

**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	Annual Report on Student Casework 2015-16
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to <b>consider</b> the attached reports
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	<p>The four reports are included for consideration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic Appeals</li> <li>2. Non-academic appeals</li> <li>3. Assessment Offences</li> <li>4. Complaints, Discipline and Fitness to Practise</li> </ol> <p>The reports provide commentary and data on the number of cases investigated by the Academic Secretariat during the 2015-16 academic year. The reports also provide an equality impact analysis of the cases by ethnicity, gender and fee status.</p>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is Senate content that cases are being handled in a satisfactory manner?</li> <li>• are there any areas of concern?</li> <li>• are there any opportunities for enhancement?</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	<p>QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B9: <i>“Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement”</i>.</p> <p>Office of the Independent Adjudicator: The Good Practice Framework</p> <p>Higher Education Funding Council for England: Annual Provider Review</p>
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	<p>Strategic Aim.3: to provide all our students, wherever based, an education that is judged internationally to be of the highest quality, and which exploits innovations in teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>Strategic Risk.2: high quality student experience throughout the student life cycle</p> <p>Strategic Risk 7: design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes</p> <p>Strategic Risk 9: reputational development and external relations</p> <p>Strategic Risk 10: Partnerships</p> <p>Strategic Risk 13: maintain effective and constructive governance</p>
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	<p>Senate</p> <p>Education Quality Board (meets after Senate on 15 March)</p> <p>Council</p>
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## Annual report on academic appeals – 2015-16

### Scope

1. This is the annual report on academic appeal cases submitted by students during the 2015-16 academic year. Academic appeals are appeals against the decisions of examinations boards and involve decisions relating to progression, assessment and award.

### Number of cases received

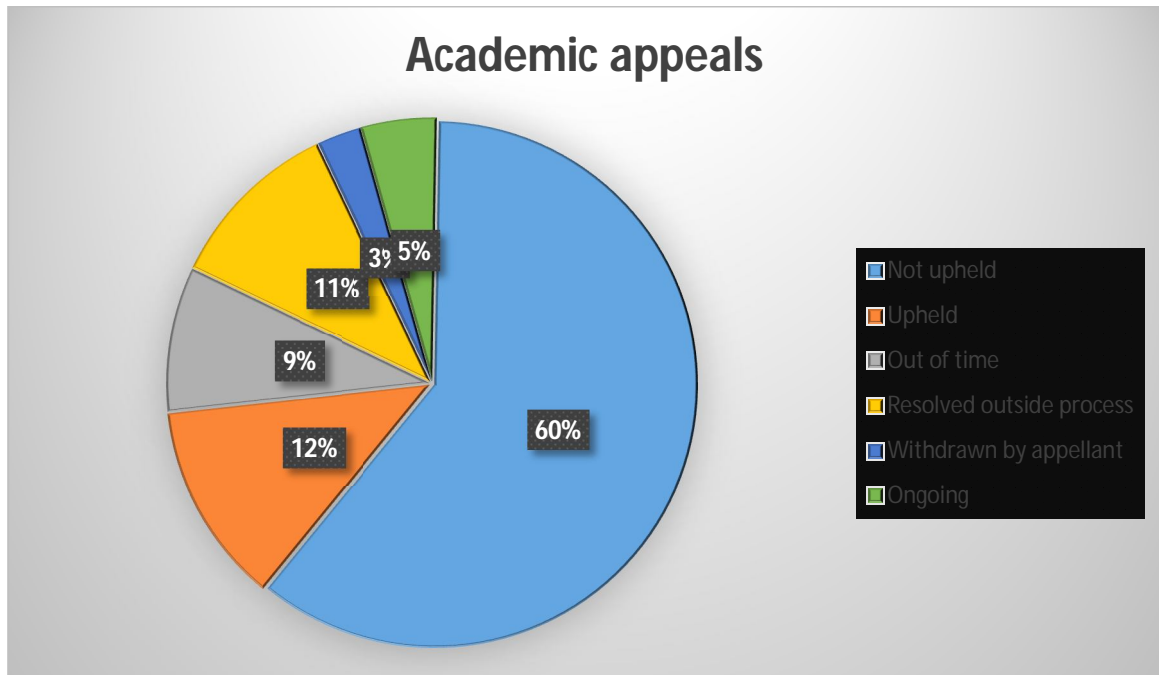
2. In total 259 academic appeals were received in 2015-16. This compares to 237 in 201-15. The total number of appeals received compares with previous years as follows:

#### Number of academic appeals received

Year	Number of appeals	% change	Student population	Number of appeals as % of student population
2011-12	178	-16.8	17,226	1.03
2012-13	163	-9.0	17,840	0.91
2013-14	201	+18.9	18768	1.1
2014-15	237	+17.9	18905	1.25
<b>2015-16</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>+8.5</b>	<b>21187</b>	<b>1.22</b>

3. 2015-16 represented the highest total number of academic appeals ever received at QMUL and the number of appeals has increased significantly in each of the last 2 academic years. However as a % of the total QMUL student population the figure is very similar to the previous year.
4. The table and chart below show the outcome for appeals received in 2015-16.

Outcome	Number of cases (2014-15 figures in brackets)
Not upheld	<b>157</b> (158)
Upheld	30 (41)
Resolved outside process	28 (16)
Out of time	23 (18)
Ongoing at time of report	12 (1)
Withdrawn by appellant	7 (3)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>259</b>



5. The percentage of cases upheld in 2015-16 was 12% of the total received. This compares with 17% of cases upheld in 2014-15. However, there was an increase in cases resolved outside the process. Cases resolved outside of the process usually involve a situation where there has been a clear oversight in procedure, for example in inputting a student's mark in to SITS, or where there are clear circumstances that can be addressed immediately by QMUL. Some of the cases resolved outside of the process are time-sensitive where a quick decision is needed with the agreement of a School/Institute in order to prevent a student suffering detriment.

#### Grounds for appeal

6. In accordance with the 2015-16 Appeal Regulations there are two grounds upon which an appeal may be based:
- i. Procedural error where the process leading to the decision being appealed against was not conducted in accordance with QMUL's procedure, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different had the error not occurred. Procedural error includes alleged administrative/clerical error and bias in the operation of the procedure.
  - ii. That exceptional circumstances, illness or other relevant factors had, for good reason, not been made known at the time or had not been taken into account properly.

*QMUL Appeal Regulations 2015-16, 2.149*

7. Of the 259 appeals received in the 2015-16 academic year, 69 (66 in 2014-15) were submitted on the grounds of i. procedural error; 159 (130 in 2014-15) were submitted on the grounds of ii. exceptional circumstances; 28 cases (41 in 2014-15) were submitted on both grounds; 3 appeals submitted in 2015-16 did not specify the grounds of appeal.

### Appeals submitted under i) procedural error

8. Of the 69 appeals submitted under procedural error, 11 were upheld, 42 were not upheld, 9 were resolved outside the process, 1 was withdrawn, and 4 were deemed out of time. 1 case is pending an outcome a time of the report. 1 case was closed owing to a suspicion of fraud.
9. Where students submitted requests on the grounds of i. procedural error, the key themes of the appeals were:
  - Challenging marks awarded for particular modules/examinations based on the appellant's belief that these had been miscalculated;
  - Challenging degree classifications based on the appellant's belief that they should have been awarded a higher classification.
10. The procedural errors that led to the appeals being upheld, or cases resolved included:
  - Lack of a marking trail - QMUL policy outlined in section 5.28 of the Assessment Handbook (2016-17) requires that 'examination boards must ensure that there is a clear marking trail of comments and notes that can be followed by readers (notably external examiners).'

There were a number of cases where Schools/Institutes were unable to provide a clear marking trail on request. Failure to provide a marking trail is concerning as there is no way to evidence how marks have been derived and undermines QMUL's academic quality standards. In such cases appeals were upheld and referred back to Schools/Institutes for fresh marking, which caused additional work. In some cases student marks changed substantially on remarking.

Most Schools/Institutes were able to provide a clear marking trail and in these cases the appeal can be concluded quickly as the student has no grounds to challenge the decision, which can be clearly evidenced.

- Incomplete or erroneous data in a student's record

### Appeals submitted under ii) Exceptional circumstances

11. Of the 159 appeals submitted on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, 100 cases were not upheld, 16 cases were upheld, 13 cases were resolved outside the process, 15 cases deemed out of time, and 5 cases were withdrawn by the student, 9 cases were open at the time of the report.
12. Where students submitted appeals on the grounds of ii) exceptional circumstances, the common themes of the appeals were as follows:
  - Assessments affected by a health condition that the student had not made known at the time – in a number of cases mental health conditions such as anxiety and/or depression;
  - Diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty during or shortly after the exam period or after deregistration.
13. The majority of cases submitted on the grounds of exceptional circumstances related to claims that examinations had been affected by ill health. By sitting exams students declare themselves fit to sit, in accordance with the 'fit to sit' policy, which states: "in attending an examination, students declare themselves 'fit to sit'. Any subsequent

claim for extenuating circumstances shall not normally be considered". In most cases applicants did not provide clear evidence of a good reason why they had not disclosed these circumstances to the examination board at the appropriate time.

14. There has been an increase over the last few years in the number of cases that involve a student being diagnosed with depression, or other mental health condition, which may be classified as a disability, while a student at QMUL. These cases are often complex and the OIA has recommended that QMUL should deal with such cases with care, in the context of the Equality Act (2010).

#### Appeals submitted under both i) Procedural error *and* ii) Exceptional circumstances

15. Of the 28 cases submitted under both grounds, 15 were not upheld, 3 were upheld, 2 cases were deemed out of time. 1 case was withdrawn and 5 cases was resolved outside of the process. 2 cases were pending an outcome at the time of the report.
16. Appeals submitted on both grounds are combinations of the factors listed above under the individual grounds and do not have any specific features that distinguish them. They can be more complex as they may involve more factors than appeals submitted on a single ground.

#### Appeals by Developmental Year

17. The tables below provide data on the number of appeals received, by level of study and by developmental year.

##### Number of academic appeals, by level of study 2015-16

(2014-15 figures in brackets)

Level of study	Number of appeals received	% of all appeals (to one decimal place)
Undergraduate and foundation	160 (160)	67.5 (67.5)
Postgraduate taught	75 (75)	31.6 (31.6)
Postgraduate research	2 (2)	0.8 (0.8)

##### Number of academic appeals, by developmental year

(2014-15 figures in brackets)

	Number of appeals received	% of all appeals (to one decimal place)
Foundation (Year 0)	4 (5)	1.5% (2.1%)
UG year 1	52 (54)	20.1% (22.8%)
UG year 2	66 (42)	25.5% (17.8%)
UG final year	74 (52)	28.6% (21.9%)
UG year 3 (of 4 or 5)	10 (4)	3.9% (1.7%)
UG year 4 (of 5)	2 (3)	0.8% (1.3%)
PGT	47 (75)	18.1% (31.6%)
PGR	4 (2)	1.5% (0.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	

18. Undergraduate students represent the largest number of appeals. Final year students are more likely to appeal as degree classification is one of the things students are often dissatisfied with.
19. Research student appeals are proportionally low; postgraduate research students make up about 7% of the student population. Complaints from research students have also decreased in recent years, indicating this may be the result of closer monitoring of supervision.
20. Appeals from postgraduate taught students reduced to a more proportionate level after a large increase in 2014-15.

### Appeals by School

21. The tables below show the number of appeals by School/Institute by total number of appeals received. The table does not take into account the different sizes of Schools/Institutes, therefore some of the Schools/Institutes near the top of the list may be owing to the fact that they have more students.
22. In terms of total number of appeals the most were received from the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, the Institute of Health Sciences Education (MBBS students), and the School of Chemical and Biological Sciences. These Schools/Institutes also had a high number of appeals in 2014-15.

#### Academic appeals by School – as % of all appeals received (2014-15 figures in brackets)

Ranking	School	Total number of appeals	% of all appeals
1	Electronic Engineering & Computer Science (including BUPT students)	39 (25)	15%
2	IHSE	35 (31)	13.5%
=3	Biological & Chemical Sciences	23 (20)	9%
=3	Law	23 (15)	9%
5	Business and Management	21 (17)	8%
=6	Economics and Finance	20 (20)	8%
=6	Engineering & Materials Science	20 (17)	8%
8	Mathematical Sciences	17 (23)	6.5%
9	CCLS	11 (15)	4%
=10	History	8 (4)	3%
=10	Physics and Astronomy	8 (7)	3%
12	Languages, Linguistics and Film	7 (7)	3%
13	Politics & International Relations	6 (11)	2%
14	English and Drama	5 (8)	2%
=15	Geography	4 (3)	1.5%
=15	William Harvey	4 (3)	1.5%
17	Dentistry	3 (0)	1%
18	Cancer	2 (3)	1%
19	International Office	2 (2)	1%

20	Blizard	1 (0)	0.5%
21	Wolfson	0 (2)	0%
		<b>259</b>	

### Timescales

23. The QMUL Appeal Regulations 2015-16 state that students will be notified of the outcome of their appeal application within 2 calendar months from the receipt of the submission of supporting evidence.
24. All students are notified if the deadline is reached and informed that their case is still under consideration and the expected timescale for completion.
25. The mean time taken to resolve a case for 2015-16 was 58 calendar days (47.4 calendar days in 2014-15); the median for 2015-16 was 57 calendar days (44 in 2014-15). The table below provides a breakdown of the number of cases under/over the two months specified by the regulations.

#### Time taken to resolve cases

	2015-16	2014-15
Number of cases under two calendar months	<b>154 (59.5%)</b>	<b>182 (76.8%)</b>
Number of cases over two calendar months	<b>93 (35.9%)</b>	<b>54 (22.8%)</b>
Cases open at time of report	<b>12 (4.6%)</b>	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>

### Final Review and Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

26. Students dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal may submit a Final Review to the Principal's Nominee who is generally the Academic Registrar, or the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching & Learning).
27. There were 48 final review requests in 2015-16. This means that 22% of eligible appeals requested a final review (out of time cases, withdrawn cases and on-going cases not eligible for final review).
28. 4 out of 48 final reviews were upheld. 1 case was referred back for further review under the appeal regulations after which the appeal was not upheld. 3 cases were referred back to examboards for consideration. 4 cases are still open at the time of this report.
29. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal may submit a complaint to the OIA. Figures on complaints made to the OIA are reported to Senate separately.

### Developments for 2015-16 and beyond

30. KPMG undertook an audit of the Appeals process in November - December 2016. The audit concluded that QMUL has robust Appeals Regulations and that the procedure was being followed appropriately.

31. One way of reducing appeals is through the informal stage where Schools/Institutes can rectify issues before they escalate to appeal. There were a number of appeals submitted in 2015-16 where there was action that could have been taken by examboards to rectify an issue without the need for an appeal. This can be seen in the number of cases resolved outside the full appeal process. Rectifying matters at the informal stage can save time and resource, provide students with a prompt outcome and increase student satisfaction.
32. In June 2015 Senate approved the establishment of 'results surgeries' or similar in all schools and institutes. The OIA had recommended the provision of a process to enable students to discuss concerns about assessment outcomes with a member of staff. Schools and institutes can vary their mechanisms for providing this opportunity for students, but the process should be publicised at key points in the assessment process. 'Results surgeries' can be a useful way of reducing the number of appeals, particularly as a number of appeals stated a lack of feedback as a reason why the student had appealed.

### Equality Impact Data

33. Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of academic appeals received by ethnicity and gender. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown of academic appeals received by fee status.
34. The highest number and proportion of appeals were from students who stated their ethnicity as white. This is also the largest ethnic group at QMUL. The second highest number of appeals was from students who stated their ethnicity as Asian-Indian.
35. The gender split in appeals was 60% male and 40% female. (62% male 32% female in 2104-15). Amongst the largest ethnic group at Queen Mary (White) the split was 54% male, 46% female. For the second largest ethnic groups (Asian-Indian), the gender split was 79% male and 21% female, which was actually a drop from the previous year where the corresponding figures were 88% male and 12% female.
36. 70% of appeals were from students classified as home/EU fee-status and 30% from overseas students (74.4% and 26.6% in 2014-15). Home/EU students make up about two thirds of Queen Mary Students (64%), so the figures are roughly proportionate.

### Appendix 1 – ethnicity and gender

Ethnicity	Number of appeals	Proportion of all appeals (% to one decimal place)	Appeals within ethnic group:	
			Male (%)	Female (%)
Arab	10	3.9%	60	40
Asian – Bangladeshi	18	6.9%	72	28
Asian – Chinese	18	6.9%	56	44
Asian – Indian	34	13.1%	79	21
Asian – Other	23	8.9%	70	30
Asian – Pakistani	14	5.4%	71	29
Black – African	23	8.9%	48	52



Black – Caribbean	1	0.4%	0	100
Black – Other	3	1.2%	33	66
Do not know/not given	20	7.7%	50	50
Other	4	1.5%	100	0
Other mixed	4	1.5%	25	75
White	78	30.1%	54	46
White/Asian	4	1.5%	75	25
White/Black African	5	1.9%	40	60
<b>Totals</b>	<b>259</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>

### Appendix 2 – Academic appeals received, by fee status

Fee Status	Number of appeals	% of total appeals
Home/EU	181	70%
Overseas	78	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	



## Annual report on non-academic appeals submitted Under the QMUL Appeal Regulations 2015/16

### Scope

1. This is the annual report on appeal cases submitted by students under the Appeal Regulations. This report focuses on non-academic appeals submitted in the 2015-16 academic year. The report includes appeals against decisions made under the following procedures:
  - i. Student Disciplinary Procedure, as detailed in the Code of Student Discipline;
  - ii. Professional Capability and Fitness to Practise Procedure;
  - iii. Regulations for Assessment Offences;
  - iv. decisions to terminate the registration of a student for non-academic reasons (i.e non-payment of fees, attendance etc.);
  - v. decisions on student bursaries, scholarships and grants administered by QMUL.

### Data analysis and trends

2. During the 2015-16 academic year 59 non-academic appeals were received. This compares to 72 cases received in the 2014-15 academic year. The total number of appeals received compares with previous years as follows:

**Number of non-academic Appeals received by year**

Year	Number of appeals	Student population	Number of appeals as % of student population
2011/12	38	17,226	0.22
2012/13	61	17,840	0.38
2013/14	73	18,768	0.39
2014/15	72	18,905	0.38
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>21,187</b>	<b>0.28</b>

3. The reduction in the number of non-academic appeals in 2015-16 is largely the consequence of fewer appeals against penalties imposed for assessment offences. The number of assessment offences actually increased in 2015-16 from 2014-15. Students now receive a more detailed explanation of the reasons for the imposition of an assessment offence penalty on a decision form which accompanies the outcome letter. It may be that this additional information has helped reduce the number of appeals as students can see the rationale for the decision and that any mitigating circumstances they have raised have been clearly taken into account.

4. The table below shows that the largest category of appeal are module and programme deregistration appeals, including deregistrations for non-attendance and non-payment of fees. This is unsurprising as students are likely to appeal a decision to deregister them even if they do not have strong grounds for appeal.
5. The number of non-academic appeals submitted by category is as follows:

#### Appeals received by category

Category of appeal	2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Student Disciplinary Procedure	1	2	2	3
Assessment Offences Regulations	9	15	20	28
Module deregistration	22	37	<i>Previously included under programme deregistration figures below</i>	
Programme deregistration taught student – attendance	10	17	31	43
Decisions to terminate the registration of a taught student – non-payment of fees	12	20	11	15
Deregistration MPhil/PhD	2	3	2	3
Bursaries, scholarships and grants	1	2	2	3
Professional Capability and Fitness to Practise Panel	1	2	0	0
Residence appeals	1	2	4	6
Fees	0	0	0	0

#### Grounds for a review

7. In accordance with the 2015-16 Appeal Regulations there are two grounds for appeal:
- i. Procedural error where the process leading to the decision being appealed against was not conducted in accordance with QMUL's procedure, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different had the

error not occurred. Procedural error includes alleged administrative/clerical error and bias in the operation of the procedure.

- ii. That exceptional circumstances, illness or other relevant factors had, for good reason, not been made known at the time or had not been taken into account properly.

*Academic Regulations 2014-15, 2.148*

8. Of the 59 appeals received, 13 were submitted under ground i. procedural error (18 in 2014/15), 36 were submitted under ground ii. exceptional circumstances (35 in 2014/15) and 10 were submitted under both grounds (19 in 2014/15).
9. As noted in last year's report there has been an increase in students submitting appeals on the grounds of exceptional circumstances.
10. The outcomes for the 59 cases received during the 2015/16 academic were as follows:

Outcome	Number of cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)	
Upheld	7	(13)
Not upheld	34	(37)
Out of time	5	(1)
Resolved outside of the process	13	(21)
Withdrawn	0	(0)

11. 12 of the cases that were resolved outside of the process students that had been deregistered for non-payment of tuition fees. The students paid the outstanding amount during the 14 day appeal period and in these cases discretion was exercised to permit the student to continue on their programme as their fees had been cleared.

## Timescales

12. Under the QMUL Regulations 2015-16 QMUL seeks to notify students with an outcome within 2 months from the receipt of the submission of supporting evidence.
13. All students are notified if the deadline is reached informing them that their case is still under consideration and an approximate timescale for completion (exact timescales for completion are not provided as this can be affected by a number of factors).
14. The mean time taken to resolve a case for 2015-16 was 42 calendar days (35 days in 2014/15) the median was 37 calendar days (33.5 days in 2014/15). The table below provides a breakdown of the number of cases under/over the timescale specified by the regulations.

**Time taken to resolve case**

	2014-15	2015-16
Number of cases under 2 months	66 (92%)	45 (79%)
Over 2 months	6 (8%)	14 (21%)

**Final Review and Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education**

15. Students dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal may submit a Final Review to the Principal's Nominee who is generally the Academic Registrar, or the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching & Learning).
16. There were 7 final review requests in 2015-16. This means that 17% of eligible appeals requested a final review (out of time cases and resolved cases not eligible for final review).
17. 1 out of 7 final reviews were upheld. 1 case was referred back to the examboard for further review.
18. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal may submit a complaint to the OIA. Figures on complaints made to the OIA are reported to Senate separately.

**Developments for 2015-16 and beyond**

16. KPMG undertook an audit of the Appeals process in November - December 2016. The audit concluded that QMUL has robust Appeals Regulations and that the procedure was being followed appropriately.

## Equality Impact Data

18. Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of non-academic appeals received by developmental year. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown by fee status. Appendix 3 shows cases by ethnic group and gender.
19. The data is probably too small to be statistically significant however the gender split was roughly proportionate to QMUL's student population. Home students were considerably more likely to appeal than overseas students.
20. The highest number and proportion of appeals were from students who stated their ethnicity as Asian-Pakistani and Black-African. There does not appear to be any obvious reason for this over-representation and no common themes in their appeals.

### Appendix 1 - Appeals by developmental year

Year of study	Number of appeals 2015/16	% of all appeals 2015/16	Number 2014/15	% of all appeals 2014/15	Number of appeals 2013/14	% of all appeals 2013/14
Year 0 (foundation)	1	2	10	14	1	1
UG Year 1	14	24	14	19	11	15
UG Year 2	23	39	18	25	16	22
UG Year 3	0	0	0	0	2	3
UG Final Year	8	14	11	15	26	35
Year 3 -5 (MBBS)	3	5	0	0	2	3
PGT	10	17	16	22	14	19
PGR	0	0	3	4	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>		<b>72</b>		<b>73</b>	

### Appendix 2 - Appeals received by fee status

Status	Number of appeals 2015-16	% of appeals 2015-16	Number of appeals 2014-15	% of appeals 2014-15
Home/EU	37	63	62	86
Overseas	22	37	10	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>		<b>72</b>	

## Appendix 3 – Appeals received by ethnic group and gender

Ethnicity	Number of appeals	Proportion of all appeals (% to one decimal place)	Appeals within ethnic group:	
			Male (%)	Female (%)
Arab	2	3.4	100	0
Asian – Bangladeshi	5	8.5	80	20
Asian – Chinese	7	11.9	29	71
Asian – Indian	4	6.8	75	25
Asian – Pakistani	3	5.1	100	0
Asian – Other	5	8.5	40	60
Black – African	5	8.5	60	40
Mixed – White/Asian	1	1.7	0	100
Mixed - White/Black African	2	3.4	50	50
Mixed - White/Black Caribbean	1	1.7	100	0
Other	2	3.4	100	0
White	20	34	50	50
Not stated	2	3.4	100	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>



## Annual Report on Assessment Offences 2015/16

### Scope

1. This is the annual report on Assessment Offence Cases considered at institutional level during the 2015/16 academic year.
2. The report is split into four categories:
  - Plagiarism by undergraduate students
  - Plagiarism by postgraduate students
  - Breaches of the Academic Regulations during invigilated examinations
  - Other offences

### Number of cases received

3. Under the Academic Regulations, all allegations in an assessment component worth 31% or more of a module and all second or subsequent offences must be forwarded to the Academic Secretariat for investigation.
4. In total 208 allegations of an assessment offence were submitted to the Academic Secretariat during the 2015/16 academic year. This compares to 155 allegations in 2014/15. There were increases in all categories of cases: undergraduate and postgraduate plagiarism, exam offences and other offences such as ghost-writing.
5. The mean time taken to complete an assessment offence allegation was 41.2 calendar days (46.3 in 2013/14); the median was 35.5 calendar days (40 in 2013/14).

### Plagiarism by undergraduate students

6. There were 64 allegations of plagiarism against undergraduate students in the 2015/16 academic year.
7. This represents an increase from 53 cases of undergraduate plagiarism in 2014/15 but slightly fewer than the 70 cases in 2013/14.
8. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 60 of the 64 cases of alleged plagiarism by undergraduate students. 3 cases were dismissed after investigation and 1 case was withdrawn by the School as there was no evidence of an offence.
9. All students accused of submitting plagiarised work are given the opportunity to meet with the Academic Registrar's Nominee for an interview and have an opportunity to respond to the allegation. Students who are found to have committed a plagiarism offence are advised to seek advice from their School on avoiding plagiarism in future and are also advised of support on academic practice provided by Learning Development.
10. The table below details the distribution of penalties for undergraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2015/16 academic year. The figures indicate that Chairs and the



panel have been increasingly using penalty i. a formal reprimand. Formal reprimands are generally used for minor offences and this will be kept under review during 2016-17.

<b>Penalty applied</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2015/16</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2014/15</b>
2.140.i. a formal reprimand;	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>
2.140.ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with the maximum mark of the resubmission limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>47</b>	<b>64</b>
2.140.iii. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the maximum mark on any resit or retake limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>
2.140.iv. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
2.135.iii. and v. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the mark that may be awarded on a resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Penalties iii. and v.	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Penalties ii. and ii.	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

11. The table below presents undergraduate plagiarism cases in 2015/16 by year of study. The table shows that 40% of undergraduate plagiarism cases are committed by final year students. This may be a consequence of the added pressure of the final year and students completing their degree.
12. There was a surprising rise in the number of 2nd year undergraduate students committing plagiarism. The reasons behind the rise are unclear and it is most likely just a blip, however but this will be monitored during 2016/17.

<b>Year of study</b>	<b>Undergraduate plagiarism cases by year of study (2014/15 in brackets)</b>
UG year 1	<b>20.3% (37.7%)</b>
UG year 2	<b>32.8 (11%)</b>
UG final year	<b>40.6% (37.7%)</b>
Associate/Erasmus	<b>6.3% (3.8%)</b>

13. The number of undergraduate plagiarism cases in 2015/16 by School/Institute is detailed below:

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)</b>
Biological and Chemical Sciences	<b>8</b> (10)
Blizard Institute	<b>1</b> (0)
Business and Management	<b>14</b> (7)
Economics	<b>0</b> (0)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	<b>2</b> (4)
Engineering and Materials Science	<b>0</b> (0)
English and Drama	<b>9</b> (5)
Geography	<b>2</b> (0)
History	<b>10</b> (6)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	<b>8</b> (13)
Law	<b>0</b> (0)
Mathematical Sciences	<b>0</b> (0)
Politics	<b>5</b> (4)
Physics and Astronomy	<b>0</b> (0)
UGA exchange programme	<b>5</b> (4)

### **Plagiarism by Postgraduate Students**

14. There were 57 allegations of plagiarism against postgraduate students during the 2015/16 academic year, compared to 33 cases in 2014/15.
15. In 54 of the cases it was determined that an offence had been committed. 2 allegations were dismissed following investigation owing to a lack of evidence. 2 cases were pending outcomes at the time of this report.
16. The average mean time taken to complete an allegation of plagiarism for postgraduate students in the 2015/16 academic year was 43.8 calendar days (41.2 calendar days in 2014/15); the median was 37 calendar days (32.5 calendar days in 2014/15).
17. The table below details the distribution of penalties for postgraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2013/14 academic year.

<b>Penalty applied</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2015/16</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2014/15</b>
2.135.i. a formal reprimand;	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
2.135.ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with the maximum mark of the resubmission limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>50</b>	<b>41</b>
2.135.iii. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the maximum mark on any resit or retake limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>

2.135.iv. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	0	3
2.135.v. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the mark that may be awarded on a resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	0	0
2.135.vi. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, with the maximum mark on any resits or retakes limited to the minimum pass mark;	0	0
2.136.i. a recommendation to the Principal that the student be suspended from the programme for a period of up to one academic year with all modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred recorded with a module result of 0X;	0	0
2.136.ii. a recommendation to the Principal that the student be expelled from QM with all modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred recorded with a module result of 0X.	0	0
ii. and ii.	0	3
iii. and v.	2	3
iii. and iii.	0	13

18. The following schools submitted postgraduate plagiarism cases for investigation.

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of cases (2014/15 figure in brackets)</b>
Biological and Chemical Sciences	1 (0)
Blizard Institute	6 (2)
Business and Management	27 (17)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	3 (4)
Economics and Finance	0 (3)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	9 (0)
Institute of Dentistry	2 (0)
Geography	1 (1)
Engineering and Materials Science	0 (0)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	1 (0)
Mathematical Sciences	2 (1)
Politics and International Relations	4 (5)
Wolfson Institute	1 (0)

### **Breaches of Regulations in an Invigilated Examination**

19. In total there were 57 allegations of breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations during 2015/16, including the late summer resit period. In 2014/15 there were 44 allegations of breaches of the regulations in an invigilated exam. 32 of the exam offence cases during 2015/16 were from the joint SBCS Nanchang programme.

20. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 52 of the 57 cases.

21. In 3 cases the allegation was dismissed following investigation. 2 cases were pending outcome at the time of this report.
22. The mean time taken to complete cases involving breaches of the regulations in invigilated exams during the 2015/16 academic year was 22.4 calendar days (43.2 calendar days in 2014/15). The median was 8 calendar days (39.5 calendar days in 2014/15).
23. The reason for the drop in time taken to complete cases in the figures above is that a large batch of 32 cases from the Nanchang programme were completed in 8 days, which reduced the overall average time. These cases all involved the students having unauthorised material in the exams such as mobilephones and notes.
24. Of the 58 cases, 47 (22 in 2014/15) involved undergraduate students and 10 (22 in 2014/15) involved postgraduate taught students.
25. The table below details the distribution of penalties for exam offences cases imposed during the 2015/16 academic year with a comparison to the previous year's figures.

<b>Penalty applied</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2015/16</b>	<b>Percentage of total cases 2014/15</b>
2.135.i. a formal reprimand;	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
2.135.ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with the maximum mark of the resubmission limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
2.135.iii. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the maximum mark on any resit or retake limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
2.135.iv. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
2.135.v. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the mark that may be awarded on a resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
2.135.vi. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, with the maximum mark on any resits or retakes limited to the minimum pass mark;	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
2.135.iii. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the maximum mark on any resit or retake limited to the minimum pass mark; <b>and</b> 2.135.v. failure (with marks of 0X) of the whole diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the mark that may be awarded on a resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	<b>7</b>	<b>36</b>
i. and ii.	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
Harmonised penalty v. A mark of 0 in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the module mark capped on any resit at the minimum pass mark.	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>
Harmonised penalty vi. The overall classification of Honours to be reduced by one grade with an explanation to be provided as	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>

to why the calculated mark does not match the Honours awarded.		
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26. In 2014/15 it was noted that there had been a rise in postgraduate taught students committing exam offences. It appears that this was a one-off and not a trend.

### **Other allegations of assessment offences**

27. There was a number of cases which involved other breaches of the Regulations for Assessment Offences. There were 18 cases of alleged collusion which was similar to the number of cases in 2014/15 although there had been a large increase from 4 in 2013/14. 12 of the allegations of collusion were dismissed which may be a consequence of the difficulty of obtaining evidence to prove the allegation.
28. There were 10 allegations that a student had used a ghost-writing service during 215/16, which was a large increase from 4 cases in 2014/15. The number of ghost-writing cases seems to be increasing and often it is necessary to hold a viva to determine whether a student's work is not their own. In 9 of the 10 allegations of ghost-writing it was determined that an offence had been committed. 1 case was dismissed. 1 student was suspended for a year for this offence.
29. There were 2 allegations of a student fraudulently reporting research data and source materials. In both cases it was determined that an offence had been committed.

### **Enhancements for 2015/16 and beyond**

30. Guidance on assessment offences, including the process and penalties, was formally approved and is now published on the QMUL website:  
<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/docs/students/appeals-office/assessment-offences/190091.pdf>
31. The Appeals Office also delivers presentations on Assessment Offences during induction to those Schools/Institutes that wish to take this up. It is generally targeted at new students and final year students.
32. One issue that arose during 2015/16 is the use of online exams and how these are administered. In such cases it is important to ensure that computers are set up to prohibit access to anything other than the examination materials otherwise the student can access the internet or other unauthorised material. ARCS recommends that all Schools/Institutes undertaking online exams review existing procedures to ensure that systems are secure and that students are not able to access unauthorised material.

**Equality Impact Data**

33. The number of students involved in assessment offence cases is very small in relation to the total student population at Queen Mary University of London or QMUL. Although the numbers are relatively small overseas students appear to be over-represented in postgraduate plagiarism cases.

**Undergraduate Plagiarism cases**

34. The below tables chart various equality data for undergraduate plagiarism cases.

**Gender**

	<b>Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases</b> (2014/15 figures in brackets)	<b>Percentage of undergraduate student population 2013/14</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>59</b> (68)	<b>50</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>41</b> (32)	<b>50</b>

**Fee Status**

	<b>Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases</b> (2014/15 figures in brackets)	<b>Percentage of undergraduate student population 2013/14</b>
<b>Home/EU Fee Status</b>	<b>69</b> (75)	<b>55</b>
<b>Overseas Fee Status</b>	<b>31</b> (25)	<b>45</b>

**Ethnic Origin**

	<b>Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases</b> (2014/15 figures in brackets)
Arab	<b>5</b> (2)
Asian – Bangladeshi	<b>6</b> (11)
Asian - Chinese	<b>11</b> (2)
Asian – Indian	<b>6</b> (4)
Asian – Pakistani	<b>19</b> (13)
Asian – Other	<b>0</b> (13)
Black	<b>0</b> (3)
Black – African	<b>6</b> (11)
Black - Caribbean	<b>0</b> (2)
Do not know	<b>3</b> (2)
Other	<b>8</b> (2)
Other mixed	<b>2</b> (0)
White	<b>27</b> (34)
White and Asian	<b>5</b> (4)
Not given	<b>3</b> (2)

## Postgraduate Plagiarism cases

35. The below tables chart various equality data for postgraduate plagiarism cases.

### Gender

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)	Percentage of postgraduate student population 2014/15
<b>Female</b>	<b>44</b> (67)	<b>52</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>56</b> (33)	<b>48</b>

### Fee Status

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)	Percentage of postgraduate student population 2014/15
<b>Home/EU Fee Status</b>	<b>26</b> (12)	<b>55</b>
<b>Overseas Fee Status</b>	<b>74</b> (88)	<b>45</b>

### Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)
Asian - Bangladeshi	<b>4</b> (3)
Asian – Chinese	<b>19</b> (24)
Asian – Indian	<b>28</b> (15)
Asian - Other	<b>12</b> (24)
Asian - Pakistani	<b>9</b> (9)
Black African	<b>14</b> (0)
White	<b>11</b> (24)
White and Asian	<b>2</b> (0)
White and Black Caribbean	<b>2</b> (0)

### Breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations

36. The below tables chart the various equality data for breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations:

#### Gender

	Percentage of Exam Offence cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)	Percentage of QMUL students
<b>Female</b>	<b>23</b> (36)	<b>51</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>77</b> (64)	<b>49</b>

#### Fee Status

	Percentage of Exam Offence cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)	Percentage of QMUL students
<b>Home/EU Fee Status</b>	<b>19</b> (41)	<b>64</b>
<b>Overseas Fee Status</b>	<b>81</b> (59)	<b>36</b>

#### Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)
Arab	<b>2</b> (5)
Asian - Bangladeshi	<b>4</b> (7)
Asian - Chinese	<b>72</b> (45)
Asian - Indian	<b>2</b> (2)
Asian – Other	<b>4</b> (7)
Asian - Pakistani	<b>2</b> (2)
Black - African	<b>2</b> (14)
Other	<b>0</b> (2)
Other mixed	<b>0</b> (2)
White	<b>12</b> (9)
White and Asian	<b>0</b> (2)
White and black Caribbean	<b>0</b> (2)
Do not know	<b>2</b> (0)





## **2015-16 Annual report on cases considered under the Student Complaints Policy, Fitness to Practise and Code of Student Discipline**

### **Scope**

1. This is the annual report on cases submitted under the Student Complaints Policy. This report focuses on complaints submitted at institutional level during the 2015-16 academic year.
2. Also included at the end of the report are cases investigated under the Fitness to Practise Regulations and Code of Student Discipline.

### **Complaints - Data analysis and trends**

3. During the 2015-16 academic year 10 complaints were received at institutional level. This compares to 17 cases received in the 2014-15 year and 13 cases in 2013-14.
4. 7 of the complaints received in 2015/16 related to academic matters (5 in 2014-15) and 3 of the complaints related to non-academic matters (12 in 2014/15).
5. The 7 complaints received about academic matters comprised the following: 3 complaints about academic programmes, including teaching and learning; 1 complaint about the penalty for the late submission for work; 1 complaint about a student's status and eligibility for an internship; 1 complaint about delay in processing an assessment offence allegation; 1 complaint about the academic and pastoral support provided by a School.
6. The 3 complaints received regarding non-academic matters during 2015-16 all related to QMUL residences.

### **Complaint - Outcomes**

7. Of the 10 complaints considered at Stage 2 of the Complaints Policy, 7 were not upheld; 1 case was resolved as a panel date was arranged and 1 case was resolved as it was agreed a student's status should be extended to enable them to complete an internship.
8. 1 case was upheld by a Vice-Principal at Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy. The examboard were asked to review the student's mark profile and award classification as it was not clear how these had been derived. The student was also offered a sum in compensation for issues pertaining to the delivery of the programme and assessments.

### **Complaints - Timescales**

9. Under the Complaints policy QMUL aims to complete all Stage 2 complaints within 1 month. Where it is not possible to complete complaints in this timescale the complainant is provided with a reason for the complaint exceeding the timescale.
10. The mean time taken to resolve a complaint for 2015-16 was 42 days; the median was 45 days. This compares to 2014-15 when the corresponding figures were a

mean of 54 days and a median of 46 working days.

11. The most common reasons for cases exceeding the 1 month timescale were: waiting for the complainant to submit documentation and correspondence with the complainant about the complaint.
12. 1 month is a tight timescale for Stage 2 complaints as this period includes 7 days for the student to submit any additional evidence for their complaint and a further 7 days for the student to comment on a case summary before a decision is made. As noted below KPMG undertook an audit of the Complaint process and one recommendation is to review the number of complaint stages in the current policy.
13. The table below provides a breakdown of the length of time taken to resolve cases in 2015-6.

**Days taken to resolve case (2014-15 figures in brackets)**

Number of cases 0-30	3 (2)
Number of cases 31-60	6 (13)
Over 90 calendar days	1 (2)

#### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education**

14. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint are entitled to submit an application to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) – the independent student complaints scheme. Applications made to the OIA are reported separately to Senate.

#### **Fitness to Practise**

15. There were no referrals to Fitness to Practise cases during the 2015-16 academic year (0 in 2014-15).

#### **Discipline**

16. There were 16 allegations of disciplinary offences investigated by the Academic Secretariat under the Code of Student Discipline during the 2015-16 academic year, which corresponds to 9 cases in the 2014-15 academic year.

17. The 16 allegations can be categorised as follows:

- 4 allegations relating to a fight in the library
- 3 allegations of alleged harassment
- 2 allegations of students sending offensive messages via email to QMUL staff
- 1 allegation of alleged physical assault
- 1 incident of a student making alleged extremist comments
- 1 incident of alleged voyeurism in gender neutral toilets
- 1 incident of a student engaging in an indecent act on QMUL premises
- 1 incident of a student permitting another student to use their student card
- 1 case of a student falsifying official QMUL documentation

1 incident of a student misusing printing facilities

18. In all cases the participants were interviewed and an investigation into the allegation undertaken. The outcomes of the cases were as follows:

In 6 cases cautions were issued by the Vice-Principal in regards to student conduct.

In 2 cases official warnings were issued to students about their conduct.

1 student was suspended from QMUL for a period of 1 year.

1 student did not return to QMUL pending a criminal trial.

1 student agreed to recompense for the expense they had caused.

2 cases were dismissed following investigation owing to a lack of evidence.

In 3 cases the student making the allegation did not wish to pursue the matter after discussion.

### **Conclusions and developments for 2016/17 and beyond**

19. KPMG undertook an audit of the complaints process in November - December 2016. The audit concluded that QMUL has a robust Students Complaints Policy and that the policy was being appropriately followed. The audit made recommendations for enhancement in terms of the recording and investigation of local level Stage 1 complaints. A process improvement project will review the current process for Stage 1 complaints and how greater consistency may be achieved.

20. The report also recommended a review of the number of stages in the complaints policy: a reduction in the number of formal stages could reduce the length of time taken to consider a complaint and ensure the student is provided with a prompt outcome.

21. Universities UK published a report in October 2016 titled 'Guidance for higher education institutions: how to handle alleged student misconduct'. These guidelines relate to student misconduct which may also constitute a criminal offence and provides some specific recommendations in relation to sexual misconduct. QMUL is reviewing the Code of Discipline in light of this guidance.

22. The Fitness to Practise Regulations are under review following the publication of guidance from the General Medical Council and Medical Schools Council on 'Achieving good medical practice: guidance for medical students'.

### **Equality Impact Data**

23. Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of complaints received by level of study year. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown by ethnicity. Appendix 3 show the number of complaints received by fee status.

24. Due to the small number of complaint cases it is hard to draw significant conclusions from the data. The largest number of complaints was from undergraduate students which is the largest cohort at QMUL. In previous years overseas students had accounted for a disproportionately high number of complaints but there was only a single complaint from an overseas student in 2015-16.

**Appendix 1 Complaints by level of study**

Level of study	Number of complaints 2015-16
UG	6
PG taught	3
MPhil/PhD	1

**Appendix 2 Complaints by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Number of Complaints
Arab	1
Asian – Bangladeshi	1
Asian – Indian	2
White/Black African	1
White	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>

**Appendix 3 Complaints by fee status**

Status	Number of complaints	% of total complaints
Home/EU	9	90
Overseas	1	10

**Appendix 4 disciplinary allegations by level of study**

Level of study	Number of cases 2015-16
UG	11
PG taught	4
Research	1

**Appendix 5 Disciplinary allegations by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Number of Cases
Arab	1
Asian – Bangladeshi	2
Asian – Other	2
Asian – Pakistani	2
Black – African	1
Don't know/unknown	2
Other	1
White	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>

**Appendix 6 Disciplinary allegations by fee status**

Status	Number of cases	% of total complaints
Home/EU	13	81.25
Overseas	3	18.75