

Dear students,

The pandemic has had a significant effect on all aspects of everyone's lives. In addition to this, we recognise that the new national lockdown, coupled with ongoing concerns about rising Covid-19 cases, has been incredibly tough on all of us. Your QMSU Executive Officers are working closely with the Deans for Education, Vice-Principal (Education) and other University staff to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on your academic experience and welfare during these exceptional times. We are writing to you with an update on our discussions so far, and will keep you updated as this work progresses.

Over the course of this month, a working group with representatives from Queen Mary and QMSU will develop our overall approach for the academic year 2020/21, with University-level mitigations for the assessments determined by the end of this month. We are all committed to ensuring fair assessment, as we know that the pandemic is causing unprecedented levels of stress and anxiety, which obviously has an impact on your studies.

In relation to current and future assessments, we will keep your wellbeing central to our approach as we consider our processes in the light of the challenges being faced. We will ensure our assessment processes are fair, and that our academic standards and the integrity of our degrees as a world-leading Russell Group University are protected; and that we keep within the requirements of our national regulators and, where applicable, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

We plan to implement a set of mitigation measures in relation to assessment that take into account any overall effects on students this academic year, alongside interventions that recognise individual students' challenges. While the approach is University-wide, different disciplines may also require more specific responses, so we are maintaining flexibility within Schools and Institutes to allow for this. Key core aspects of our approach are as follows:

- Streamlining our **Extenuating Circumstances** policy and processes to reflect the impact of Covid-19.
- **Extending deadlines** for coursework where necessary (as decided by the Head of School/Institute).
- Ensuring our **Examination Boards** take account of patterns in student performance, compared with previous cohorts, and individual students' circumstances. The Subject Examination Boards and Degree Examination Boards include external members who provide commentary on academic standards, achievement trends, fairness and consistency.
- In addition, Schools/Institutes will consider how access to local, national and international academic resources and facilities, which otherwise would have been available, have been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.

Further details will follow by the end of January.

We are continuing to work with Faculties through our governance structures to ensure a fair assessment process. We are committed to working with you, including via our student representatives and Student Staff Liaison Committees, as we develop the University's approach.

Finally, we wanted to thank you for the feedback we have received so far. We are working hard to incorporate it into our approach. Stay safe and keep well.

Best wishes,

Aphrodite Murray-Liddington – Vice President for Science & Engineering, Queen Mary Students' Union

Shamima Akter – Queen Mary Students' Union President, on behalf of the Students' Union Executive Team

Professor Stephanie Marshall – Vice-Principal (Education)

Professor Stefan Krummaker – Deputy Vice-Principal (Education)

