

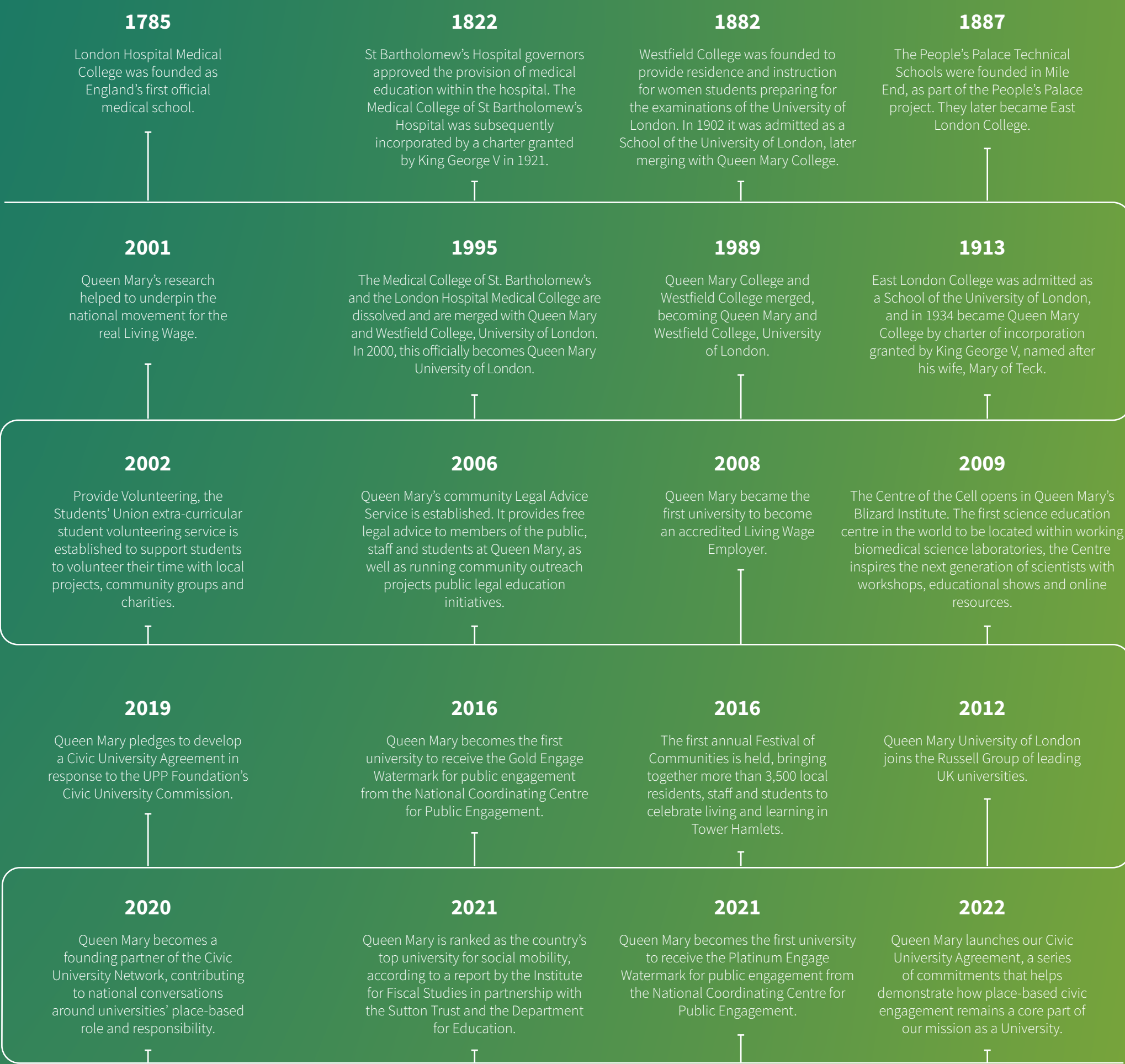
# Our Civic University Agreement

Opening the doors of  
opportunity to East London  
and beyond



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# Foreword

I am delighted to launch our first ever Civic University Agreement.

Queen Mary has a long, proud and distinctive history built on our four founding institutions stretching back to 1785 and beyond. These founding institutions – the London Hospital Medical College, St Bartholomew's Medical College, Westfield College and Queen Mary College – shared a vision: to provide hope and opportunity for the less privileged populations of East London and the suburbs of the City of London.

Today, Queen Mary is a leading global research-intensive University committed to improving lives locally, nationally and internationally. True to our founders' vision, we continue to open the doors of opportunity for anyone with the potential to succeed and remain committed to building on our deep and enduring engagement with our local communities. Our Civic University Agreement represents an important new chapter in this story.

The process of developing this Agreement presented an opportunity to reflect on two key questions: what role do we play within society; and where do we play it?

Queen Mary is unique among the world's research-intensive universities in our combination of excellence in research and education, the diversity within our community, our global reach and our engagement with our local communities. We are home to people from diverse ethnicities, languages and cultures, and have over 170 nationalities represented on our London campuses alone.

A student whose family lives within half a mile of one of our London campuses is learning about the economies of nations thousands of miles away. A researcher is sharing their latest work with international peers, based on community research here in East London.

One powerful benefit we can bring to our local community is in helping cross perceived boundaries – geographical or otherwise – and we have carried that ethos into this Civic University Agreement.

Of course, East London is already a global community. Its people and places have deep-rooted connections to the wider world. While working with stakeholders to develop our Agreement, people described their pride in East London's resilience, community spirit and entrepreneurship. They also shared their concerns about, among other things, social divides, and inequalities in health and life chances.

As a large organisation rooted in place, we always strive to be the best anchor institution we can be. We are committed to working with local residents, businesses, the NHS, local government, the arts and cultural sector, and the voluntary and community sector to help our communities to prosper. Our Civic University Agreement brings together new and ongoing activity at Queen Mary to ensure our work meets the needs of our neighbours and partners. This includes the students we welcome from the local area, the involvement of local lived experiences in our research, the buildings and campuses we share with local communities, and our role within East London's growing knowledge and innovation economy.

I would like to thank the many people who took part in the development of this Agreement. We look forward to deepening and extending our work with local partners to make a positive difference to people and places in East London.

**Professor Colin Bailey**  
President and Principal  
Queen Mary University of London



# Opening the doors of opportunity

We are proud of our place within East London, one of the most diverse, creative and fastest growing areas of the capital and the UK. As a longstanding neighbour to over two million residents, there are a multitude of ways in which Queen Mary works with and for its local people, communities and partners.

The development of this Civic University Agreement is the next stage in our journey to formalise our commitment to civic and community engagement, working with local partners and communities to identify key priorities that will shape our future work. So it is important for us that over 300 people who live, work or study in East London – residents, third sector organisations, businesses, Queen Mary staff and students – helped us develop this Civic University Agreement.

Through a process of consultation, co-analysis workshops and collaborative prioritisation, we have listened and reflected together on what makes East London unique and how Queen Mary can play a positive and engaged role in its future.

From resilient local communities to plentiful green spaces, there is much to be proud of in East London. And there are opportunities for us to grasp together, including: building health equality and equity; contributing to a sustainable future; mitigating digital exclusion; championing lifelong learning; supporting local enterprise to flourish; supporting and advocating for arts and culture; and sharing intellectual and research assets.

The five themes outlined in this Civic University Agreement are a result of this collaborative process and represent a strong, evidence-based foundation upon which we can build our civic purpose in the months and years ahead.

## Our values

### Inclusive

We will be inclusive, with transparent processes and opportunities that are accessible to all our stakeholders.

### Proud

We are proud of our history and place within East London. We will celebrate our diverse communities, and the difference we can make when we work together.

### Ambitious

We will grow and adapt the way we engage with society, responding to local needs and trialling innovative approaches.

### Collegial

We will share our work locally, nationally and internationally, creating space to learn from different approaches and to inspire other organisations to begin their civic engagement journey.

### Ethical

We value our communities, their knowledge and experience, and will recognise their contributions as equal partners.

## Five themes

1

Inclusive  
place-making

2

A healthy and  
sustainable future

3

Pathways  
for life

4

A cultural hub for  
East London

5

Enabling civic  
practice



# 1. Inclusive place-making

We will use our expertise as an anchor institution to champion local agendas, bring together others seeking to strengthen communities of place, and represent the needs of East London on a national and international stage.

East London's local economies are unique and vibrant assets, with an appetite to grow and adapt to new opportunities for innovation. Queen Mary has a vital role to play in supporting businesses to innovate and adapt following on from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working with partners to boost the economies surrounding our campuses, and to bridge the gap between the

businesses based in the City and Canary Wharf, and those based in East London's high streets.

We are also uniquely placed to act as a local convenor, working in partnership with the third sector and voluntary organisations to collaborate on key issues affecting those living and working in East London.

## We will:

- Convene a network of "civic champions" who want to collaborate on shared priorities, sharing insight and learning to address local needs.
- Support local innovation and enterprise, through initiatives such as the Queen Mary Enterprise Zone, an innovation hub which supports new start-ups in East London – particularly those working in digital health, medical technologies, and artificial intelligence.
- Continue to offer free, expert legal advice to members of the public through our award-winning Legal Advice Centre.
- Ensure local people can access Queen Mary spaces and infrastructure in different ways, through removing existing barriers and finding new opportunities.
- Develop a network of Queen Mary researchers working in East London and explore the opportunities for collaborative research agendas for the area.
- Continue to provide Queen Mary students with volunteering opportunities, responding to local and national needs, and find ways for Queen Mary staff to share their skills and expertise locally.
- Build stronger communications channels into our local area, raising awareness of opportunities to connect with us.



## The Festival of Communities

Exploring living and learning together in Tower Hamlets, the annual Festival of Communities is a collaboration with local organisations which provides an opportunity where Queen Mary staff and students, community groups and residents can come together to share ideas and experiences, find out about local opportunities and celebrate the best of their borough.

The activities at the festival showcase our research, teaching and other initiatives alongside local organisations, and over 3500 families visit each year to learn something new or try something different. These varied activities include hands-on experiments, sharing stories and views, interacting with demonstrations and trying out new sports.





## CHILL (Children's Health in London and Luton)

The CHILL study investigates the effects of reducing air pollution from traffic on children's health. Working with primary school students, researchers from the Wolfson Institute of Population Health are investigating the effectiveness of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), whether the ULEZ reduces air pollution, and whether this reduction has a positive impact on children's health compared to a control group in Luton.

Over 3,300 primary school pupils in London and Luton are taking part over four years to investigate the impact of reducing air pollution on children's lung growth, respiratory symptoms, activity levels and brain function.

## 2. A healthy and sustainable future

Queen Mary has a vital role to play in protecting the future health and environmental sustainability of East London – from the health inequalities facing local residents, to the quality of the air we breathe.

We know that East London faces challenges. The long-term health inequalities experienced by Black and South Asian communities, and the wider challenges of poverty and deprivation for many local residents, are already mobilising work across our three faculties on lifelong health and wellbeing.

The impacts of climate change will also disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. Queen Mary is committed to working in partnership with local people and organizations to develop

solutions, mitigate these impacts, and to make our urban environment more sustainable.

Alongside other anchor institutions in east London, we are uniquely placed to be able to rise to these challenges. Working together within our diverse local area, we can shape healthcare and environmental innovations which meet genuine needs, enable truly participatory research, and use our global partnerships to build on best practice from around the world.

### We will:

- Work in partnership with anchor institutions across East London and use our world-class expertise in health research to strengthen health equity and respond to health inequalities, both locally and across the globe.
- Ensure that people's lived experiences are included in our research on these topics, giving voice to those most affected.
- Continue our work with Genes and Health, the world's largest community-based genetics study, aiming to improve health among people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage in East London and around the world.
- Develop Queen Mary as a Living Laboratory, bringing opportunities for staff students and external organisations to collaborate on projects looking at real-life sustainability problems by using our London campuses as a test site.
- Work with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to support plans to become a Net Zero Carbon borough by 2045.
- Decrease our own environmental impact with an initial carbon reduction target of 30% over 6 years, against our 2018/19 carbon footprint.
- Build an interdisciplinary network of people working to address critical climate and sustainability issues affecting East London and beyond.



# 3. Pathways for life

As a major employer and education provider in East London, Queen Mary has an important role to play in improving the life chances of our neighbours. Social divides – such as wealth inequality and uneven access to new digital technologies – affect future life chances in East London.

Queen Mary is working to alleviate some of these pressures through training, work experience opportunities and diverse routes to learning and employment. We will also use our convening power to bring together others who can influence this work.

We can inspire and support young people through our outreach and widening participation programmes, address skills gaps, and work with our partners to support the development of secure, high-quality future employment opportunities.

## We will:

- Deepen and extend our relationships with education providers across East London, including co-sponsored and other local schools and colleges, to ensure that young people are supported to make the most of learning and employment opportunities.
- Ensure young people across East London are aware of and have access to Queen Mary as an exciting place to learn.
- Provide new educational and employment opportunities, working in partnership with further education and the NHS, including through the new London City Institute of Technology and the Whitechapel Life Sciences development.
- Provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities for adults, helping to fill local skills gaps and building strong foundations for the future economy of East London.
- Develop our Degree Apprenticeship programmes and apprenticeship opportunities at Queen Mary, responding to emerging skills needs and raising awareness of these opportunities locally.
- Trial ways to ensure local young people have access to employability guidance and support, in collaboration with expert local stakeholders and partners.

## London City Institute of Technology

The London City Institute of Technology is a collaboration between Queen Mary University of London, Newham College and a wide range of employers. It will specialise in delivering higher technical education and apprenticeships with a focus on STEM subjects, such as engineering, digital, and construction.

With £28m in funding from the Department for Education and the Greater London Authority, the Institute will play a vital role in creating secure, high-quality roles in areas where employers need future skills. The London City Institute of Technology will also help to fill local skills gaps by providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities for adults.





## Arts & Culture at Queen Mary

Arts & Culture at Queen Mary brings together creative practitioners, cultural organisations and Queen Mary staff and students to sustain long-term collaborations, student employment opportunities and research projects, across East London and the world. These projects focus on exchanging knowledge and expertise across sectors and research, teaching and collaboration at Queen Mary, drawing on arts and culture research and methodologies used across science, medicine and the humanities.

Staff in the School of English and Drama, for example, have been working with the local authority and local arts and cultural organisations on the annual Season of Bangla Drama since its creation in 2002. The festival brings together the best of British-Bengali theatre with a uniquely East London focus. It showcases local talent as well as putting the spotlight on a range of issues relevant to the British-Bengali experience. Its programme is in both English and Bengali, incorporating plays from East London as well as West Bengal, India and Sylhet, Bangladesh.

## 4. A cultural hub for East London

East London is home to a rich arts and cultural sector, alongside strong networks of community and voluntary organisations.

Continuing the ethos of the People's Palace, Queen Mary has a unique opportunity to build on this important part of our history and add value to this creative and cultural infrastructure, ensuring that arts and culture are accessible for all.

The arts provide important opportunities to bring communities together, building on East London's community spirit and boosting the local economy. We can tackle social divides and provide space to connect and collaborate with local people and partners.

### We will:

- Provide new educational and employment opportunities for Queen Mary students to work with East London arts and cultural organisations.
- Connect East London arts and cultural organisations with international arts networks through our researchers and research centres.
- Enable staff and students to engage with and learn about East London's rich history, through collaborations, partnerships and projects.
- Celebrate our local heritage through a series of annual collaborative events, such as the Festival of Communities and A Season of Bangla Drama.
- Use our campuses as a civic resource to raise the profile of arts and culture for new audiences and acknowledge our place in the local cultural infrastructure.
- Support and advocate for East London's arts and cultural sector, for example through our Arts and Culture programme, and through Network, our Centre for the Creative and Cultural Economy.
- Introduce residency, research and fellowship opportunities for arts, cultural and community organisations or individuals to develop their work through working with Queen Mary.



# 5. Enabling civic practice

Our Civic University Agreement builds upon a history of civic and community engagement at Queen Mary, but our future place-based commitments cannot be achieved in isolation.

We will sustain our existing collaborations and build new partnerships with local stakeholder organisations and leaders to ensure our collective civic strategies align to achieve maximum impact for East London.

This Agreement will be underpinned by a strong internal foundation focussed on enabling our staff and students to contribute to society, championing good

practice, introducing new guidance, providing opportunities to learn from each other, and monitoring the effects of our work. We will ensure the knowledge, skills and experience that we have at Queen Mary can be used for the benefit of the many communities around us and share the outcomes of this work with other institutions around the world, enabling others to begin their civic journey.

## We will:

- Build an implementation framework around the five themes of this agreement, so that teams and individuals across Queen Mary can contribute to a clear civic strategy.
- Develop an evaluation framework to understand what success will look like for Queen Mary across the five themes, building in feedback from everyone involved.
- Co-produce, with residents, community and arts organisations, principles for high quality community partnerships, to form the foundation of future staff and student training and ensure future partnerships have community needs at their centre.
- Find ways to ensure that East London voices and perspectives can contribute to discussions at all levels of Queen Mary – from community engagement funding panels to university governance.
- Enable staff and students to share their time and expertise locally, with policies in place to support this work.
- Continue to offer free, expert legal advice to members of the public through our award-winning Legal Advice Centre, promoting access to justice within the community.
- Develop guidance and processes to appropriately acknowledge and recompense individuals, community and arts organisations who contribute to research and teaching.
- Develop and embed policies to ensure we are a fair local employer and local workforce champion, building on our experience as the first university to become a Living Wage employer and supporting other organisations to do the same.
- Continue to develop our sustainability practices in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Work with other institutions across East London and beyond to ensure our civic agreement and other local civic strategies are connected to each other.

## London Living Wage

The real Living Wage aims to have an impact on high rates of in-work poverty that affects millions of households in the UK by introducing a higher minimum pay threshold based on the amount a person needs to earn to cover the basic costs of living.

Queen Mary became the first accredited university in the UK to pay the real Living Wage in 2006, bringing outsourced cleaners in-house and introducing new working conditions for staff. By January 2008, every staff member at the University received a basic minimum package of 30 days' annual leave, access to sick pay, an annually negotiated pay increase and an employer-contribution pension scheme.

As a principal partner of the Living Wage Foundation, research from our School of Geography provided evidence to support the campaign for employers to adopt the Living Wage.





# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who supported the development of this Civic University Agreement through sharing their experiences and insight, analysing the evidence and setting priorities. We would particularly like to thank Tower Hamlets Citizens and the Institute of Community Studies, who have supported this work throughout.

## East London Support

This Civic University Agreement is a commitment from Queen Mary to East London and beyond, but it would not be possible without many organisations across East London who have committed to support Queen Mary as partners, convenors, and advisors as this work progresses.



