

Queen Mary, University of London



Student Guide **2012**



Queen Mary
University of London



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Just why do our students love Queen Mary so much?

Campus lifestyle

We are one of very few city-based campus universities, and the only one in central London, so students mix with people from many departments and never have to walk far. You will never be bored here! We have a vibrant student body, and you can take advantage of extensive sports, social and entertainment activities.

Accommodation

The Westfield Student Village at the Mile End Campus boasts a total of over 2,000, mainly en-suite rooms.

Friendly, community atmosphere

Everyone who visits Queen Mary is struck by our friendliness. Relations between staff and students are excellent, and the social life of the College is legendary. The Students' Union supports a big range of clubs and societies. Never underestimate the value of a healthy social life at university! The Union also has a brand new industry-leading gym, with two fitness studios, daily fitness classes and a ladies-only section; QMotion Health and Fitness Centre is the place to be to keep fit and have fun.

The University of London

Queen Mary is the third largest University of London College, and all Queen Mary graduates gain a University of London degree – recognised worldwide as a guarantee of quality.





Just why do our students love Queen Mary so much?

Career prospects

Our location between the City and Docklands gives our students a huge advantage in the job market. The quality of Queen Mary graduates is well known, and many blue-chip companies advertise their training places with us and visit the College to recruit our students.

High-quality research

The vast majority of our academic staff are also involved in cutting edge research. This means that students will benefit from being taught by real experts in their subject– whose enthusiasm and knowledge is guaranteed to rub off. The latest RAE rankings confirmed our position as a top research university, ranking us 11th nationally (The Guardian).

Teaching quality

The 2011 National Student Survey (which asks students about their experiences at university) places Queen Mary equal first in London (among the major universities), confirming that the vast majority of our students are very satisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive here. Our innovative flexible modular degrees give our students the freedom to choose modules and to determine the direction of their studies. Our students also benefit from the personal contact with teaching staff they receive through small group teaching and tutorials, where discussion and feedback is actively encouraged.



Why study at the University of London?

Choice and reputation

The quality of the teaching and research at the colleges and institutes of the University is consistently high, and the University of London as a whole also has an outstanding international reputation.

Career prospects

Employers know about the University of London and the calibre of its graduates. If you choose to study at Queen Mary, you'll get a University of London degree, respected world-wide as the sign of a well-qualified graduate. Nearly half of all the University's graduates stay in the capital after completing their degrees, are highly sought after by top companies and organisations – and earn good salaries (Queen Mary's graduates are consistently in the top 10 for starting salaries in the UK).

University of London Students' Union (ULU)

Based in Bloomsbury, ULU is one of the largest students' unions in the UK, representing all 120,000 students in the University. ULU campaigns on educational and regional issues such as student finance, fair trade and ethical employment. They support a long list of clubs and societies, and publish the London Student newspaper. They also run the Duck and Dive bar, the Gallery restaurant and a live music venue.





Why study at the University of London?

Sports

Energy Base is open to all the University's students and membership includes use of the 60-station gym and 33 metre swimming pool, exercise classes and even beauty therapy treatments (at reasonable prices). Students can also take part in London-wide intercollegiate sports leagues or play for ULU itself.

Culture

Are you a bit of a culture vulture? Good news: several of the University's Colleges house important museums and galleries. These include The Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery and the Petrie Museum of Archaeology at UCL. Free (the magic word for students) lectures, concerts and events on a wide range of subjects are organised by all of the Colleges.

Libraries

If one library just isn't enough for you, then you'll be pleased to hear that you also have access to the main University Library at Senate House in Bloomsbury. This is a fantastic resource, housing important special collections in subjects including English literature, history, and even magic! It's definitely worth joining.





Accommodation at Queen Mary

Rooms

Our en-suite rooms come complete with a self-contained shower room, plenty of storage space and an under-desk fridge/freezer unit. En-suite flats typically comprise between six to eleven rooms with students sharing a large kitchen/dining area. Non en-suite rooms feature plenty of storage areas as well as a washbasin. Students will be sharing a shower room and kitchen with only five others. For both types of rooms, wireless broadband connection and daily communal-area cleaning are provided as standard.

Eating and drinking

The Curve is just one of several catering facilities where students can enjoy breakfast or lunch. Situated in the Student Village, students can visit the sandwich deli bar, hot food counter or even our Starbucks Coffee bar for an enjoyable meal or snack with friends. For a place to drink and space to relax away from their rooms, students can chill out at World Marché. Situated within the Village and offering great views of the Regent's Canal, World Marché is ideally located for students living in the Village.

Groceries

For all grocery requirements, students can visit the Village Shop. There are other food stores and supermarkets near the Campus.





Maynard and Varey House



Sir Christopher France House

Accommodation at Queen Mary

Laundry facilities

The Village boasts three separate areas for laundry so Queen Mary students no longer have any excuses to send their dirty washing home.

Reception point and stewards

Plenty of support is available to all of those staying on campus. Each flat is overseen by a residences steward who is available 24 hours a day to provide any assistance that may be required. Furthermore, should your light bulb decide to expire at 3am, don't worry, as the Village 24-hour manned reception is available to help. And all of this just a few minutes' walk from the lecture theatres: students have never had it so easy.

Please note that due to high demand, we are unable to guarantee room availability. To find out whether you are eligible for a room on campus, or for any further information on our accommodation, please visit our Residences Office website at

www.residences.qmul.ac.uk





Support for students at Queen Mary

At Queen Mary we take our students' welfare very seriously and pride ourselves on providing a real community atmosphere in which you can flourish and make the best of your student experience. As a Queen Mary student, you will always have access to the following people for support:

Personal tutor

This is a member of the teaching staff from your department, with whom you can discuss academic issues such as module choice and any difficulties you might be having. You will usually keep the same tutor for your entire degree.

Advice and Counselling Service

The Advice and Counselling Service offers a range of free and confidential professional support services.

Welfare Advisers have specialist training to offer advice on a range of welfare rights, financial and legal issues. This can help you to understand your rights and entitlements and access professional support to remedy any problems, therefore enabling you to concentrate on your studies. Advice includes: all aspects of student finance; (loans, grants, bursaries, fee status); welfare and disability benefits; NHS funding; council tax; immigration law and more. As well as helping you find solutions to problems, Welfare Advisers can also give advice on how to avoid problems before they happen. For example, you can get help with planning a budget and check that you are getting all the funding you are entitled to – often students find out there is money available they didn't know about.

Being a student can occasionally present personal and emotional challenges. Our counsellors and therapists are professionally qualified to offer support with emotional, personal and psychological concerns.

The Advice and Counselling Service also welcomes enquiries from prospective students. You can contact them on 020 7882 8717, or visit their website at **www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk**.



Disability and Dyslexia Service

Queen Mary's Disability and Dyslexia Service provides advice, guidance and support for students with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties like dyslexia, as well as providing support to students who may be coming to terms with a recent diagnosis of a disability or specific learning difficulty. Many students who do not necessarily consider themselves to be disabled are offered support and guidance, as well as students with short-term disabilities and those with specific learning difficulties like dyslexia.

Students with disabilities or dyslexia who are interested in studying at the College may contact the Disability and Dyslexia Service staff on 020 7882 2756 for an informal discussion about their support needs whilst studying or email dds@qmul.ac.uk. Prospective students with sensory or mobility difficulties are invited to evaluate the College environment on a campus tour. More information on the support available through the Disability and Dyslexia Service can be found at www.dds.qmul.ac.uk.

Student Health Service

Queen Mary's on-site Student Health Service provides a number of medical services for its students including treatment for minor injuries and illnesses, and immunisation. It is open from 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. During term-time students can attend the on-site surgery to see a GP, a registered nurse or a health care assistant.

Careers Service

As well as offering the opportunity to talk to a Careers Consultant one-to-one, the team runs a comprehensive Information Library and organises over 80 on-campus events throughout the year: employer networking events, skills training and recruitment fairs.

The team also maintains an online Jobs Board giving you 24-hour access to part-time job vacancies, work experience opportunities (including internships) and graduate jobs. This service has been extended to include international opportunities. For more about all of our careers services and how they can support you during your time at Queen Mary, please visit: www.careers.qmul.ac.uk

Queen Mary Students' Union

The Students' Union is a student-run organisation, run by officers elected by Queen Mary students. Its central aims are to offer support to students and represent their concerns to the College, individually and generally, as well as offering various facilities and opportunities for socialising and development outside your academic work.

The Students' Union has recently undergone a multi-million pound redevelopment project which includes a state-of-the-art health and fitness centre and a newly refurbished Drapers' Bar which is at the heart of most of our social events.

The Union supports a wide range of cultural, sporting and general interest clubs and societies, which are represented at the Freshers' Fair (held during enrolment), which is the best time to sign up for the activities. There are many very active groups, holding both regular and large one-off events throughout the year. The Union also has its own monthly magazine, Cub, which has been nominated for national awards in recent years and Qmessenger, which is the Students' Union's fortnightly newspaper.

Log on to find out the latest information at:
www.qmsu.org.





Student Finance

Student finance explained for 2012 entry

Yes, fees are rising, but you will have access to an excellent financial support package – and will only repay your student loans in manageable amounts after you graduate.

With the new finance arrangements for 2012 splashed all over the media it is understandable that you may be confused. In fact, you will be able to borrow the cost of your tuition fees and money to cover your living expenses – and repay them after you graduate, in manageable amounts related to your income. So don't let these concerns put you off going to university. Additionally, there will be lots of 'free' money available if you are from a low or even middle income household.

Tuition fees: how much – and how do I pay?

From 2012, universities will be able to charge between £6,000 and £9,000, as long as they meet strict criteria to ensure that all students can access their courses, regardless of family income. The majority of universities have announced that they'll charge £9,000, but check their websites for full details. The good news is that you do not have to pay your fees upfront. Instead, you can take out a Tuition Fee Loan from Student Finance England, who pay the fees direct to your university. The loan is available to all eligible home students, on part- and full-time degree programmes, irrespective of their family's income.

Living costs: how will I survive?

Obviously you'll need money for accommodation, food, books, socialising, communications (smartphone, plus apps), and so on. Where will this money come from? Your lottery-win dreams are unlikely to come true, so for most students this will mean taking out a Student Loan for Maintenance, again from Student Finance England, to cover their living costs. Eligible students are entitled to at least 65

per cent of the maximum amounts available; the other 35 per cent depends on household income.

The maximum loan available will vary depending on where you live and study. If you move away from home to study in London, the maximum will be £7,675. For a student living away from home outside London it will be £5,500, and for students living at home it will be £4,375. The loan will be paid into your bank account in termly instalments to help you budget: don't spend it all in freshers' week on clothes/socialising/a car!

How will I repay the loans?

Your fee and maintenance loans will be combined and you will start paying them back through the tax system from the April after you graduate, BUT, only if you are earning over £21,000. The most important point is that your monthly repayments will be linked to how much you earn, not the amount you actually owe: you'll repay at a rate of 9 per cent of your income above £21,000. For example, if you are earning £25,000 you will pay back approximately £30 a month. If for any reason your income drops below £21,000, your repayments will stop. Any debt left after 30 years will be written off. The interest rate is linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI), plus extra depending on your graduate income. The maximum interest rate, which will apply once you are earning over £41,000 a year, will be RPI plus 3 per cent.



Student Finance

Maintenance Grant (non-repayable)

If your family's household income is £25,000 or less, you'll be entitled to a non-repayable Maintenance Grant of up to £3,250; students from households with incomes of up to £42,600 will be entitled to a partial Maintenance Grant. Your family income will be assessed before you go to university. Like the maintenance loan, any grant you get will be paid termly. (However, your maintenance loan will be reduced by 50p for every £1 of grant you receive.)

Bursaries (non-repayable)

Universities charging between £6,000 and £9,000 have to agree to provide financial support to help students from low income backgrounds. You need to check universities' websites to find out what they are offering. As an illustration, Queen Mary, University of London, plans to offer a generous bursary package: £1,500 a year for students in receipt of the full Maintenance Grant and £1,200 for students who get a partial Maintenance Grant.



Programme

The Government has announced a £150m National Scholarships Programme for students from lower income families. Again, check with individual universities to see how they will administer this. For example, Queen Mary plans to offer 266 students from low income families a £3,000 benefit in their first year: a £1,500 fee reduction plus £1,500 made up of a cash bursary and 'in-kind' support. In their second and third years, they'll receive the Queen Mary Bursary.

Scholarships (non-repayable)

Many universities also offer scholarships, although information on these can be hard to find. They usually reward academic achievement, for example, excellent results in your year 13 exams, or, once you are at university, your first year exam results. To find out more, contact university finance advisers, usually located in welfare or student support offices. They can advise you on all aspects of financial support to study, including how to actually obtain what you are entitled to.

Please note that these arrangements refer to students living in England and studying for an eligible course at an English university and for those who qualify as home students. Some of this information might change before you start university so keep up to date at: **www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance** and/or **www.bis.gov/studentfinance**



Money – students' tips to make it go further

The key to financial survival at university is obvious but boring: careful budgeting and advance planning. Here, Samerah, a medicine student, and Kemal, a history student, share their experiences and pass on their advice. Here are their joint tips to avoiding financial meltdown:

Budget in advance!

Kemal: By creating a realistic budget before you start university, you can easily get used to the funds you have available for things like food, books and nights out - so you can avoid any nasty surprises when you begin your course!

Samerah: Budgeting in advance is very important for me, mainly so I don't go on a spending spree and find myself strapped for cash by the middle of the month.

Put a bit extra into the pot

Kemal: By putting an extra bit away every month you are preparing yourself for any possible scenario that could occur during your time at university. You will be prepared for anything.

Samerah: I try to put some money away every month so I have savings to fall back on if needed.

Shop smart (and cheaply)

Kemal: If you live in university halls or a shared-house, shopping with your flatmates is a very smart choice. By shopping communally, it is possible to save a lot of money as the products you buy are often bought for the long haul, meaning that trips to the shops are less frequent - saving you valuable travel money.

Samerah: I make a list when I go shopping, so I don't end up buying things I don't need. It doesn't hurt to treat yourself once in a while, if you save on one thing then there is no harm in spending on another, like nice clothes.



Plan your social life

Kemal: This can easily be done by planning a cheap, yet (still) active social life. For example, frequenting the university club rather than going to expensive night clubs in the centre of town every night will save you buckets of money.

Samerah: If I know I'm going out, I'll make sure I set some money aside in advance. I try to account for everything (travel, food) as I prefer not to use my savings to fund my social life.

Getting the most out of London on the cheap

Kemal: There are many attractions in London that you can visit on a student budget. For example, many clubs run student nights and many shops offer student discounts.

Samerah: There are many things to do in London for free, I like visiting parks and museums for example so I only end up paying for travel. There are also loads of nice places to eat that aren't too pricey (it's not all about the big fancy restaurants) - I find it's the smaller (cheaper) eateries that do the nicest food.

Credit card schemes

Both Samerah and Kemal agree, be wary of credit card schemes when you start your course. Credit companies will approach you with 'free gifts' in return for your membership, however more often than not, there is a catch so be careful to avoid any possible future trouble.



Part-time work

Whether working as a student tutor or even as a store assistant at the local supermarket, students can enhance their CVs with valuable skills and experiences they've gained from their part-time jobs. Here we ask Gabriella (a part-time Events Promoter for Queen Mary's Students' Union & Shop Assistant for stationers Paperchase) and Beren (a part-time barman & waiter) about their part-time jobs and what skills they've gained, in addition to the cash!

Tell us about your jobs

Gabriella: As an Events Promoter for Queen Mary's Students' Union, my main role is promoting the Students' Union Drapers' Bar and the various Freshers' events that happen during Freshers' fortnight. I recently undertook a spot of amateur photography for the Students' Union Facebook Group and (rather excitingly) was charged with gathering information on competing club nights to determine what students want from their Students' Union. My research led to the establishment of the hugely successful weekly 'Indie' night at the Drapers' Bar.

Beren: I work as a barman and silver service waiter at many top venues all over London. Being employed by an agency means that every shift is in a different location which means it is virtually impossible to get bored with the job.

How many hours do you work a week?

Gabriella: During Freshers' week, I typically worked up to 6 hours a day but as time wore on and the demand for promoters dwindled, I worked anything between 6-10 hours a week. This is why I decided to work for 12 hours a week for Paperchase.

Beren: The thing that is so useful about my job is its flexibility. There is no set number of hours you need to work during any one week; as a guide, when I first started my job I was working between 12-16 hours a week, but these hours vary depending on my availability.



Beren Ashton-Butler
English Language and Linguistics

How did you get your part-time job?

Gabriella: I found out about the Events Promotion job through on campus advertising (posters outside the Library) and looked up the job description on the Students' Union website. I found my Paperchase job independently, by popping into the central London branch and enquiring whether they had any vacancies. Luckily I was recruited as a Christmas temp, did well, and was kept on.

Part-time work




Gabriella Fisher
Drama

Beren: I saw an advert outside the Careers Office on a notice board and then arranged an appointment to get advice on interview techniques. Within 2 days of applying for the job, I got it. Over 2 years later I still have the same job, and have even been promoted to Supervisor.

Is it difficult to balance your part-time job and your study?

Gabriella: When it comes to balancing part-time work and study (not to mention clubs and societies), it is important to remember that your studies should always come first. Arrange suitable hours with your employer as soon as you receive your timetable at the beginning of the academic year. Also, be sure to pencil in time-off for exams as soon as possible and it is well worth reducing your working hours during study leave periods. Find a balance that works for you and stick to it; I found working on the weekdays I was free and leaving my weekends for study and a night out worked well for me.



Beren: My studies come first and my job is there for any downtime I might have between social activities, study and personal time. It doesn't dominate my student life but it does allow me to make the most of my time at university, not only because of the freedom the extra money can give, but also because of the people I meet and the experiences I can gain from a working life.

How important is the income from your part-time job to your budgeting plans?

Gabriella: Having a part-time job means I have an allowance that is mine to spend as I wish! Having funds separate from my student loan is great as it's money that I don't have to pay back; I recently saved assiduously so that I could afford to go to Singapore and Sydney in my summer break.

Beren: The income from my part-time job is of vital importance to my budgeting plans. With a healthy drip into my bank account during term-time, I can make good use of the clubs and societies at university as well as plan for my trips abroad.

What other skills have you developed as a result of your part-time job?

Gabriella: Having a part-time job whilst studying has equipped me with many skills, including time management, communication and negotiation skills as well as a greater sense of responsibility. Most importantly though, I feel the experience has prepared me for the world of full-time work as I am more aware of what employers are looking for. Having a part-time job whilst studying also looks great on your CV as it shows an employer that you can time-manage. Gaining positive references from previous employers also helps!

London on the cheap

Thinking of coming to university in London and worried about the cost of living? Don't be: we're here to help you find the best bargains, the cheapest food and even a social life that won't cost the earth. Plus, remember that you will be entitled to a larger Student Loan for Maintenance (if you live away from your parents' home) – and that part-time work is plentiful in the capital, and generally better paid than elsewhere.

Food, drink and household shopping

As a student you won't be shopping at Harrods (sorry), but there are numerous ways you can afford your regular supply of instant noodles. Buying supermarket own brand goods is the cheapest option, and clubbing together with your housemates to buy regularly used items (teabags, coffee, milk, rice, pasta, etc) in bulk – also helps. Take advantage of London's many street markets, where you can find everything from household items like washing up liquid and toothpaste to fruit, vegetables, and even clothes. Queen Mary's students are particularly well served by local markets, including Roman Road, Whitechapel and Brick Lane.

Eating out

If you plan to eat out, there are numerous cheap restaurants (check out the Time Out '50 Cheapest Eats' Guide). For more up-market dining look at the London papers (Metro, The Evening Standard etc.) or Time Out, which often have two-for-one deals at restaurants. The on-line restaurant guide, TopTable, has plenty of bargain dining-out options at good venues. Don't forget you can also eat on campus or even – shock – make your own lunches at home, which is usually the cheapest option and can be tailor-made to your own tastes.



London on the cheap

Clothes

For more fashionable items visit markets like Spitalfields, Petticoat Lane, Greenwich, Camden and Portobello Road, where you can pick up vintage clothing as well as current trends. Brick Lane is also good fun for the completely random (one shoe, anyone?) but extremely cheap bargains. There are also chain stores offering really cheap clothing as well as student discounts, but you might even be able to replicate what's on the catwalk by visiting London's numerous charity shops.

Travel

Don't forget that you get a massive discount on tube, buses and national rail/coach services. In addition, if you are regularly travelling on London Transport, get an Oyster card. This will give you automatic discounts not only on travel but at some galleries and events. Walking is an excellent way to get around London – the centre of London is really quite small and if you are willing to do a couple of hours' walking you can take in all the major sights, galleries, shops and museums.

Entertainment

Your NUS card will get you into gigs, theatres, galleries, and much more for reduced prices, but further bargains are easily found – the TKTS booth in Leicester Square offers half price tickets for the theatre. Most of London's museums are now free so there is no excuse for you to avoid culture. Take advantage of 'entry before 10pm' offers when it's cheaper or even free to get in at many of London's clubs.



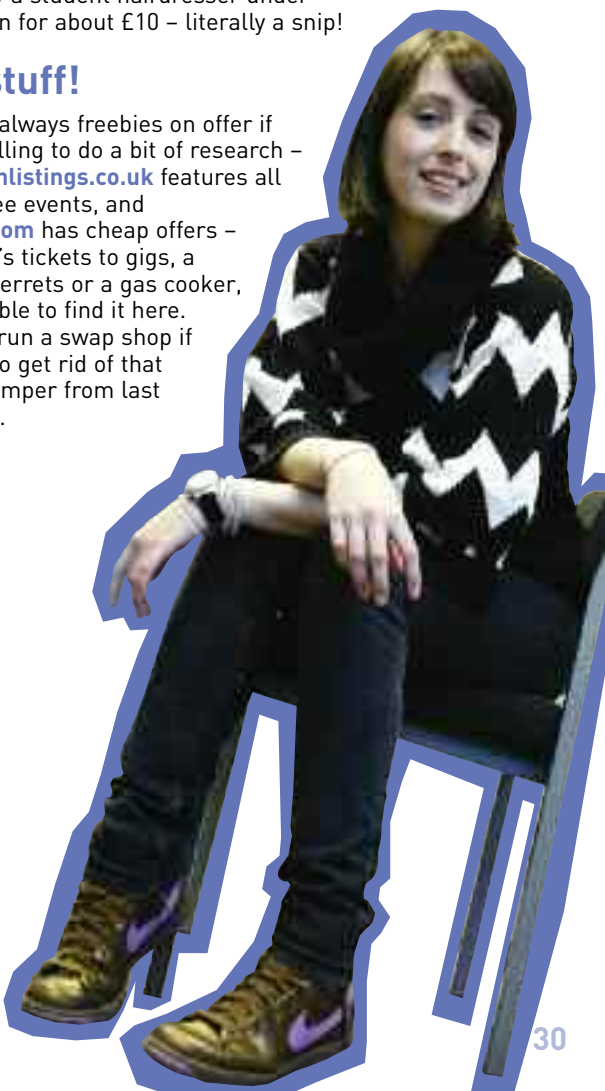


Keeping your locks trim

You can get inexpensive haircuts at salons like Toni and Guy or Vidal Sassoon, if you are willing to be a 'model' – your cut will be done by a student hairdresser under supervision for about £10 – literally a snip!

Free stuff!

There are always freebies on offer if you are willing to do a bit of research – freelondonlistings.co.uk features all current free events, and gumtree.com has cheap offers – whether it's tickets to gigs, a couple of ferrets or a gas cooker, you'll be able to find it here. They also run a swap shop if you want to get rid of that horrible jumper from last Christmas.



Update on the job market

Head of Queen Mary's Careers Service, Emily Huns, explains the career benefits of getting a degree.

Has the current economic downturn affected graduate employment?

Whilst the current climate makes job-hunting more challenging for everyone, evidence consistently suggests that graduates are in a better position than non-graduates. Unemployment amongst Queen Mary graduates is relatively low and, what's more, students can improve their chances significantly by doing three things:

1. building work experience from Year 1 (good work experience in your first year doesn't have to be paid and could include community volunteering or a job role on-campus);
2. attending some of the 80+ careers events run on the QM campus each year;
3. taking advantage of the weekly training Queen Mary Careers provides in applications, CV-writing and interview technique.

Is it still the case that graduates can earn 35% more than those with only A-levels?

They can do, yes. Much depends on which sector and role the graduate goes into. Average graduate salaries – in the larger firms which report such figures – were increasing year-on-year for a long time and have stayed remarkably stable during this recession.

Are graduates still in demand?

Yes! Despite the recession, Queen Mary Careers has engaged 25 additional employers in on campus careers events for students this year, and the graduate job market is starting to recover – particularly in financial services. Other sectors are still affected by the current climate. We are keeping an eye on hiring figures across all sectors and will update you regularly via our website and blog.

What should students do; study a subject at university that they are likely to enjoy, or one that they feel will lead to a job?

Generally, one you enjoy and are good at, since motivation and a good grade are two of the five most important factors in making a graduate employable. The other three are challenging work experience that showcases graduate level skills, a real

understanding of what a job entails and a well presented and evidence-based application and interview (my team can help you with all of this).

Remember that around half of graduate jobs are open to you whatever you've studied. However, if you feel safer doing something you feel will lead you to a job rather than the subject you enjoy most, that's ok too – as long as you like it enough to do well in the subject.

How can university Careers Teams help university students?

Through all of the things referred to in my answers above, so that includes:

- helping students find work experience and part-time work on and off campus;
- arranging careers events through which students can meet prospective employers and network with past students;
- guiding students through their career options after uni;
- advertising vacancies;
- training students in CV- and application-writing and interview techniques;
- advising them on whether or not postgraduate study will make them more employable.

Finally, tell us a little bit about QM's Careers Office

Well... there are 14 of us (that includes careers consultants, information officers, an employer liaison officer and two students helpers). We're based in the Queens' Building, on the Mile End Campus, with a satellite service for medical and dental students at our Whitechapel Campus. We provide all the above services plus have a particular focus on integrated careers work in academic departments, graduate careers coaching, creating new student work experience opportunities and skills training for student groups such as Students' Union societies and volunteers. Read more about the team and our range of services at www.careers.qmul.ac.uk, where you'll also find job vacancies, our Jobs Blog and student career profiles.

Emily Huns



University – what do graduates think?

We spoke to two recent Queen Mary, University of London graduates and asked them the questions you need answered...

The graduates

- **Natasha Neeson**, English and Drama
- **Vishal Pankhania**, Geography with Business Management

1. Tell us about your job

Natasha: I work as a researcher for BBC 3 Development, working in Factual Entertainment. My job is to work with my team to create new show ideas and formats for BBC3. My days vary a lot - usually I spend most mornings reading through papers, magazines - getting inspiration for new shows and researching hot topics, trends, stories etc. We'll then meet, brainstorm ideas, and work on formats and the talent to use - we meet with lots of different people from day to day, from celebrities to entrepreneurs. I also work on Saturdays on Strictly Come Dancing, working backstage on the live shows, which is absolutely incredible!

Vishal: I'm currently working as a graduate surveyor in a chartered practice; I'm involved primarily in valuations. A typical day for me involves meeting senior surveyors at subject properties we've been instructed to value. I assist senior surveyors to measure and inspect the buildings for defects and once we've drawn up our floor plans and are familiar with what we've been instructed to value, I prepare valuation reports. I'm also currently being sponsored for further training towards gaining my chartered status.

2. Was the transition from student to full time-employee difficult?

Natasha: I literally went straight from handing in my dissertation into full-time work. It wasn't too challenging, the thing I found the hardest was the long days and actually embracing the life of 'living for the weekend'.

Vishal: Working as a surveyor can be compared with meeting deadlines at university! The transition therefore wasn't too difficult and the skills I've learnt at university have really helped me in my job.



Natasha Neeson

3. How did you apply for jobs while at university?

Natasha: I always knew that eventually I wanted a career in media. When I entered my final year I looked into graduate jobs in the media sector, especially the BBC. I saw the Vision Intake Pool, applied for it and fortunately got a place.

Vishal: The Careers Office provided me with lots of advice on my CV and the literature available in the Careers Office was particularly useful in helping me establish the industry in which I wanted to work.

4. What skills did you gain at university which you currently use in your job?

Natasha: Skills such as communication, self-motivation, the ability to research in-depth topics have all come in very handy.

Vishal: Transferable skills such as data analysis, research methods and the ability to confidently present information.

5. What are the benefits of getting a degree?

Natasha: With a degree you're much more likely to go into a better paid, higher qualified job. Three years at university really teaches you a lot about yourself, and gets you ready for the expectations of the real working world.

Vishal: Getting a degree demonstrates to employers that you are academically astute in a subject. It also gives you credibility – which can't be taken away from you.

7. Do you have any job seeking advice for graduates?

Natasha: At the beginning of your third year, start mapping out your options. The final year is so intense, especially the workload, so give yourself time to visit the Careers Office, make sure you have a solid CV and know what line of work suits you. Try getting a few weeks' work experience if you can – employers love people with experience! Think ahead – you might graduate in July, but vacancies are advertised much earlier.

Vishal: My advice would be to identify an industry or role you would like to work in and then market yourself to employers in that industry. This is best done by making direct contact with individuals over the phone or in person who may be looking to hire graduates in your field.



Vishal Pankhania

Making the transition to university

Although university is superficially similar to school (ie much of your time will be spent studying) you will find it all a very different experience. Being at university is ultimately all about taking responsibility for your learning (and your life).

Lectures and tutorials

The structure you are used to at school will disappear overnight and you will be expected to follow a different sort of timetable. Unlike at school, no-one will take registration in lectures and if you start missing them you won't be reminded to attend – they're not normally compulsory, but it is generally a good idea to go or you'll miss essential information. Tutorials and seminars are compulsory, however, and must not be missed!

The dreaded deadlines

You will be expected to produce work to rigid deadlines and failing to meet them usually results in something nasty happening: either you'll get a lower grade or the work will not be marked at all. It really is worth getting into good habits early on in your course before the level of work starts to increase.

Public speaking

At some point you are going to have to give a presentation to a group of students, often followed by a discussion. This is sometimes called a seminar, and, although nerve-wracking, is an important part of your university experience, and very valuable for your future career. You will be expected to use your own initiative to research and present a topic, as well as offering a logical argument (it's not always necessarily about being right or wrong) and making sure your audience doesn't fall asleep.



Making the transition to university

Working with other students

On most degrees you'll work with others on joint projects and this may require you to perfect your skills of negotiation, diplomacy and teamwork. (In other words, sometimes your fellow students can be awkward and lazy.) You won't always be able to choose who you work with, but no matter how annoying the rest of the group is, it's important to keep your goals in mind and work together professionally.

Looking after yourself

As well as being a model student academically, if you're leaving home for university you'll also be learning how to live with other people in your shared flat, and making friends and socializing with the wider university community. To add to the challenge you'll also have to manage your money and look after yourself on the practical front. That means getting to grips with shopping, cooking, sharing 'facilities' (unless you have an ensuite room), doing laundry and making sure you have insured your belongings – exciting stuff.

You'll never walk alone

There is plenty of help and advice available about all aspects of university life but it will be up to you to seek it out when you need it. Students in higher years are a great source of information on how to cope with the first few weeks of university, especially on the practical front. All universities also have advice centres and your students' union will also be a great source of help. There isn't a problem that they haven't dealt with before and they will be only too happy to assist.





How to survive living with other people

Leaving home for the first time can be scary, but luckily most universities give priority for halls to first years, on the basis that it's a halfway house between home and the outside world. However, living in halls is likely to involve something you might never have experienced: close contact with Other (non-family) People. Living with people you've never met before can be a challenge – and that's after you've got over the initial shock of discovering their strange habits, odd personal hygiene routines and obsessions with phantom (or otherwise) milk-stealers.

Here are the Golden Rules of communal living according to two seasoned Queen Mary flat-sharers, Charlie Butt and Helen McGraw.

Be prepared to compromise

Charlie: You HAVE to be prepared to compromise. It's probably the most integral part of living with others and without it, any living arrangement will never be successful and happy. It sounds obvious but a bit of give and take between housemates can make a world of difference; if you're willing to adapt for your housemates then they're going to be much more willing to do so for you.

Agree the ground rules

Charlie: Agreeing ground rules is incredibly important especially if you are moving in with people who you may not know that well. I was lucky enough to move in with people with whom I was already great friends but we still laid down certain rules.

Helen: We also wrote out a few jokey flat rules. Making it fun didn't make us feel like we were living by strict rules but gave us a general understanding of the do's and don'ts in our lovely house.

Work out a flat-share budget

Charlie: As far as managing money was concerned we split everything equally. We tried to be vigilant about how much electricity/ water etc we used (it was a house rule) and would always be prompt with payments - when you're splitting bills you owe it to your friends to be reliable.

The importance of communication

Charlie: Communication is so important between housemates. If any issues, we discussed them as quickly as possible. In our house there were rarely any raised voices and consequently we've remained really good friends.

Respecting each others' space

Helen: Your room is yours. Knock before entering (I am particularly bad at this!) to say goodnight.

Charlie: Just because you share a house it doesn't mean you want to share every waking moment with each other! Being an only child and used to having some alone time, it meant a lot to me that when I wanted my own space my housemates would respect that and not take it as an insult!

Do you have any other tips for living with other people?

Helen: Have fun, enjoy it. You don't realise how lucky you are, especially if you are living with your best friends.

Charlie: My only tip would be to really appreciate each other. These people are like your uni family and will always be there for you so make time for them.

Are you still in contact with your flatmates?!

Helen: YES! No way are they escaping me. I have lived with four other people and I love them ALL to bits!

Charlie: ABSOLUTELY! I was in a performance last week and all of my (now ex) housemates made the effort to come. It meant a lot to me that they showed support and it reminded me how much I miss us all being together. I definitely consider them all friends for life and think I'm so lucky to have shared such an important time with them.

Charlie Butt and Helen McCraw, both 21, graduated in Drama 2010.



Staying at home?

Make it work for you!

What's life really like for a student living at home and commuting to university? With more and more students seeking to drop the expense of moving into student halls as a way of saving money, it's a good idea to be aware of how to make the best of living at home – while also making the most of your university experience. James May-Quinlain lived at home in his first two years whilst studying history at Queen Mary, University of London. We asked him the obvious questions...

Why did you choose to stay at home?

One of the main reasons I chose to stay at home was cost, staying at home and commuting seemed the most sensible thing to do. Living where I did in London at the time meant that I was only 40 minutes away from Campus, which was actually closer than my journey to college was! I also got a few more years of my Dad doing my cooking and cleaning, which was definitely a plus!

By living at home, do you feel you missed out on the social life?

I don't think I missed out on the social life that much at all. Straightaway, I was enjoying a pretty full social life. The fact that I was always a night bus or two away from home also meant that my evenings were never curtailed by the need to catch the last train.

Was it more difficult to make friends?

As I wasn't living in halls, I made more of an effort to meet people who were on my course. I felt that this worked well as I made a good few long lasting friendships this way. With Freshers, it doesn't matter if you live in halls or at home as everyone is so friendly.

How were your parents with you returning home later than usual?

I live with my Dad and he was fine about me returning home later than usual. He understood that even though I was living at home, I would be out more. It also helped that I made a friend at university who lived near me, so I usually had someone to share the night bus with!

Any regrets about living at home?

I really enjoyed my first two years at university and I really don't think that living in halls would have given me a better experience. If you put the effort into enjoying your time at university, it really doesn't matter if you live at home or not.

James May-Quinlain



Useful contacts

Contacts at Queen Mary, University of London

The Education Liaison Office

For advice on higher education in general:

Tel: 020 7882 3064

email: education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk

Central switchboard

For all general enquiries, please call:

Tel: 0800 376 1800

Accommodation

For up-to-date information on our halls of residences, including amenities and prices, please call:

Tel: 020 7882 5522

Advice and Counselling

To find out about the types of support available to Queen Mary students, including support for students with disabilities, please call:

Tel: 020 7882 8717

Or alternatively, you can email any queries to welfare@qmul.ac.uk

External contacts

The National Union of Students

For more information on what it really means to be a student in the UK.

www.nusonline.co.uk

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

Tel: 01242 227 788

www.ucas.com

Queen Mary, University of London

www.qmul.ac.uk

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