We were honoured to renew and extend our partnership with Santander in October 2014, when Steve Pateman visited us for a formal signing ceremony and gave a lecture to our students on ‘Our progress to economic recovery, the role of enterprise and the banks and the challenges that still lie ahead’. The new partnership agreement focused on preparing our students for the world of work in a wide variety of ways. It gave them a global perspective by supporting their work and study at universities overseas. It gave them entrepreneurial skills by supporting their business ideas and start-ups. It gave them an insight into how societies and communities work and the difference that creativity can make, by introducing them to the work of arts and cultural groups in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. And it gave them the chance to deepen their academic learning and progress their careers through postgraduate scholarships.

Case studies of all these activities are given in this report, highlighting the difference made to our students’ lives through Santander’s generosity and foresight. We are immensely grateful for this support. Not only does it directly impact our students in incredibly positive ways, but it also moves the University forward in achieving its strategy and core purpose. Today, we are a more international university, a more community-focused university, a university that offers more quality teaching and learning and that prepares its students better for the world of work than we were. Without Santander’s support, we would not have been able to offer such opportunities. Thank you.
Each year Santander funds 20 Mobility Awards for students at Queen Mary allowing them to travel abroad to undertake work or study in a new and culturally diverse environment.

Lucio Pezzella travelled to Valencia, Spain for his year abroad.

“My year abroad was fantastic in every sense of the word. Studying in Spain meant that my Spanish improved drastically; way more than it could ever have improved in England. The studying experience was intense, but hugely rewarding. It was certainly a challenge adapting to a new university in a new country, but it was a challenge I found very welcoming.

I have learnt more than I could possibly imagine during my time abroad. I learnt to establish friendships with people who do not speak the same mother tongue as me, and as a result I have become much more confident in my abilities.”

I am very grateful to Santander for the grant, which hugely helped with my finances during my year abroad, and I would like to thank them for this support.”

Loes Van Driel spent her year abroad at the University of Malaga, Spain.

“Although I was already open-minded as a result of my international education before I came to Queen Mary, my year abroad has only developed my international mindset. I am currently about to embark on the process of applying to a postgraduate degree. One of the programs I want to apply to is an MSc in Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts at Erasmus University Rotterdam, which requires candidates with an international mindset. Thus, even though taking up a program like this will mean that I won’t be (academically) studying Spanish any more, the skills I have gained during my degree at Queen Mary and those developed during my year abroad have developed me into a suitable candidate for a degree in such an international field.”

‘I would like to thank Santander for the opportunity to pursue what I would like to do and for recognising my attitude and contribution to my studies and universities.’
Investing in young entrepreneurs

Thanks to a generous grant from Santander, QMUL Careers have been able to support ‘Try It’ prizes of up to £500 to start up students’ businesses or social enterprises, and ‘Grow It’ prizes of up to £10,000 to develop students’ existing profit-making or social enterprises.

Pahal Nopani was awarded a ‘Grow It’ prize for her social enterprise, ‘Tripeeza’.

Tripeeza is an e-commerce travel website that aims to make travel easy for the audience. It will give the audience at large an opportunity to experience what it feels like to travel from experienced travellers. It also aims to contribute to the travel industry and inspire people to travel far and wide with ease.

Since receiving the funding, Pahal has founded a team of web developers and created a landing page for Tripeeza. The beta version is going to launch soon, and will be tested first with bloggers. The app is also currently under construction. The social media pages are already operational and the Facebook page has over 700 likes.

“If you do what you love, you’ll never work a day in your life.” – Marc Anthony

Hi. My name is Pahal Nopani and this is one quote that I firmly believe in and live by. A happy go lucky girl belonging from the city of Kolkata in India, I did my MSc in Marketing from QMUL (2013-14). Before that I had done my under graduation in B.B.A from St Xavier’s College in Kolkata. My father is a self-made businessman whilst my mother is a homemaker. A travel enthusiast, I love exploring different places, meeting new people, making friends from all over the world and seeing all the beauty that this world has to offer.

“One of the huge mistakes people make is that they try to force an interest on themselves. You don’t choose your passions; your passions choose you.” - Jeff Bezos

Travelling is that passion that has chosen me. I used to hunt for career options that involved travelling. I did find a lot but nothing interested me much. I wanted to travel the world, one city at a time. I didn’t want baggage behind. I wanted to be free, to travel at my own will. And while thinking deeply how I could do that, I found my answer. “If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door”; these inspiring words by Milton Berle ignited my mind and provided me with the drive to find Tripeeza, my dream start-up company. I had begun the work as soon as the idea came to my mind. It involved a lot of research, a lot of streamlining of thoughts, a lot of brainstorming sessions and a lot of questions in my mind. But as I began the journey, things became clearer, and I gradually became more acquainted with such kind of a learning environment. I wanted to do everything I could for my start-up venture. I wanted to give it my all. I was ready to undertake the risks involved and put in 24 hours of work to it to see it thrive. Soon, I began sharing the ideas with people I trusted and started getting reviews. I worked on the reviews I found were worthwhile and began refining the idea further.

When I won this award everything felt surreal. I couldn’t believe that I had just secured funds to build upon my start-up. It is a huge thing for any start-up venture and it can do wonders to your project.

It was the exact same thing for me too. The feeling was both unbelievable and outstanding at the same time. This award is not only going to be life changing but it is also a career defining moment for me. There is no better feeling of achievement than seeing others believe in the vision you see. It acts as a booster to mental confidence and gives one a sense of immense satisfaction.

Santander has given wings to my dream. I am immensely grateful to Santander and those behind the Build It awards for entrusting me with this huge responsibility and for helping me build my dream start-up. In the future, I shall always remember Santander as the stepping-stone, which helped further my start up career through this award.

‘There is no better feeling of achievement than seeing others believe in the vision you see… Santander has given wings to my dream.’
Earlier this year Santander provided six grants for QMUL students to spend a life-changing week in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro with Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, in partnership with People’s Palace Projects. This opportunity provided a unique opportunity to work alongside some of the world’s greatest cultural warriors, as they fight for social transformation through art.

Christina Govier, BA Politics

“The packed schedule of the week was excellent as it allowed us to see as much of the organisation’s work as possible. We were given an overview on the Monday visiting all the cultural centres and learning about the organisation’s collective work and history. This really helped later in the week having context to projects we saw or people we met. On talking with the others a lot of us felt overwhelmed, not emotionally but just with information. We had become aware of the importance of the opportunity we had been given and felt exceptionally privileged. As a group we often spent our evenings at our base discussing our personal reflections on the day, this became really important to me to understand others’ perspectives on particular things. It was good to broaden my own understanding of what we were experiencing.

I particularly enjoyed hosting a theatre workshop for Vigario Geral’s professional theatre group and the reciprocated workshop Afroreggae’s theatre group hosted for us on the Friday. It was important to challenge ourselves and to be immersed in their work practically. It was in engaging in these superb workshops that I felt the transformative power of Afroreggae’s work within the favelas. I was particularly impressed with the dedication members showed to the organisation and to their respective groups, something I have experienced much less of in the UK.

“We had become aware of the importance of the opportunity we had been given and felt exceptionally privileged.”

I would recommend the project maintains a diverse group with one or two members from another academic discipline to theatre because it diversified our discussions and learning greatly. I would highly recommend the trip to anyone who is looking to work in social/arts based projects and wants to view the work of a successful organisation that have grown successfully in a challenging societal environment.

I am exceptionally grateful for this opportunity I was given. It has been transformative for myself and for my learning.”
Catherine Palmer, BA Drama

“Our week long experience with AfroReggae is definitely hard to define, review or find words to encompass. It was an incredible week, which is very hard to describe to others and has become almost a powerful sensation and memory between those that experienced it.

This opportunity felt completely unique and an absolute privilege to experience working with AfroReggae, feeling so welcomed in the favelas and being able to use art to communicate and learn from each other. The first day of the trip, visiting all the cultural centres was exciting and completely overwhelming. This day really allowed us to come to terms with the effect AfroReggae has through its infrastructure and physical presence. This was also our first time experiencing AfroReggae in real life and time beyond readings, videos, photographs etc. The cultural centres and the fantastic variety of people working in them gave a real sense of the presence, importance and hope AfroReggae offer to the community. What really added to this experience was seeing a range of diverse performances from different groups at the cultural centres. These short performances really brought the spaces to life and were surreal and amazing, in terms of the skill, commitment and passion that oozed from the performers.

My next main highlight from the trip was the workshop we did with Afro Lata. This workshop was a practical and reflective exploration, looking at how we can engage young people coming from difficult backgrounds and engage them using art. This workshop produced excellent discussion and reflection on working with young people, as well as the exchange of stories and suggestions. We also questioned different social issues, we asked Afro Lata about what they noticed between working with young people in Liverpool and Rio. We questioned how art was valued comparatively in Brazil and the UK and the connotations attached to those working in the arts industries. We discussed the ill-treatment of women and girls in the UK, in terms of experiencing sexism, lack of respect and abuse. All of these discussions emerged from doing only three different exercises that we had each used with different groups of people for community and applied theatre projects in the UK.

During our week in Rio, I was constantly surrounded by those who loved and dedicated themselves to art and young people, despite difficult social, political and economic circumstances. Art had such a value and a place in the community which was overwhelming and beautiful.”
Widening opportunity within the Students’ Union

Santander supports the Student Unions’ QM Skills Award, which helps students record and strengthen the employability skills they develop whilst volunteering in a leadership role and/or working in the Students’ Union.

Recognising excellence: Santander Postgraduate Scholarships

Santander Universities UK provides three scholarships of £3,000 for UK and international students from Ibero-American countries to study at Queen Mary. The funding contributes to tuition fees to enable the brightest students to come and study here.

Esteban Belmont is from Mexico, and came to Queen Mary to do his MA in International Relations. He tells us:

“I studied an undergraduate programme in International Relations at Mexico’s biggest public university: UNAM. Following this I wanted to do a Master’s and continue my professional formation, so I decided to do my best to get an opportunity to study in the UK, known worldwide for having outstanding universities.

When I got accepted at QMUL, I was thrilled. It made me realise that I was a step closer to fulfil my dream of studying at one of the best UK universities. My aspiration is simple: work hard, and return to Mexico as an International Relations professional.

I remembered the day I received confirmation that I have been awarded the Santander scholarship. I saw the message at 6:00am Mexican time and I was so excited about it that I woke up my parents to celebrate!

This scholarship means a lot to me, not only in the obvious financial terms but also as a recognition of my work, my profile and how much effort I put in to be standing today here at QMUL. This scholarship has marked a difference in many ways. Now I am going to be able to be focused on my Master’s programme and nothing more. This..."
Eira Deneb Esparza Soto is studying MSc International Financial Management at Queen Mary. She previously studied at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Tamaulipas in Mexico.

“I always had big aspirations to study overseas, but I knew I would need some financial support to be able to do so. Receiving this scholarship has helped me focus 100% on my studies, as I no longer have to worry about the tuition fee payment.

I would like to thank Santander for providing me the opportunity to study MSc International Financial Management at Queen Mary University of London. It has been a great honour to receive this financial support, and it will be my pleasure to get the most out of this incomparable experience, by being a model student within my programme. Thank you very much.”

Szymon Walkowiak is a graduate student on the Master’s programme in Big Data Science at Queen Mary University of London. He joins us from the University of Westminster.

“I felt very honoured and pleased to have been selected as Santander scholarship recipient. It was a very meaningful appraisal of my track record to-date both in academia and professional life. This success meant that I could afford my postgraduate education and focus all my attention and energy on achieving the best possible results at Queen Mary.

I believe the Santander Master’s Scholarship will have a great impact on my performance during the Master’s programme and ultimately will help me realise my career aspirations. As we live in times of dynamic information revolution and there is a growing demand for highly-skilled data scientists, my goal is to stay at the very forefront of this change and to position myself as an expert in data mining, new statistical techniques and Big Data processing methods. I am convinced that the Santander Scholarship will enable me to contribute more towards future research outputs and the academic excellence of Queen Mary University of London. I am sure that the generous support which I received from Santander will help me achieve those goals. I am extremely grateful for being granted the Santander Master’s Scholarship and I am proud I can represent such an organisation amongst fellow postgraduate students at Queen Mary.”

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“I am convinced that the Santander Scholarship will enable me to contribute more towards future research outputs and the academic excellence of Queen Mary University of London.”
Funding from Santander will be used to offer support to QMUL students taking part in the Partner Summer School Programme. Under this programme students can attend summer programmes of study or cultural immersion with some of our partner universities overseas. This year we sent around 30 students to partners in China and India, and will next year include partners in Colombia and hopefully Mexico. The funding from Santander will be used to contribute to some of the costs for some students, e.g. flights and living expenses. The selection of how the funds are divided will depend on how many applicants there are. Students will be required to submit their transcripts and a personal statement, for their application, and this will be used to decide which students are allocated the funding.

For further information please contact:

Rose Bailey
Development and Alumni Directorate
e-mail: rose.bailey@qmul.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7882 6429