



Senate

Paper Title	Suspension of Regulations: October and November 2016
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the report and to consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	A summary of suspensions of regulations requested during October and November 2016, and the outcomes.
Questions for Senate to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are members concerned by the number of suspensions?• How can the number of suspensions be reduced?• Do members feel that the suspension decisions are appropriate?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	The paper concerns exceptions granted to the normal application of the <i>Academic Regulations</i> , the main regulatory document for the management of quality and standards in relation to our academic provision.
Strategy and risk	Security of academic standards and quality relies upon the approved frameworks being applied consistently. There should be no exceptions. This paper details action taken to address those exceptions that did arise.
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	Senate only.
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Suspension of Regulations: October to November 2016

Background

A report on suspensions of regulations is submitted to each meeting of Senate. Suspension may be requested where a situation arises in which the normal application of the Academic Regulations would either be manifestly unfair to one or more students, or where a situation has arisen that was not foreseen by the regulations (that is, where a change to the regulations is needed, but action is required on behalf of the current cohort). These cases should be extremely rare, and the situations leading to them are normally avoidable.

To obtain a suspension requires support from the appropriate Subject and Degree Examination Boards and Vice-Principal (SETL or Research) for assessment issues, or from the Head of School/Institute/Directorate and Vice-Principal for other issues. All requests are passed through ARCS, and screened at that stage.

This report covers October and November 2016. Tables showing a breakdown of requests by faculty and school/institute are provided, and a brief summary of each suspension and its cause is given in the appendix.

Summary data: October and November 2016

There were six requests for suspension in this quarter. In the equivalent quarter in 2015/16 there were only four requests for suspension. In 2014/15 there were seven, and in 2013/14 there were 16. Four of the six cases were wholly avoidable.

The column titled 'avoidable' indicates how many cases could have been avoided. Most avoidable suspensions are caused by school/institute error. Unavoidable suspensions typically relate to cases concerning an individual student's personal circumstances.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total	Avoidable
Biological & Chemical Sciences (Nanchang)	3	-	3	2
Dentistry	1	-	1	1
Physics & Astronomy	1	-	1	0
Business & Management	1	-	1	1

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total	Avoidable
Humanities and Social Sciences	3	-	3	2
Science and Engineering	2	-	2	1
Medicine and Dentistry	1	-	1	1
Total	6	0	6	4

Common themes

Incorrect information provided to students

Four of the suspensions related to cases where incorrect information had been provided to students, the students had been working to that information in good faith, and a suspension was required to temporarily validate the unapproved scheme so as not to disadvantage the students and place QMUL in breach of regulations from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). Such cases typically relate to the provision of incorrect assessment details to students; in this particular period, however, there were a wider range of examples.

In case 2016-01, the School of Business and Management informed students of an unapproved assessment scheme; the suspension validated the scheme that had been delivered.

In case 2016-02, the Institute of Dentistry had incorrectly informed students that a particular module was compulsory rather than core (must pass, and cannot be condoned); the suspension allowed the condoned failure of a core module.

In case 2016-04, the School of Business and Management determined that a module approved in 2014 but not delivered until 2016 had been designed with academically inappropriate assessments – an alternative was used; the suspension validated the scheme that had been delivered.

In case 2016-06, the QMUL-Nanchang Joint Programme (based with SBCS) had approved a qualifying mark on an examination (meaning that students had to pass the examination outright, as well as having an overall module mark of 40.0 or higher), but not informed students; one student had failed as a result of the qualifying mark, and the suspension removed the qualifying mark for 2016/17.

Other cases

The other cases in this quarter were less concerning, and represent examples of where suspensions were used appropriately.

In case 2016-03, the School of Physics and Astronomy used a suspension to amend the MSc (Euromasters) progression rules in order not to disadvantage current students following the discovery of inconsistent practices in resit provision across University of London colleges (the programme has a large intercollegiate element). The suspension will be codified as a permanent change to the regulations from 2017/18.

In case 2016-05, the School of Business and Management used a suspension of regulations to remove the progression hurdle from the taught element to the dissertation on all postgraduate taught programmes. The School will make the change permanent for 2017/18 and beyond through programme amendments. Removing the hurdle for the 2016/17 cohort does not disadvantage any student, is beneficial for some students, and brings logistical and administrative benefits for Business and Management and Registry as well as harmonising progression practices across Humanities and Social Sciences.

Appendix – suspensions of regulations: October and November 2016

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2016-01	Module: assessment	Apply unapproved assessment weightings.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2016-02	Programme: diet	Treat core modules as compulsory.	Error	Yes	Yes	Dentistry
2016-03	Academic 5.117 (2015/16)	Amend progression requirements to introduce a small degree of discretion	External factor	Yes	N/A*	SPA
2016-04	Module: assessment	Apply unapproved assessment weightings.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2016-05	Academic 6.4 (2016/17)	Remove the progression hurdle.	External factor	Yes	N/A*	SBM
2016-06	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS (NCU)

* Ideally, these changes would have been made during 2015/16 for a 2016/17-start; this would have avoided suspensions, but the delay was understandable in these cases.