



Issue 23, Spring 2017

PASS NEWSLETTER

Welcome

Welcome to the twenty-third PASS Newsletter. Back copies can be found on the PASS webpage: www.qmul.ac.uk/pass



Mary (History) and Hira (SBCS) at the conference. A particular take home point for Mary was the need to be a 'listener' as a mentor and not just an 'engager'

Mary and Hira at the PASS/PAL National Conference, 4th-6th November



The QMUL delegates for the PASS/PAL National Conference this year were History Student Organiser, Mary Ojo and SBCS Student Co-organiser, Hira Javaid. Here is Hira's reflection on her time at the Conference:

The PASS/PAL National Conference took place this year in Bournemouth on an incredibly chilly November weekend. The main purpose of the conference was to bring together students involved in mentoring schemes at UK and Ireland universities. However, what is less acknowledged is that the conference is an incredible opportunity to not only build your mentoring network but have a ton of fun! This year, the conference organisers had a plethora of team challenges, activities, talks and workshops planned to ensure a weekend packed full of enjoyment, self-discovery and personal and career development.

Meeting all the mentors that I had, I realised there was one thing we all had in common and that was a real passion for the courses we are studying and

Hira's team, Pamela's PALS, named after their mascot the palm tree, attempt to build a human pyramid to earn some extra points for the team challenges

a strong desire to benefit others and enthuse them about the subject. One of the workshops showed that we had traits that inclined us to being more active, energetic, and excited about things in life. These qualities also predisposed us to take on more responsibility than usual, thus unfortunately increasing our risk of a heart attack! However, given that, our dispositions also make it more likely we will recover from an attack and take necessary steps to prevent one in the future (phew!). On a non-scientific side, it was clearly evident that we were all also incredibly competitive, apparent from the Twitter wars that ensued when it was announced that tweeting would give our teams bonus points! It was a great time to completely dissociate from work and act completely childish. At one point, an elephant-shaped Helium balloon was let loose in the lovely tall building of the new Bournemouth Campus. All the attendees started following its ascent to the top, rooting for the little pink elephant, and breaking into a spontaneous applause when it reached the top. I do wonder how it must have been brought down.

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Mary and Hira at the PASS/PAL National Conference, 4th-6th November

It was not all play though. The keynote speech was incredibly motivating. It pushed us to set time-specific goals and take small steps every day in order to achieve them. It was the trigger I needed to push me onto a journey towards my long-term goals and I continue to take the mini-steps every day. For that I'm incredibly thankful to the speakers, Jon Bowmer and Ross Coombes. [You can watch the keynote speech here: PASS/PAL Conference Keynote]

Learning to use specific action verbs to add value to our CV was incredibly useful and supported our personal development further. Instead of using nonspecific verbs like "I did", using verbs such as accomplished, co-ordinated, determined, designed, etc., provides more information to the reader. A worksheet from the CV building workshop can be accessed here.

Most importantly though, we were able to discuss our PASS schemes with the attendees in great detail and take home key points on how to improve our PASS scheme. Several of the challenges we face including student engagement, advertising, and scheduling the sessions were similar to other universities. Interestingly, Queen Mary was quite unique in having the scheme being primarily student-led with student organisers taking care of individual PASS schemes and being more proactive and encouraged to make decisions, changes, and try new things.

All in all, the conference made me incredibly proud to have been involved in PASS at Queen Mary and in doing so, become part of this wonderful national effort. May PASS/PAL continue to flourish for years to come!

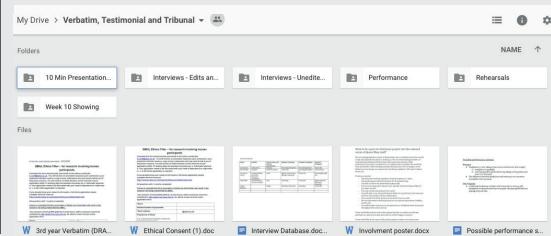
"What do you do?"

Previous Co - Student Organiser for Drama, Sophie Davies utilised her involvement with PASS and ventured into interesting territories for her final year project based on "the unheard voices of QMUL Staff":

We Should Call It "What Do You Do?" is a piece of verbatim theatre that tracks the process of making a piece of theatre about the lives of Queen Mary University non-teaching staff. The piece was created as a final assessment for the third year Drama module, Verbatim, Testimonial and Tribunal, ran by Sylvan Baker. Verbatim in simple terms means 'word for word' and the process of putting this piece together involved interviewing non-teaching staff and turning those interviews into word for word scripts performed by Andrew Bourne, Frankie Taylor and myself, Sophie Davies.

Staff that we interviewed included an on-campus manager, St Benet's chaplain Ella Sharples, two Student's Union staff members and, of course, a member of staff involved with PASS, Fathea Khanum. The reason for interviewing non-teaching staff came from the general consensus of the group and our entire class that non-teaching staff contribute a lot to the lives of students but are very rarely spoken about or spoken to. As a past PASS student organiser and mentor, I felt that having a perspective from this section of Queen Mary was vital in order to capture just how much this university provides for its students outside of lessons.

During my time as a PASS mentor I was not always lucky enough to have large, full groups of students each week, however, it was very clear to me that those who used our services benefitted from them greatly. By interviewing Fathea it became clear quite quickly that those working behind the scenes of the PASS scheme work hard in order



to make the programme what it is today and have a lot of personal investment in not only the programme, but also each individual person who encounters it. Similarly, Fathea was able to give us - and subsequently the audience - an insight into the types of people who are working to improve students' lives around campus.

"The moment I put a collar on, people started to lie to me. And they would take on a kind of bizarre Pious-ness because I was wearing a collar. And for me, it's- the collar is a, it's a-a signal of servant-hood, if you like. It's not a mark of authority. But people kind of put on you what they already have in their minds from their background." – Ella Sharples (Chaplain)

One thing that stood out to me during the process was how little I knew about each member of staff that we interviewed on a personal level. PASS is set out to be student run in order for other students to feel comfortable discussing modules or personal life without teachers or members of staff present. However, having done this project I believe even more so now that universities are spaces where students and staff can and should interact and build friendly and open relationships.

If you are involved with PASS or not, I would urge you next time you're in a conversation with a member of staff on campus, from a seminar leader to cleaning staff, to ask them what their name is, how they are, or even get talking about something non-university related. You'd be extremely surprised what kinds of lives these people lead and have lead and even in those short conversations you may just start to realise – as we did – how much we're all just human beings and we all have a story to tell.

"I want students to know that it's ok. It's ok for you to change course or change direction. You've not failed in what you set out to do."
– Fathea

Explorative expansions in PASS

As each year passes through, many departments encounter opportunities to grow and further their schemes. Here is a snippet of these developments:

Physics had a break through this year with their ‘women in physics’ as Semester A attendance stats showed majority of their mentees to be female. This too correlated with the mentors being predominantly female so well done physics in improving the representation of women in Physics PASS at QMUL!

SPIR Student Organiser, Samuel Singler reached out to second years: ‘SPIR PASS has previously been directed

mostly at first-year students, but given the difficulties many second-years were having with a few projects last year, I decided it might be worth seeing whether there would be interest among second-years towards receiving guidance from the final-year mentors. Indeed, the sessions since that email have included a few second-year students asking about those projects as well as final-year module choices and dissertation preparation. In all, I feel like it was a successful expansion of the PASS programme, and I think it will continue to contribute to higher attendance figures in the future.’



PASS congratulations

Congratulations to History PASS mentor and Student Organiser, Mary Ojo on her election to the post of VP Education and also to Dentistry Mentor of the Year, Ali Nasser on his election to the post of Dental Society President, both for the year of 2017-18.

SBCS PASS ran 5 course-specific revision sessions this year which up until now is completely unprecedented and it had a fantastic turn out! An exam essay writing session was also delivered which further emphasises the appeal ‘themed sessions’ has on our mentees.

EECS had run additional sessions for a group of “degree apprenticeship” students this year. They are a small group of students, and initially a very large proportion of them were interested in PASS, but that proportion declined to a level similar to that of the general student body, leaving EECS to run very small sessions. EECS Organiser, Marcello continued the additional sessions into semester B however, so that students were able to get help if they needed it.

PASS dentistry mentors got hands on and ran an OSCE practical session during a weekend and received great response from the mentees who loved having a chance to put their practical skills to the test prior to their exam! For the non-dental folk, OSCE stands for the Objective Structured Clinical Examination dental students sit at the end of the year. Organisers now feel this should continue annually as a positive development within PASS Dentistry.

PASS Certificate ceremony 2017

With the academic year rocketing passed us, the time for the annual PASS Certificate Ceremony had finally arrived on Wednesday, March 15th. With the trusted PASS Certificate Committee comprising of Mary Ojo (History SO) and Maddie Hobbs (English SO) at hand, the event ran smoothly with smiling faces all around. Certificates were presented by Queen Mary's Head of Outreach and Widening Participation, Anne Setright. She talked about the excellent reputation

PASS has at Queen Mary and particularly how proud she is of the PASS mentors' willingness to talk about their work and share good practice. Anne went on to say how satisfying it is to hear how well PASS alumni are doing, and how the skills they gained as PASS mentors and/or organisers has helped them in the next stage of their careers. This was echoed by guest speaker, Ryan Hill.

Ryan, a previous Physics mentor and co-organiser gave a dynamic speech that had the audience stretching their muscles as well as their vocal abilities with a rather tricky tongue twister. With the audience energised and grasped, he went on to find out what skills the mentors have gained from being involved with PASS and then linked these with current examples from his role on the BT graduate scheme.



PASS Alumni, Ryan Hill sharing his experience of PASS and beyond



Gratitude was extended to all mentors and student organisers but PASS mentor of the year awards (chosen within the mentors' own schools or departments) went this year to Amina Bizhoeva (SBM); Oria Shuman (SBCS); Chelsea Lewington (Drama); Jake Lee (EECS); Danny Watts (English); Ali Nasser (Dentistry); Hasina Begum (SEF); Venkata Prabhu Sai Sravan Dontu (SEMS); Mishma Aelu Abraham (Geography); Hayat Ibrahim and Tanzeena Miah (History); Chiara Scurait (SLLF); Lee Pedder (SPIR) and Anees Ali (Maths).

Tributes to these mentors included, all round helpful person; reliable and enthusiastic; did a huge amount to help our PASS scheme this year; produced a SEMS PASS page; always helpful and supportive to mentees; attended all mentoring sessions!

The awards didn't end there however, with requests for the recipients of mentor of the year awards to be increased flooding in, a generous compromise was found in the secondary award of 'senior mentor'. These were awarded to students who had also been

"My role is pretty analytical and I spend a lot of time working with data but I also spend time talking to managers and senior leaders to discuss my work and what I am doing for the business. My degree helped me a lot but the skills I gained from PASS come in handy every day; whether it's explaining a complicated data concept to someone who doesn't work with data, or organising meetings and making sure I am ready for them. Soon I will be moving onto a less data based role, to get experience in other areas, hopefully I'll be just as prepared for that as well!" – Ryan Hill



SEF Co-organisers, Kajal and Thevinth with their group of mentors

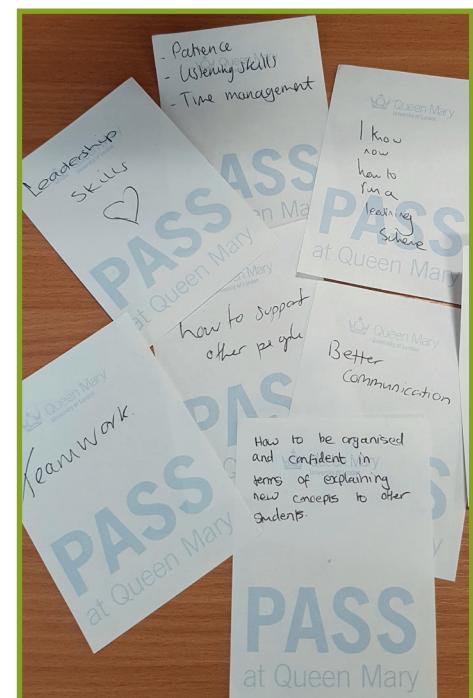


[left to right] Aqeel (Geography), Safwan (Geography) and Mary (History) mingling over the much loved cupcakes



A heartfelt embrace from SLLF Student organiser Ethan and mentor of the year, Chiara

proactive and extra reliable throughout the year and was commemorated by being awarded the senior mentor title and the highly sought after, PASS mug! Senior mentors included Sudipta Karmaker; Polina Pogudina; Melissa Akman (SBM); Laurence Taylor (Geography); Ryan Huggett (Maths); Caitlin O'Brien-Ball; Oishee Islam; Liliane Eleid; Tanya Bass (SBCS) and Hamza Liaquet (SEMS).



Skills current mentors feel they have gained from PASS

Alumni news

I became a PASS mentor in my final year at Queen Mary (some may find hard to believe!), which gave me the opportunity to give back to a program that supported me a great deal when I started at university and facilitated me in securing other positions thereafter. PASS is a brilliant initiative that provides fruitful dialogue and

bridges the gap between the first years and those in later years. I found it a rewarding and heartfelt experience to have the opportunity to reflect on past misinterpretations, share best practice and support others from making the transition into higher education study. Mentoring has helped in opening up other opportunities that I had not initially

thought about – I would encourage readers to let others know about PASS, both from the perspective of mentee and mentor - the skills you develop are invaluable! PASS also helped in developing vital soft skills including communication and teamwork – often those that employers are eagerly looking for!

Saiam Ahmed, Maths PASS mentor, 2013-14, now a Research Associate and Statistician at the Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit at the UCL Institute of Clinical Trials & Methodology shares his journey post-graduation:



Saying goodbye and PASS It On

New mentors will as usual be trained in September and it is hoped that the current mentors going into their final year will continue mentoring and give the new ones the benefit of their experience. If you are graduating and

would like to keep in touch via this newsletter, please let us know. You may also be willing to be part of PASS It On. This is where former mentors offer to give occasional email advice in response to queries from current mentors in

their subject, particularly about their own experiences in applying for jobs or further study. This kind of advice is very reassuring, especially for people who already believe in the power of the peer.



I graduated from Queen Mary University of London in 2014 with a degree in Mathematics and Statistics. I was subsequently awarded funding by the National Institute of Health Research to further my training and development with an MSc in Medical Statistics with the intention to go into research and benefit areas of the NHS. After graduating from QMUL, I also became one of the directors for one of the largest fundraising activities on university campuses worldwide – Charity Week, a completely volunteer-led project supported by the international NGO and DEC member Islamic Relief.

After my MSc, I came back to QMUL and joined Barts Cancer Institute based at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry working with investigators within the centre and the wider Barts NHS Trust as junior statistician and research assistant. I provided statistical support to early phase clinical trials in cancer patients including national, pharmaceutical and investigator-led studies.

After a year, I moved to the Medical Research Council to work on a portfolio of projects in the infectious diseases theme, including the first ever randomised clinical trial in multidrug resistant tuberculosis, which is rather exciting! The trial is evaluating shorter regimens for the treatment of MDR-TB and is being conducted in several sites in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. I am also a member of the governing body for a school located in tower hamlets. For now, my focus is to remain involved with clinical studies in various disease settings, but would like to embark on further training opportunities to widen my skillset.

I would advise current PASS mentors to keep a note of any skills they may develop during their term as this will be handy when it comes to thinking about future activities – especially answering various competency based questions in applications/interviews! PASS is a brilliant program at QMUL and I hope you are able to make the best of it!

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:

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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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