

Senate

Paper Title	Annual Report on Student Casework 2016-17
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to consider the attached reports
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<p>4 reports are included for consideration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic Appeals 2. Non-academic appeals 3. Assessment Offences 4. Complaints, Discipline and Fitness to Practise <p>The reports provide commentary and data on the number of cases investigated by the Academic Secretariat during the 2016-17 academic year. The reports also provide an equality impact analysis of the cases by ethnicity, gender and fee status.</p>
Questions for Senate to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is Senate content that cases are being handled in a satisfactory manner? • are there any areas of concern? • are there any opportunities for enhancement?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	<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>
Strategy and risk	<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>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	<p>Education Standards and Quality Board</p> <p>Senate</p> <p>Council</p>
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Annual report on academic appeals – 2016-17

Scope

1. This is the annual report on academic appeal cases submitted by students during the 2016-17 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

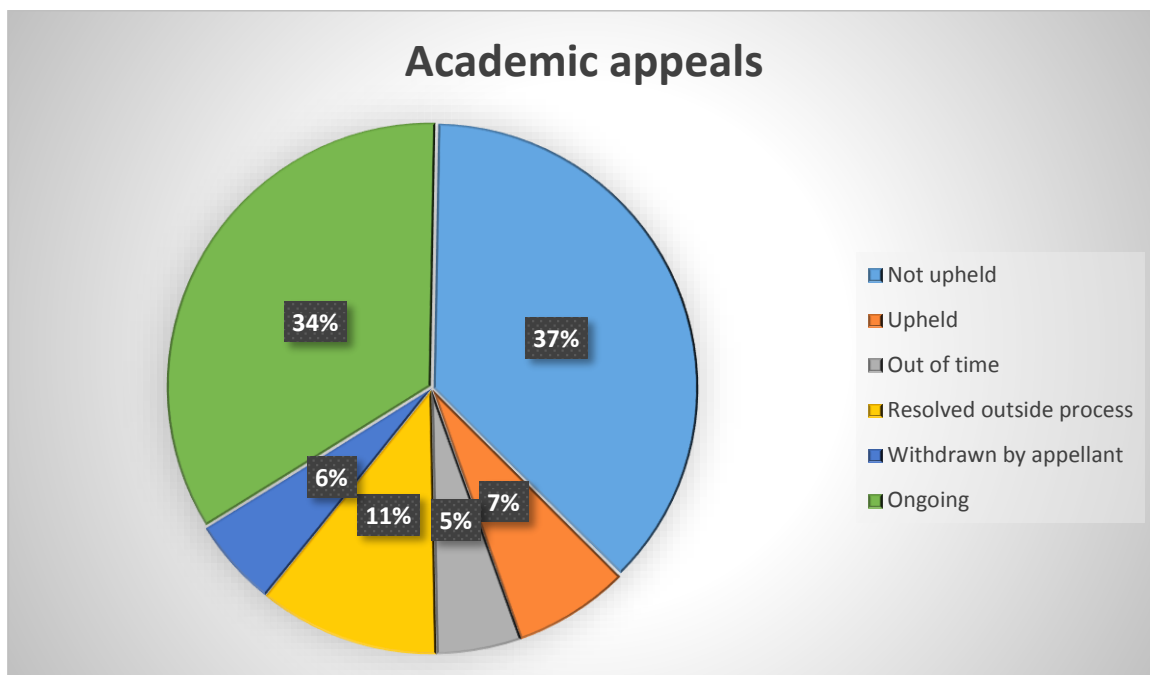
2. In total 352 academic appeals were received in 2016-17; a 36% increase from the 259 academic appeals received in the 2015-16 year. The number of appeals has increased in each of the last 4 academic years.
3. 2016-17 represented the highest number of academic appeals ever received at QMUL as well as the highest number of appeals as a percentage of the total student body.
4. 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	18, 768	1.1
2014-15	237	+17.9	18, 905	1.25
2015-16	259	+8.5	21, 187	1.22
2016-17	352	+35.9	23, 114	1.52

5. The table and chart below show the outcome for appeals received in 2016-17.

Outcome	Number of cases (2015-16 figures in brackets)
Not upheld	131 (157)
Upheld	25 (30)
Resolved outside process	39 (28)
Out of time	18 (23)
Ongoing at time of report	120 (12)
Withdrawn by appellant	19 (7)
TOTAL	352



6. The increase in appeal cases has meant that there are more cases open at the time of writing the report than in previous years.
7. The rise in cases resolved outside of the process is primarily down to two factors: 1. cases involving mental health problems where QMUL determines the circumstances mean the student should be offered an additional opportunity to complete assessments or retake the entire year. 2. Cases where there is a clear oversight such as a lack of marking trail, or incorrect mark entry. 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

8. In accordance with the 2016-17 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 2016-17, 2.153

9. Of the 352 appeals received in the 2016-17 academic year, 122 (69 in 2015-16) were submitted on the grounds of i. procedural error; 185 (159 in 2015-16) were submitted on the grounds of ii. exceptional circumstances; 45 cases (28 in 2015-16) were submitted on both grounds.

Appeals submitted under i) procedural error

10. Of the 122 appeals submitted under procedural error, 9 were upheld, 47 were not upheld, 13 were resolved outside the process, 11 were withdrawn, and 6 were deemed out of time. 36 cases were pending an outcome at the time of the report.
11. 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.
12. The procedural errors that led to the appeals being upheld, or cases resolved included:
 - A 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 of second marking/moderation in accordance with QMUL assessment policy. In some cases Schools/Institutes said work had been second-marked/moderated but that it had not been recorded as the marker had agreed with the first marker. However, without a clear audit trail there is no way to evidence how marks have been derived. 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.

Appeals submitted under ii) Exceptional circumstances

13. Of the 185 appeals submitted on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, 67 cases were not upheld, 13 cases were upheld, 21 cases were resolved outside the process, 9 cases were deemed out of time, and 6 cases were withdrawn by the student. 69 cases were open at the time of the report.
14. 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.
 - Student claiming their degree classification was affected by circumstances had existed for a prolonged period of time, often relating to previous years as well as their final year.
15. 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.

16. 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).
17. There appear to be an increasing number of students submitting appeals after sitting and failing exams who provide medical evidence, particularly of mental health conditions such as anxiety and/or depression, that states that student was unable to determine their fitness to sit exams as well as being unable to submit extenuating circumstances at the relevant time. QMUL cannot contest the medical evidence provided by the student and therefore generally these cases have to be upheld.

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

18. Of the 45 cases submitted under both grounds, 17 were not upheld, 3 were upheld, 3 cases were deemed out of time. 2 cases were withdrawn and 5 cases was resolved outside of the process. 15 cases were pending an outcome at the time of the report.
19. 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

20. 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 2016-17
(2015-16 figures in brackets)

Level of study	Number of appeals received	% of all appeals (to one decimal place)
Undergraduate and foundation	264 (208)	75.0 (80.3)
Postgraduate taught	82 (47)	23.3 (18.1)
Postgraduate research	6 (4)	1.7 (1.5)

Number of academic appeals, by developmental year
(2015-16 figures in brackets)

	Number of appeals received	% of all appeals (to one decimal place)
Foundation (Year 0)	13 (4)	3.7% (1.5%)
UG year 1	87 (52)	24.7% (20.1%)
UG year 2	69 (66)	19.6% (25.5%)
UG final year	85 (74)	24.1% (28.6%)

UG year 3 -5 BDS/MBBS only	10 (12)	2.8% (3.0%)
PGT	82 (47)	23.3% (18.1%)
PGR	6 (4)	1.7 (1.5%)
Total	352	

21. Appeals increased for every category of student but there was a particularly large increase in undergraduate students appealing.
22. Final year students are more likely to appeal as degree classification is one of the things students are often dissatisfied with.
23. 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.
24. Appeals from postgraduate taught students reduced to a more proportionate level after a large increase in 2014-15.

Appeals by School

25. The tables below show the number of appeals by School/Institute by total number of appeals received and number of appeals as a percentage of the total population of the School/Institute.

Academic appeals by School – as % of all appeals received (2015-16 figures in brackets)

Ranking	School	Total number of appeals	% of all appeals
1	Biological & Chemical Sciences	41 (23)	11.6
2	Mathematical Sciences	40 (17)	11.4
=3	IHSE	34 (35)	9.7
=3	Electronic Engineering & Computer Science (including BUPT students)	34 (39)	9.7
4	Engineering & Materials Science	33 (20)	9.4
5	Business and Management	30 (21)	8.5
6	Law	24 (23)	6.8
7	English and Drama	20 (5)	5.9
8	Economics and Finance	18 (20)	5.1
9	CCLS	17 (11)	4.8
10	Politics & International Relations	13 (6)	3.7
11	Languages, Linguistics and Film	12 (7)	3.4
=12	Physics and Astronomy	7 (8)	2.0
=12	Dentistry	7 (3)	2.0
=13	Cancer	5 (2)	1.4

=13	International Office	5 (2)	1.4
14	History	4 (8)	1.1
=15	Geography	3 (4)	0.9
=15	William Harvey	3 (4)	0.9
16	Blizard	2 (1)	0.6
17	Wolfson	0 (0)	0
		352	

Academic Appeal by % of School/Institute cohort appealing

Ranking	School	Total number of appeals 2015/16 figures in brackets)	% of students in the School appealing* (2015/16 figures in brackets)
1	Mathematical Sciences	40 (17)	4.4 (2.1)
2	Electronic Engineering & Computer Science	34 (39)	2.9 (3.2)
3	Engineering & Materials Science	33 (20)	2.5 (1.7)
4	English and Drama	20 (5)	2.1 (0.5)
5	Biological & Chemical Sciences	41 (23)	2.0 (1.3)
5	Business and Management	30 (21)	1.8 (1.6)
6	Law (including CCLS)	41 (23)	1.6 (2.0)
7	Medicine	44 (35)	1.5 (1.6)
8	Politics & International Relations	13 (6)	1.4 (0.8)
9	Languages, Linguistics and Film	12 (7)	1.4 (0.9)
10	Dentistry	7 (3)	1.4 (0.6)
=12	Economics and Finance	18 (20)	1.3 (1.4)
=12	Physics and Astronomy	7 (8)	1.3 (1.5)
14	International Office	5 (2)	0.9 (N/A)
15	Geography	3 (4)	0.6 (0.9)
16	History	4 (8)	0.5 (1.2)
		352	1.5

*calculated using population (by headcount) for all levels and modes of study as at 1 December 2016.

26. In terms of total number of appeals received the most were from the School of Chemical and Biological Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, the Institute of Health Sciences Education (MBBS students), the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, and the School of Engineering and Material Sciences.
27. In terms of the number of appeals received as a percentage of a School/Institute's total student population the most appeals were received from Mathematical Sciences, the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, and the School of

Engineering and Material Sciences, the School of English and Drama and the School of Chemical and Biological Sciences,

28. The School of Mathematical Sciences and the School of English and Drama saw large increases on the previous year in terms of the percentage of the School's students submitting appeals. It appears that a common theme in appeals from both Schools are students providing evidence of mental health problems.

Timescales

29. The QMUL Appeal Regulations 2016-17 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.
30. All students are notified if the deadline is reached and informed that their case is still under consideration and the expected timescale for completion.
31. Of cases that have been closed the mean time taken to resolve a case for 2016-17 was 93.5 calendar days (58 calendar days in 2015-16); the median for 2016-17 was 99.5 calendar days (57 in 2015-16). The table below provides a breakdown of the number of cases under/over the two months specified by the regulations.
32. The reasons for the increase in timescale was in part owing to an increase in the total number of cases dealt with by the casework office in 2016/17. Academic appeals increased by 35% from 2015/16 and there were also significant increases in the number of non-academic appeals and assessment offences. In addition two members of the casework team left during the year and was a gap before new staff could be recruited. It is hoped timescales will reduce in 2017/18.

Time taken to resolve cases

	2016-17	2015-16
Number of cases under two calendar months	55 (15.6%)	154 (59.5%)
Number of cases over two calendar months	177 (50.3%)	93 (35.9%)
Cases open at time of report	120 (34.1%)	12 (4.6%)

Final Review and Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

33. 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).
34. There were 21 final review requests in 2016-17. This means that 16% of cases which were not upheld submitted a final review.
35. 2 out of 22 final reviews were upheld. Both cases were referred back to examboards for further consideration and students were granted additional opportunities to complete assessments.

36. 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 2016-17 and beyond

37. One way of reducing appeals is through the informal stage where Schools/Institutes can rectify issues before they escalate to appeal. 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.

38. Another way of reducing appeals is ensuring there is a clear marking trail with evidence of double marking, or moderation, for all assessments in accordance with the Assessment Handbook. Having this evidence ready to hand means appeals can be quickly considered and rejected if the appeal is simply challenging academic judgement. If there is not a clear marking trail then assessments have to be remarked.

Equality Data

39. 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.

40. 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-Other, Asian-Chinese and Black-African.

41. The gender split in appeals was 57% male and 43% female. (60% male 40% female in 2015-16). Amongst the largest ethnic group at Queen Mary (White) the split was 60% male, 40% female.

42. 72% of appeals were from students classified as home/EU fee-status and 28% from overseas students, a figure which is similar to figures in previous years. Home/EU students make up about two thirds of Queen Mary Students (65%), 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	19	5.4%	53	47
Asian – Bangladeshi	26	7.4%	54	46
Asian – Chinese	36	10.2%	52	58
Asian – Indian	23	6.5%	57	43
Asian – Other	37	10.5%	70	30

Asian – Pakistani	30	8.5%	50	50
Black – African	34	9.7%	68	32
Black – Caribbean	4	1.1%	25	75
I do not know	7	2.0%	43	57
Do not know	8	2.3%	50	50
Other	10	2.8%	50	50
Other mixed	4	1.1%	50	50
White	103	29.3%	60	40
White/Asian	5	1.4%	60	40
White/Black mixed	6	1.7%	83	17
Totals	352		57	43

Appendix 2 – Academic appeals received, by fee status

Fee Status	Number of appeals 2015/16 figures in brackets	% of total appeals 2015/16 figures in brackets
Home/EU	255 (181)	72.4 (70)
Overseas	97 (78)	27.6 (30)
Total	352	

Annual report on non-academic appeals submitted Under the QMUL Appeal Regulations 2016/17

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 2016-17 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 2016-17 academic year 108 non-academic appeals were received. This compares to 59 cases received in the 2015-16 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
2015/16	59	21,187	0.28
2016/17	108	23,114	0.47

3. The increase in the number of non-academic appeals in 2016-17 is in part owing to an increase in the number of appeals against penalties imposed for assessment offences. While the number of assessment offences in 2016-17 rose by approximately 25%, assessment offence appeals have increased by a much greater amount. The penalties imposed for assessment offense in 2016-17 is in-line with previous years so it is unclear what the reason for the increase.
4. There were also large increases in the number of first year and final year undergraduate students appealing whereas second year undergraduate and

postgraduate appeals were similar to the previous year.

5. The table below shows that the largest category of appeal are appeals against module and programme deregistration for non-attendance. This is unsurprising as students are likely to appeal a decision to deregister them even if they do not have strong grounds for appeal. The decision to amend the regulations relating to deregistration for the future is likely to reduce the number of appeals in this category.
6. The number of non-academic appeals submitted by category is as follows:

Appeals received by category

Category of appeal	2016/17		2015/16	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Student Disciplinary Outcome	2	2	1	2
Assessment Offences Regulations	34	31	9	15
Module and programme deregistration - attendance	46	43	32	54
Deregistration - non-payment of fees	16	15	12	20
Deregistration – failing to enrol	4	4	0	0
Bursaries, scholarships and grants	3	3	1	2
Professional Capability and Fitness to Practise Panel	2	2	1	2
Residence appeals	0	0	1	2
Fee status	1	1	0	0

Grounds for a review

7. In accordance with the 2016-17 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 2016-17, 2.153

- 8. Of the 108 appeals received, 26 were submitted under ground i. procedural error (13 in 2015/16), 58 were submitted under ground ii. exceptional circumstances (36 in 2015/16) and 24 were submitted under both grounds (10 in 2015/16).
- 9. The outcomes for the 59 cases received during the 2015/16 academic were as follows:

Outcome	Number of cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)	
Upheld	12	(7)
Not upheld	65	(34)
Out of time	1	(5)
Resolved outside of the process	19	(13)
Withdrawn	1	(0)
Open at time of writing report	10	(0)

- 10. Many of the cases that were resolved outside of the process involve 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 QMUL exercised discretion to permit the student to continue on their programme as their fees had been cleared.

Timescales

- 11. Under the QMUL Regulations 2016-17 QMUL seeks to notify students with an outcome within 2 months from the receipt of the submission of supporting evidence.
- 12. 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).
- 13. The mean time taken to resolve a case for 2016-17 was 71 calendar days (42 days in 2015/16) the median was 74 calendar days (37 days in 2015/16). The table below provides a breakdown of the number of cases under/over the timescale specified by the regulations.
- 14. The reasons for the increase in timescale were in part owing to an increase in the total number of cases dealt with by the casework office in 2016/17. Non-academic appeals doubled in number from 2015/16 and there were also significant increases in the number of academic appeals and assessment offences. In addition two members of the

casework team left during the year and was a gap before new staff could be recruited. It is hoped timescales will reduce in 2017/18.

Time taken to resolve case

	2016-17	2015-16
Number of cases under 2 months	34 (35%)	45 (79%)
Over 2 months	64 (65%)	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 16 final review requests in 2016-17. This means that 22% of eligible appeals requested a final review (out of time cases, withdrawn and resolved cases not eligible for final review).
17. 2 out of 16 final reviews were upheld and were referred back to the examboard for further consideration.
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.

Equality Data

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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 2016/17	% of all appeals 2016/17	Number of appeals 2015/16	% of all appeals 2015/16	Number 2014/15	% of all appeals 2014/15
Year 0 (foundation)	2	2	1	2	10	14
UG Year 1	42	39	14	24	14	19
UG Year 2	23	21	23	39	18	25
UG Final Year	29	27	8	14	11	15
Year 3-5 (MBBS)	0	0	3	5	0	0
UGA	1	1	0	0	0	0
PGT	10	9	10	17	16	22
PGR	1	1	0	0	3	4
Total	108		59		72	

Appendix 2 - Appeals received by fee status

Status	Number of appeals 2016-17	% of appeals 2016-17	Number of appeals 2015-16	% of appeals 2015-16
Home/EU	76	70	37	63
Overseas	32	30	22	37
Total	108		59	

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	6	5.6	50	50
Asian – Bangladeshi	12	11.1	75	25
Asian – Chinese	12	11.1	42	58
Asian – Indian	7	6.5	57	43
Asian – Pakistani	13	12.0	85	15
Asian – Other	5	4.6	40	60
Black – African	16	14.8	62	38
Mixed – White/Asian	1	0.9	100	0
Mixed - White/Black African	3	2.8	67	33
Other	1	0.9	0	100
Other – Mixed	2	1.9	100	0
White	20	18.5	40	60
I do not know	10	9.3	60	40
Totals	108		58	42

Annual Report on Assessment Offences 2016/17

Scope

1. This is the annual report on Assessment Offence Cases considered at institutional level during the 2016/17 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 there were 260 assessment offence allegations submitted to the Academic Secretariat during the 2016/17 academic year. This compares to 208 allegations in 2015/16. There was an increase in undergraduate plagiarism cases, exam offences and other offences, particularly collusion. There was a slight decrease in postgraduate plagiarism cases.
5. The mean time taken to complete an assessment offence allegation was 56.0 calendar days (41.2 in 2015/16); the median was 46 calendar days (35.5 in 2015/16).

Plagiarism by undergraduate students

6. There were 84 allegations of plagiarism against undergraduate students in the 2016/17 academic year. This represents an increase from 64 cases of undergraduate plagiarism in 2015/16 and 53 cases in the 2014/15 academic year.
7. The average mean time taken to complete an allegation of plagiarism for undergraduate students in the 2016/17 academic year was 61.0 calendar days, the median was 56 calendar days.
8. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 69 of the 84 cases of alleged plagiarism by undergraduate students. 11 cases were dismissed after investigation and in 2 cases the student withdrew from QMUL before the investigation was completed. 2 cases are pending an outcome at the time of this report.
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 in writing. Students who are found to have committed a plagiarism offence are advised to seek advice from their school or institute on avoiding

plagiarism in future and are also advised of support on academic practice provided by Academic Development.

10. The table below details the distribution of penalties for undergraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2016/17 academic year. The figures indicate penalty ii. failure in the element of assessment is the most commonly applied penalty for undergraduate plagiarism. After a large number of formal reprimands in 2015/16 the figures are more in line with previous years.

Penalty applied	Percentage of total cases 2016/17	Percentage of total cases 2015/16
2.140.i. a formal reprimand;	10	23
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;	64	47
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;	16	25
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;	4	3
2.140.vi. failure (with marks of zero) 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;	3	2
2.141.viii. recommendation to the Principal that the student be expelled from QMUL with all modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred recorded with a module result of zero.	2	0
Penalties ii. and iii.	2	0

11. The table below presents undergraduate plagiarism cases in 2016/76 by year of study. There appears to have been a significant increase in plagiarism by first year undergraduate students. It is not clear what the reason for this increase is and whether this is a new trend. It may be that first year students are less familiar with the expectations of academic work at university.

12. After a surprising rise in the number of 2nd year undergraduate students committing plagiarism in the 2015/16 academic year the trend has reverted to the norm with a higher percentage of first year and final year students committing offences.

Year of study	Undergraduate plagiarism cases by year of study (2015/16 in brackets)
UG year 1	41.6% (20.3%)
UG year 2	20.2% (32.8%)

UG final year	33.3 (40.6%)
Associate/Erasmus	4.8% (6.3.8%)

13. The number of undergraduate plagiarism cases in 2016/17 by School/Institute is detailed below:

School	Number of cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	14 (8)
Blizard Institute	0 (1)
Business and Management	21 (14)
Economics and Finance	3 (0)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	7 (2)
Engineering and Materials Science	0 (0)
English and Drama	9 (9)
Geography	1 (2)
History	6 (10)
IHSE	1 (0)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	7 (8)
Law	0 (0)
Mathematical Sciences	2 (0)
Politics and International Relations	8 (5)
Physics and Astronomy	0 (0)
UGA exchange programme	4 (5)
ULIP	1 (0)

Plagiarism by Postgraduate Students

14. There were 51 allegations of plagiarism against postgraduate students during the 2016/17 academic year, compared to 57 cases in 2015/16.
15. The average mean time taken to complete an allegation of plagiarism for postgraduate students in the 2016/17 academic year was 58.7 calendar days (43.8 calendar days in 2015/16); the median was 50.5 calendar days (37 calendar days in 2015/16).
16. In 46 of the 51 cases it was determined that an offence had been committed. 5 cases were pending outcomes at the time of this report.
17. The table below details the distribution of penalties for postgraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2016/17 academic year.
18. The most common penalty for postgraduate plagiarism is penalty iii. failure in the module with a capped resit. This is in accordance with QMUL guidance for assessment offences and reflects the fact that students at postgraduate level are expected to be aware of the conventions for appropriate referencing in academic work.

Penalty applied	Percentage of total cases 2016/17	Percentage of total cases 2015/16
2.135.i. a formal reprimand;	11	6
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;	33	50
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;	48	41
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;	7	0
2.135.iv. and 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;	2	0

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

School	Number of cases (2015/16 figure in brackets)
Barts Cancer Institute	1 (0)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	1 (1)
Blizard Institute	9 (6)
Business and Management	18 (27)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	9 (3)
Economics and Finance	4 (0)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	1 (9)
Institute of Dentistry	2 (2)
Geography	0 (1)
Engineering and Materials Science	0 (0)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	2 (1)
Mathematical Sciences	0 (2)
Politics and International Relations	3 (4)
Physics and Astronomy	1 (0)
Wolfson Institute	0 (1)

Breaches of Regulations in an Invigilated Examination

20. In total there were 87 allegations of breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations during 2016/17, including the late summer resit period. In 2015/16 there were 57 allegations of breaches of the regulations in an invigilated exam.

21. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 82 of the 87 cases.

22. In 4 cases the allegation was dismissed following investigation. 1 case was pending an outcome at the time of this report.

23. The mean time taken to complete cases involving breaches of the regulations in invigilated exams during the 2016/17 academic year was 40 calendar days (22.4 in 2015/16* and 43.2 calendar days in 2014/15). The median was 32 calendar days (8 calendar days in 215/16* and 39.5 calendar days in 2014/15).

* As noted in the 2015/16 report the reason for the drop in time taken to complete cases in the figures for that year was owing to a large batch of 32 cases from the Nanchang programme which were completed in 8 days, which reduced the overall average time.

24. Of the 87 exam cases, 67 (47 in 2015/16) involved undergraduate students and 20 (10 in 2015/16) involved postgraduate taught students.

25. The table below details the distribution of penalties for exam offences cases imposed during the 2016/17 academic year with a comparison to the previous year's figures.

Penalty applied	Percentage of total cases 2016/17	Percentage of total cases 2015/16
2.135.i. a formal reprimand;	5	30
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;	21	9
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;	7	9
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;	5	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;	7	3
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; and 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;	20	7
i. and ii.	1	0
iii. and v. and vii,	1	0
Harmonised ii.	1	
Harmonised iii.	11	
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.	15	26
Harmonised penalty vi. The overall classification of Honours to be reduced by one grade with an explanation to be provided as to why the calculated mark does not match the Honours awarded.	5	11

Other allegations of assessment offences

26. There was a number of cases which involved other breaches of the Regulations for Assessment Offences. There were 27 cases of alleged collusion (18 in 2015/16).
27. There were 11 allegations that a student had used a ghost-writing service during 2016/17, which was similar to the number of cases in 2105/16 although a large increase from 4 cases in 2014/15.
28. In 7 of the 11 allegations of ghost-writing it was determined that an offence had been committed. 3 cases was dismissed and 1 case was withdrawn by the School. 5 students who were found to have committed a ghost-writing offence were failed in all modules taken during the year with resits capped at the minimum pass mark.

Enhancements for 2017/18 and beyond

29. The QAA published a paper on contract cheating in October 2017 to address concerns about the rise of contract-cheating in Higher Education. Contract-cheating falls under the term ghost-writing in the QMUL Regulations, which encompasses not just cases where students have bought assignments from online sources, but where they may have received assistance in the writing of the assignment from any person external to QMUL (such as a personal tutor). Ghost-writing cases receive the most severe penalties when they are proven however they are difficult to investigate as often there is no direct evidence of the student having paid for the assignment, or receiving outside assistance. School/Institutes are asked to conduct vivas to determine whether there is evidence the student did not produce the work that they submitted.
30. A Task and Finish Group led by Academic Development has been convened to examine how QMUL can address issues around contract-cheating in relation to the design of assessments and what preventative methods may be employed.
31. The Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office is considering how assessment offence decisions involving panel cases may be expedited. Currently students often face some delay before a panel can be convened as panels require two members of Senate to sit on the panel alongside a Chair and one of the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers. All Senate members are eligible to sit on panels and are encouraged to sit on panels when possible.

Equality Data

32. 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. Although the numbers are relatively small, overseas students are over-represented in exam offence cases, although the disproportion has decreased since last year. The 2015-16 report noted that overseas students were over represented in the number of students committing postgraduate plagiarism but the figures are more proportionate in 2016-17.

Undergraduate Plagiarism, Ghost-writing and Collusion Cases

33. The below tables chart various equality data for undergraduate plagiarism cases, ghost-writing and collusion cases

Gender

	Percentage of undergraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Female	51 (59)
Male	49 (41)

Fee Status

	Percentage of undergraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Home/EU Fee Status	71 (69)
Overseas Fee Status	29 (31)

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of undergraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Arab	4 (5)
Asian – Bangladeshi	13 (6)
Asian - Chinese	4 (11)
Asian – Indian	10 (6)
Asian – Pakistani	10 (19)
Asian – Other	8 (0)
Black	6 (0)
Black – African	1 (6)
Black - Caribbean	1 (0)
Do not know	9 (3)
Other	2 (8)
Other mixed	2 (3)
White	25 (27)
White and Asian	4 (5)
Not given	2 (3)

Postgraduate Plagiarism cases, Ghost-writing and Collusion Cases

34. The below tables chart various equality data for postgraduate plagiarism cases, ghost-writing and collusion cases

Gender

	Percentage of postgraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Female	57 (44)
Male	43 (56)

Fee Status

	Percentage of postgraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Home/EU Fee Status	41.2% (26)
Overseas Fee Status	58.8% (74)

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of postgraduate cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Arab	8 (0)
Asian - Bangladeshi	2 (4)
Asian – Chinese	19 (19)
Asian – Indian	6 (28)
Asian - Other	11 (12)
Asian - Pakistani	15 (9)
Black African	13 (14)
White	25 (11)
White and Asian	2 (2)

Breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations

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

Gender

	Percentage of Exam Offence cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Female	31 (23)
Male	69 (77)

Fee Status

	Percentage of Exam Offence cases (2015/16 figures in brackets)
Home/EU Fee Status	33 (19)
Overseas Fee Status	66 (81)

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of exam cases (2014/15 figures in brackets)
Arab	5 (2)
Asian - Bangladeshi	11 (4)
Asian - Chinese	55 (72)
Asian - Indian	3 (2)
Asian – Other	5 (4)
Asian - Pakistani	5 (2)
Black - African	3 (2)
Other	0 (0)
Other mixed	1 (0)
White	6 (12)
White and Asian	0 (0)
White and black Caribbean	3 (0)
Do not know	2 (2)

2016-17 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 investigated at institutional level during the 2016-17 academic year under the Student Complaints Policy, Code of Student Discipline and Fitness to Practise Regulations.

Complaints - Data analysis and trends

2. During the 2016-17 academic year 14 complaints were received at institutional level. This compares to 10 cases received in the 2015-16 year and 17 cases in 2014-15.
3. 10 of the complaints received in 2016-17 related to academic matters (7 in 2015-16) and 4 of the complaints related to non-academic matters (3 in 2015-16).
4. The 10 complaints received about academic matters comprised the following:
4 complaints about programme delivery, 2 complaints about PhD supervision, 1 complaint about inadequate space facilities for PhD study, 1 case in regards to the referral of assignments for investigation under the Assessment Offence Regulations, 1 complaint about exam registration, and 1 complaint about a restriction on the number of students who could take a module.
5. The 4 complaints received regarding non-academic matters during 2016-17 related to the following: 1 complaint about the security campus following the theft of a bike, 1 complaint about a fee refund following interruption, 1 complaint about damage to a laptop, and 1 complaint about the time taken to convene an assessment offence panel

Complaint - Outcomes

6. Of the 14 complaints considered at Stage 2 of the Complaints Policy, 9 cases were not upheld; 1 case was upheld and the student was offered a small amount of compensation, 1 case was partly upheld and the student was offered an extension for their masters dissertation, 1 case was resolved following agreement to backdate interruption and not charge fees, 1 case was deemed not eligible for consideration under the complaints policy and 1 case was under consideration at the time of writing this report.

Complaints - Timescales

7. 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.
8. The mean time taken to resolve a complaint for 2016-17 was 72 days; the median was 79 days. This compares to 2015-16 when the corresponding figures were a mean of 42 days and a median of 45 working days.

9. 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.
10. 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 in December 2016 and one recommendation was to review the number of complaint stages in the current policy.
11. The table below provides a breakdown of the length of time taken to resolve cases in 2016-7.

Days taken to resolve case (2015-16 figures in brackets)

Number of cases 0-30	2 (3)
Number of cases 31-90	7 (6)
Over 90 calendar days	5 (1)

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

12. 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.

Code of Student Discipline

13. There were 10 allegations of disciplinary offences investigated by the Academic Secretariat under the Code of Student Discipline during the 2016-17 academic year, which corresponds to 16 cases in the 2015-16 academic year.
14. Despite the fall in the number of cases from the previous year, some of the allegations submitted during 2016-17 were of a more serious nature.
15. The 10 allegations can be categorised as follows:
 - 1 allegation of assault motivated by homophobia
 - 3 allegations of sexual assault
 - 1 allegation of assault and abusive language which included alleged racial language
 - 1 allegation of offensive online postings of a sexual and racist nature
 - 1 allegation of the misuse of QMUL IT facilities and offensive postings about QMUL staff
 - 1 allegation of harassment
 - 1 allegation of a student misusing QMUL facilities
 - 1 allegation of a student directing written abuse towards QMUL staff

16. In all cases the participants were interviewed and an investigation into the allegation undertaken. The actions taken following misconduct allegations were as follows:

- 1 was student not permitted to enrol at QMUL
- 2 students suspended from QMUL for a period of less than 1 year
- 2 students received warnings and were required to write apologies to members of staff
- 2 students were excluded from QMUL facilities for a period of less than 6 months
- 1 case was dismissed following a panel hearing
- 1 allegation was not pursued after the allegation was withdrawn following preventative action taken by QMUL
- 1 allegation was not pursued after a court case relating to the misconduct allegation was dismissed

Fitness to Practise

- 17. There were 2 referrals to Fitness to Practise for medical students during the 2016-17 academic year (0 in 2015-16).
- 18. In both cases the student was found not fit to practise and had their registration terminated.

Conclusions and developments for 2017-18 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.
- 20. Following the audit EQSB approved a proposal from ARCS to reduce the number of complaint stages from three to two, which is likely to reduce the length of time taken to consider a complaint and ensure the student is provided with a prompt outcome. In addition ARCS is considering how QMUL can record Stage 1 complaints consistently.
- 21. Universities UK published a report in October 2016 titled 'Guidance for higher education institutions: how to handle alleged student misconduct which may also constitute a criminal offence'. QMUL has reviewed the Code of Discipline in light of this guidance and has revised the section on types of misconduct (including a new section on sexual misconduct) and expanded the section on handling misconduct which is also a criminal offence. The revised Code of Discipline was approved by Senate in December 2017.

Equality Data

- 22. The appendices below provide data on complaints and disciplinary cases by level of study, fee status and ethnicity. Due to the small number of cases it is hard to draw significant conclusions from the data.

Appendix 1 - Complaints by level of study

Level of study	Number of complaints 2016-17
UG	7
PG taught	3
MPhil/PhD	4

Appendix 2 - Complaints by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Complaints
Arab	1
Asian – Bangladeshi	2
Asian – Indian	2
Other	1
White	5
White/Black mixed	2
Not given	1

Appendix 3 - Complaints by fee status

Status	Number of complaints	% of total complaints
Home/EU	11	79
Overseas	3	21

Appendix 4 - Complaints by Gender

	Number of complaints	% of total complaints
Male	7	50
Female	7	50

Appendix 5 - disciplinary allegations by level of study

Level of study	Number of cases 2016-17
UG	9
PG taught	1
Research	0

Appendix 6 - Disciplinary allegations by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Cases
Arab	1
Asian – Bangladeshi	1
Asian – Other	1
Asian – Pakistani	1
Black – African	1
White	5
Totals	10

Appendix 7 - Disciplinary allegations by fee status

Status	Number of cases	% of total complaints
Home/EU	8	80
Overseas	2	20