

Degree Outcomes Statement 2022-23

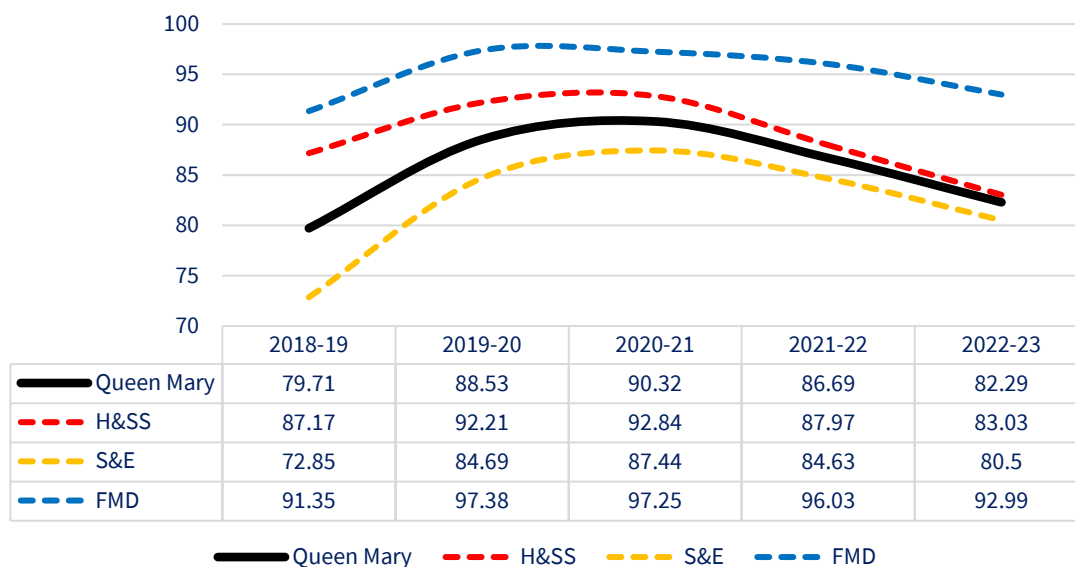
1. The Degree Outcomes Statement presents and reflects upon Queen Mary University of London's classification profiles for undergraduate awards. The UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment ([UKSCQA](#)) asks providers to publish and act upon Degree Outcome Statements as part of the higher education sector's commitment to protecting the credibility and value of awards and classifications, both when granted and when compared to those conferred in past years. This commitment aligns with the [Office for Students' Conditions of Registration](#) B4 and B5 on assessment and sector-recognised standards.
2. Universities UK ([UUK](#)) made additional [commitments](#) on the long-term protection of the value of UK degrees, asking institutions to plan a roadmap to return to 2018-19 classification distributions following the disruption of the coronavirus pandemic. This Statement includes consideration of the impact of the pandemic upon outcomes and procedures linked to classification and award.
3. The management of Queen Mary's Degree Outcome Statement is overseen by the Education Quality and Standards Board, which includes representation from academic and professional services staff and our Students' Union. The Statement draws upon input from our examination boards, the reports of external examiners, statistical data, and strategic objectives and projects.
4. The UKSCQA document '[Degree Classification: Transparency, reliability and fairness – a statement of intent](#)' provides further information on Degree Outcomes Statements.

Undergraduate degree classifications 2014-15 – 2022-23

5. The Degree Outcomes Statement normally covers five academic years. To respond to UUK's commitment to map a pathway to 2018-19 awarding levels the 2022-23 Statement includes some consideration of the past nine years, including five pre-pandemic years. In accordance with UKSCQA guidance, the data under review comprises undergraduate honours awards at academic level six. It does not include postgraduate awards, level seven undergraduate masters awards, or unclassified undergraduate honours awards.
6. Queen Mary's overall "good honours" percentage in 2018-19 was 79.71%; in 2022-23 this stood at 82.29%. This shows an increase over the period of 2.58% but is down from a peak of 90.32% in 2020-21 at the height of the pandemic. Queen Mary put in place [mitigation measures](#) to protect the student experience and classification outcomes during the pandemic; these had an observable impact on outcomes in 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22, which is now falling away. At the same time, Queen Mary has continued to enhance educational delivery and support, and has made changes (including increased entry tariffs in some disciplines), so expected to see a moderate increase in "good honours" rates independent of the effects of the pandemic mitigations.

7. Figure 1, below, show trends in undergraduate classifications over the past nine years at University level and at Faculty level.

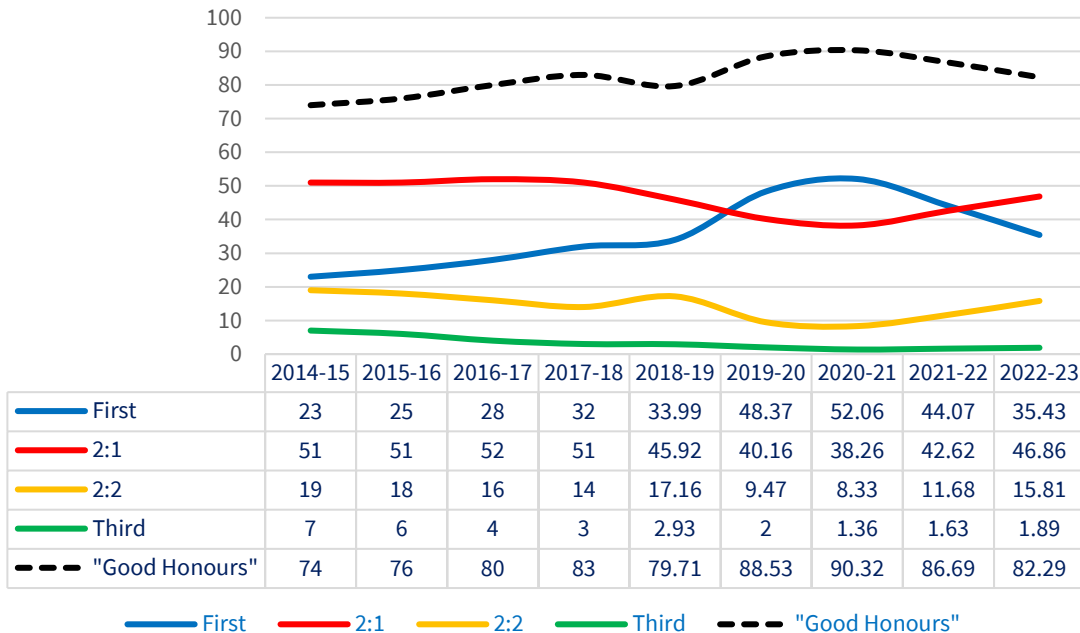
Figure 1: "Good Honours" outcomes 2018-19 - 2022-23 (%)



8. Queen Mary’s academic provision is primarily delivered through three academic Faculties: Science and Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Medicine and Dentistry. Each Faculty saw a peak in “good honours” outcomes during the pandemic, with percentages falling somewhat in the following years. There are different factors to consider for each of the Faculties, which are outlined below. Queen Mary also has some provision not directly associated with the Faculties; only 30-50 students per year fall into this category, and these have been included in the overall Queen Mary outcomes but not discussed independently in this Statement.
9. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had a “good honours” rate of 87.17% in 2018-19. This peaked at 92.84% in 2020-21 but now stands below the original, at 83.03% (-4.14%). There is variation across the schools that make up the Faculty, but seven of the eight schools now stand below their 2018-19 levels.
10. The Faculty of Science and Engineering had a “good honours” rate of 72.85% in 2018-19. This peaked at 87.44% in 2020-21 but still stands somewhat above the original level, at 80.5% (+7.65%). All five constituent schools stood above their 2018-19 levels in 2022-23. The Faculty saw a particular increase at First Class level, though the proportion of Firsts in 2022-23 in three of the five schools stood below the 2018-19 level. There are statistical differences between the schools that make up the Faculty, and mark distribution is a subject of ongoing discussion and review.
11. The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry had a “good honours” rate of 91.35% in 2018-19. This peaked at 97.38% in 2019-20 and now stands at 92.99% (+1.64%). This small difference can be attributed largely to natural variation, as the Faculty has little provision that falls within the scope of the Degree Outcomes Statement; the majority of programmes are either postgraduate, or unclassified (notably the MBBS and BDS qualifying medical and dental degrees); this equated to 208 students in 2018-19 and 214 in 2022-23. Intercalated programmes account for the vast majority of those students; those programmes are only normally open to students who have already completed a minimum two years of study and who are already performing at 2:1 or higher level, so the high proportion of “good honours” outcomes is expected.

12. A more significantly observable change has been in the distribution of classifications *within* the ‘good honours’ outcomes (figure 2). The pandemic years saw a discernible increase in the proportion of students achieving First Class outcomes, though principally from a commensurate reduction in students achieving 2:1 classifications rather than an across-the-board increase.

Figure 2: Queen Mary classification distribution 2014-15 - 2022-23 (%)



13. Figure 2 shows that this position has now reversed as [coronavirus mitigations](#) cease to impact upon the algorithms that determine classification outcomes. In 2018-19 Queen Mary awarded First Class outcomes to 33.99% of students who achieved their intended awards. In 2022-23 that figure was 35.43% - an increase, but already markedly lower than 2020-21 (52.06%) and 2019-20 (49%). Again, this pattern can be attributed in large part to pandemic mitigation measures that are gradually falling away.

14. Queen Mary is satisfied that its outcomes are appropriate and are on an appropriate trajectory following the impact of the pandemic years and the mitigations that applied during that period. The University remains committed to ongoing scrutiny and review of its degree outcomes, and is confident in its awards. Where we identify specific areas in which results may appear out of line we will continue to direct particular attention to the review of its procedures, but without disadvantaging students who have already completed elements of their studies under the legitimate policies and procedures in effect at the time.

15. There can be a variety of factors that can legitimately increase outcomes in particular schools, including entry tariffs, educational initiatives including resources and support, and targeted interventions to – for example – address attainment gaps. Queen Mary set closing the value-added attainment gap between White and BAME students as an institutional key performance indicator. This gap has been steadily decreasing and was almost eliminated during the pandemic.

16. The most recent (2021-22) data show a level below that at the start of the pandemic and closing this remains an institutional priority:

Graduating cohort	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Value-added attainment gap between BAME and White students	-0.090	-0.072	-0.051	-0.027	-0.002	-0.037

These figures address the data of awards within the scope of the Degree Outcomes Statement

17. By considering the change in value-added score over time, the University can consider the extent to which our students are achieving outcomes which are comparable with similar students nationwide, based on their entry qualifications and their subject.

Academic governance

18. Queen Mary University of London is an autonomous higher education provider that holds and exercises independent degree awarding powers and establishes its own educational policies and procedures with reference to sector regulation and guidance including the Office for Students' ([OfS](#)) [Conditions of Registration](#) and the Quality Assurance Agency's ([QAA](#)'s) [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#), and [subject benchmark statements](#).
19. The Senate, subject to the overall superintendence of Council, has general responsibility for the academic activity of Queen Mary. The Senate delegates responsibility for the operation of matters relating to academic standards and the quality of the student experience to the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB). The EQSB is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education) and includes representation from academic and professional services colleagues, and student representatives. It is serviced by the same team that services the Degree Examinations Boards, to ensure a strong link between policy and observed practice. The EQSB has established a dedicated Assessment Sub-Board with a range of responsibilities linked to degree outcomes, including assessment design and integrity, ongoing review of our degree algorithms, and reviewing marking practices and grade descriptors.
20. The Degree Examination Boards (DEBs) have authority to approve awards. In most cases there is one undergraduate and one postgraduate taught DEB for each faculty, serviced by the Directorate of Governance and Legal Services for consistency of approach, including consistency of application of regulations and policies. Multiple school/institute-level Subject Examination Boards (SEBs) report to each DEB, each with external examiners. SEBs confirm marking, and progression outcomes. DEBs have a responsibility to ensure consistency and appropriateness of approach within and between the SEBs and review qualitative and quantitative reports on their outputs each year. DEBs and SEBs are chaired by academic staff with considerable experience in assessment. Faculty-level groups comprising the Faculty SEB and DEB Chairs provide for a in which to reflect upon results and share good practice outside of the formal DEB meetings.
21. Queen Mary does not franchise its degrees or accredit degrees on behalf of other providers. Where we enter a partnership with another provider we conduct bespoke review exercises to establish commonality in standards, including marking criteria. Where appropriate, this includes a mark conversion scheme to draw direct equivalencies between the marks issued at Queen Mary and at the partner institution.

22. Queen Mary degrees at level six are classified using a weighted aggregate mark held to one decimal point (the 'Classification Mark'). All three developmental years count towards this mark, with year one counting for 10%, year two 30%, and year three 60% (1:3:6 weightings). We believe that including the first year marks is important; we have a high proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds and wish to ensure that they are given the maximum possible incentive to engage fully with their programmes and assessment from the start. This is balanced by the relatively low overall weighting given to the first year, as we also wish to recognise positive exit velocity. Students must take most modules in each developmental year at the corresponding academic level; having the final year count for 60% of the Classification Mark ensures that the degree outcome is properly reflective of material at the level of the award itself.
23. We do not practice discounting (outside of the [pandemic contingency measures](#)) – all 360 credits count towards classification. We use a single algorithm for each award rather than a 'best of two' or similar approach as we believe that consistency of approach is important. We amended our regulations for 2015-16 entry, significantly increasing the minimum requirements for award; at the same time, we harmonised the degree algorithms in use – previously some schools used 1:2:4 weightings and others 1:3:6. Universal adoption of 1:3:6 allowed for clearer regulations and had no material impact on degree outcomes – in percentage terms, the two algorithms are very similar (1:2:4 = 14:29:57% and 1:3:6 = 10:30:60%).
24. Our undergraduate Law award (LLB) operated on different regulations for many years, largely for reasons of historical practice. Since 2020-21 entry it has followed the same rules as the other awards offered at Queen Mary, and awards made in 2022-23 were made on that basis. However, other cohorts of LLB students covered in this Statement used a calculation under which the first year did not count for classification, and the second and third years were weighted equally; the LLB was classified on profile (how many modules at each grade) rather than a weighted mark. Certain of the LLB exceptions were linked in part to guidance and requirements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). A very small number of other programmes have additional PSRB requirements linked to the award regulations – in all cases the exception results in a more stringent rather than a more lenient approach (this generally concerns minimum requirements to qualify for the award itself, rather than the classification algorithm).
25. Queen Mary operates a borderline classification policy. It is a wholly algorithmic system, but historically included limited scope for discretion where a student had approved extenuating circumstances that could not be taken into account elsewhere (that provision was removed following the publication of the UKSCQA's [Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design](#) in 2020). Students within 1.5% of a borderline fall into a zone of consideration (except at pass/fail, where there is no borderline consideration). A student in the zone with half or more of their final year credits at or above the level of the higher classification will be raised into the next classification banding. Examination boards and external examiners pay particular attention to borderline cases; in the event of any concerns or unusual patterns of achievement the Degree Examination Board would intervene and, if appropriate, escalate this for consideration.
26. Students at Queen Mary on all programmes within the scope of the Degree Outcomes Statement have two attempts to pass each module, a first attempt and one resit of the assessment (without a repeat of the teaching). On resit, the module mark is capped to the minimum pass mark to reflect the fact that the student did not pass it at the first attempt. Where students have extenuating circumstances, they can be given additional attempts ('first sits') without penalty and without incrementing the attempt number; in rare cases a repeat of the whole module including teaching can be offered (a 'first take').

27. Queen Mary operates a 'fit to sit' policy; if a student attempts an assessment they cannot normally claim for extenuating circumstances against that assessment – this protects the integrity of the assessment as a measure of students' attainment.
28. Queen Mary's degree algorithms and borderline classification policy are available for students and other stakeholders to view in the relevant editions of the Academic Regulations, the Assessment Handbook, and in school/institute student handbooks.

Pandemic mitigation measures

29. The coronavirus pandemic, beginning in 2019-20, necessitated review of our award and classification rules to protect students. We took robust steps to ensure that this was the case, while maintaining appropriate minimum standards. Queen Mary reduced the overall credit requirements for award to those we had used prior to our last review (pre-2015-16 regulations) for 2019-20 finalists. For all students we allowed discounting of the lowest scoring modules from 2019-20, recognising that students might be unable to engage with all assessments and/or unable to perform to the level of their ability due to disruption to their educational experience. We discounted the lowest 30 credits of marks from 2019-20 or (at the point of classification) the entire 2019-20 year, whichever gave the more favourable outcome. For 2019-20 'finalists' we excluded 30 credits in all cases, and never the entire year, recognising the importance of content at the academic level of the award and that the final year counted for 60% of the Classification Mark. These changes have largely worked through the system now, with reduced effects each year (as the year that is discounted has a lower percentage weighting for students who were in the first year in 2019-20 versus those who were in the second or third year). We also amended our borderline classification policy for 2019-20 and 2020-21 finalists, raising students who fell within 1.5% of a borderline and who had (a minimum) 15 credits fewer than half of all final year credits at or above the level of the higher classification. Reflecting on these accommodations we remain satisfied that they were academically appropriate in the extraordinary circumstances of those years and in the sector's period of uncertainty over the extent and duration of the impact of the pandemic on education. However, we have now moved away from those measures and would carefully consider our previous experiences and contingency regulations in the event of another emergency situation.
30. During the first years of the pandemic we relaxed certain rules relating to extenuating circumstances, which resulted in more students than usual deferring assessments or interrupting their studies.

Assessment and marking practices

31. Queen Mary's assessment and marking criteria are designed to ensure compliance with sector reference points, including the OfS' Conditions of Registration, PSRB requirements, and guidance documents such as the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements and Quality Code for Higher Education; Queen Mary has conducted detailed benchmarking against all of those publications and is satisfied that our processes are fully in line with the recommended and required practices.
32. Assessments are designed to test the specific learning outcomes set out in programme and module specifications. Marking is always criterion- and not norm-referenced – marks are based on an individual student's attainment measured against the marking criteria specific to that assessment. Queen Mary has generic grade categories at institutional level, and detailed marking criteria are set at school/institute level in accordance with relevant subject benchmarks - these may be generic to a whole school or tailored to individual assessments. Scaling of marks to meet expected 'norms' is prohibited, and scaling is reserved as a repair mechanism for 'broken' assessments, where a problem was discovered. Such scaling is rare and requires the approval of both the Subject and Degree Examination Boards.

33. Staff must be trained to mark and must do so in accordance with Queen Mary's Code of Practice on Double Marking and Moderation. The Code ensures that at least half of the assessments for each module undergo quality assurance testing beyond the initial marking; this can be double-marking, where a second marker marks all submissions in full and the two markers agree a final mark, or moderation, where the second marker looks at a sample of scripts and determines whether the first marker's marks, as a whole, are appropriate. Samples from across the range of achievement and insufficient numbers to allow an informed judgement are then sent to external examiners for comment and to ensure that the marking is in line with Queen Mary's expectations and norms for the sector and discipline. Subject Examination Boards have a particular remit to review module marks and trends, and there are several examples of good practice where schools have developed reporting mechanisms for this purpose, including the School of Geography and the School of Politics and International Relations where detailed records of longitudinal performance on assessments and modules are maintained. Queen Mary has invested in a business intelligence tool, PowerBI, with module mark reporting functions. This has been well received and offers powerful reporting to examination boards and to external examiners, who will be able to access this system directly. It allows for year-on-year reporting to show differences between cohorts on the same module, comparison between the results for the specified module and other modules taken by the same cohort, and isolation of individual students to compare results between modules and years.
34. Several schools use 'stepped' marking, using only certain numerical marks; this has tackled a historical unwillingness to mark above 70 that was identified internally and by external examiners. It has aided in decision-making, as markers can now focus on slightly broader grade descriptors when assigning marks rather than focusing on the difference between, eg, a 54 and a 55. The system has been well-received including by external examiners in their comments. It has sometimes resulted in more marks issued at the higher end. While we continue to monitor this, it does not present an issue for concern at this time and is the intended outcome of ensuring that high-performing students are recognised appropriately.
35. External examiners attend Subject Examination Boards and submit annual written reports to Queen Mary. These have been positive in relation to marking and assessment, and no issues of institutional concern have been raised. All reports are considered by the Directorate of Governance and Legal Services, which submits an annual report to the Education Quality and Standards Board. An 'External Member' – a senior member of staff with responsibility for academic quality and standards at another university – fulfils a similar role at the Degree Examination Boards, commenting on issues of process and the appropriateness and comparability between institutions of regulations.
36. During the pandemic Queen Mary amended its assessment methods, notably including a move to more assessments that could be delivered remotely. We supported this transition with expert working groups and procedures and retained and continue to develop many aspects of that provision. Like all institutions we faced some initial challenges with student behaviour in online assessments and continue to develop procedures to further increase the robustness and integrity of assessments, including the return to greater synchronicity in assessments, the development of guidance specific to online assessments (including guidance on where online assessment may not be appropriate), and a bespoke online training course on academic integrity made available to all students.

Teaching practices and learning resources

37. We are engaged in continually developing our teaching practices and investing in our learning resources. Much of this work is led by, or draws on the expertise of, the Queen Mary Academy. We have a co-created pedagogic approach, the Active Curriculum for Excellence (ACE). In developing the ACE Approach, we worked with our students to bring together the lessons learned from educational experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic. Our focus was to reintegrate our community back into campus life enabling students to enjoy an active and engaging curriculum. The following elements underpin this pedagogic approach:
- i. student-paced learning activities – students can follow these at their own time and pace;
 - ii. interactive large group sessions – these build on independent learning activities and provide an opportunity to test, progress and stretch students’ understanding;
 - iii. learning-by-doing sessions – these include tutorials, lab work, seminar debates, employability skills training, clinical training, patient treatment, Problem-Based and Team-Based Learning;
 - iv. small active learning groups – provide an opportunity to both build up a small community of practice, and to enjoy peer-to-peer opportunities;
 - v. co-curricular activity.
38. We place significant value on having qualified teaching staff. We have continued investment in the recognition, which has led to increases in the number of staff with teaching qualifications and fellowship.
39. At the end of 2021-22, the percentage of academic staff with HEA Fellowship or an academic teaching qualification had risen to 73% which is above the sector (58%) and the Russell Group (50%) averages.
40. In 2023, we have launched Educational Leadership Programmes which supports staff in key roles such as Director of Education, Programme Directors and Module Organisers. These programmes develop strategic approaches to delivering our education strategy with the overall aim of improving degree outcomes.
41. We have celebrated the achievements of our educators through the annual Education Excellence Awards and President and Principal’s Prizes. 26 nominations were received in 2023, demonstrating how many of our staff are achieving excellence in education. The Awards and Prizes are a pipeline to external recognition.
42. In 2023 a Queen Mary educator was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship – a previous recipient of our internal education prize. They joined the seventeen other staff currently or formerly affiliated with Queen Mary who have achieved this recognition.
43. We developed and launched the Student Enhanced Engagement and Development (SEED) Award to celebrate and recognise students’ contribution to co-creation. Since launching the SEED Award launch, more than 100 students have received this recognition.
44. The funding of innovative educational strategic projects has also aided students in achieving to their full potential. In 2023, we launched the President and Principal’s Fund for Educational Excellence, which was established to encourage a culture of educational innovation and exploration at Queen Mary. The Fund awards £120,000 each year to projects across the institution to support the development of innovative and impactful educational projects.

45. To bring together our work to share and promote excellence in education, we hosted the Queen Mary Festival of Education in 2023. The Festival of Education is one of the highlights of the year. It provides an opportunity for our community of educators to come together to share and develop effective practice. Through raising the profile of educational excellence, and disseminating excellent practice throughout the University, we are supporting staff to ensure that students can achieve good degree outcomes.

Learning resources

46. Our Library Services Vision is that Queen Mary Libraries will be making major contributions to the strategic ambitions of the University relating to learning, research and reputation. This includes providing a wide range of information resources and services, providing accessible spaces and continuing to develop our unique collections. In 2022-3, a major redevelopment of the Mile End Library included the addition two floors of study space and the refurbishment of existing reading rooms and other spaces. This made 500 additional study spaces available. There has also been a significant increase in the scope of academic skills and information literacy provision, open to students across all disciplines. In addition to increasing Library Services provision, now including Maths and Statistics support, we also introduced an online tutoring service that provides formative feedback to students on their work. Further, we have recently ring-fenced £80k per year to increase the number of e-textbooks, and increased the collection development budget by £100K per year to widen the range of digital materials, such as primary archival sources, that students are able to access
47. Across the University, we have over 100 areas which are used for student study space. We established a Study Spaces Working Group to promote the availability of these different spaces, to determine common standards for them, and lead on the process of rolling refurbishments in consultation with academic stakeholders. Students at Queen Mary have access to our Mile End, Whitechapel and West Smithfield libraries, and can also access Senate House Library and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies library.
48. Across our London campuses, we provide a wide range of specialist teaching and learning facilities, including computer laboratories, teaching labs, clinical skills rooms, performance and rehearsal spaces, Bloomberg terminals, and a recently opened haptics suite for dental education. The University has made considerable investment in developing new educational facilities which support interactive, engaging, and collaborative learning.
49. Education is supported by a range of digital learning tools, including our lecture capture system, QReview. Our virtual learning environment (VLE) has benefitted from recent significant investment to improve stability by moving to cloud hosting, and we have also undertaken a refresh of the theme in response to student feedback. We have also deployed Blackboard Ally, which reviews content on the VLE for accessibility. Since 2020, we have made a significant investment in the development of Mixed Mode Education, for which we were shortlisted for an award by UCISA in 2022. Staff delivering Mixed Mode Education can use both MS Teams and Zoom, providing flexibility in the platform, and have access to training in the effective use of both platforms. MME is supplemented by a range of other digital pedagogies, including the use of mixed-reality, to provide students with new ways of experiencing practical activities. Principally this has been through using HoloLens technology in medicine and in chemistry.