## Queen Margaret University
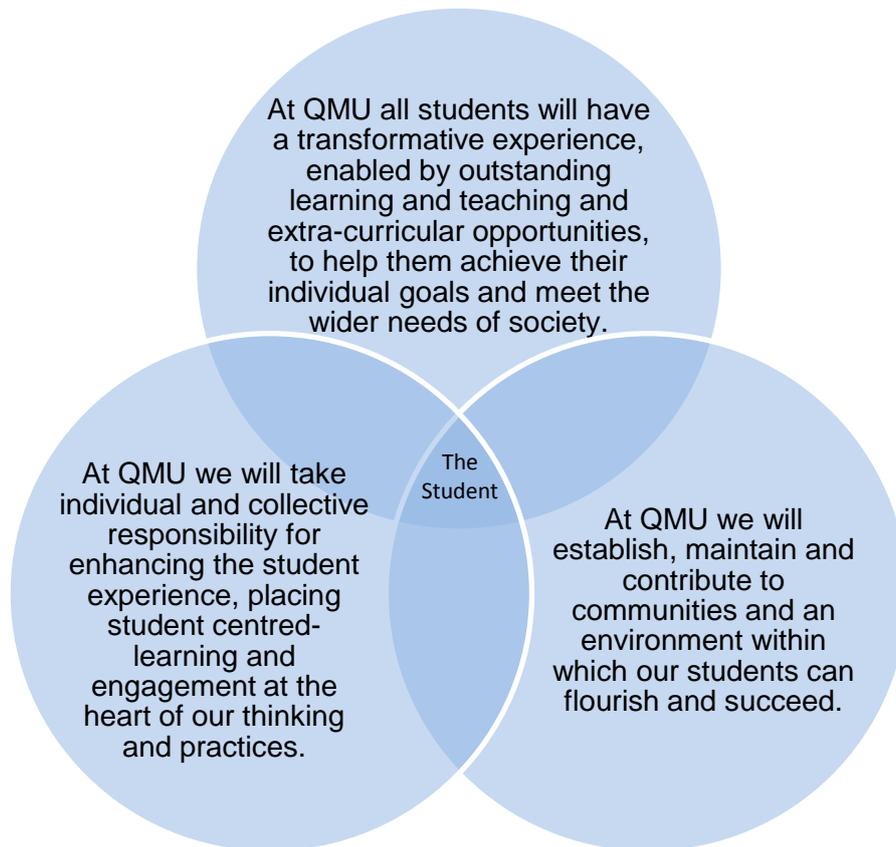### EDINBURGH

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2015- 20: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The QMU Student Experience Strategy is a holistic strategy that is concerned with:

1) The student learning experience
2) Aspects of the student experience that support and complement student learning

The Student Experience Strategy for the period 2015-2020 includes the following **key priorities**. The priorities are inter-related and of equal importance.

At QMU all students will have a transformative experience, enabled by outstanding learning and teaching and extra-curricular opportunities, to help them achieve their individual goals and meet the wider needs of society.

The Student

At QMU we will take individual and collective responsibility for enhancing the student experience, placing student centred-learning and engagement at the heart of our thinking and practices.

At QMU we will establish, maintain and contribute to communities and an environment within which our students can flourish and succeed.

The priorities take account of, and feed into, the overarching institutional Strategic Plan and other reference points, such as the International Strategy and the University's Outcome Agreement with the Funding Council. Each of the priorities is underpinned by a detailed University level action plan, which is monitored by the Student Experience Committee. Resource implications are subject to consideration and monitoring by the relevant managers.

Queen Margaret University

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**STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2015- 20**

## 1 Institutional context

Queen Margaret University's **vision** is to be a university of ideas and influence.

Our **mission** is to foster intellectual capital with both a theoretical and practical focus, giving students and staff the confidence to make a real difference to the world around them. We are known not only for excellent, relevant teaching, research and knowledge exchange but also for the care and respect we give our students, staff and partners. As a thriving campus university we strive to create a community without borders, helping to improve people's lives locally, nationally and internationally. We are ambitious and enterprising, and, in everything we do, we are committed to social justice.

In pursuit of our vision and mission, we will aspire to be:

- Ambitious, confident and inspiring to instil staff and students with a sense of belonging to the QMU community.
- Committed to social justice, recognising equality and diversity in all that we do.
- Excellent in research, teaching and knowledge exchange.
- Supportive and enterprising.
- Focussed on meeting the needs of students, staff, employers and our communities.
- Committed to all forms of sustainability.
- A University without borders that embraces partnership working with the local, national and international communities.

The Student Experience Strategy reflects and influences the overarching goals set out in the University's Strategic Plan for the period 2015-25. In particular, the Strategy is aligned with the following five goals:

**An excellent student experience**

Students will have access to the highest quality of learning. All students, regardless of their background, will have equal opportunities to succeed and become graduates with a strong sense of ethical and social responsibility who can contribute to and influence the wider community.

**A highly visible and strongly promoted academic portfolio**

Our flagship areas and our reputation for high quality will make us the "go to" University across our provision.

**A University without borders**

We will be an integral part of a community with no borders. Facilities available to the public will be developed further so that they become an integrated, efficient and sustainable part of the range of facilities in the area. The local community will be involved in our day-to-day activities.

**A vibrant campus with appropriate facilities**

QMU is predominantly an environmentally conscious Campus University and it will remain so. It is vital that there are the facilities to maintain a vibrant student and staff community both socially and academically. As part of the University's partnership working and engagement with the community we also need to exert influence over the use of surrounding land.

**Motivated, confident, engaged and inspired staff**

Through supportive leadership staff will be encouraged to think creatively and take considered risks.  We will attract and retain good staff by valuing them through transparent promotion opportunities, appropriate staff development, inclusivity and equality, and through instilling in our staff a strong sense of social responsibility.

**2       Ownership**

The Student Experience Strategy is relevant to everyone who has a relationship with QMU. This includes prospective and current students, academic and professional services staff and other stakeholders, for example graduates and industry or community partners.

Relevance for **students**: The Strategy sets out the ways in which University staff support students to achieve their potential. Very importantly, it also provides opportunities for students to play an active role in that process. We believe that all students have a responsibility to themselves and to the wider student community to contribute to a positive experience. There are lots of ways to do this, as set out in the Strategy action plan. Some of these are quite straightforward and self-contained. Others have potential to be more complex and may be implemented over a longer period of time.

Relevance for **academic and professional services staff**: The Strategy sets out priorities for the academic, co- and extra-curricular experience at QMU.  Staff can use these priorities to develop the programmes and professional services for which they are responsible to ensure a high quality and consistent experience for all of our students. The Strategy applies equally to staff based in Edinburgh and other locations, including our **collaborative partner** organisations in the UK and overseas.

Relevance for **other stakeholders**: The Strategy recognises the importance of QMU engaging with the wider community. We want our students to be able to give back to their communities during their time at University and also once they graduate. Related to this, we welcome involvement of employers in our curriculum design and delivery. QMU also aims to be a University without borders, and our Strategy identifies ways for the local (and indeed wider) population to be involved in our campus activities.

## 3  The Student Experience Strategy

The Student Experience Strategy sets out the priorities for the student experience at QMU for the period 2015-20. QMU welcomes diversity and is committed to creating and celebrating a positive, inclusive atmosphere, based on respect for individuals' differences, in which students and staff are actively encouraged to reach their full potential. All of our activities are governed by principles of equality of opportunities, including the implementation of this Strategy.

The student experience is interpreted holistically as embracing the student learning experience and those aspects that support the learning experience. It spans the full student journey from recruitment through to graduation and beyond (to include alumni relations).

The Strategy provides a framework for delivery of an excellent student experience to all QMU students, including undergraduate and taught and research postgraduate students studying on campus in Musselburgh, by distance learning, or at one of QMU's UK or overseas collaborative partner institutions.

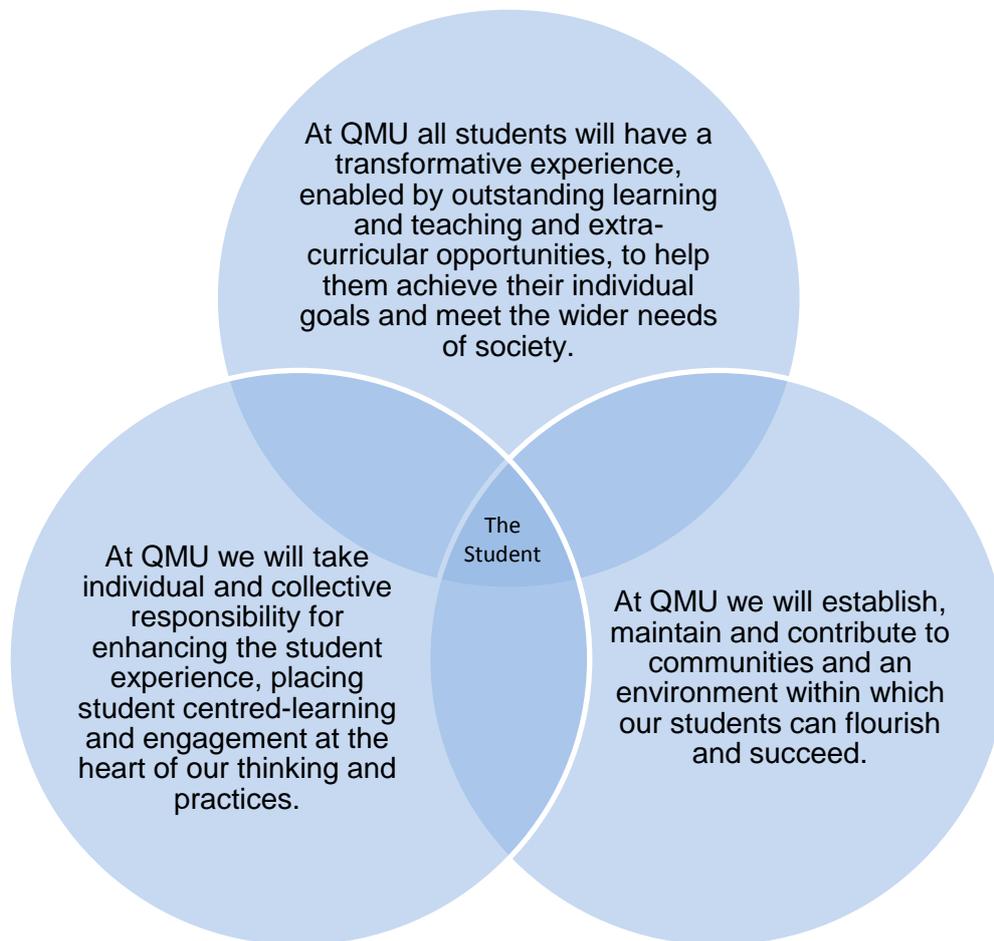The Strategy exemplifies the University's commitment to the following:

- High quality educational programmes that satisfy individual and professional needs, enabling graduates to contribute to and influence the wider community.
- Student-centred learning with students as co-creators of their curriculum.
- The development of graduate attributes, enabled through curricular and co-curricular opportunities.
- Flexibility in delivery and personalised academic and pastoral structures that support achievement, transitions, persistence and retention.
- The enhancement of the physical and social environment.
- Establishing and maintaining a culture of well-being and belonging.
- Staff and student partnership, and shared understanding of responsibility for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

The Strategy does not exist in isolation. It is aligned directly with the QMU Strategic Plan and sits alongside the International and Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategies. It sets the context for operational planning and the framework within which the University's approach to learning and teaching and other student-facing and enabling strategies operate. Importantly, it encapsulates and supersedes the former QELTA Strategy. It also reflects relevant targets within the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council.

The Strategy embodies a partnership model, within which academic and professional services staff work together with the Students' Union and students to establish a shared understanding of responsibilities and obligations.

**4      Priorities**

The Student Experience Strategy for the period 2015-20 includes the following **key priorities**. The priorities are inter-related and of equal importance.

At QMU all students will have a transformative experience, enabled by outstanding learning and teaching and extra-curricular opportunities, to help them achieve their individual goals and meet the wider needs of society.

The Student

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At QMU we will establish, maintain and contribute to communities and an environment within which our students can flourish and succeed.

**5      Actions**

The Strategy includes high level actions in support of each of the priorities to be progressed under the auspices of the Student Experience Committee. It is also used locally within the Schools, Divisions and professional services to guide operational planning and other activities. For further detail on this, see the section below on Engagement (paragraph 6 refers).

The Student Experience Committee has responsibility for monitoring implementation of the institutional action plan through an annual review of progress against each of the priorities. Qualitative and quantitative performance indicators provide the basis for evaluation, linked directly to the annual monitoring and operational planning exercise. These include:

- ELIR reports and other external review and audit outcomes
- Application and conversion rates
- Student retention and withdrawal measures
- Employability statistics

- Survey results, including the National Student Survey (NSS) , QMU Internal Student Survey (QSS)
- Module evaluation results
- Feedback from staff and students
- Feedback from employers, External Examiners and other external stakeholders

The Student Experience Committee also develops mechanisms for dissemination of the Strategy to staff, students and University communities, ensuring that it is accessible and visible to all stakeholders. Through this activity, the Committee promotes awareness, engagement and ownership in support of the priorities contained within the Strategy.

## 6 Engagement

Students and staff are expected and enabled to work in partnership to agree programme level objectives in line with the key priorities. Programme Teams going through validation or review should use the Strategy to prepare for the event. Teams may also wish to discuss the Strategy annually at meetings of the Student-Staff Consultative Committee to refresh local objectives and make sure they remain relevant.

The Student Experience Strategy Committee will receive periodic reports on local implementation, and the outcomes of that process may influence the high level actions/annual action plan.

Through this engagement, students and staff will share responsibility as co-creators of a transformative experience that is subject to regular evaluation and enhancement in response to that process.

## 7 Feedback

Feedback on the Student Experience Strategy is always welcome. Comments and suggestions can be sent to Dawn Martin, Secretary to the Student Experience Committee: dmartin1@qmu.ac.uk

**Key Priority**

At QMU all students will have a transformative experience, enabled by outstanding learning and teaching and extra-curricular opportunities, to help them achieve their individual goals and meet the wider needs of society.

| Action | Responsibility, detailed activities and indicative timescale | | Selected references |
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| **1** Develop and implement mechanisms for staff and students to engage in curriculum development as co-creators | Schools/ CAP/GQE | • Develop and issue written guidance to staff and students (including validation and review participants) on co-creation of the curriculum (August 2016) <br> • Deliver staff development sessions on the above (on-going) <br> • Discuss co-creation at SU Class Rep training, SSCC and PC meetings (on-going) <br> • Identify and act on opportunities to involve students as co-researchers and co-workers (on-going) | **QM150** – by 2025 we will have introduced opportunities for students to support each other and to influence the development of programme delivery |
| **2** Continue to innovate in our learning, teaching, assessment and feedback practices | Schools/ CAP | • Review resources and academic staff development provision in support of the new SES/enhancement activities (on-going) <br> • Promote discussions at SSCC and PC meetings and through validation and review (on-going) | |
| **3** Provide a flexible and technology rich environment to support student learning | Campus Services/ CAP | • Technology Enhanced Learning Group to be re-established by December 2016 to lead the technical and pedagogic changes necessary to implement student-centred blended and online learning | **QM150** - by 2025 we will offer blended learning approaches across our programmes <br> Initial **QM150** action - develop IT infrastructure to support blended learning |

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| | | • Detailed actions to be progressed, including the following (end of 2016-17)<br>1) Develop TELG frameworks for the development of blended and online learning<br>2) Work in conjunction with IT to develop a route map for future provision<br>• Provide face to face and / or virtual support to staff, including collaborative partners, to enable them to implement appropriate learning technologies (on-going) | |
| **4** Review and prioritise the University's Graduate Attributes | SEC | • Review Graduate Attributes, acting on advice from students, staff and employer groups (2017-18) | |
| **5** Develop opportunities and support uptake of short periods of study overseas | SEC/ Schools | • Review current provision and identify possible future opportunities (2016-17)<br>• Promote the benefits of overseas study for developing Graduate Attributes (on-going) | **International Strategy** - action 5.4 exact wording (SEC Convener identified as responsible) |
| **6** Develop appropriate work-related partnerships for every programme Schools | Schools | • Review current provision across all programmes, identifying good practice, gaps and barriers (2017-18)<br>• Identify possible sources of funding for work-related partnerships (on-going)<br>• Develop cross institutional guidance on good practice in placement/work-related partnerships (2017-18) | **QM150** - by 2025 we will have a placement/appropriate industry partner for every student<br>Initial **QM150** action: Introduce a graduate apprenticeship pilot with a view to placements/industry partners being identified for every programme. |
| **7** Develop, promote and recognise learning | SEC/SU | • Promote culture/issue reminders that Wednesday afternoons need to be kept free from timetabled activities (on-going) | |

| achieved through co-and extra-curricular activities | | • Review approaches to recognising this type of learning at other HEIs (2016-17)<br>• Acting on the outcomes of review of other HEIs, develop HEAR or alternative for QMU (2017-18)<br>• Develop effective peer to peer mentoring systems and encourage student engagement with these (on-going) | |
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| **8** Engender a culture of innovation and enterprise by students and graduates to support start-ups, micro and small businesses. | Schools | • Embed enterprise education and opportunities for students to develop as entrepreneurs, throughout our curriculum and co- and extra-curricular activities (on-going)<br>• Provide opportunities for students to work with national enterprise enabling agencies (on-going)<br>• Provide a Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) for QMU graduate start-up companies<br>• Encourage local businesses to engage enterprising students and graduates as their clients (on-going)<br>• Follow the recommendations for universities of the Royal Society Report (2015) 'Entrepreneurial Education in Scotland' (pp. 32-3) (on-going) | |

| **Key Priority** | | | |
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| At QMU we will take individual and collective responsibility for enhancing the student experience, placing student centred-learning and engagement at the heart of our thinking and practices. | | | |

| **Action** | **Responsibility, detailed activities and indicative timescale** | | **Selected references** |
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| **9** Embed a culture of continuous enhancement in line with internal and external quality processes and reference points | SEC/CAP/ GQE/ Schools | • Engage fully and appropriately with new and existing and external reference points, e.g. SCQF; QAA Quality Code; Enhancement Themes outcomes and Focus-On activities (on-going)<br>• Engage fully with ELIR4 during 2017-18 to make best use of the revised methodology and focus on contextualisation<br>• Regularly review QMU policies, procedures and regulations in line with five year cycle, or more frequently, where appropriate<br>• Make use of summary reports arising through analysis of procedures to provide key information to SEC and highlight any areas for attention (on-going)<br>• Respond appropriately to areas identified through external review processes, including the QAA overseas review of TNE in Greece (June 2016) | **Outcome Agreement** (key objective 2/16) |
| **10** Continuously enhance the student experience through the development of student-centred educational provision, research and scholarship | Schools | • Ensure full consideration of Programme specific student-centred learning through validation and review (on-going)<br>• Encourage peer review of teaching (on-going) | |

| | | • Embed discussion of student-centred learning in the PER process (on-going) | |
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| **11** Develop professional services and academic support mechanisms for all students, with particular focus where appropriate on groups identified within the Outcome Agreement | Schools/ Prof Services | • Review and implement outcomes from WISeR projects (e.g. 'Stay-on-Course') to support students from a range of backgrounds (on-going)<br>• Revisit and further refine the management and implementation of the PAT system (2017-18)<br>• Continue to refine ERA (now in its second full year) as data becomes available to support enhancement (on-going)<br>• Support collaborative partners to deliver a high quality student experience (on-going)<br><br>**Recent/on-going reviews (correct at May 2017)**<br>1)Conclude Student Transitions Professional Services Review (June 2016) and implement recommendations (2016-17)<br>2) Conclude Disability Services review and implement recommendations (2016-17)<br>3) Conclude Student Funding review and implement recommendations (by September 2017)<br>4) Conclude School Office review and implement recommendations (2017-18) | **Outcome Agreement** (key objective 2/1)- Embedding of support arrangements targeted on those students from the most deprived postcodes; prioritising of those schools with the lowest HE progression rates |
| **12** Support transitions between all levels, promoting and maintaining a culture of well-being and belonging. | Schools/ Prof Services | • Systematise our approach to supporting student transitions, well-being and belonging, capturing and extending existing good practice across QMU<br>Note that a more systematic approach should not preclude bespoke transition experiences | **QM150** –by 2025 we will ensure all students are instilled with a sense of belonging to the QM community<br>**International Strategy** - action 4.3 implement recommendations from the Student Transitions |

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| | | for certain cohorts, e.g. QMAdvance, Associates, DE Induction<br><br>• Review current induction practice, both on entry and longitudinal (June 2016)<br>• Explore opportunities for engaging students in self-assessment of their learning needs prior to and after arrival<br>• Seek a more systematic approach to assessing and developing students' academic writing | Theme and professional services review (SEC Convener identified as responsible) |
| **13** Develop approaches to gathering and using data on the student experience | Schools/ Prof Services | • Engage with sector wide projects on enhancing the student experience through data evaluation (on-going)<br>• Develop approaches to integrating data on the student experience, for example through annual monitoring (on-going)<br>• Review approaches to module evaluation (2016-17)<br><br>Note that the activities in support of action 13 will complement existing well-developed mechanisms for institutional survey analysis (including NSS and QSS). | **Outcome Agreement** (key objective 2/10) - Continued embedding of equality and diversity across all aspects of the University's activities, and to monitor progress against an established set of quantified indicators e.g. annual application, admission, progression and retention statistics**.**<br>**International Strategy** - action 4.1 continue to monitor enhancement of support for students on campus; outcomes from relevant student surveys to remain constant or improve over time (SEC Convener identified as responsible) |
| **14** Further develop partnership working between the University and | SEC/SU | • Continue to raise awareness of Student Partnership Agreement (on-going) | Initial **QM150** action - Develop a portfolio of opportunities to support students, working in partnership with the Students' |

| the SU to enhance the student experience | | • Facilitate SU participation in University staff team meetings and other similar opportunities. (on-going)<br>• Encourage opportunities for University staff to support SU initiatives, including sports and societies (on-going)<br>• Explore Committee representation and mechanisms, with a view to enhancing operation (2016-17) | Union and recognising the diversity of the student population.<br>**International Strategy** - action 4.2 improve international student engagement in representative structures |
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| **15** Continue to build professional development programmes, supporting staff to become in-depth, critical and reflective thinkers who apply expert knowledge to enhance the student experience | CAP/ Schools | • Encourage Scholarship of Learning and Teaching<br>• Review resources and academic and professional services staff development provision in support of the new SES<br>• Facilitate the flow and sharing of innovative ideas and approaches through various mechanisms, e.g. networks, workshops, and newsletters<br>• Promote active participation in the sector-wide development of quality enhancement<br>• Use the CPD Scheme as a mechanism for engaging staff with the activities, knowledge and values embedded in the UK Professional Standards Framework<br><br>All of the above on-going<br><br>• Develop improved support and guidance for doctoral students involved in teaching (2017-18) | **QM150** - motivated, confident, engaged and inspiring staff |

| **16** Support review of UG and PG portfolio, taking into account student, employer and service user/carer needs | SEC | <ul><li>Encourage innovative approaches to engaging stakeholders through validation and review (on-going)</li><li>Develop and implement Service User and Carer Policy (December 2016)</li></ul> | |

**Key priority**

At QMU we will establish, maintain and contribute to communities and an environment within which our students can flourish and succeed.

| Action | Responsibility, detailed activities and indicative timescale | | Selected references |
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| **18** Develop models of engagement with our communities as a mode of learning | SEC | • Identify and disseminate current good practice within academic programmes and professional services (on-going)<br>• Support students to develop a sense of social justice (on-going) | **QM 150** (QMU without borders) – by 2025 we will have a) a strong concept of social responsibility in our staff and student populations through giving back to the community; b) a well-developed programme of community engagement offering services to the local community and seeking the local community's involvement in our activities.<br>Initial **QM150** action - Embed community engagement as part of programmes. |
| **19** Engage in relevant networks, partnerships and communities to enhance the student experience | SEC | • Develop good practice guidance to support opportunities and complement placement guidance (see action 6) | |
| **20** Work with the SU to review and expand student sports groups, societies and volunteering opportunities with a view to enhancing campus life and working with the local community. | SEC/SU/ Campus Services/ Campus Life Working Group | • Identify opportunities for recognising learning through sports, societies and volunteering (see action 7).<br>• Identify local groups which can provide opportunities for student engagement in sports, societies and volunteering.<br>• Inaugurate a Dean's prize for volunteering in each School | **QM150** (A vibrant campus) – by 2025 we will have additional student societies including discipline based societies |
| **21** Enhance campus facilities to develop a vibrant staff and student | Campus Services/S U/Campus | • Identify opportunities for modular learning to encourage and enable wider access | Initial **QM150** action: Involve students in the development of campus facilities to ensure that there |

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| community both socially and academically | Life Working Group | • Explore opportunities for staff, alumni and current students to deliver learning, e.g. evening classes/industry specific training | is a student-centred approach that is also of benefit to the local community. |
| **22** Adopt a holistic and collaborative view of the student journey that maximises student persistence and retention | Schools | • Develop an institution-wide QMU transitions approach, designed to engender belonging (see action 12) (2017-18)<br>• Encourage staff to submit appropriate bids for funding to support persistence and retention (e.g. WISeR funding and any subsequent available funding opportunities)  (on-going)<br>• Identify mechanisms to promote and sustain good practice emerging through WISeR project and other similar initiatives | **Outcome Agreement** (key objective 2/3) - Maximise recruitment of students from LEAPS, SHEP and SWAP East initiatives into the University<br>**Outcome Agreement** (key objective 2/12) - Implementation of student attendance policy as part of the wider strategy to monitor student engagement and to intervene at an early point of disengagement |
| **23** Continue to break down barriers and develop opportunities for widening access to Higher Education for all,  through initiatives such as the Children's University, Associate Students' Scheme, and Academies | SEC/ Schools | • Support the recruitment and retention of students from different protected characteristic and widening participation groups in line with the Outcome Agreement between the University and the SFC (on-going) | Initial **QM150** actions - Continue to run the Children's University programme and in parallel seek long term funding solutions;<br>Continue to run the Academies programme and support student transitions to the University and in parallel seek long term funding solutions. |