLSA Board members regardless of the number of Union Officer Committee members, and the Postgrad Consultation Group could continue to recruit members from the postgrad research community without the need for any Union Officer Committee members to join the group.

## **Can the BLSA Board continue to operate as it currently does?**

Yes, the BLSA Board can continue to operate as it currently does under the new structures. It can still have the same members, the rules for adding and removing roles will remain the same (as outlined in the BLSA Bye-Law), and training, staff support and funding will still be available, and the representatives will continue to have access to funding, training and identified suitable staff support from across the Students' Union staff team.

## **Will all engaged students get the same rewards?**

No, rewards would be tailored to each group of engaged students and would be linked to the level of commitment involved in the role. The exact rewards are yet to be decided, and ideas are very welcome.

All engaged students will be entitled to a certificate. In some cases, engaged students may also be entitled to HEAR recognition, but the minimum engagement requirements (set centrally by the university, not by the Students' Union) would have to be met.

## **How will the members of the Union Officer Committee be held accountable?**

The members of the Union Officer Committee are accountable to the all-student meeting, and all members of the Union Officer Committee will be required to give a report at the all-student meetings (suitable alternatives will be agreed on a case-by-case basis if an officer has a good reason for not being available, such as illness).

On a day-to-day basis, the Union Officer Committee will also play an informal role in holding each other accountable, and the Union Officer Committee will have the authority to request a welfare check if a member is absent without sending apologies.

## **What happens if a member of the Union Officer Committee resigns?**

If a member of the Union Officer Committee resigns during their term in office, there'll be a process to replace them. It is likely that the process will be similar to the current process for filling PTO vacancies, but other ideas are welcome.

## **Will it be possible to remove someone from their role if they aren't active?**

Yes, similar to the current rules, there'll be a process for students to express no confidence in an officer and have them removed. The process is likely to be similar to the current process.

## **I have a question, who can I contact?**

Please contact the Student Voice team on [su-representation@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:su-representation@qmul.ac.uk).

## **How can I give feedback on this proposal?**

All students can attend Student Council on 4 March at 6pm to give feedback. Please note that you must pre-register to join the meeting. You can find more information on our website:

<https://www.qmsu.org/yourvoice/change/studentcouncil/>

If you aren't available to attend the meeting on 4 March, you are welcome to email your feedback to [su-representation@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:su-representation@qmul.ac.uk).