

Queen Mary, University of London Student Support Strategy 2008-2010





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Introduction by the Vice-Principal



Queen Mary's Student Support Strategy 2008–2010 represents an important aspect of our larger commitment to offering all students an excellent educational experience at Queen Mary. It is also part of our aspiration to respond creatively and effectively to the rapidly changing national and international educational landscape.

Queen Mary has grown significantly in recent years, and many aspects of teaching and learning have changed to meet the needs of our large and diverse body of students. Despite this rapid change, however, our core values remain very strong. We aspire to support all our students to achieve their full potential, to help them develop and grow both academically and personally, and to ensure that upon graduation they are ready to meet the challenges of their future careers.

In our vision of excellent student support, we are keen to demonstrate how effective support can enable and support success. All students need support to achieve their own personal and academic goals. These can range from successful completion of an undergraduate programme, to gaining international prominence for an original piece of research. Neither can readily be managed without information, advice, and support from a wide range of staff within the College.

The Student Support Strategy proposes, for the first time, that we develop agreed minimum standards for academic advising. It also proposes detailed reviews of our approach to many aspects of student support with a view to identifying what works and what may need revision or reform. The Strategy

invites and encourages radical thinking about models for student support. This work will, of course, be done in close collaboration with our students, drawing on a range of opportunities to capture their opinions and needs.

Successful implementation of all aspects of the Student Support Strategy will both require and enable a degree of culture change. All staff will be invited to consider the ways in which their work can help to support students during their time at Queen Mary. We should work to ensure that there is no 'wrong door' and no 'wrong person' when students are looking for the information and the support they need to allow them to thrive in their academic studies.

The Student Support Strategy will help Queen Mary to maintain and develop an excellent learning experience for all its students.

Professor Morag Shiach

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Morag Shiach', written in a cursive style.

Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)



Background to the Student Support Strategy

Queen Mary, University of London has seen a rapid expansion of both staff and student numbers in recent years.

The growth of student numbers has been reflected across the College not only in undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research students, but also in the numbers of international students and distance learners. This growth has brought new challenges in the provision of student support, which require both careful collective reflection and detailed strategic planning to enable us to respond creatively and effectively.



Queen Mary is committed to supporting the individual learning needs of all students. This means we must recognise the diversity of disciplines and the different approaches to supporting students' learning. But we must also identify shared standards of support and values that underpin the support we offer to all students, regardless of discipline or programme.

The development of this Student Support Strategy is part of Queen Mary's work on improving and supporting the student experience. This has included the appointment of the College's first Vice-Principal for Teaching and Learning in 2005; the appointment of the College's first Director of Student Services in 2006; and the creation of the Student Support Committee and Student Affairs Committee, also in 2006.

The National Student Survey (NSS) has provided new and valuable information in recent years about the undergraduate

student experience at Queen Mary. Whilst not the main driver behind the development of the Student Support Strategy, the NSS has provided an important background for discussion of strategic priorities in student support.

Specific guidance on support for international students and students learning at a distance is currently being developed by the International Office and the Distance and eLearning Unit. This work will complement and inform the implementation of the Student Support Strategy.

The effective implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and by the Student Support Committee, which reports to the Academic Board. The impact of the Strategy on the quality of students' overall experience at Queen Mary will be monitored by the Student Affairs Committee, which reports to the College Council.



Core values underpinning the Student Support Strategy

1.1 College values

The College's *Strategic Plan 2006-2010*¹ contains several core values which have informed the Student Support Strategy, namely:

- Excellence in the personal achievements of staff and students, supported by the College in reaching their goals;
- Collegiality in all aspects of the life and work of the College, treating all other members of our community with respect and courtesy, and encouraging success;
- Diversity in our staff and student body, and valuing our differences as an important contribution to our research, teaching, and other activities.

The Student Support Strategy has also been informed by the overarching aim of the College's *Learning and Teaching Strategy 2006-2009*² to ensure that all students are provided with an excellent learning experience, in an environment enriched by research and scholarship at the highest levels.



1.2 Student Support Strategy values

The specific priorities identified within the Student Support Strategy have also been informed by the core values defined below:

1. Support for success

Support should be designed to ensure that all students reach their full potential, and achieve as many of their personal and academic goals possible.

2. Equality and diversity

Support should be offered to all students regardless of background, gender, and sexual orientation, and students should be treated in a manner that both welcomes and supports a diverse student population.

3. Excellence

All students should be provided with excellent learning opportunities, spaces, and services, and be encouraged to strive for personal excellence in their academic and non-academic work and lives.

4. Open, fair, accessible and welcoming

All services in the College should be accessible, and the entire Queen Mary community should constitute a welcoming and friendly environment in which to study.

5. A community of learning

Students should feel part of a community of learners in which their opinions are respected, and they are actively encouraged to develop as rounded individuals.

These values underpin the Student Support Strategy, and all objectives and proposed actions will be measured against them.

1. Queen Mary, University of London: *Strategic Plan 2006-2010*, available at: www.qmul.ac.uk/about/collegeinfo/docs/strategicplan0610.pdf
2. Queen Mary, University of London: *Learning and Teaching Strategy 2006-2009*, available at: http://connect.qmul.ac.uk/docs/tl_newsletter/lt_strat_0609.pdf

Key objectives for the Student Support Strategy

The Student Support Strategy identifies key areas and objectives for the College for the next three years in relation to student support, in all of its different forms. These are:

1. Academic support and support through feedback
2. Support for employability and career management
3. Enhanced support using feedback from students
4. Support for learning and the development of generic academic skills
5. Support for the wider student experience
6. Support for student wellbeing
7. Supporting best academic practice
8. Supporting students through effective communication.

These key objective headings were agreed by the Student Support Strategy Working Group (see Appendix A for membership), following detailed consultation with students at focus groups run by Lesley Salem of Cultivation Consultancy and input from all members of the Working Group.



Aims and objectives of the Student Support Strategy

1 Academic support and support through feedback

1.1 To undertake a review of the quality and effectiveness of current academic support by academic and central service departments

1.2 To develop new college-wide standards for academic advisor systems

1.3 To implement the College's code of practice on assessment and feedback

1.4 To enhance the provision of accessible, high quality IT and learning resources

2 Support for employability and career management

2.1 To review college support for employability and entrepreneurship, and to recommend enhancements

3 Enhanced support using feedback from students

3.1 To ensure that student feedback is used consistently to improve the student experience on all programmes

4 Support for learning and the development of generic academic skills

4.1 To ensure the provision of high quality support for all students in the development of generic and discipline-specific academic skills

5 Support for the wider student experience

5.1 To facilitate enhanced participation by students in the wider academic and social life of the College

6 Support for students' wellbeing

6.1 To ensure that students on all programmes, studying in any mode, are offered appropriate support for their physical, mental, and financial wellbeing

7 Supporting best academic practice

7.1 To ensure that all accredited qualifications in academic practice include explicit consideration of student support needs, and to enhance training in aspects of student support available to all staff

7.2 To implement findings of the Leadership Foundation Fellowship Project, 'Managing Teaching Performance'

8 Supporting students through effective communication

8.1 To enhance the accessibility and consistency of information about student support on all college websites (both academic departments and central services)

8.2 To investigate how students currently access information about support

8.3 To ensure that all student support information is written in clear and understandable language, and is available in a variety of formats (Braille, large print, etc)

8.4 To promote the use and development of virtual learning environments within the college as a tool for student support

8.5 To implement a new student information system

8.6 To work towards the development of a college-wide 'student portal'.



Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010

This action plan is designed to enable effective implementation of the Student Support Strategy at College and departmental/ disciplinary levels.

The table alongside sets out actions related to identified areas within the Strategy, gives times scales for achievement of these actions, and identifies those with overall responsibility for implementation, as well as the committees responsible for monitoring this. These committees will also develop appropriate methodologies to evaluate the impact of the Student Support Strategy on student experience.

In this table 'HoD' is used to designate the person with overall responsibility for an academic department, school, or institute, while 'Director' is used to refer to the head of a central service department. Many of the actions identified below are relevant to both academic and central service departments.

The implementation of the Strategy is a dynamic process and many actions outlined below have a degree of interdependence. Time frames are designed to aid the planning of implementation at both departmental and college levels, and to ensure that all innovations are informed by a full and detailed understanding of students' needs.

1. Academic support and support through feedback				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
1.1	Review of quality and effectiveness of current academic support by academic and central service departments	June 2008	VP (Teaching and Learning) and sectoral VPs	Student Support Committee (SSC)
	Review scores achieved in NSS for questions related to academic support 2005-07	April 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Discuss academic support needs of all categories of students with staff/student committee or equivalent users' group	April 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Clarify current respective roles of departmental academic staff, support staff, and central services in provision of support for learning	April 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Develop mapping of student academic support needs against current provisions within department	May 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Confirm the extent to which provisions meet needs of undergraduate, postgraduate, full-time, part-time, home, international, and distance learning students, and students with particular learning or support needs	May 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Report on above to student support committee	June 2008	HoD/Director	SSC

1. Academic support and support through feedback (cont.)				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
1.2	Development of new college-wide standards for academic advisor systems	Dec 2008	VP (Teaching and Learning), Secretary to Council and Academic Secretary, and Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	Academic Board
	Disseminate information on best practice in academic advising within Queen Mary and nationally	March 2008	Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC)
	Agree on priorities for academic advising with staff/student committees	April 2008	HoD	LTAC
	Identify appropriate timelines and responsibilities for replying to student emails	April 2008	HoD	SSC
	Develop departmental standards for nature and frequency of academic advisory support for all students	Oct 2008	HoD	LTAC
	Review and enhance processes for providing academic advice on course choices and planning for all students where necessary	Oct 2008	HoD	LTAC
	Clarify formal departmental mechanisms and timescales for collecting and responding to student enquiries, queries, or complaints	Oct 2008	HoD/Director	SSC



Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010 (cont)

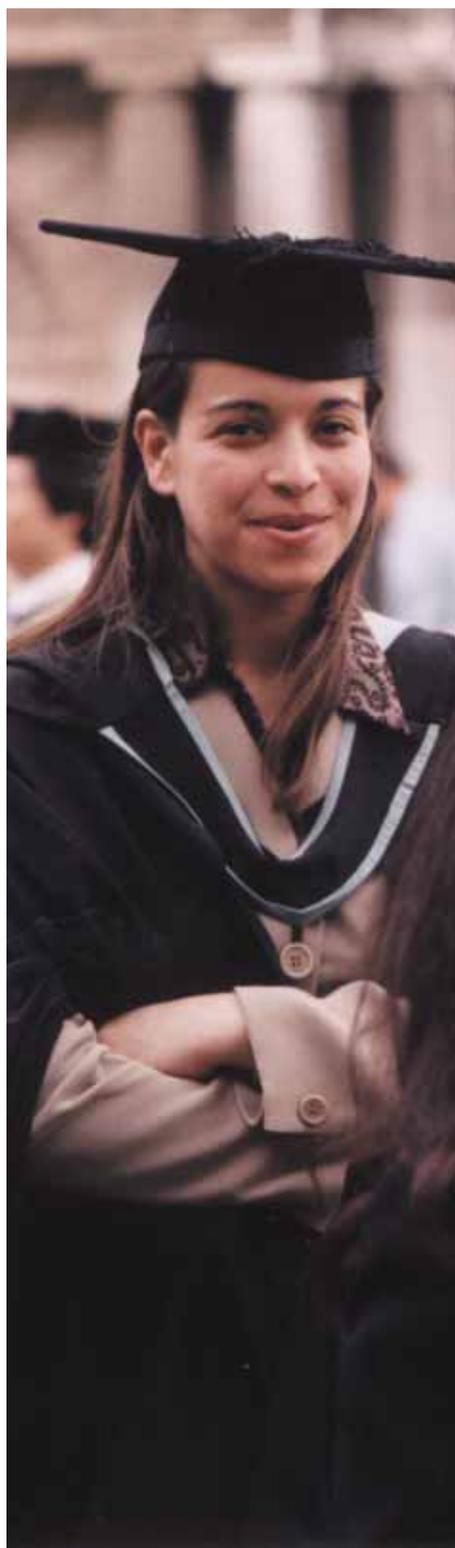


1. Academic support and support through feedback (cont.)				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
1.2 (cont)	Map support for acquisition of relevant research and information literacy skills centrally and within academic departments	Oct 2008	HoD/Director	LTAC, Graduate Schools Management Committee, and IS Board
	Report on above to Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, Information Services Board, Graduate Schools Management Committee, and Student Support Committee	Nov 2008	HoD/Director	LTAC, SSC and ISB
	Develop new college standards for academic advising/tutorial systems	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Secretary to Council and Academic Secretary and EO (Teaching and Learning)	Academic Board
	Review impact of agreed standards on student satisfaction as measured by NSS, PRES, and Queen Mary student survey	Oct 2009	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and EO (Teaching and Learning)	Student Affairs Committee (SAC)
1.3	Implementation of code of practice on assessment and feedback	Sept 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	LTAC
	Approval of code of practice by Academic Board	Dec 2007	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and Director of ESD	Academic Board
	Revise departmental policies on assessment and feedback in light of the code	May 2008	HoD	LTAC
	Ensure that all students receive published deadlines for feedback on assessed work throughout the academic year	Sept 2008	HoD	LTAC
	Review impact of Code of Practice on student satisfaction as measured by NSS, PRES, and Queen Mary student survey	Oct 2009	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	SAC

1. Academic support and support through feedback (cont.)				
Area of enhancement	By when	Led by	Monitored by	
1.4	Enhanced provision of accessible, high quality IT and learning resources	Oct 2009	Director of Library Services and Director of ICT	IS Board
	Develop an electronic strategy for the library service in the creation, collection, management, and delivery of electronic learning resources	Aug 2008	Director of Library Services	IS Board
	Establish a new collection development strategy for the library service; include plans for the development of collections in support of all faculties plus archives	Oct 2008	Director of Library Services	IS Board
	Improve reliability and robustness of electronic resources delivery	Oct 2009	Director of Library Services	IS Board
	Implement new authentication system for accessing library systems and resources, eg Shibboleth (or other) to recognise user interests at logon and filter through to information sub sets	Aug 2009	Director of Library Services and Director of ICT	IS Board
	Extend opening hours of libraries and the Level One Study Area, to increase access to IT and learning resources	Oct 2008	Director of Library Services	IS Board
	Improve access to recommended core readings via online reading list service	Dec 2008	Director of Library Services	IS Board
	Review current provision of IT facilities for students in light of identified needs, resource requirements, and organisational structures	June 2008	Director of ICT, Chief Administrative Officer and Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	IS Board



Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010 (cont)



1. Academic support and support through feedback (cont.)				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
1.4 (cont)	Develop protocols to ensure technical support needs can be met and understood, enabling innovations in teaching delivery and support	Dec 2008	Director of ICT and Head of eLearning	IS Board
	Introduce and consolidate upgrade of student IT service to windows XP	Dec 2008	Director of ICT	IS Board
	Join Eduroom to allow students internet access in all other participating institutions	Dec 2008	Director of ICT	IS Board
	Develop plan to extend wireless network availability to departmental PC labs	June 2008	Director of ICT	IS Board
	Develop plan for integration of departmental web services with IDCHECK mechanism to enable remote access	June 2008	Director of ICT	IS Board
2. Support for employability and career management				
2.1	Review college support for employability and entrepreneurship, and recommend enhancements	July 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Head of Skills and Employability (ESD), Head of Business Development (I&E Ltd)	SSC, LTAC, and Board of Queen Mary I&E Ltd
	Create working group to review current provision of support for employability, career management, and entrepreneurship education	Nov 2007	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	SSC and LTAC
	Benchmark Queen Mary provision	March 2008	Head of Skills and Employability	Student Employability, Entrepreneurship and Career Management Advisory Group (SEECMAG)

2. Support for employability and career management					
Area of enhancement	By when	Led by	Monitored by		
2.1 (cont)	Embed support for skills, employability, entrepreneurship education, and volunteering in both academic and central service departments	Dec 2008	Sector Vice-Principals, Director of Student Services and Chief Administrative Officer	LTAC and SSC	
	Ensure that the Queen Mary Key Skills Framework is fully embedded in academic programmes	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and Head of Skills and Employability	LTAC	
	Review impact of enhancements on student employability and NSS results for 'personal development'	Oct 2010	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	SAC	
3. Enhanced support using feedback from students					
3.1	Ensure that student feedback is used consistently to improve the student experience on all programmes	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Director of Student Services, Chief Administrative Officer and Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	Student Support Committee	
	Review effectiveness of current methods for collecting and responding to feedback from students on all programmes	June 2008	HoD/Director	SSC	
	Implement any necessary changes in methods of collecting feedback identified within this review process	Dec 2008	HoD/Director	SSC	
	Implement any necessary changes of processes for responding in a timely fashion to student feedback	Dec 2008	HoD/Director	SSC	



Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010 (cont)



3. Enhanced support using feedback from students (cont.)				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
3.1 (cont)	Publish regular updates for students on all actions taken to improve student experience as a result of student feedback	From Dec 2008	HoD/Director	SSC
	Review impact of more effective use of student feedback on student satisfaction as measured by NSS, PRES, and Queen Mary student survey	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	LTAC
	Review impact of enhancements on student employability and NSS results for 'personal development'	Oct 2010	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Director of Student Services and Chief Administrative Officer	SAC
4. Support for learning and the development of generic academic skills				
4.1	Ensure high quality support for all students in the development of generic and discipline-specific academic skills	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Sectoral Vice-Principals, Director of Corporate Affairs and Head of Language and Learning Unit	LTAC and SSC
	Review range of centrally provided support currently available to all students in relation to writing and benchmark against sector	June 2008	Queen Mary/HEA Inclusive Policy and Practice Team	LTAC
	Review range of centrally provided support currently available to all students in relation to mathematics and benchmark against sector	June 2008	Director of Corporate Affairs and Academic Director of SEFP	LTAC
	Review range of centrally provided support currently available to all students in relation to information skills and benchmark against sector	June 2008	Director of Library Services and Head of eLearning	LTAC

4. Support for learning and the development of generic academic skills (cont.)

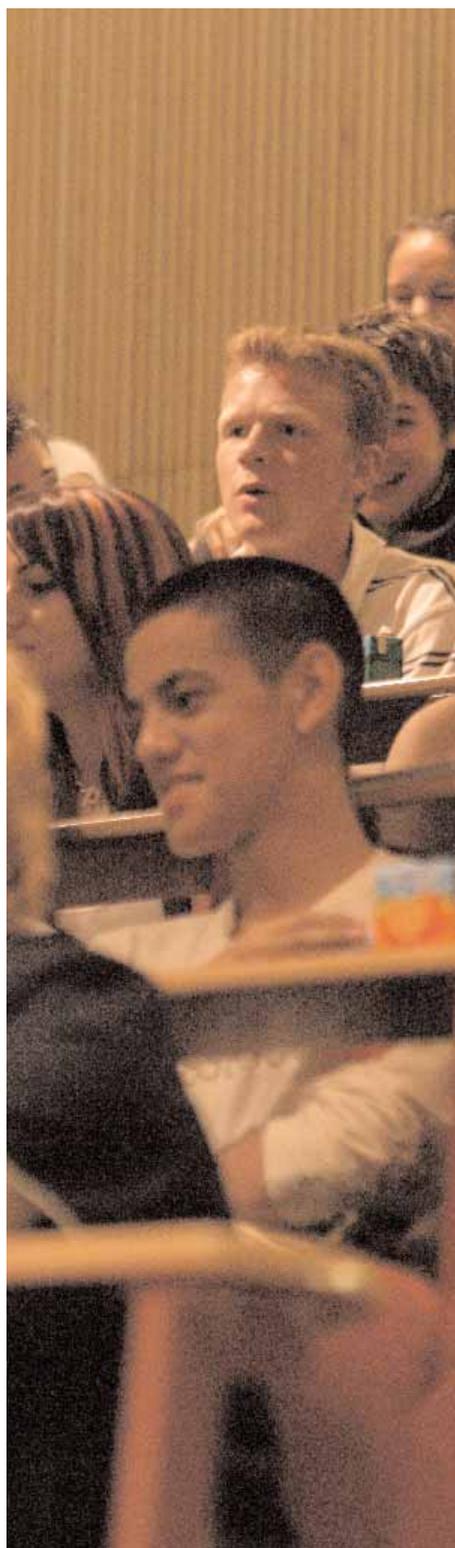
Area of enhancement	By when	Led by	Monitored by	
4.1 (cont)	Review support of academic skills development for postgraduate students and benchmark in relation to RCUK skills statement	June 2008	Directors of Graduate Schools and Director of ESD	Graduate Schools Management Committee
	Report on best practice and enhancement needs arising from reviews	Dec 2008	Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	LTAC

5. Support for the wider student experience

5.1	Facilitate enhanced participation by students in the wider academic and social life of the College	June 2009	VP (Teaching and Learning) and Director of Student Services	SSC
	Encourage further development of extra-curricular activities and societies both within and outside of academic departments	Ongoing	HoDs and Students' Union	SSC
	Develop and support the student representative system	Ongoing	HoDs, Vice-President (Welfare and Representation) QMSU and Assistant Academic Secretary	SSC and OEC
	Ensure close and effective working relationships between academic and central departments and the Students' Union	Ongoing	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and Director of Student Services	SSC
	Report on the above to Student Support Committee	Dec 2008	HoDs, Director of Student Services, Vice-President (Welfare and Representation) QMSU	SSC
	Review current provision of social spaces for students on all three campuses and develop a plan for enhancement as necessary	June 2008	Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Director of Student Services, President QMSU	Estates and Services Committee

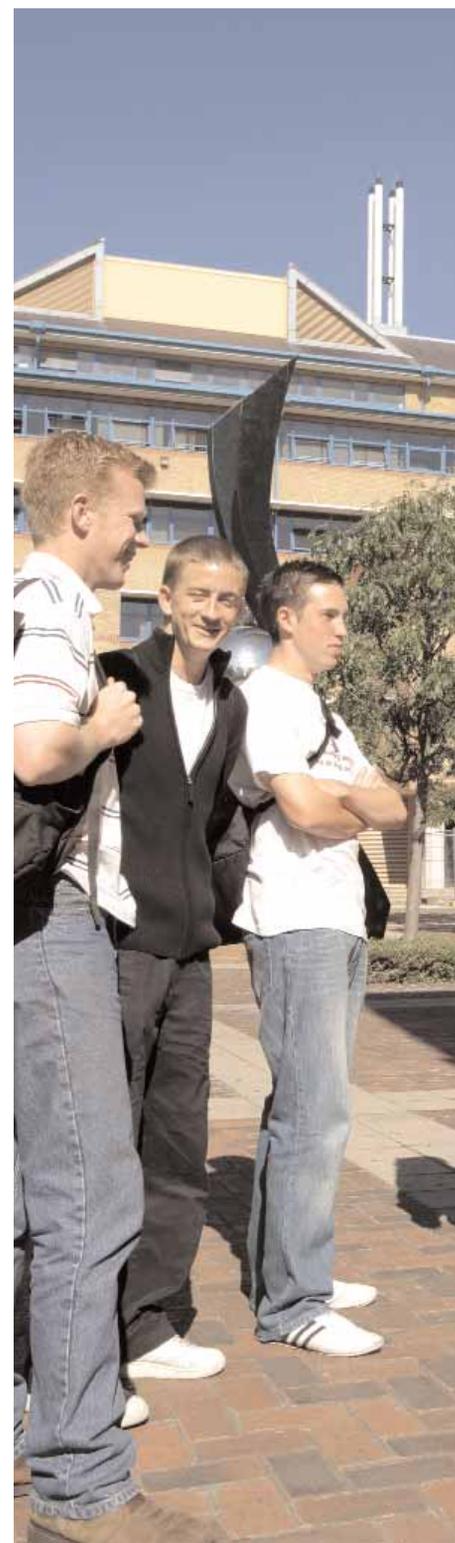


Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010 (cont)



6. Support for student wellbeing				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
6.1	Ensure that students on all programmes and studying in any mode are offered appropriate support for their physical, mental, and financial wellbeing	Dec 2008	Director of Student Services and Dean for Student Affairs (SMD)	SSC
	Review current departmental and College systems for personal support, and identify and disseminate examples of good practice	Sept 2008	Director of Student Services and Dean for Student Affairs (SMD)	SSC
	Review current provision of Student Health Services in order to ensure it effectively meets the needs of all students; provide annual report to SSC to include any proposals for service enhancement	Ongoing	Director of Student Services	SSC
	Ensure clear and effective working between Advice and Counselling, Student Health Service, and Occupational Health Service; provide regular reports to SSC to include any proposals for service enhancement	Ongoing	Director of Student Services	SSC
	Provide enhanced physical environment for Student Health Services, Occupational Health Service, and Advice and Counselling	Sept 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	SSC
	Review the scope and comprehensiveness of college-wide standards for effective support of applicants and students with disabilities (including mental health disabilities); implement new initiatives to ensure successful student progression and achievement	Dec 2008	Director of Student Services	SSC

6. Support for student wellbeing (cont.)				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
6.1 (cont)	Develop and introduce systematic operational planning within the Directorate of Student Services to promote continuous improvement in the range of support offered to students	July 2008	Director of Student Services	Chief Administrative Officer and SSC
	Review current security strategy for all campuses to support a safe environment for students living and studying at the College	Dec 2008	Head of Operations, Estates	Estates and Services Committee and SSC
	Ensure College regulations, complaints procedures, and disciplinary procedures are fair, transparent, and accessible to all students	Dec 2008	Secretary to Council and Academic Secretary	Academic Board and SAC
7. Supporting best academic practice				
7.1	Ensure that all accredited qualifications in academic practice include explicit consideration of student support needs	Sept 2008	Director of ESD	Staff Development Group (SDG)
	Enhance training available to all staff in aspects of student support	Ongoing	Director of ESD	SDG
7.2	Implement findings of the Leadership Foundation Fellowship Project, 'Managing Teaching Performance'	Dec 2008	Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) and Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)	LTAC



Action plan for the implementation of the Student Support Strategy 2008-2010 (cont)



8. Supporting students through effective communication				
Area of enhancement		By when	Led by	Monitored by
8.1	Enhance accessibility and consistency of information about student support on all College websites (both academic departments and central services)	June 2008	Director of Corporate Affairs	SSC
8.2	Investigate how students currently access information about support	April 2008	Director of Corporate Affairs	SSC
	Identify and implement enhancements identified through this process	Dec 2008	Director of Corporate Affairs	SSC
8.3	Ensure that all student support information is written in clear, understandable language and is available in a variety of formats (Braille, large print, etc)	Ongoing	Director of Corporate Affairs, Director of Student Services, and Assistant Academic Secretary	SSC
8.4	Promote the use and development of Virtual Learning Environments within the College as a tool for student support	Ongoing	Head of eLearning	SSC and IS Board
8.5	Implement a new student information system	Ongoing	Chief Administrative Officer	SIS project Board and IS Board
8.6	Work towards the development of a college-wide 'student portal'	Ongoing	Director of IT Services, Director of Student Services, Head of eLearning (ESD)	IS Board

Appendix A

Membership of Strategy Development Working Group

This Strategy was developed by a working group, which reported both to the Student Support Committee and the Student Affairs Committee. Consultation involved academic departments, central service departments, and QMSU.

Professor Morag Shiach
Vice-Principal, Teaching and Learning (Chair)

Sam Brenton
Head of eLearning, Educational and Staff Development

Brian China
Director of Student Services

Dr Brian Colvin
Dean of Student Affairs, School of Medicine & Dentistry

Sarah Cowsl
Assistant Academic Secretary, Academic Secretariat

Alan Evison
Head of Language and Learning Unit

Dr Joy Hinson
Dean for Postgraduate Studies, School of Medicine and Dentistry

Mangal Patel
Director of ICT, Computing Services

Nigel Relph
Director of Corporate Affairs

Laura SeQueira
Head of Advice and Counselling

Leigh Ward
Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)

Dr Peter Wormleaton
Senior Tutor, School of Engineering and Materials Science

(For the development of the action plan)
Nasir Tarmann
President, Queen Mary Students' Union (QMSU)

Denis Shukur
Vice-President, (Representation and Welfare), QMSU



This Strategy has been produced by
the Publications and Web Office for
the Office of the Principal

For further information contact:
Mr Leigh Ward
Executive Officer (Teaching and Learning)
Office of the Principal
Queen Mary, University of London
Mile End Road
London E1 4NS
Tel: +44 (0)20 7882 7648
Fax: +44 (0)20 8981 2848
email: l.m.ward@qmul.ac.uk