

QM YOU

MAGAZINE

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF
QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY
Issue 92 | APRIL 2025



Susan Black
- Beyond the pitch

£2.1m transforms
QMU's learning spaces

QMU's Fringe Village
gamechanger



Queen Margaret
University
EDINBURGH



Principal's Welcome

This year, we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of Queen Margaret University, and one of the ways we are marking the occasion is to include a special commemorative edition of QMYou, alongside this, the main magazine. The main magazine shares the usual news of recent developments with you, while our commemorative supplement offers you the chance to look back on our institution's extraordinary 150-year journey. We hope you enjoy reading the selection of short articles celebrating our shared past, and learning more about some of the many highlights and transitions that our institution has experienced in the years since its inception in 1875.

The stories in our commemorative supplement may whet your appetite for more. If so, why not take a stroll through our history and enjoy 150 stories, along with some fascinating film footage, all of which are available for you to view on the **QMU150** pages of our website?

In this main edition of the magazine, we are delighted to highlight some of the significant initiatives that have taken place on and off campus recently, and to shine a spotlight on the excellent work of our inspirational staff, students and graduates.

We celebrate the contribution of two significant women who have made their mark on QMU in recent years – the late Lady Elgin, who was Pro-Patron of the University (p3), and Dame Prue Leith, who recently stepped down as Chancellor of QMU (p5).

We responded to the urgent need for affordable accommodation for Edinburgh Festival Fringe performers by creating the Fringe Village on campus last summer. You can read more about the ways in which we are supporting the Festival Fringe and the development of new creative talent on pages 6 & 7.

Our work to enhance the student experience never stops, and we have been thrilled to see the transformation of learning and study spaces at QMU. Our £2.1m Future Spaces investment (p10 & 11) shows that we are responding to changes in the way students now study and learn by providing an outstanding range of modern, attractive, flexible spaces for them to enjoy.

Partnership allows us to build strength and capacity into our offering, and we have been delighted to collaborate with Edinburgh Napier University to bring its impressive entrepreneurial support service to QMU students. Read about this, the Bright Red Triangle development, on pages 12 & 13 and see how it's supporting more students to turn their entrepreneurial ideas into reality.

We love hearing how our graduates are making an impact on the world. You couldn't fail to be impressed with the career journey of Susan Black, Director of Communications with Liverpool Football Club (p16 & 17), and the meteoric rise up the ranks of Adrian Crighton (p18), who, in just a few years since graduating, is now a director with American Express. They are certainly an inspiration to everyone at QMU.

If you are a graduate, please stay connected with us through our alumni office E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk. If you are a member of the public or are new to QMU and want to connect, please don't hesitate to talk to our Development team or email development@qmu.ac.uk about ways to get involved and support the University's work.

With best wishes

Sir Paul Grice, FRSE, FAcSS

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Remembering The Right Honourable the Countess of Elgin and Kincardine

In December, we were saddened to announce the passing of QMU's Life Patron and Honorary Graduate, Lady Elgin.

Lady Elgin served as Pro Patron of our institution from 1993 to 2006, and subsequently as Life Patron until her passing. In 2000, she was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of her personal contributions to the University.

Many graduates and staff will have fond memories of Lady Elgin, in particular, her graceful presence at graduation ceremonies in the 1990s and early 2000s. Her service to the University forms an important and enduring part of our institution's history.

Lady Elgin attending a QMU alumni event

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Teaming up with Hearts FC to revive historic plays at Tynecastle Stadium

OUR STUDENTS HAD the incredible opportunity to perform two iconic productions at Tynecastle Park for Hearts Football Club's 150th anniversary celebrations in November last year.

The critically acclaimed shows, 'A War of Two Halves', and 'Sweet FA', were revived in collaboration with award-winning theatre company, 'Two Halves Productions', and received five-star reviews. The cast of Sweet FA also performed at half time at the Women's Premier League Capital Cup game. □



Students re-enact team huddle in Hearts' changing room

Free disability resources for schools

Q MU IS PASSIONATE about equality and inclusivity. To help achieve this, positive discussions and activities should be encouraged, starting in primary school classrooms. To make it easier for teachers to kick-start the process, we have launched the Toy Box Diversity Lab website – a series of free resources to help practitioners enhance disability literacy.

Created by academics who have practical experience of working in inclusive education in academia and in the classroom, Dr Siân Jones and Dr Clare Uytman have also launched a new online short course, 'Disability Confidence for Educational Practitioners', to help participants develop their diversity and inclusion skills.

Find out more about the Toy Box Diversity Lab at www.qmutoyboxdiversitylab.com □

Preparing QMU graduates for board membership

LAST YEAR, WE launched a new initiative to further enhance the diversity of the membership of the University Court – the body which governs QMU. The GIVE project has been designed to help those without previous board experience, but who have much to offer in terms of professional experience and expertise, gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to join the University Court.

There was a high volume of interest in the scheme, and we are delighted to have appointed QMU graduate Becky Hope-Palmer as our first GIVE scheme participant. Becky, a freelance theatre director, graduated from QMU in 2022 with a MA Applied Arts and Social Practice. Having worked with different production companies across the UK, she now predominately works at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland as a visiting director, as well as on 'A Play, A Pie and a Pint' in Glasgow and at Dundee Rep.

In participating in the GIVE scheme, Becky will benefit from formal training and mentoring and observe the work of the University Court and its committees in action, with a view to her joining the University Court as a full member. By facilitating board membership through the GIVE initiative, we are enabling the University to benefit from the rich experience of talented individuals, including our graduates who can help shape the University's future.

To find out more about Becky's story, visit the QMU website or scan the QR code. □



Andrew Lloyd Webber names theatre suite after QMU graduate producer

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY that someone gets a lounge in one of the UK's biggest theatres named after them. But that's what happened to QMU graduate, Michael Harrison, when Andrew Lloyd Webber, the leading West End impresario, dedicated a new bar in the London Palladium to him.

Michael Harrison has an international reputation as a producer of award-winning musicals and pantomimes throughout the UK and across the world. After graduating from QMU in 2001 he has gone on to achieve outstanding success, working with some of the biggest names of stage and screen including Andrew Lloyd Webber, with whom he formed Lloyd Webber Harrison Musicals in 2022 to produce both new musicals and revivals of Andrew's existing work.

The 44-year-old producer has a string of accolades to his bow, but recently he has been behind Imelda Staunton's triumph in 'Hello, Dolly!' at the London Palladium, as well as her celebrated turn as Rose in a revival of 'Gypsy'; the 'Sunset Boulevard' on Broadway starring Nicole Scherzinger; and 'The Drifters Girl'; as well as countless other musicals. Towards the end of last year, he directed no less than three pantomimes in Newcastle, Birmingham and at the Palladium, whilst overseeing 22 pantos across the length and breadth of the UK!

The next time we're in London, we'll pop into the Harrison Suite to lift a glass in celebration of Michael's remarkable contribution to the London Palladium's success over the last decade, and to his wider achievements as an internationally recognised producer. □

Prue Leith steps down as QMU's Chancellor

OUR MUCH-LOVED entrepreneur, and star judge on The Great British Bake Off (GBBO) series, has stepped down from the role of Chancellor of QMU, after seven years of dedicated service.

Dame Prue Leith CBE was installed in the role of Chancellor in July 2017, and has made a significant contribution to the institution over the years.

As a writer, restaurateur and cookery expert, Prue brought a wide range of skills and knowledge to the role and was always enthusiastic to find out about University initiatives and developments. Drawing on her varied and successful career in business, hospitality, food education and TV, she was highly entertaining and very generous with her time when it came to sharing stories of her career journey and enthusing our students about entrepreneurship.

Although it is always a treat to see the QMU Chancellor beamed into our living rooms on one of the UK's most popular TV shows, Prue is so much more than just a TV personality. She has a hugely impressive track record – building a business from scratch, which grew to become Leith's Good Food, the party and event caterer; and founding Leith's School of Food and Wine, which trains professional chefs and amateur cooks.

She paved the way for more female appointments on industry boards and in public life, having held non-executive director positions in organisations such as British Rail, Whitbread, and Belmond. Having spent 11 years as a judge on The Great British Menu, and now six years on GBBO, as well as countless prime time appearances on a variety of TV shows, she has become a household name across the UK and well beyond!

Although Prue is in her 80s, she's not slowing down or shying away from challenging projects. During recent visits to QMU, she told us about new businesses that she's set afloat, and she recently progressed her involvement with the Dignity in Dying campaign with an investigation into assisted dying that was broadcast on Channel 4.

During her time as Chancellor, Prue has brought energy and positivity to her role, and to the many events in which she has taken part. She's interacted with school pupils, students and their families, graduates and staff. We will miss her straight talking attitude, and, of course, her graduation speeches. However, she won't feel far away. We can continue to enjoy watching her TV appearances, reading her newspaper columns and novels, and taking tips and recipes from some of her fabulous cook books.

There's no-one quite like the unstoppable Prue Leith. She has been a wonderful ambassador for QMU, and we are hugely grateful for the positive impact she's made on the QMU community and on the University's profile. □

New University Chancellor

QMU is in the process of recruiting a new University Chancellor who will continue Prue's excellent work in this important ceremonial role. □



Dame Prue in her role as Chancellor at her final QMU graduation ceremony in 2024

QMU's Fringe Village is a game-changer for festival performers

Located in the world's leading festival city, QMU's involvement with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe has continued to grow from strength to strength, with 2024 marking several firsts.

DURING THE SUMMER, we embarked upon a partnership with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society to provide much-needed affordable accommodation to hundreds of performers.

Although we've opened our doors to Fringe participants in previous years, the collaboration was officially formalised at the beginning of 2024 in response to the rising cost and decreasing availability of accommodation in the capital.

In line with the Fringe Society's focus on helping artists maintain their mental health during the Fringe, QMU's beautiful campus offered a haven of tranquility, away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. QMU's Festival Village proved to be a great hit with Fringe performers, writers, directors and producers, from across the world, who made the most of the Fringe business breakfasts, social meet-ups, rehearsal spaces, and free yoga sessions on campus.

Professor David Stevenson, Dean of QMU's School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management, said: "Our history is in culture and creativity. We have had a performing arts department for over 50 years and know how important the Fringe is for new performers. Performers don't go for the money; they go to be creative, to benefit from the Fringe experience, and to explore and expand their careers. It's really important to the Fringe that there's a route for them to express themselves and take part in one of the greatest art festivals in the world.

"By working in partnership with the Fringe we can create more equitable opportunities for performers and creatives, and support the showcasing of new talent that could otherwise be lost."

In the same year, we also sponsored the Scotsman Fringe First Awards for the first time, in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University.

Established in 1974 by The Scotsman arts editor, Allen Wright, the Fringe Firsts encourage companies and performers to bring new work to the festival and have propelled the careers of actors, comedians and writers such as Rowan Atkinson, Billy Connolly, Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Stephen Fry.

Our co-sponsorship of the 2024 awards helped towards the staging of three prize ceremonies throughout August where the Scotsman's chief theatre critic, Joyce McMillan, presented awards to 17 deserving companies who each displayed outstanding new writing talent throughout the Festival. It was heartwarming to see just how much these awards meant to the prize winners, with some groups travelling from as far as Australia to perform in the Fringe.

It was indeed an exciting and fruitful collaboration, and we look forward to building on this partnership in 2025, as we continue to support the development of creative talent at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, along with the attendant social and economic benefits on Scotland's capital city. □

Festival performers join QMU's Student Presidents for the Fringe performers welcome event on campus



"...we can create more equitable opportunities for performers and creatives, and support the showcasing of new talent that could otherwise be lost."

Photo credit: Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society

Kick-starting early-stage careers in the creative arts

SPONSORING THE SCOTSMAN Fringe Firsts and providing artists with affordable accommodation are just two of the ways that we supported the creative industries during the Festival.

In 2023, QMU's Emerging Creatives Fund, which was supported by our donors, was established to aid student opportunities and experiences in extracurricular drama and performance activities.

Last year, the fund supported students in showcasing their creative talents at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe - a move which ultimately helped some of our students launch their careers.

With the financial backing they received, BA (Hons) Drama students, Lukca Best's and Gabriela Krumova's company, Mon Espoir Theatre Company, secured places for two shows at the Festival Fringe 2024.

Gabriela said: "The Festival presents a practical way to refine our production skills and build a network for our future careers. It also offers a dynamic opportunity to bridge the gap between academia and the professional landscape we're about to step into."

For the 2025 festival, the Emerging Creatives Fund will support the full early-bird registration fee for up to four shows produced by current QMU students. □

Find out more by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.qmu.ac.uk/alumni-and-friends/make-a-donation



Winners of the Scotsman Fringe Festival First Awards gather at the Pleasance

Painting a picture of university life

A beautiful and engaging new public artwork will be installed in our campus grounds, this year, as part of our 150th anniversary celebrations. Created by a local artist, Martha Ellis, the sculptural work will be a permanent installation for students, staff, visitors and the local community to enjoy.

MADE POSSIBLE BY donations from members of the QMU community, Martha was selected from a pool of applicants to design the artwork. Her work is intended to capture the people and activities which make up QMU, both from the past and present, creating a unique piece that will inspire all who visit, study and work at the campus.

Martha is a visual artist with a passion for showcasing a 'sense of place' in her signature 'cut-out' drawing style, using sheet metal. Students, staff, alumni, members of the QMU Association, and East Lothian residents have all helped inform the design process, and should be able to see themselves reflected in the final construction.

Martha said: "Given QMU's expertise in the creative and cultural sectors and community arts, there were lots of opportunities to engage with the University community. From my research, I was struck by the many amazing things that the University has achieved – and continues to achieve."

Martha's artwork was displayed at an exhibition at QMU in March, giving some members of the community an exclusive look at the elements of the design before its official launch later this year.

QMU's Principal, Sir Paul Grice, said: "This project is a great example of the power of philanthropy at QMU and showcases the impact our donors continue to make. QMU is all about

people – improving people's lives, producing graduates who can make a difference in the world, conducting research that has a positive impact, supporting students to achieve their goals, and creating a strong sense of community where everyone is welcome and where we support each other. We are sure this piece of art will not only be visually engaging but will also connect with the variety of people who make up our wider QMU community." □

Don't be a stranger to QMU – everyone is welcome

Soon, you will be able to see the sculpture for yourself when the artwork is installed. So, don't be a stranger to QMU. Come and enjoy Martha's artwork, take a stroll in our lovely grounds and relax with a coffee in Maggie's Cafe Bar.

"...this piece of art will not only be visually engaging but will also connect with the variety of people who make up our wider QMU community."



Sample laser-cut line drawings by Martha Ellis



Cosy project room



Touchdown space

FUTURE SPACES: £2.1m investment transforms QMU's learning and teaching spaces



Project room



Touchdown space

THERE IS NO DENYING that QMU has a fabulous range of modern spaces on campus for students to study in. Whether students are looking for a quiet room, group work area or a lively learning environment, there is space that will fit the bill.

With our rigorous ongoing maintenance programme, our campus still looks as good as it did when it first opened in 2007, but in the 18 years since then, the way students study and learn has changed.

As a result, we've just made a £2.1m investment which has transformed our Learning Resource Centre and drama spaces, and the results are pretty spectacular!

The Future Spaces project has involved the revitalisation of some of the University's most important learning and teaching spaces so that they better suit the way students now study and learn. This project has also supported the University's ambitions to refresh, enhance and modernise the campus so that it continues to attract prospective students and supports the growth of the university.

It is safe to say that students have been loving the transformation! As soon as the new areas opened, they immediately started making use of the more comfortable, vibrant and sociable study space options. It looks as though our mission to expand capacity for self-directed and collaborative learning, as well as informal teaching activity, has been a resounding success. But, that's just phase 1 of the Future Spaces project – we never stop continually improving our offering for students, and our flexible campus design has helped facilitate that.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without our partner Morris and Spottiswood, who supported us in bringing our vision to life, and ensuring the QMU environment is a happy, productive and enjoyable place to be. □

Check out some of the cool new spaces in our **Learning Resource Centre (LRC)**

1. Touchdown space offers students a place to meet before choosing their workspace in the LRC.
2. Two forum spaces support informal teaching and supervision activity.
3. Project rooms, decked out with big tables, white boards, large screens and soundproofing, are perfect for collaborative learning.
4. A variety of cosy workrooms are ideal for smaller group projects.



Forum



Exciting new partnership boosts QMU's entrepreneurial support

IN RECENT YEARS, QMU has done much to enable our talented graduates to fulfil their entrepreneurial ambitions by starting their own business. But our commitment to entrepreneurship goes far beyond simply supporting students to develop start-ups. Our aim has been to unlock a more connected entrepreneurial culture across our research and knowledge exchange work and our student experience by promoting entrepreneurial mindsets, and to ensure that all students can view entrepreneurship as a viable graduate destination.

That's why we've launched an exciting new partnership with Bright Red Triangle (BRT), which is taking entrepreneurial support at QMU to a whole new level.

Bright Red Triangle's impressive entrepreneurial support services are highly regarded by the Scottish Government. The organisation has supported more than 1,000 start-ups and freelancers since it launched in 2005. The new partnership, which now involves QMU and Edinburgh College as well as the original provider, Edinburgh Napier University, means that budding entrepreneurs from across all three of these institutions will be able to access Bright Red Triangle services such as start-up advice, training, workshops, and opportunities to turn innovative ideas into business ventures or creative solutions.

This provides students, graduates and staff with access to a unique and diverse portfolio of specialist support across each institution's key areas of expertise from wellbeing, health, and food and drink; to creative industries and tourism, product and graphic design, engineering, construction, and computing and AI.

Talking about the new BRT partnership, QMU's Principal, Sir Paul Grice, said: "This builds on the tailored support we've provided in the past by strengthening our overall entrepreneurial offering and improving graduate skills and employability. Easy access to exceptional business support across three locations, and the opportunity to network with other likeminded people, can only help to improve the chance of success as aspiring entrepreneurs turn their innovative ideas into successful ventures."

Kim Stewart, Director of QMU's Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Unit, said: "This exciting new alliance supports our vision for regional collaboration which assists economic transformation by building on QMU's 15-year partnership with our on-campus Business Gateway service run by East Lothian Council. It also aligns with our strategic commitment to Community Wealth Building and future Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal ambitions with the opening in 2025 of the Edinburgh Innovation Hub in the land surrounding the campus." □

Choose a start-up studio that's convenient for you!

QMU graduates can use the QMU Startup Studio on campus, or if it's more convenient, you can use start-up spaces at Edinburgh Napier University or Edinburgh College campuses. You can also access BRT services at QMU, Napier or Edinburgh College.



Are you a graduate who would benefit from fantastic entrepreneurial support? Here's how you can tap into Bright Red Triangle services:

- Do you have a business idea, but you're not sure how to get started?
- Need advice about developing your existing business?
- Want access to free training?
- Need desk space to work from, or free spaces for professional meetings?
- Want to meet and chat with like-minded graduates?

You don't need to do everything by yourself. The BRT team is here to support you, so get the specialist help you need to kick-start your successful entrepreneurial journey. Find out more at: www.brightredtriangle.co.uk



Artist's impressions of Innovation Hub

Innovation Hub on track to open this summer!

WE'RE DELIGHTED THAT the Edinburgh Innovation Hub, which is being built on land around the QMU campus in Musselburgh, is on track for completion this summer.

A 'topping out' ceremony took place in December 2024 to mark the completion of the roof and structure of the Hub, which will be a nationally significant centre for innovation driven business growth.

The Hub, a joint venture between East Lothian Council and QMU, will offer flexible laboratory, office and fully equipped meeting and conference spaces for rent by small to medium enterprises (SMEs). Tenants will be able to rent flexible accommodation packages for move-in ready space that are bespoke to their size and needs.

The venture is supported by £28.6 million from the UK Government, £1.4 million from the Scottish Government and £10 million from East Lothian Council, as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESES City Region Deal).

Sir Paul Grice, QMU Principal, said: "Along with driving economic development locally and nationally, the Hub will act as a gateway into QMU for businesses, increase opportunities at the University for industry-relevant research and knowledge exchange, promote an entrepreneurial culture, and increase the vibrancy of the area around the campus. The Hub is not just a new building, it will be a new business."

Could the Hub be the answer for your business? Find out more at: www.edinburghinnovationhub.co.uk



“The Hub is not just a new building, it will be a new business.”



“It not only allows us to showcase the talents of one of our award-winning drama graduates, it also creates a platform to highlight our institution’s rich history.”



QMU's founders helped establish the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses

The gender divide – getting more males into caring professions

DESPITE NURSING BEING one of the most important and widely recognised professions in our health sector, the profession continues to struggle to attract a male workforce.

In Scotland's NHS, men make up only one in every 10 nurses, and two in every 10 allied health professionals.

Healthcare is an inherently human experience, one that should not be gender nor class specific. So why is it that the nursing profession, with its high profile in our society, experiences such a significant gender imbalance?

According to Dr Glyn Morris, a Lecturer in Biological Sciences at QMU, it was Victorian attitudes that significantly influenced this gender divide, which we continue to see today.

He explained: “The gender-based division of labour in Victorian culture, and the ignorance regarding the place of women in society, resulted in the feminisation of caring professions. There was a clear hierarchical male-dominated medical model – men were recognised as doctors and surgeons – the decision makers, the pioneers, the lifesavers. Historically, nursing incorporated chores such as stoking the fires, cooking and cleaning, as well as patient care responsibilities. This meant men wishing to work as an allied health professional were shunned for entering these professions. It was considered beneath them. In fact, in 1919, men were barred from registering as professional nurses. This only changed in the 1960s!”

In more recent decades, men who did enter the profession, were described as “male nurses”, and often directed into

mental health nursing. Their physical strength was seen as an advantage in dealing with patients who might need to be physically restrained.

Today, the stereotypical allied health professional is still predominately middle class, white and female with a split of 70% females and 30% males. Professions such as art therapy (86%), optometry (89%), occupational therapy (92%), dietetics (93%) and speech and language therapy (96%) are amongst some of the highest female dominated roles. Only in paramedics is there a gender split of less than 70% - in that case weighted towards males with only 40% of paramedics being women.

Dr Morris explained: “We are still seeing medicine and senior leadership healthcare roles dominated by men, so clearly our healthcare profession is not a true representation of Scottish society. But to change the gender dynamics, we need to understand why more young men are not aspiring to train as nurses.”

Dr Morris has been working with Suzanne Ewing, Widening Participation Officer at QMU, on a small pilot study with 14-year-old schoolboys from East Lothian. The Guardians of Healthcare study aims to identify what's turning young working-class boys off from a career in nursing. The boys are given some free rein, allowing them to steer the direction of the study, and to lead their peers in discussions on the subject.

Suzanne, who is using this study as part of her master's degree, explained: “The profile of nursing has been shaped by society over centuries. Due to its continual exposure as a female-oriented profession, boys are simply not interested in looking at nursing as a career option.

“The boys identified roles such as chefs, surgeons and gamers as being male professions. Their view of careers is shaped by what they see represented in popular culture and through their social networks. There remains a distinct lack of male role models. Young boys are not seeing or hearing about men in their sub populations, or even on the world stage, who are thriving in the nursing profession. So, it's just not considered as a legitimate option. Even boys who have fathers who are carers still don't view nursing as a career path for men.”

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to encourage women into STEM careers, but the drive to achieve equality also needs to address the gender imbalance in healthcare.

Suzanne said: “If we want a society which reflects men as caring and empathetic, we must break down barriers to entry into professions that have care and compassion at their core. Hopefully this research will provide valuable information that will help us harness the potential of more talented young men who can make a positive contribution to the future of nursing in Scotland and beyond.” □

“If we want a society which reflects men as caring and empathetic, we must break down barriers to entry into professions that have care and compassion at their core.”

Award winning drama graduate writes play to mark 150th anniversary

QMU HAS ALWAYS BRIMMED with creative talent, so why would we go anywhere else to source great writing to mark our special anniversary year?

We have been delighted to commission QMU drama alumna Stef Smith, to develop an original piece of drama that celebrates the history of Queen Margaret University.

Stef, who is an award-winning playwright, seemed like the perfect fit for this special 150th anniversary project.

Having achieved her BA (Hons) Drama and Theatre Arts at QMU in 2009, Stef has been described by the Scotsman as “one of Scotland's most gifted playwrights”, and The List as “one of Scotland's boldest chroniclers of contemporary women's lives”.

Not long after graduating, Stef won an Olivier Award for ‘Roadkill’. Her plays include ‘Nora: A Doll's House’, ‘Swallow’ and ‘Enough’; and her recent screen credits include ‘Float’, the BBC Scotland drama, which shines a light on the lives of LGBTQ+ teens living in rural communities. She has a string of awards to her bow, and in 2022, she was voted Best Writer at the Royal Television Society Awards.

Stef's play, which will be staged in 2025/6 – the University's 150th academic year - forms part of a wide range of activities which will celebrate the significant historical milestone. It will be performed by QMU Acting and Performance students, with various elements of the production involving students from across our Media, Communication and Performing Arts Division.

John Dean, Head of Media, Communication and Performing Arts at QMU, said: “We are excited to mark our 150th anniversary with great writing from Stef. It not only allows us to showcase the talents of one of our award-winning drama graduates, it also creates a platform to highlight our institution's rich history.”

Want to book tickets for the play? We'll keep you posted about the timing and details via our social media platforms and our website, later on this year. □

Interested in learning more about Stef Smith?



Listen to her chat about her varied career in the QMU podcast ‘Going Off Script With...’ by scanning the QR code. The podcast series, which includes a series of interviews with our performing arts graduates, went live in 2023 when we celebrated ‘50 years of Drama’ at QMU.

The team is aiming to involve secondary schools from across Scotland in the next phase of this study. Contact: Suzanne Ewing E: sewing@qmu.ac.uk for details.

Beyond the Pitch: Shaping the Future of Liverpool Football Club

Susan Black, Director of Communications, Liverpool FC

Susan Black's journey from QMU student to a key figure at Liverpool FC is a testament to her unwavering ambition and a belief in the power of personal growth. This driven graduate has embraced challenges, seized unexpected opportunities, and built a career that reflects her passion for making a positive impact on the world.

Role

My adventure at Liverpool FC kicked-off in the world of communications, and that storytelling spirit still fuels much of what I do. Our team is the voice of the club, from crafting thrilling press releases to connecting with our amazing community, as we shape the future of our club.

But my role has evolved beyond just words. I've dived headfirst into the unbelievable work of the Liverpool FC Foundation, guiding an incredible team of 120 passionate individuals who are making a real difference to the lives of people in Liverpool. We're talking over £8 million raised annually for good causes – that's impact! To top it all off, I'm an Executive Director for Liverpool FC Women, cheering on our incredible players and contributing to the exciting growth of women's football.

It's a dream job - a real hat-trick of challenges and rewards!

My QM story

Queen Margaret College (QMC), back in the day, absolutely stole my heart...twice!

My path to higher education was a bit unconventional. After finishing school, I landed a job at NTL (now Virgin Media). But my thirst for improvement wasn't quenched, and an opportunity to pursue a CIPR diploma at QMC presented itself – a chance to learn while juggling a full-time career.

My classmates were a vibrant mix of working professionals, and the programme was incredibly flexible. We'd meet every three months, tackling assignments between sessions. Classes were at the Corstorphine campus, conveniently scheduled over a weekend.

Emboldened by the enriching diploma experience, I decided to pursue a master's. QMC was the obvious choice – the quality of teaching I'd encountered during the diploma was simply unparalleled.

The master's was a different beast altogether. My international travel commitments with work added another layer of complexity. Jumping from a part-time diploma to a part-time master's felt like jumping from League 2 to the Premiership! I was out of my depth.

I remember knocking on my lecturer, Mark's, door, confessing, "I don't think I can do this." The support and reassurance I received were invaluable. Mark worked closely with me, breaking down one of the really challenging modules into manageable steps and providing the encouragement I needed to persevere.

My journey to my role today

Sport? Never really been my thing – a bit of hockey in my youth, but that was about it. So, imagine my surprise when NTL, my employer at the time, dived headfirst into sports sponsorship, particularly focusing on football clubs.

Suddenly, I, the communications person, was thrust into the spotlight, tasked with leading this exciting new venture. The big boss declared, "Susan, you're perfect for this! Since you're

not a die-hard fan, you'll make decisions with your head, not your heart."

And just like that, I was at the helm of NTL's flagship shirt sponsorships with Celtic FC and Rangers FC. Talk about pressure!

Despite the initial shock, I embraced their thrilling journey into sports sponsorship. However, when Richard Branson took over and announced a move to London, it was time for a change.

To gain more global experience, I joined a PR agency in Leeds. Fast forward to 2011, and I received a call from Fenway Sports Group (FSG). My mind raced: a major sports retailer? A rugby team? After a series of intriguing conversations, the truth dawned on me: it was Liverpool FC!

It was an exciting time to join the club. FSG, the new owners, were passionate about growing the global fanbase and forging strong commercial partnerships. My experience with NTL, particularly my work in sports sponsorship, proved invaluable. I understood the inner workings of football clubs and the needs of sponsors.

When I started, Liverpool FC had a modest 232 employees. Today, we have over 1,000!

Typical matchday?

There's no such thing as a "typical" matchday. We have two Communications teams: the onsite squad, always ready for action, and the offsite support crew. I prefer to be at the ground, in the thick of things.

Our team? We're like Duracell bunnies, always on the go. On matchday, we're cheering for the team, and praying for a smooth operation. Tonnes of preparation goes into each game. We gather intel from safety, security, even the police, so we know what to expect: a Nottingham Forest home game is a different beast compared to an away match against Manchester City.

The offsite team handles the day-to-day communications, while the onsite squad often finds themselves in the midst of a live crisis, constantly communicating with the remote team, adjusting strategies on the fly. It's exhilarating!

Unforgettable moments: from Melwood magic to matchday miracles

Securing a world-class training facility for our Women's team is a great memory. We bought back Melwood and transformed it to its former glory! And transforming our incredible charity work with our inaugural charity match at Anfield. We raised over £1 million for the Liverpool FC Foundation and the Hillsborough Survivors Support Alliance.

Whether it's empowering our players or supporting our community, people are at the heart of everything we do. That's what makes it all worthwhile.

And as for those wise words from my NTL days – "make decisions with your head, not your heart" – I still live by them. It's a philosophy that has served me well throughout my career. ☐

“...make decisions with your head, not your heart.”



Jurgen Klopp, former Manager of Liverpool FC, with QMU alumna, Susan Black

Photo credit: John Powell@LFC

Photo credit: Andrew Powell@LFC

Adrian Crighton – more than a rising STAR!



ADRIAN CRIGHTON HAS had an almost meteoric rise up the ranks, securing a senior leadership role with multinational bank holding company, American Express. As Director & Chief of Staff of Global Strategy and Enablement with the global brand, it's hard to believe that this talented young man, who oversees a large-scale world-wide operation, only graduated from QMU in 2020!

But if you know Adrian, you'll be aware he does nothing by halves. He threw himself into the BA (Hons)

Public Relations, Marketing and Events, and made the most of every opportunity that was offered to him throughout his degree at QMU.

Adrian tells us about the experiences that helped kick-start his graduate career, and his plans to develop new talent by volunteering with QMU's Employer Mentoring Scheme.

What QMU initiatives helped shape your future career?

QMU is fantastic at giving students outstanding opportunities to develop their talents and CVs. I worked at open days, helped set up the University's Marketing Society, and I volunteered at professional award ceremonies. However, it was the Student

Tourism Ambassador Role Scotland (STARS) project, and the support of mentors, which really helped develop my skills, experience and confidence.

STARS was an innovative programme set up to connect QMU students with some of the largest tourism sites across Edinburgh by giving students vital work experience in customer-focused positions. I worked in a customer services/public liaison role, which allowed me to draw on my academic studies and blend it with practical communication and organisational skills. I was then given the incredible opportunity, by my two QMU mentors, to be the programme coordinator. It was daunting, as we had over 40 ambassadors spanning Edinburgh Airport, Waverley Train Station, St James Centre and The Edinburgh Military Tattoo, but the experience taught me vital leadership, communication and critical thinking skills, which would have been hard to come by elsewhere.

What did you love about your course?

I loved the hands-on elements, as well as the practical skills that we picked up. The lecturers also went above and beyond to make the material relevant and transferable to a professional setting. A highlight was the Crisis Communications module where a portion of the final grade was a role play exercise involving pseudo journalists questioned you as part of a press briefing. This was something I had to do multiple times in a similar format when I was applying for graduate schemes.

We were also encouraged to pursue what we were most passionate about. For me, it was how communications can inform and impact relationship building, hence why public relations felt like a great fit."

Biggest lesson you learned?

Saying yes! You'd be shocked at how often people let opportunities pass by because they don't think they're up to it. My pre-degree entry programme to QMU, mentoring, STARS, and internships all had a profound impact on me. If you want to truly get the most out of your university experience, then this is a sure-fire way to do it. If you're ever doubting yourself, ask 'why not me'?

What's helped you succeed in your early career?

At QMU, I felt supported and known as an individual, and that was reflected in the amount I was able to grow and develop over my time there. The incredible teaching staff were instrumental in setting me up for success.

Recently, I said to my mum that QMU has been the catalyst behind pretty much all of the success in my adult life. I wouldn't have stood out as much in the Graduate Scheme programme processes had I not benefitted from the wide range of opportunities that QMU presented to me.

Tell us about your career development?

I secured a place on the Customer Service and Business Strategy Graduate Scheme at American Express, and moved to Brighton to work in its international headquarters. There were four rotations over two years, so I worked across Capabilities Product Management, Global Partner Management, Fraud Operations and Customer Service Delivery.

I then became Strategy & Business Planning Manager, which involved managing the executive office of an Executive Vice President within the operations world - overseeing the running of the office and leading on strategic initiatives that impacted our 12K colleague base across 20 markets. After two years, I was promoted to Director & Chief of Staff within the Global Strategy & Enablement team.

Now, my day-to-day work might include budget discussions with finance partners, working on our strategic priorities and how we're tracking against them, to planning a staff meeting in one of our markets. I love the variety, and it's a privilege to work with such a talented and diverse group of people.

How do you champion diversity?

I'm passionate about supporting diversity in the workplace - partly due to a lack of role models when I was younger, so I'm now Chair of the Pride Network within the UK. I wear a pin to work every day that reads 'Be Proud, Be Visible'.

Tell us about your involvement as a QMU student mentor?

I'm now a QMU mentor in the new Rotational Leadership Mentoring Programme, and I'm delighted to be able to help the future workforce achieve their aspirations. □

Want to be inspired by more graduate stories?

Read Adrian's full story and other graduate case studies: www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-stories/

A fresh take on student mentoring

We love to switch things up at QMU, so our new pioneering mentoring project, with its novel twist, is all set to better prepare students for success in the workplace.

Building on the success of our inaugural QMU Employer Mentoring Programme, which launched some years ago, we're now offering a Rotational Leadership Mentoring Programme (ROME) - the first of its kind in the education sector. Set up by the QMU Careers and Employability team, it's designed to give students the opportunity to understand the various industries and career paths available to them by pairing them with four expert mentors, rather than just one.

The new rotational set-up means that students can meet with each of their four mentors to focus on a key skill required for that specific role or industry. They can concentrate on key areas with different specialists.

Interested in mentoring a QMU student? Take a look at the new scheme. Scan the QR code.



“...QMU has been the catalyst behind pretty much all of the success in my adult life.”

To support student development at QMU, scan the QR code to find how you can **MAKE A DONATION**



Supporting students to become their best selves

Generous support from our alumni, donors and friends helps students enrich their QMU experience and become their best selves through study and work abroad opportunities, paid internships, mentoring programmes, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Here are a few examples of how our donors have supported students over the past year.

The opportunity of a lifetime in Hong Kong

FOR FOURTH-YEAR International Hospitality and Tourism Management student, Lison Chaillou, a term at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) in 2024, proved to be one of the best experiences of her life.

Lison's Hong Kong adventure was made possible after receiving £5k from the Lisa Persdotter Simonyi Scholarships Fund. A generous gift from QMU alumna, Lisa Persdotter Simonyi, established the Fund to help female students experience education abroad, irrespective of their financial circumstances.

During her time with HKBU she took classes that enhanced her cultural understanding of Hong Kong, and learned Mandarin so she could converse with local people. She also loved learning about the country through its fusion of cuisines, and visiting the temples, landmarks and hiking trails.

Having received financial support to help with accommodation and other costs, Lison was able to develop her education, broaden her horizons and have the trip of a lifetime! Lison said: "The Lisa Persdotter Simonyi Scholarship made my exchange to Hong Kong possible, and enabled me to explore Asia, visiting new countries including China, Philippines and Vietnam. The experience has been one of the best of my life." □

“The Lisa Persdotter Simonyi Scholarship made my exchange to Hong Kong possible, and enabled me to explore Asia, visiting new countries including China, Philippines and Vietnam.”



Lison (far right) exploring with friends

Work is sweet with Strawberry Lemonade Events

KEEN TO BOOST her employability, fourth-year Business Management student, Georgia Ripanucci, undertook an internship with the award-winning corporate event planning agency, Strawberry Lemonade Events.

Georgia's internship was funded through the Santander Universities Employability Scheme, which helps improve students' employability skills by taking part in paid internships with small or medium-sized enterprises.

Georgia gained a range of tremendous experience with the agency - from event coordination and market research to data analysis and social media management.

She explained: "Working on projects such as the launch of a tech venture and Scottish Borders Business Excellence Awards improved my organisational and project management skills, ability to work under pressure and attention to detail. The experience taught me how to deliver high-quality work across multiple projects simultaneously. Learning how to prioritise tasks and manage time effectively was an invaluable experience."

It's not just our students who benefit from the employability scheme. Sian Downes, double graduate and CEO of Strawberry Lemonade Events, shared her reasons for being involved. She confirmed: "It's important for me to help current students and future alumni, and by maintaining a close relationship with QMU, we can engage with new talent from business, events and media. We're a corporate events agency, but also a social enterprise, and The Santander Universities Employability Scheme has become an important part of our employability and education strategy." □



(L-R) Georgia Ripanucci with Sian Downes

Psychology & Sociology Society's Conference

AN AWARD OF £770 helped support QMU's student Psychology & Sociology Society run a conference for their final year undergraduates. Thanks to the Vice-Chancellor's & Student Development Fund, the conference supported the academic, personal and professional practices of the group.

According to Ellie Birchall, former Society President, the event encouraged student engagement across year groups and courses, and helped develop communication, presentation and critical appraisal skills. It was also a confidence booster for students who plan to progress careers in academia, and who may present papers at future external research conferences. □

Alumni successes, events and reunions

QMU graduate appointed Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

WE WERE THRILLED that a QMU graduate had been appointed Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

Dr Harini Amarasuriya, who studied with our Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD), is the country's first female prime minister in 24 years. She is only the third woman in Sri Lanka's history to hold this top leadership position.

Following several years of research in the field of international health, Dr Amarasuriya completed a joint PhD programme with QMU and the University of Edinburgh in 2011. She was sworn into office as the 16th Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on 24 September 2024 by the country's president, Anura Kumara Disanayake. Prior to her

career in politics, Dr Amarasuriya worked as a lecturer at The Open University of Sri Lanka.

Dr Marcia Vera-Espinoza is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Global Health and Development at QMU. She said: "Harini's rise from academia to politics reflects a critical shift toward qualified and inclusive governance, which is pivotal in a nation navigating economic and social challenges.

"Her focus on justice, education, and labour reform, coupled with her progressive vision, is expected to set a new tone for Sri Lanka's political landscape. This achievement is not only a testament to her academic and activist background, but also a step forward for gender inclusivity in South Asian politics."

Upcoming Alumni Events

With 2025 marking 150 years of QMU, we have several events which may be of interest to our alumni. For more details, scan the QR code or visit the QMU150 website: www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/qmu150

Other alumni-specific meet-ups include:

- Central London event on 12 June 2025.
- Edinburgh city centre event in October 2025.

Want to hear about events as they're announced?
E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk



Call for Classmates

Mike Tucker would love to hear from fellow students who joined the one-year Professional Qualification of the Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management Association in 1982, and graduated alongside him in 1983. Reconnect with Mike at E: mikejtucker007@googlemail.com

QMU Association update by Lindesay Irvine, President



A busy year!

IT WAS A BUSY YEAR, with our first 'Clean It, Fix It' week in March '24 at Madras Lodge, the QMU Association's holiday rental property in Gullane, East Lothian. Many members helped with spring cleaning, decorating, garden tidying, and most importantly, coffee making. Two skylights were replaced, and new flooring was added in the loft and house.

If you're a member, look out for this year's meeting / events dates in your emails.

The spring dinner had a Great Gatsby theme. The students created marvellous decorations and produced wonderful food at the Edinburgh New Town School of Cookery. Some members dressed for the occasion, which was great fun.

Coffee get-togethers were generally well attended with interesting trips to the Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh (ITE), facilitated by our member Katrina Balmer. Katrina is also the boxmaster with the ITE.

In spring, we enjoyed a guided tour of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to see the rhododendrons. We ended the get-togethers with a coffee at the Dovecot Studios, followed by a visit to its Scottish Embroidery Exhibition.

We finished the year with our Christmas lunch at the Royal Scots Club. Thanks goes to our Social Secretary for organising these events.

Membership of QMU Association

Membership of the Association has been extended to include those working closely with QMU and partner organisation staff. Get more details about membership, membership joining forms, and email updates by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.qmugraduateassociation.com



We have made changes to our membership email distribution lists and therefore, if you have not heard from us in a while, please contact us at E: qmugradass@outlook.com to ensure we stay connected.

Alumni Events and Class Reunions

Alumni events and class reunions are an excellent way to stay connected with the University and your fellow alumni.

Last year, the alumni team was delighted to host several catch-ups for our alumni community — one in Dublin, two in London, and two in Edinburgh. The staff loved the opportunity to meet many graduates in person for the first time, as well as seeing familiar faces.

Last September, the team also attended the Scottish Universities Alumni Event at Scotland House in London. The event proved to be an effective platform for alumni to grow their personal and professional networks in the capital.

Class Reunions

Last year, we welcomed many of our alumni back to campus, individually or as part of class year groups. It was great to reconnect, and have the opportunity to listen, as everyone reminisced about their student days.



Diploma in Podiatric Medicine, Class of 1991



Diploma in Dietetics (and Catering), student intake 1974



BSc Dietetics, Class of 1984



(L-R) Dr Sara Smith, QMU's Dean of the School of Health Sciences, with Kelly Shanks, Chief Executive of Sport Manawatu in New Zealand, during a visit to campus in March 2024. Kelly graduated in 2000 with a BSc Psychology with Sociology and Social Policy.

Organise a Reunion

Would you like help to organise a reunion or get-together of your course, year or group of friends? E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk

Graduate Discount Scheme

20%

QMU is offering up to a 20% discount in postgraduate tuition fees for alumni who graduated with an undergraduate degree, whether studied on the University's Edinburgh campus or with one of our local or overseas partners.

- 20% discount for students who register for a full or part-time postgraduate degree, excluding those courses taught only online.
- 10% discount for students registering for one of our online postgraduate degrees.
- Discounts apply to the self-funding element of the postgraduate tuition fee only.

For more details scan the QR code:



Terms and conditions apply.

QMU¹⁵⁰

An insight into the life and legacy of Saint Margaret

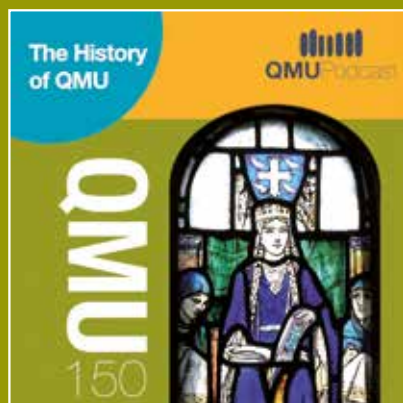
As part of our **QMU150** celebrations, we are planning a lecture and discussion covering the legacy of both St Margaret, after whom we are named, and those involved in the women's movement in Scotland at the time of the founding of our institution. If you are interested in attending this lecture, which will take place in November, please contact E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk



QMU Podcast

A Podcast on the history of our institution

To mark our 150th anniversary, Dr Tom Begg OBE, former economics lecturer at QMU, shares his incredible knowledge of our institution in a podcast which highlights the origins and history of Queen Margaret University. Dr Begg takes us on a fascinating journey from the early days, when groups of eager young women gathered at the Royal Museum of Scotland to learn about cooking, through to our first home at Atholl Crescent, and then onto the war years.



Tune into our podcast by scanning the QR code

