Welcome

Welcome to the twentieth PASS Newsletter. Please send contributions or comments for future issues to: d.m.andrews@qmul.ac.uk. Issue 21 will be out in summer, 2016. Back copies can be found on the PASS webpage: www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/schools/wp/qmul-students/pass-archive/index.html

All contributors receive a PASS mug...

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Please note that all pictures in this newsletter of the conference and certificate ceremony were taken by Khadhija Khanom.

PASS training 2015 - aiming high with Careers

As always, PASS student organisers were strongly in evidence as co-trainers or presenters this year. Thanks to co-trainers Krishna Halai (SPIR), Ryan Hill (SPA), Michael Khoshdel (SMS) and Catherine Palmer (Drama) and to presenters Nayela Azmat (SBM), Emma Black (SBCS), Kam Choudhury (History), Tarandip Dhillon (Geography), Alex Kombo (SBM), Anne Nakasha (Dentistry), Peter Neary (SMS) and Molly Patterson (SLLF).

At PASS training sessions, consultants from Queen Mary Careers advise new mentors on how to showcase their mentoring skills and experience when applying for jobs or further study. This year, they combined this with some assessment-centre practice by getting the trainee mentors to work in multi-subject groups and come up with their dream job. Having decided what skills they would need for being head of a charity, a wild-life film-maker or a headteacher (to name a few), they then cross-referenced these with the skills they could gain from mentoring and built a tower, with one brick per skill. Frustrated architects had to put height over design as the tallest tower was always the winner. Creativity was fuelled by muffins from Queen Mary Catering.

The exercise was devised by Dr Maya Mendiratta and delivered by her and by colleagues Abi Sharma, Vicki Tipton, Karen Watton, Jeff Riley and Dr Tracy Bussoli.
One of the tasks that we were given was to make a shield to personify our team’s ideas. After much debate and having a sneaky peek at what others were doing, we decided to go in completely the opposite direction and keep it simple. Our reasoning being PASS does not need to be complicated and intricate to be effective. Sometimes Less is More. Even though we came last in this challenge, we preferred to think of it as leading from the back!!

My time at the PASS/PAL conference 2015 was spent in the company of the wonderfully named ‘Team Hi – 5’ (as we were placed on Table 5). It was a fantastic opportunity to hear that PASS is everywhere, on my table alone we spread from Bournemouth to Ireland. (PS That’s me in the middle.)

Ultimately, the main aim of the whole experience was to take ideas back that we can incorporate into our own PASS sessions here at QMUL. Here, we were being told about PASS in Ireland, it was crazy to hear how different it is. The one thing I can take away from it, is there is no correct prescribed way to run a session. Just do what you think is best for your own sessions. If you do get the chance to go next year wherever it is, I recommend you do! Best case scenario you have an amazing time, worst case scenario…..free hoodie!!

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Ryan blogged about the conference and an extract is included below:
I decided when I got to the conference that I was just going to say yes to pretty much everything; whenever someone needed a volunteer I would offer straight away, if people were all going to do something I’d go along no matter how much I wanted to sleep (which by the end was a lot!) and I’m so glad I did this. I went from putting my name down to possibly go to a conference, to standing in front of over 100 people yelling “STRONG, POWERFUL, FIRM” while the keynote speaker was trying to push my arm down, I did not see that coming! I mean just look at how happy?… I am!

Of course the weekend wasn’t just about making friends and drinking free wine, there were a lot of great sessions covering things like adding technology to PASS sessions, or how to identify and tackle our unconscious bias. There were also workshops on how to be creative with session ideas and being spontaneous in speech; I feel like it was as much about improving the PASS sessions as it was a weekend about improving myself!

Bonus pic of us posing like the statue!!
Student organiser, Krishna Halai, reflects on what has worked for her and the mentor team

I became a student organiser in my second year of a Politics degree, and the PASS scheme in the School of Politics and International Relations was also in its second year. Having attended PASS as a mentee in my first year, there was a familiarity I had with how it was already run and the awareness of how I would have wanted things to be from the perspective of a mentee when I became student organiser. It was a great opportunity for me to be able to mould the direction of how PASS would be run in my school, especially since the scheme was so new there and there was a level of flexibility to do so.

It has been a challenge getting Politics students attending but, being a continuing student organiser, I feel that we’ve learnt a lot from the last year and the continuing mentors and I have strived to make this a better year. With the addition of new mentors, it’s been great having new faces around to provide more assistance and knowledge for myself, the continuing mentors and the mentees. Here are a few things I have learnt from the past year about our PASS scheme:

**Attendance:** Attendance fluctuated a lot and there was no way to predict numbers for our scheme. I have always said that even if there’s only one mentee attending, we have still had an impact on someone who may have really needed our help and that really motivates us. I also noticed a peak in attendance on the week before assignments were due, which is great because it helped us to really narrow down and plan ahead on what most mentees came in to discuss with us.

**Motivation:** Enthusiasm goes a long way! There were many weeks last year where we had no mentees attending, and it can be disheartening for mentors to come in very prepared and to have no-one to speak to on the day. Rather than sitting in silence and waiting, we always make it a friendly atmosphere and use the time for us mentors to get to know each other better. Nevertheless, this year has been well attended so far in comparison to last year, and that also has motivated all of us immensely!

**Promotion:** I really appreciate being a continuing organiser as it has given me the opportunity to work out the best ways to improve on promoting PASS to students. So far, I have been able to speak at the induction talk, sent out many emails through the Politics office (who have been very helpful in raising the profile of PASS), attended lecture shout-outs and am even working on getting posters put up! Trying out many different ways really helped me figure out what I needed to do more of to get students more aware of and interested in PASS. I spoke to mentees when they did come to sessions and it turns out that Politics and IR students just love getting PASS emails, which of course will be utilised more in the future.

Those were just a few points to reflect on and to update everyone on what SPIR has been up to, and it’s clear we are making great progress. We are all really excited for the rest of the year and expanding the PASS scheme in our school!
Mentor boundaries in Drama

The issue of boundary-setting is always a knotty one for PASS mentors. Sophie Ellen Davies (new co-student organiser for Drama PASS) reflects on this in the context of her department.

In early discussions and training days for being a PASS mentor, the topic of boundaries would arise and in these conversations, I found myself to be making some strong observations in regards to my own boundaries and how my subject, Drama, has impacted them for the better.

Most other organisers have been open in sharing that they make their role as a mentor different to their role as a student and that there are specific ways and times in which to contact them for mentor-related topics. Whilst I completely understand the reasoning and can see the benefits of keeping one’s personal and academic lives separate, Drama discourages this boundary to a certain degree. As a Drama student you are taught many invaluable skills such as confidence, teamwork and communication; skills that are transferable into any walk of life from moving up the career ladder to making new friends. Not only this but the incredible department we have in this particular university allows for things such as QMTC (Queen Mary Theatre Company) to evolve and become an engrained part of the degree. Because of this, students from every year will inevitably mingle, become friends and share experiences both personally and on an academic level. Therefore, in the discussions of boundaries, I am proud to say that I happily engage with students who need the help of a PASS mentor – or a friend – on all platforms in a way that doesn’t hinder my personal or academic life because they intertwine in a way that I find extremely beneficial.

My only experience of being a student organiser has been in the past few months and whilst as a department we may not always have a large showing to our weekly one-hour sessions, I can confidently say that I have helped many students and gained many friends (sometimes, in conjunction) through the PASS scheme but also because of the kinds of people Drama as a subject creates. Not only am I proud to be a PASS organiser, I am proud to be a student of such a multi-faceted subject that is able to create, nourish and expand such open-minded, intelligent and talented individuals.

Sophie’s co-organiser, Catherine Palmer, appealing for the valuing of creativity at last year’s QMUL PASS conference
Alumni news

Rebekah (née Soen) and Nick Watson (former Geography PASS student organiser and mentor respectively, 2011-2013), were married in May 2015

Becky now works as Human Resources manager at Lyle and Scott and is always pleased when former QMUL students (especially mentors) apply for positions there.

Leyla Noury, SBCS PASS student organiser, 2014-2015, says a special hello to all SBCS mentors who remember her:

Currently I am at UCL doing a MSc in Pharmacognosy, which is investigating drugs derived from plants and while this all sounds very technical and unrelated to PASS, mentoring for PASS has helped me a great deal in studying this MSc. Mentoring for PASS has made me of aware of how different learning approaches work for different people and I found that the new learning approaches I encountered in PASS work depending on the context, whether it be an intricate mind map complete with diagrams, or a concise list of notes. Moreover, observing how mentees interpret problems and how they solved them (with a tiny nudge in the right direction) helped me to come up with different ways to look at academic topics and problems. As a result, my learning has become a lot more flexible and this is all due to mentoring for PASS. Being a PASS mentor enabled me to be a better student and it would not have been possible without Caroline Brennan, Jean Smith, WP and the SBCS mentees and mentors!

PASS panellist at FYE seminar

Ryan Hill (SPA), was the PASS representative at a meeting coordinated by Sally Mitchell, Head of Learning Development at QMUL, during a visit to the UK by Dr Margaret Henley - Academic Director, first-year experience student mentor programme, Faculty of Arts, University of Auckland. He found it very stimulating:

The visit from Margaret Henley and the opportunity to discuss ‘First Year Experience’ (FYE) with staff and academics from across the university was a fantastic opportunity that I couldn’t pass up. The meeting had ideas flying around the table constantly, with all of us particularly interested in the FYE program that our New Zealand visitor had created. A lot of focus at the university is going on first-years, to reduce the difficulty of the transition to university and also to reduce the rate of failures/drop-outs in the first year. Coming out of this meeting I was overflowing with ideas of how to improve the SPA PASS scheme as well as ideas to pass onto my school manager to help improve things in the first (and later years) beyond the scope of just the PASS scheme. It was a truly insightful and excellent experience and one I would happily be part of again.
Key dates and mentor opportunities

Save the date

Afternoon of Wednesday 27 January, PASS Careers Event - How to be pitch perfect - Francis Bancroft 1.15

Afternoon of Wednesday 9 March, PASS Certificate Ceremony, Skeel Lecture Theatre

For further information please contact Fathea Khanum (f.khanum@qmul.ac.uk)

National essay competition

Institute for Government Essay Competition 2016

If you were made Head of the Civil Service tomorrow, what would your priorities be?

All current masters and undergraduate students are invited to enter the Institute for Government essay competition 2016. This is an opportunity to have your work seen by leading academics and journalists and carries a first prize of £500, a second prize of £250 and third prize of £100. The first and second prizes will also come with £1000 and £750 for the winners’ academic departments.

The competition is open to anyone studying for an undergraduate or master’s degree at a UK university. Essays should be no longer than 2,000 words, and the deadline is 31 January 2016.

For more information – including details on how to enter – go to www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/essay

Judges

PETER RIDDELL
Director of the Institute for Government

DR PATRICK DIAMOND
Lecturer in Politics at Queen Mary University of London

JANE DUDMAN
Journalist and Editor at Guardian Public Leaders Network

JULIA GOLDSWORTHY
Former Liberal Democrat MP and an advisor to Nick Clegg under the Coalition

DR HANNAH WHITE
Programme Director at the Institute for Government, and former Parliamentary Clerk.

NCIS with The Challenge

For details of paid work as youth leaders and mentors or in other roles on the summer programme of a charity, go to www.ncsthechallenge.org or email rose.coleman@the-challenge.org.

PASS tweets

The Widening Participation team are now on Twitter! Follow and tweet us @QMULWP, we’d love to hear all your PASS news and musings.

QMUL Teaching and Learning Conference and Drapers’ Lecture

The theme this year is ‘Student transitions: into during and out of higher education’ so right up the street of PASS mentors. To find out more, go to the website of the Centre for Academic and Professional Development:

capd.qmul.ac.uk/what-we-offer/educational-development/teaching-and-learning-events/teaching-and-learning-conference-and-drapers-lecture/
The beginning of this year was quite an exciting time for me as I had just been selected to become a PASS mentor for the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences. I had learned so much over the past year and was itching to share my experience and ‘hacks’ for a successful first year with other students. I knew I wanted to start early! So during the summer, I put together two presentations, one was a general introduction to first year at university and the other, specifically targeted towards students on my course (Biomedical Sciences), was filled with module-specific introductions and tips to excel in each (complete with quirky pictures). I shared my presentations with staff and the SBCS student organisers. I then emailed the presentations to the first-year students and they were quite a hit with several students emailing back mentioning how helpful they were.

Two weeks after the start of the PASS sessions, I received an email from my school's student organisers. An advice and counselling training session was scheduled for the next day but they were all unavailable at that time due to other commitments and they wished that I attend it on their behalf. It was pleasing to hear that they considered me suitable to substitute for them. Of course, I would attend! I was in the quiet study space of the library when I received an email from Dr Andrews telling me that I would get a PASS mug for my dedication. I pumped my fist in the air and whisper-screamed, “YESSSS YESSS!”. I had had my eyes on that mug since the PASS training session! I find it quite funny how much I love that mug. I don't want it to break so I never leave it in the kitchen and the safest place I’ve found in my room is on my desk, where it sits much like a trophy.

At the advice and counselling session, we learnt about how advice and counselling services operated to ensure student welfare at the university. We also discussed the importance of treating each case sensitively and respectfully and I realised the importance of our own contributions to the maintenance of welfare, a role we fulfil by being understanding and caring students, mentors or friends. I later wrote a summary of the things I had learnt at the session and emailed them to the organisers.

Being a PASS mentor makes for a wonderful learning experience. It challenges you to manage your time effectively and always be ready to make amendments to your schedule at a short notice such as my experience with the advice and counselling session. It forces you to think up creative ways to increase student turn-out at the sessions. It forces you to be dependable and flexible. In the end, it is always wonderful to see yourself rising to these different challenges with the never-ending support and encouragement of the staff and peers.

Second-year SBCS student, Hira Javaid, knows some things are beyond price

‘I’m a new PASS Mentor, and I love it’ – second-year Economics student, Kajal Kumar, has enjoyed the early days of mentoring

My experience as a PASS mentor within SEF has been a great one. Though I've just started, I've learned so much already. The reason I love my role is because of the relationships and friendships I see forming between first-years in PASS sessions.

I was heavily involved with SEF Welcome Week activities, so got the chance to meet many enthusiastic first-years and answer any questions they had. I enjoyed sharing my university experiences, so decided I'd like to become a PASS mentor. It's easy to give insightful advice to students, as you know what they're going through and how they feel.

When I was in first year, I didn’t even know PASS existed. So this year, I knew we had to get the word out and publicise PASS in an exciting way! Along with another mentor, I did a lecture shout-out in the first-years’ MMEB1 lecture. Mr Makedonis was kind enough to let us have a good amount of time from his lecture. We got the BEST EVER turnout in SEF, at our first PASS session. It made me so happy to see first-years are appreciating PASS.

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First thoughts on PASS from two new mentors

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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.

**Biological and Chemical Sciences**

**Student organisers**
Emma Black
– e.l.black@se13.qmul.ac.uk
Abdirahman Salah Abdullah (Abdi)
– a.abdullah@se13.qmul.ac.uk
Maryam Tehami
– m.tehami@se13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Caroline Brennan
– c.h.brennan@qmul.ac.uk

**Economics and Finance**

**Student organisers**
Samantha Nazif
– s.nazif@hss13.qmul.ac.uk
Grace Sleath
– g.sleath@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Aoife Monks
– a.monks@qmul.ac.uk

**Electronic Engineering and Computer Science**

**Student organiser**
Mariya Starin
– m.starin@se13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Khalid Rajab
– k.rajab@qmul.ac.uk

**Engineering and Materials Science**

**Student organisers**
Raghad Alturkistani
– r.alturkistani@se14.qmul.ac.uk
Ashna Gopal
– a.gopal@se12.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Hicham Adjali
– h.adjali@qmul.ac.uk

**Geography**

**Student organiser**
Taran dip Dhillon
– t.dhillon@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Professor Cathy McIlwaine
– c.j.mcilwaine@qmul.ac.uk

**History**

**Student organiser**
Kam Choudhury
– k.a.choudhury@hss13.qmul.ac.uk
Natasja Jozsa
– n.jozsa@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Matt Jacobsen
– m.j.jacobsen@qmul.ac.uk

**Languages, Linguistics and Film**

**Student organiser**
Molly Patterson
– m.patterson@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Kirsteen Anderson
– k.h.r.anderson@qmul.ac.uk

**Mathematical Sciences**

**Student organisers**
Michael Khoshdel
– ah09051@qmul.ac.uk
Peter Neary
– p.j.neary@se12.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Juan Valiente-Kroon
– j.a.valiente-kroon@qmul.ac.uk

**Physics and Astronomy**

**Student organiser**
Jack Cribben
– j.cribben@se13.qmul.ac.uk
Ryan Hill
– r.l.hill@se12.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Jeanne Wilson Hawke
– j.r.wilson@qmul.ac.uk

**Politics and International Relations**

**Student organiser**
Krishna Halai
– k.halai@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Chris Phillips
– c.phillips@qmul.ac.uk

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**Drama**

**Student organisers**
Sophie Ellen Davies
– s.e.davies@hss14.qmul.ac.uk
Catherine Palmer
– c.l.palmer@hss13.qmul.ac.uk

**Academic coordinator**
Dr Kirsty Rolfe
– k.rolife@qmul.ac.uk