

# Student Council

## Minutes

**Emergency Meeting Thursday 28 May 2020, 6.00 pm - Held via Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook**

### Present

Joe Vinson, Deputy Chair of Student Council

### Executive Committee:

Megan Annetts  
Shamima Akter  
Annika Ramos

Vice President Barts and The London and Acting President of QMSU  
Vice President Welfare and QMSU President (Elect)  
Vice President Education

### Student Representatives and Part-time Officers

Ariana	Cervantes	Allied Courses Representative
Maria	Malik	
Sid	Singh	Barts and The London Faculty Representative (Pre-Clinical)
Thaarabi	Tharmapathy	BME Representative (Barts and The London)
Sami	Rasooli	BME Representative (Mile End)
Jack	Juckes	Disabled & SLD Students Representative (BL)
Lauren	Day	Disabled & SLD Students Representative (Mile End)
Krista	Tingbrand	HSS Faculty Representative
Varvara	Evgeniou	International Representative (Barts and The London)
Zoe	Binse	LGBT+ Representative (Barts and The London)
Jedd	Higgins	LGBT+ Representative (Mile End)
Sami	Rasooli	Postgraduate Research Representative (Mile End)
Kaifeng (Kai)	Liang	Postgraduate Taught Representative (Barts and The London)
Jia Li (Carrie)	Luo	Postgraduate Taught Representative (Mile End)
Mat	Robathan	Rag Officer (Barts and The London)
Caitlin	Gordon	Societies Officer (BL)
Bilal	Khan	Societies Officer (Mile End)
Alice	Jones	Sports Officer (Barts and The London)
Maddy	Stichbury	Sports Officer (Mile End)
Charlotte	Moore	VP London
Lizzie	Hunter	Sustainability Officer
Courtney	Mann	Trans Representative
Grace	Catchpole	Vice President Barts
Giulia	Olayemi	VP London
Ashraya	Harish	Volunteering Officer (Barts and The London)
Alice	Scholfield	Welfare Representative (Barts and The London)
Ashra	Shrestha	Welfare Representative (Mile End)
Ellora	Kamineni	Womens Representative (Barts and The London)

Mariam	Raashid	Womens Representative (Mile End)
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#### **In attendance:**

Brad Coales	Secretary and Governance Adviser
Tiana Dinard-Samuel	VP Communities (Elect)
Avin Houro	QMSU Student Media (The Print)
Tom Longbottom	Student Trustee
Marianne Melsen	Representation and Democracy Manager
Chris Mitchell	External Trustee
Alvin Ramsamy	Deputy CEO

### **1.0 Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following members:

Mohammed Moin	Barts and The London Faculty Representative (Dental)
Asad Ali	Dental Society President
Eshan Gaugher	Gozo Society President (Barts and The London)
Salman Desai	Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Representative
Carrie Luo	Postgraduate Taught Representative (Mile End)
Nazia Uddin	Postgraduate Research Representative (Barts and The London)
Muhammad Siddiqui	Postgraduate Research Representative (Mile End)
Zaman Raja	Science and Engineering Faculty Representative
Khizar Azam	Student Council Chair
Stephanie Tang	Volunteering Officer (Mile End)

### **2.0 Chairs Welcome and Announcements**

As the Student Council Chair was unavailable, the Deputy Chair, Joe Vinson, took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair explained that the meeting had been called in response to a letter signed by over 50 percent of Council members.

As this was an emergency meeting the normal agenda was suspended and the meeting would be confined to the discussion of the two motions which had been submitted and published on the Union's website. No amendments had been submitted in advance and it was not intended to take amendments during the meeting (unless for points of accuracy).

The meeting would be live-streamed on the Union's Facebook page, in accordance with policy passed at the last meeting of Student Council.

The Chair reminded Members that the Student Staff Protocol applied, and that Members should conduct themselves in a respectful manner during the meeting.

### **3.0 Motions and Amendments**

## **Motions and Amendments**

#### **3.1 Supporting QMSU's Student Staff - #QMFurloughNow**

**Proposed by:** Megan Annetts (Acting QMSU President)

**Seconded by:** Joe Vinson (Commercial Services Officer)

Megan Annetts spoke in favour of the motion, asking Members to ratify their support for the campaign to furlough student staff, and to mandate the Union to support it.

The Union had been lobbying the University for the past two months to furlough student staff under the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (CJRS) since the closure of the Union's commercial outlets. Student staff were paid from the commercial income, but the University ran the Union's payroll and so their assistance was required to access the scheme. To date the Principal had opposed this, even though the Union believed it met the criteria and other Unions such as LSE, Kings, Greenwich and Manchester had accessed the scheme.

The guidance for the scheme set out that furloughed staff (on casual contracts) should have their pay calculated as an average of their earnings over the previous tax year, or since their start date. There was no requirement to calculate shifts which might have been worked, and as the Union did not have a crystal ball, such a method had no accuracy or equity as to who should get what, but the Union were being asked to guess who might have worked and when. The gap between what student staff might have received under the CJRS and what they would receive would get larger over time.

Student staff were facing financial difficulties; it was they who were the face of the Union running the gym, cafes and bars and she would like to thank them for their commitment.

Megan asked Members to vote for the motion to support QMSU being able to access the CJRS, and also to ask that the Principal attend a Q and A session with student staff to address their concerns.

The Chair asked for other contributions, either for or against.

Jack Juckes also spoke in favour of the motion, declaring that he was a member of student staff and also the Union's Vice President Welfare (Elect).

The University had suggested student staff apply to their student hardship fund, but this was not appropriate. There was no evidence of how much support might be available, it took a minimum of four weeks to apply and there was no guarantee of the outcome. He also noted that the link to the application form was not currently working.

The eligibility criteria were steep and as there was only a finite amount available, applications from student staff would only decrease the amount available to other students. It seemed nonsensical to direct student staff to the hardship fund when the CJRS was available.

Alice Schofield spoke in favour of the motion. She was also a member of student staff and was not working due to the closure of reception points. As the Union had made a blanket payment to student staff for April, everyone had only received circa £20.

As there were no further contributions, either for or against, the motion was put to a vote.

Votes were cast through an on-line poll and 27 Members voted in favour, with none against and no abstentions. One member, Courtney Mann was unable to access the online system and their vote in favour was recorded in the minutes.

**The motion was therefore passed unanimously by 28 votes in favour, with none against and no abstentions.**

### **3.2 Should QMSU express no-confidence in QMUL's Principal and President, Professor Colin Bailey?**

**Proposed by:** Jedd Higgins (ME LGBT+ Rep)

**Seconded by:** Joe Vinson (Commercial Services Officer), Lizzie Hunter (Sustainability Officer), Ashra Shrestha (ME Welfare Rep), Alice Schofield (BL Welfare Rep), Jack Juckes (BL Disabled and SLD Rep), Caitlin Gordon (BL Societies Officer)

Jedd Higgins spoke in favour of the motion. In her second year the University had cut bursaries that enabled her to study at QMUL with minimal student consultation. Students then had to stage an occupation to make their voices heard in a bid to keep QM accessible. Since then, the Senior Executive Team had continued to ignore student voices, on furlough and other issues.

The Principal had used all-student emails to try to undermine support for lecturers taking industrial action, who had seen the Principal's income rise whilst theirs fell in real terms. Recent graffiti on campus referencing 'colonialism' and 'white supremacy' had initially been attributed to someone from off campus, rather than investigating to see whether it represented the feelings of the BAME students who make up 69% of our student population. QM uses figures like this to its advantage, whilst students and the Students' Union is ignored on the issue of institutional racism.

She was one of the student staff who had been campaigning to be furloughed. Coming from a northern working-class family, the idea that parents could support their own homes and those of their student children was preposterous and showed a complete lack of understanding about how working-class people live. QM boasts that 57% of its students are the first in their family to attend university, she was the first in hers. The institution presented itself as the Russell Group university that welcomed and supported working-class students, particularly those from the local community, but the Principal was decimating that image. As a once proud student of QM she was tired of the fight to keep university affordable and accessible, tired of seeing her lecturers undermined, and tired of institutional racism being pushed under the rug. She asked Members to express that they had no confidence in the Principal's leadership of QM by voting for the motion. The student experience was being negatively impacted in several different ways, and the common denominator was the Principal's decision making and the consistent lack of student consultation.

The Chair asked for other contributions, either for or against.

Maddie Stichbury spoke in favour of the motion. The annual Merger Cup was similar to many varsity events held across the country, but QM's was special because of its campaigning and fund-raising aspects. Each year, a different charity and campaign was chosen. It was one of the best engaged student campaigns with, on average, over 600 students attending and over £650 being raised for charity. The Merger Cup relied on funding from the University and a decision had been made by the Principal to stop funding this event. The decision was taken without any student consultation and the decision seemed uninformed. Following a meeting where over 20 student testimonials were presented, the Principal had declined to comment. The Principal was not listening to the experiences and opinions of his students, even when they were directly linked to student satisfaction. Decisions were made without any regard for what students actually wanted.

Caitlin Gordon spoke in favour of the motion. Security on campus had been an issue for years and had been campaigned on by multiple Union Executive Officers and nothing had been done about it. As someone from the Whitechapel campus, it felt extremely exposed. Most medical students felt unsafe, bike thefts were rampant, laptop thefts were rampant from all of the major study spaces, including Mile End.

There were multiple spots on the Whitechapel campus that were sites of drug dealing and illegal activity and the visibility of security was almost zero in some places. There had been an ongoing campaign to repair a door in Whitechapel Library since last August, which had still not been resolved, and the courtyard outside was regularly used by people buying, selling and using drugs who often entered the Library which made students feel unsafe and had a negative impact on open days.

Laird Hall and Floyer House had regular intrusions by members of the public and people had entered students' kitchens and rooms in Floyer House. People selling drugs had to be regularly asked to move on from outside of events being held in Laird Hall. At Mile End, bike thefts were rampant, there was little CCTV coverage and there had been muggings, thefts and acts of physical violence which left students feeling unsafe and unwelcome in their own communities. The response from the Senior Executive Team had been below expectations. Bi-monthly crime reduction meetings had not taken place since December.

Lizzie Hunter spoke in favour of the motion. She seconded the motion because they had spent the last year trying to get the University to declare a climate emergency, as many universities around the country had already done. When the Principal was asked at Student Question Time in January why they had not done this, he said although universities were key to tackling climate change through research and innovation, we shouldn't be making promises which we couldn't keep - for example becoming carbon neutral by 2025, saying that we needed sensible targets. He also said that debate was needed to agree on these targets, but there had been no opportunity to actually have this debate despite reaching out to him.

QM recently created the first draft of their Sustainability Strategy which acknowledged the climate emergency, but without publicly declaring it, making it essentially meaningless. The Strategy needed a lot more student staff consultation. Despite QMSU having declared a climate emergency, involving lobbying the University, the Principal had refused to listen. The Executive lead on sustainability had been really responsive, however they faced challenges in getting the Principal to understand students' point of view. Declaring a climate emergency would create accountability for QM's actions to tackle climate change. It was for this reason that she supported a vote of no confidence, and she agreed with all the other points made and wanted to support all students who had suffered because of inactivity on furloughing.

Tom Longbottom spoke, declaring that he was a Student Trustee, speaking in favour of the motion from the perspective of a student. He also wanted to offer some insight; as the previous Vice President Barts and The London when he led a campaign called 'Save Our BL' in response to the re-branding of the Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry logo. This resulted in a petition which received over 1,600 signatures from students and over 3,000 in total from students, staff and alumni. When the petition reached QM Council, the Principal stated that this number of students only represented a small percentage of the student population and so no further action was required. The NSS satisfaction figures for the medical school dropped directly linked directly to this issue. As far as they were aware, nothing had happened as a result. Two examples of students clearly saying one thing and not being listened to.

Thaarabi Tharmapathy spoke in favour of the motion. She wanted to highlight things the University had been perpetuating around institutional racism. Part of the reason for the UCU strikes was the disparity in pay between BAME staff and non-BAME staff. This was justified by the University as being because there were few BAME staff in senior positions, which was in itself an issue and reflected the lack of diversity amongst the staff which did not reflect the student body.

In October, the University ran multiple events on slavery for Black History Month, without consultation, and without listening to complaints from students the previous year that the events were predominantly run by white speakers. Although the Principal was not directly involved in organising these events, he was responsible for not hiring a diverse cohort of staff and for not ensuring that time and attention was given to such important topics. It shows that the University was complicit in institutional racism.

Ashra Shrestha spoke in favour of the motion. She had decided to second the motion because one of the things that had most affected students' welfare and the quality of their education over the past few years was strikes. Staff had not wanted to strike, but had done so because they felt they had no other option and that they were not being listened to. Under the Principal's leadership, staff were still unhappy and this had negatively affected their mental health and consequently the quality of the education that students received, and also students' mental health. The Principal had denied the use of casual contracts and described the pension scheme as unaffordable and very generous.

She felt the Principal had underlined democracy in many ways, including in emails he had sent re. furloughing where he said staff had been paid for March and April, but failed to acknowledge that it was not close to 80% of what student staff would normally earn.

Jack Juckes spoke in favour of the motion. He wholeheartedly agreed with everything that had already been said. The Principal talked about co-creation and the importance of student voice. Although co-creation had been around for a while, the senior leadership team had started talking about it in connection with the 'Going for Gold' initiative to try to increase the TEF ranking. However, it was clear now that this was a tokenistic tick-box to try and get the ranking to gold. The Principal often asked students to contact him with any concerns they might have and when they did so, he copy-and-pasted a template reply to them. When he had personally contacted the Principal on an issue, he received the same reply as everyone else had received.

The Principal also used all-student emails to discredit campaigns the Union had run and he also did the same during the UCU strikes.

Mat Robathan spoke in favour of the motion. People needed to be aware that the Principal did not seem to be aware of what mattered to students and did not want to listen. At a face-to-face meeting with Student Council some issues were raised that concerned students at BL, including the demolition of one of their student halls and a performance space, Laird Hall. Also, that placements were being over-filled and student were having trouble being put on placement within hospitals which was an important part of their education. The Principal did not know what Laird Hall was, he did not know about half of these issues and he asked what they were talking about, he doesn't listen and the University doesn't listen, which is a really worrying pattern. Decisions are often made without consulting students, especially during the Covid pandemic where a lot of important decisions have been made without student input, and when input is taken they have already made the decision - they say 'this is what we are doing' and there is no opportunity to adjust that, or make it work for students.

Ashra Shrestha spoke again in favour of the motion. She wanted to agree with the earlier point made by Jack and add to it. The Principal's contact with students had been very limited until this year, probably then only because the Students' Union President invited him for question and answer sessions. When he has communicated with students it had been very misleading. In the last question and answer session, when asked questions about the UCU strikes, facilities and the Merger Cup, he always managed to dodge the questions and draw attention to other initiatives that were irrelevant. A lot of Students' Union campaigns had not been successful because of the lack of co-creation by the University under the Principal's leadership.

As there were no further contributions, either for or against, the motion was put to a vote.

Votes were cast through an on-line poll and 26 Members voted in favour, with none against and no abstentions. One member, Courtney Mann was unable to access the online system and their vote in favour was recorded in the minutes.

**The motion was therefore passed unanimously by 27 votes in favour, with none against and no abstentions.**

#### **4.0 AOB**

There was no other business.



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