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Welcome

The end of another academic year has arrived and what an academic year it was! We are delighted to send out this round up of the news and stories from the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre (QMLAC).

The Centre is an integral part of the School of Law at Queen Mary University of London and we proudly work to improve access to justice in our local community here in Tower Hamlets and further afield.

As the Covid 19 pandemic continued to shape the design and delivery of our service last year we learnt many things about our processes, work and resilience. Thank you so much to all who showed patience, adapted and excelled in the last academic year.

One of the aims of this year was to increase our interdisciplinary collaboration within the University. The QMLAC is delighted to be part of the SKETCH project (an interdisciplinary professional services firm in collaboration with the School of Business Management and Economics and Finance). We have also been pleased to contribute to a wider Queen Mary network of academics and professional services staff who work in the areas of prisons and/or with prisoners. We look forward to giving and learning from all these collaborations in the years to come.

On our staff team we said goodbye to Korina Christoforou in December who took a new role in Cyprus and Rachael Theophile; we wish them both all the best on their new journeys. It was wonderful to welcome Meghan Mizen and Mary Abidakun in Autumn 2020. Both have already made a fantastic impact on our team. Thank you as well to alumna Enaab Mohammed, who joined our team but now moves to a new role in the Civil Service.

At the time of writing we are currently advertising a number of new posts as a result of increased funding. We are really looking forward to expanding our staff team in the coming months.

As ever we are enormously indebted to our clients, volunteer lawyers, and students. Without any one of these groups our Centre would not be able to function – thank you.

The QMLAC Staff team
I wanted to say a massive thank you again to the LAC Team for all the assistance this past year. It has truly been an amazing experience.”

QMLAC Student Adviser 2020-2021

Statistics

Keep up to date with all our news on Twitter @QMLAC and on LinkedIn
Our 1-2-1 client advice work moved seamlessly to a virtual clinic. Our students, volunteer lawyers and staff worked hard to learn new systems and find a way to keep the clinic running using MS Teams and Zoom.

Not only did it keep running, but we managed to record the highest number of client appointments in any academic year since the Centre started in 2006!

We were delighted to welcome a new volunteer supervisors to the QMLAC including a large number from Government Legal Services.

As a Black student with hopes of becoming a human rights lawyer, I’m really grateful to have been a part of this project. George Floyd’s murder in 2020 and the protests that followed uncovered a lot of truths that Black people had already experienced first-hand. Being able to directly help those affected by police misconduct or workplace discrimination has been something I’m incredibly proud of, helping other Black people feel empowered through the law instead of alienated by it.

Abisola Bishi Student Adviser on the BJP 2020-2021

The service was effective, kind and respectful. I felt respected and heard, and confident that I was in good hands. The letter of advice was very detailed and clear on how I should proceed.

QMLAC Client 2020-2021

University of London Refugee Law Clinic

We were delighted to join forces with others from the University of London to place 5 students in this collaborative student law clinic. Together with law firm volunteers, students provided pro bono legal advice for refugees preparing fresh claims for asylum – an area underserviced in the current legal landscape. Thank you to Frances Trevena, Susan Reardon-Smith, and David Cantor for their dedication and hard work.

Fitness to Practice Support Services

In September 2020 we launched the Fitness to Practice Support Services giving practical support and advice to nurses, midwives and nursing associates under investigation by the Nursing and Midwifery Council. By the end of the academic year we opened up the service to those facing investigation by the General Dental Council and look forward to developing both aspects of this work in the future.

Students had a 100% success rate at Tribunal hearings in 2020-2021

For a full list of the areas of law that we are able to give 1-2-1 legal advice in please see our website: http://www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/clients/advice/

Read a Dominic Wan-E Lee’s blog about what he learnt as a Student Adviser: lac.qmul.ac.uk/our-legal-blog/items/what-i-learnt-from-my-time-as-a-student-adviser-at-the-lac
Facilitating workshops in the community while an undergraduate student is no easy thing, add in a pandemic and things got even more interesting.

The QMLAC students worked tirelessly to prepare and virtually deliver numerous interactive workshops. They adapted to times when students were at home on individual devices, and to situations where they were ‘beamed’ into the front of classrooms. Our SPITE for Schools project facilitated workshops for over 500 school students on the law on image based sexual abuse.

SPITE for schools

This brilliant SPITE video was created by students on our Street Law module www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/clients/community-projects/spite-for-schools/

I am you

Student on the I Am You project created interactive videos for teachers to play so primary aged students could learn about what protected characteristics under the Equality Act means.

Students on our Street Law module have created some fantastic legal information videos which are scattered around the QMLAC website – take a look www.lac.qmul.ac.uk

The pandemic meant that our students were unable to physically visit prisons to deliver our workshops on the rights of prisoners to get back their own property. Sadly the lack of tech in prisons could not support this work, or our usual advisory work. However, the students on the Prisoner Property Project thought outside of the box and created a fantastic hard copy tool kit explaining rights in clear and accessible terms. They engaged the principles of legal design to ensure that the toolkit was useful, clear and accessible. It has now been posted to 16 different prisons. At the request of our prison partners we have also translated the tool kit into French and will have hard copies available soon. Thanks to the Community Connections Grant Scheme at QMUL for funding the translation and thank you to all in Content and Brand for being such great partners to our students.

“…I thought that despite the lockdowns/inability to visit HMP Huntercombe, the project was amazing. I have learnt so much about the prison system, property rights of prisoners in general. It has been really invaluable. I have also definitely enhanced some key employability skills, like communication, team work and attention to detail.”

Uswah Naseem – student on the Prisoner Property Project

Students worked with Jane Secker (City University) and Chris Morrison (Kent University) to adapt Copyright the Card Game, a game usually designed to teach librarians the law, for secondary school students. It was great to see the school students learn a topic through playful teaching.
Our students published a record number of legal blogs this year, covering a variety of topics such as human trafficking and protecting our personal information.

A big thank you to our blog writers and especially our student blog editors; Joseph Hilditch, Kieran Reidy and Nicolas Chong for all their hard work.

You can join the conversations surrounding the legal issues within our blogs on our Twitter and LinkedIn profiles. Please have a read of the blogs here: www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/our-legal-blog/.

The success of this year’s Blog Project has inspired a new focus on social justice issues next year and we look forward to continuing to grow our legal blog at the QMLAC.

Have you listened to ‘ReImagine Law’, the Queen Mary podcast on legal education and careers? re-imaginelaw.org.uk
Events

Justice in the time of a Pandemic – virtual event on 25th November 2020
The panel discussion looked at the effects of the pandemic through the lens of the justice system. The background to the discussion was the Black Lives Matters protest movement, which advocates for non-violent civil disobedience in protest against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against black people. We were delighted to be joined by Melanie Simpson QC, Lydia Dagostino, Patricia Daley, and Queenie Djan. The panel was chaired by Audrey Cherryl Mogan, a Barrister at Garden Court Chambers.

Alumni Panel Event – a virtual event on 24th March 2020
On the 24th March 3 QMLAC alumni held a panel event for current students about where they discussed what they learnt in their time at QMLAC and how this interlinks with their choices. They talked about ‘tips and tricks’ as well as having key reflections on the continued benefits to them in their legal careers. Thank you to James Alao, Gareth Rhys and Elizabeth Andrewartha.

We were delighted that our staff team had two nominations in the QM Education Awards 2021. Kelli Ryan was nominated for the unsung hero award, and Frances Ridout for Teacher of the Year, Assessment and Feedback Champion.

November 17th 2020 saw the annual student law clinics global day of action against climate change take place. The theme this year was the Rights of Nature. Three undergraduate law students from the QMLAC worked with staff to host a brilliant panel event welcoming; Susan Shaw from the Law firm, Living Law, Dr Philip Tamuno, Queen Mary’s Head of Sustainability and Mumta Ito from NGO Nature’s Rights.

Following a grant of £650,000 from the Office for Students, Queen Mary set up an inter-disciplinary professional services firm called SKETCH (Student Knowledge Exchange Through Community Hubs). The QMLAC is one of five pillars of the new SKETCH initiative which spans the Law School, School of Business and Management and School of Economics and Finance. Through this work our QMLAC undergraduate Law students have worked with post graduate Law students at qLegal to give advice two local charities on their policies and guidelines.

The service provided to the Nightline Association by the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre and qLegal was outstanding. Through their recommendations, we have been able to develop more robust, extensive and detailed guidance to Nightline’s throughout the UK on ensuring good practice. Rather than simply a markup document, which is what you would expect from a legal review service such as this, the team provided us with a comprehensive report outlining their recommendations and the reasons behind them. This made reviewing complex areas of law and compliance a far more manageable process. Throughout the entire project, they kept us updated and informed, as well as taking the time to answer further questions following the review. I wouldn’t hesitate in recommending them as a superb partner.

Harry Cloke, Quality Assurance Lead, Nightline

If you are an organisation or charity looking for some help from a multi-disciplinary team get in touch: www.qmul.ac.uk/sketch/.
Events

We are committed to hearing and involving the student voice in our work at the QMLAC. This year saw the development of a Student Committee. One student from each of our various student groups and projects sit on the committee with the staff team to discuss ideas, feedback and keep our Centre evolving.

Future Leaders Programme

We were delighted to run a workshop with the very talented Future Leaders Programme in December 2020 on Human Rights.

A free, accredited and award winning leadership programme for any Year 12 student in Redbridge, Newham and Waltham Forest.

The Future Leaders Programme is an important and unique opportunity for young people. The commitment, passion and dedication from those undertaking, and leading the programme is exceptional. It was a pleasure to work with such dedicated and engaged young people on the programme, and discuss important and topical issues around human rights law in society. This FLP embodies the very spirit of the human rights we were discussing, and will no doubt develop leaders with the utmost integrity. I do hope I get to meet these young people again in the future – perhaps as Law students at the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre!*

The QMLAC Team

We were honoured to be invited by the Law Commission to input our experience from the QMLAC SPITE project into their work to consider the law on taking, making and sharing intimate images without consent. The QMLAC contributed to the pre-consultation stages and the consultation and we look forward to seeing their final reports.

Many congratulations to Prof. Alan Dignam who was appointed as Honorary Queens Counsel in 2021. Alan has been an integral part of our QMLAC since the beginning and continues to work as part of the internal management committee. You can read more about his appointment and the work he does for the QMLAC here: [www.gov.uk/government/news/new-queen-s-counsel-welcomed-by-lord-chancellor](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-queen-s-counsel-welcomed-by-lord-chancellor)
Looking forward

Although we might not have physically been using our space, it was certainly not left quiet. The builders have been in re-working our corner of the Law Building to give us more student working space, more client appointment rooms and more practical space for the staff.

We look forward to starting the new academic year surrounded with vibrant colours and student selected inspirational wall quotes!

The Environmental Law Foundation
We are delighted to have set up the Queen Mary ELF clinic with the national charity The Environmental Law Foundation. Students will work with volunteer lawyers to advise clients on environmental law cases which come from the network. We look forward to welcoming our first clients on this project in autumn 2021.

CICA Toolkit
Four QMLAC students worked alongside Emily McFadden of Bolt Burdon Kemp to develop a toolkit to empower those applying for Criminal Injuries Compensation (CICA).

This toolkit outlines eligibility, frequently asked questions and the processes of the claim in an easy and understandable way. This toolkit is currently in its final stages of production and we hope that it will be a helpful tool for our future clients.
Thank you

Deborah Abidakun
Gemma Adams
Ed Adase
Alexandra Agnew
Nasima Ahmed
Lucrezia Alaimo
James Alao
Rosa Alexander
Dan Amroussi
Shiva Ancliffe
Elizabeth Andrewartha
Emma Armitage
Martha Averley
Christian Ayerst
Jenny Barker
Liz Barrett
Marissa Beatty
Oscar Benito
Alex Beresford
Alexandra Bishop
Miryam Boston
Rachel Bowley
Sarah Branson
Jessica Bridgett
Gregg Burrough
Benjamin Burrows
Jack Burstyn
Claire Butler
Salma Butt
Abigail Cannon
David Cantor
Christina Chambers
Kiran Channa
Victoria Channing
Alicia Chantrey
Audrey Cherryl
Mogan
Kate Clarke
Rickard Claythorn
Sue Cole
Ross Condie
Sarah Conway
Rachel Cooper
Simona Corcoz
Alfie Cranmer
Georgia Crossman
Elissa Da Costa
Waldman
Lydia Dagostino
Patricia Daley
Niamh Daly
Mira Dandan
Minhaal Dattu
Cassandra Dauteville
Jack Davies
Lily Davies
Kealy Davis
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Robert De Souza
Zoe De Rijk
Henry Debilolly
Maria Dixon
Queenie Djan
Sarah Dodds
Clare Driver
Richard Duggleby
Mags Dunning
Harry Eccles-Williams
Josh Edwards
Jean-Luc Esposito
Amelia Evans
Dami Ewedemi
Wan Fan
Serena Fasso
William Fenwick
Natalie Flynn
Daniel Foley
Rose Franckeiss
Flora Gair
Susan Gallagher
Nath Gbiki
Alfie Gibson
Rosie Gibson
Luke Gittos
Elsa Glauert
Katherine Goatly
Jessica Good
Katelyn Gottschling
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Maya Grantham
Emily Greig
Richard Grimes
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Kirstie Imber
Edward Imrie
Irina Iolysh
Lucy Isaac
Mumta Ito
Molly Javangwe
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Becca Jones
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Lisa Meller
Adam Merrick
Anna Metadjer
Kwasi Mills-Bampoe
Will Morris
Chris Morrison
Sophie Mortimer
and the team at the Revenge Porn Helpline
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Louis Muncey
Kathryn Murphy
Arabella Murrison
James N.L Wilkes-Green
Vitoria Nabas
Rebecca Naylor
Stacey Nevin
Emmanuel Nibo
Cathy Nicholes
Ifeoma Nwabude
Thank you

Thinn Nyunt
Nicholas O’brien
Sam O’Flaherty
Sean O’Beirne
Felicia Oduntan
Heidi Paget-Brown
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Olivia Stiles
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Kayla Trigiani
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George Viopoulos
Avi Virdee
Tessa Waite
Hannah Wallelt
Sibby Ward
Tom Watling
James Watson
Liz Watson
Steve Weiner
Sam Welsh
Alexandra Whiston-Dew
Kristian Whitaker
Pippa Woodrow
Faye Woollard
Emily Wright
David Wylde
Sarah Wylie
Yin Yee Ng
Magda Zima
As well as exceptional legal advice, the students and tutors have excellent interpersonal skills, being honest and fair but with bags of empathy. Given I’ve never needed legal advice before, this personal touch was what I needed to put me at ease."

QMLAC Client 2020-2021

The service was effective, kind and respectful. I felt respected and heard, and confident that I was in good hands. The letter of advice was very detailed and clear on how I should proceed."

QMLAC Client 2020-2021

My contact with your service has been helpful and constructive. I was asked many questions about my case. Based on information on the letter I was able to come to my own conclusion on the best way forward. Excellent service!"

QMLAC Client 2020-2021