Welcome
Welcome to the seventeenth PASS Newsletter. Please send contributions or comments for future issues to: d.m.andrews@qmul.ac.uk. The next newsletter will be in the autumn. Back copies can be found on the PASS webpage: www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/schools/educationliaison/wp/pass/index.html. All contributors receive a PASS mug...

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Pioneer SBCS mentor at PASS awards event
Guest speaker at the certificate ceremony this year (19 March) was PASS alumna, Tendai Dzvuke, whose address was interesting, inspirational and helpful to current students. Tendai is now a DF1 Dentist at the Pavilion Dental Centre in Brixton, whose manager there kindly allowed her to spend the afternoon with us. Tendai told current mentors how she had been one of the pilot organisers (with Khaled Abid and Nima Farah) for the SBCS PASS scheme, set up in 2008 with Dr Caroline Brennan. She recalled how much she had enjoyed being an SBCS PASS pioneer and taking part in other PASS-related activities, such as a debate with UCL mentors. She also talked about her memories of mentoring sessions and said she is still in touch with one of her original mentees.

Credit this year should go also to the event photographer (whose work appears in this newsletter), Khadhija Khanom (Maths), and organising committee Zeeshan Arshed (SEF), Thomas Ganly (Geography), Lois Ove (SEMS), Po Hu - Kelly - (EECS) and Basma Tahir (SBM). Queen Mary Catering’s cupcakes also got a lot of compliments.
Not all PASS schemes choose to elect mentors of the year each time (not because their mentors aren’t fabulous, of course). This year, awards went to:

**Nicolay Beck**, SBM, for getting on with everyone and attending so often; **Alhamza Alnaimi**, Computer Science, for being really enthusiastic about PASS and an excellent mentor as shown by the response and comment left by students and **Muhammad Zunair Hamid**, also Computer Science, for being dedicated and regularly turning up to PASS sessions even if he is not scheduled to be there; **Alexandra Polakova** and **Deepinti Ghurburrun**, SEF, for being incredibly consistent in their mentoring and effort for the past two years; **Kavinda Edirisinghe**, Electronic Engineering, for always being actively engaged and really helpful; **Leigh Whitlie** and **Rachel Nelms**, English, for being absolute superstars, turning up every week to mentor, and a huge support; **Tayo Akindeinde**, Geography, for being an extremely enthusiastic and valuable mentor and for offering to help advertise PASS when numbers dropped and **Bryony Corr**, also Geography, without whose time and effort it wouldn’t have been possible to organise extra PASS sessions for environmental science students during the first term; **Giulia Campolo**, SMS, for being such a committed and enthusiastic mentor who really knows her stuff; **Alexander Hicks**, Physics, for being helpful and dedicated; **Ambika Kumar**, SBCS, for turning up to all PASS sessions committed to, many times twice a week, and helping out as many mentors as possible, **Catalina Romila**, also SBCS, for making an effort to turn up to every PASS session committed to despite not having many, if at all, Biochemistry mentees turn up at sessions which she could directly mentor and **Leyla Noury**, SBCS, for having a very good attendance record at PASS sessions, and making a commendable effort; **Dinitha Bulathsinghala**, SEMS, for being outstanding, extremely smart and never missing any allocated session even when he had deadlines and **Jade Ng Chieng Hin**, also, SEMS, for being very dedicated and committed to PASS and having the highest attendance record in SEMS PASS.
Careers advice on pitching and presenting

In February, QMUL Careers Consultant, Maya Mendiratta, held a workshop for PASS mentors to develop their presentation and pitching skills for interviews and assessment centres. The mentors had to compose and deliver a pitch to nominate an organisation of their choice as a funded recipient of QMUL interns. All present found the workshop and the detailed feedback each received from Dr Mendiratta, extremely useful. Geography mentor, Rebecca Von Hellfeld, was voted as best pitcher.

PASS mentors make outstanding course reps

Congratulations to Ambika Kumar, who won Course Rep of the Year at the QMUL Education Awards 2014. Ambika has been a dedicated SBCS PASS mentor for two years and, as mentioned above in this newsletter, is an SBCS Mentor of the Year. PASS mentors are often also current or former course reps and Maths PASS joint student organiser, Khadhija Khanom, is also a former Course Rep of the Year. Continuing Maths PASS mentor, Samer Haque, was recently elected QMSU Student Council Chair for next year - very well done to her.
Physics record a record

PASS mentees are promised confidentiality in that no remark is ever passed on with a name attached without their permission. However, they are asked to record their attendance and this information is very important to get an overview of numbers and reactions each semester. Next year’s joint Physics PASS student organisers, Ryan Smith and Ryan Hill, have already been helping out with managing this and Ryan Smith writes below on leading Physics away from paper (doesn’t sound lazy but he says it is):

Physics is all about being lazy and finding ways of simplifying laborious tasks. So in that light, the Physics PASS team have adopted Google Docs as the primary method for recording our PASS session attendances. It allows us to easily view and edit the spreadsheet document online and quickly perform data analysis on the attendance registers. The easy sharing of the Google Docs documents means that we can swiftly deal with the administration side of PASS, leaving us more time to focus on the actual sessions. Speaking of which, Physics PASS recorded its most successful attendance in the week I’m writing this (with a special revision-style format which seemed appropriate). It’s good to know that during the stressful exam period, people are coming to the PASS sessions to seek advice and support, this is exactly what it’s about!

Ryans Smith and Hill (with Alexander Hicks, centre)

Mentor recruitment discussions

Widening Participation works in partnership with each School or departmental PASS scheme but there is a lot of variety in the way individual schemes run various aspects, reflecting their different approaches, needs and preferences. All new mentors are selected or approved by the mentor’s own School, in the person of their academic coordinator.

This year, the PASS Central Team (student organisers’ planning committee) thought it would be useful for academic coordinators to consider the range of recruitment practices currently in use and a sub-group was formed to bring these together. Student organisers in the group were Arianna Rice (Drama), Poomima Sakthithasan (Dentistry) and Ismail Uddin (SBCS) and their helpful reflections were conveyed to all academic coordinators and PASS teams via email. Some teams, notably Maths, then added their own ideas to feed in to the reflections.

SEMS mentor career route snapshot

It is always interesting to hear the career paths followed by PASS mentors after graduation, as reflected in the news of alumni in this newsletter. Two graduating SEMS mentors, Habiba Yasmin and Juned Uddin (also SEMS student organiser for two years), have made it on to competitive training schemes. Habiba, who has achieved her ambition of securing a place on the NHS Scientist Training Programme, thinks PASS helped:

One of the major reasons why I took up PASS mentoring, was to enhance my communication skills so that I would be prepared for the trainee interview. I wanted an environment where I was asked unexpected questions and would have to find various ways of explaining things to people, and I know for a fact that PASS has helped me gain part of this confidence.

Juned, who has been accepted on to the Teach First training programme from September also reckons PASS helped: I truly believe my work with PASS and the widening participation team has helped me secure this position.

SEMS PASS stall at Queen Mary Industrial Liaison Forum in March
Alumni news

Henrik Mathiesen, History PASS mentor and student organiser 2010–2012, was the pioneer organiser for the School and is always interested to see how the scheme is going. He writes:

Graduating from Queen Mary in the summer of 2012, I moved to Oslo in order to do an MA at the university there. However, I felt exhausted by the intensity of my three years abroad and the subsequent move back home, and I realised I could not bear the immediate pressure that studying for another degree would bring after only a month as a graduate. Therefore, I decided to spend the following autumn doing substitute teaching at various secondary schools in Oslo. After having been sent, often at the last minute, to give lessons in subjects ranging from German, Maths, PE, Mandarin, Neo-Norwegian, to Art, Craft and Design – none of which I was even mildly familiar or comfortable with – by Christmas I realised that it was time to once more become a student again.

At the University of Oslo I was offered a position as mentor for first-years, and having experienced the joys of mentoring back at Queen Mary, I savoured the opportunity to once again being able to do more of what I enjoy doing. Likewise, after having been sent, often at the last minute, to give lessons in subjects ranging from German, Maths, PE, Mandarin, Neo-Norwegian, to Art, Craft and Design – none of which I was even mildly familiar or comfortable with – by Christmas I realised that it was time to once more become a student again.

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My MA thesis is a continuation of the project I started as my History Research Dissertation at Queen Mary. I am trying to establish what perspectives Scandinavian immigrants had on the nature and the progression of the westward expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century, and how they employed these perspectives to justify their process of making homes there. I often laugh to myself on the striking irony in investigating what made people feel at home at specific times and in specific places, when the more I move around myself, the more I realise that as long as one is surrounded by friends who offer you meaningful and delightful company, one is at home everywhere.

Two of Henrik’s fellow History mentors, who also graduated in 2012, Hrista Dimitrova and Jennifer Keen, sound equally busy. Hrista has gone into the media:

I currently work as an Archive Assistant at Sky News and am hoping to become a Picture Researcher soon. You could say I have made use of my mentoring skills when new members of staff join the Sky News Library. They receive their training but as someone who has recently gone through the process of settling in to a new office environment, I can provide incoming staff with very useful tips and guidance that it has taken me months to amass.

Sky News also has a mentoring scheme. Some of my colleagues have a more experienced member of Sky News as a mentor, who can help not only with day to day practical information but also guide them through career progression. I am considering taking part in this program and getting my own mentor, since I’ve seen how useful it can be and make one’s life so much easier.

Jennifer has fulfilled her ambition of becoming a teacher:

Glad to hear that PASS is still going strong. I’m currently in my first year of teaching, having received NQT status after doing a PGCE at Canterbury Christchurch University in the year since graduating. I teach History at a secondary school in Ashford, Kent, so I’m putting my degree and my PASS mentoring experience to good use. It’s tough and there is lots of work to be done always but I’m enjoying the challenge and hope to get more out of it the more I put in!

Serap Gonen (SBCS mentor and organiser 2009–11, who was also in the first batch of SBCS mentees as a new student) writes from Edinburgh, where she is doing a PhD in Genetics, and sends greetings:

Hope you are all doing OK and that PASS is still running as well and as smoothly as it did back when I was at QMUL. I am so happy to hear that it is still going strong; I always appreciated the help I got from PASS mentors in my first year, and hopefully I was able to give the same help to others when I became a mentor.

Priyank Krishnani (Electronic Engineering PASS mentor, 2010–11 and organiser 2011–12, now working in industry) has taken part in the PASS alumni PASS It On Scheme, giving advice to a mentor hoping to follow in his footsteps to Imperial. He finds time to read the newsletter, too:

I keep an eye out for the newsletter and it’s fun to read about the experience and achievements of PASS mentors and organisers. Please feel free to give my details to any mentor or student interested in a relevant course or path; I am happy to help them.
Finding out more

Anyone reading this newsletter is likely already to be involved in some way in PASS at Queen Mary. However, if there is anything about which you would like to know more (or if you would like to contribute to the next edition of this newsletter), please contact: Dr Debbie Andrews, Peer-mentoring and Transition Coordinator (Widening Participation Team, Directorate of Marketing and Communications): d.m.andrews@qmul.ac.uk

Below is a list of the key PASS people in schools and departments. These are the academic coordinators and the undergraduate student organisers, each of whom is a PASS mentor leading a team of mentors.

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