Senate: 13.03.13 Paper Code: SE2013.45c



Senate

Paper Title	Annual report on Assessment Offences 2012/13.	
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to consider the findings in this report.	
Points for Senate members to note and further information	 The paper provides statistics and data on the number of assessment offences investigated by the Academic Secretariat during the 2012/13 academic year. It provides data on the number and type of penalties imposed for undergraduate plagiarism, postgraduate plagiarism and for exam offences. The report also provides equality impact analysis of the cases by ethnicity, gender and fee status. Although based on a statistically small sample the data does not indicate any group is over-represented in the figures or is being disadvantaged. 	
Questions for Senate to consider	Is Senate content with the approach to handling assessment offences? Are there any themes which Senate may wish to explore further?	
Regulatory/statutory reference points	This report has been produced to enable Queen Mary to monitor and evaluate the assessment offence process. The Assessment Offence Regulations form part of the Academic Regulations.	
Strategy and risk	Monitoring assessment offences is key to the management of QMUL's academic standards.	
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper		
Authors	Luke Vulpiani, Assistant Academic Registrar Student Casework	
Sponsor	Professor Susan Dilly, Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	



Annual Report on Assessment Offences 2012/13

Scope

- 1. This is the annual report to Senate on Assessment Offence Cases considered at institutional level. This report focuses on offences submitted in the 2012/13 academic year.
- 2. The report is split into three categories:
 - Plagiarism by undergraduate students
 - Plagiarism by postgraduate students
 - Breaches of the Regulations during invigilated examinations

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 190 allegations of an assessment offence were submitted to the Academic Secretariat during the 2012/13 academic year. This compares to 108 allegations in 2011/12.
- 5. It will be noted from the figures below that there has been a rise in the number of undergraduate plagiarism allegations received in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12. There is no indication that Schools have not forwarded plagiarism cases to the Academic Secretariat in previous years. Possible reasons are that there is an increase in the number of assignments worth at least 31% of the module and that there has been more frequent screening for plagiarism. There has also been an increase in the number of allegations of breaches of the Regulations in invigilated exams and this may be attributed to improved detection by invigilators.

Plagiarism by undergraduate students

- 6. There were 112 allegations of plagiarism against undergraduate students made in the 2012/13 academic year. This is a large increase from the 61 cases in the 2011/12 academic year.
- 7. Of the 112 cases of alleged plagiarism by undergraduate students, in 98 cases it was determined that an offence has been committed.
- 8. In 12 cases the allegation was dismissed. These cases were dismissed either due to lack of evidence or because it was considered by the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Assessment Offences Panel or the Panel that an offence had not occurred. In cases where an allegation is dismissed the student is informed that no further action will be taken and there will be no record of the allegation kept on their student record.

- In 1 case the allegation was not taken forward as the student's registration was terminated because he had failed other modules which meant he was unable to progress.
- 10.1 case is still outstanding due to the student's longs-standing medical condition which has prevented the allegation being progressed.
- 11. The mean time taken to complete an allegation of plagiarism involving undergraduate students was 27 days, the median was 22 days. This represents a significant improvement compared to the 2011/12 academic year, despite the large rise in the number of cases, when the mean was 45 working days and the median was 39 working days.
- 12. All students accused of submitting plagiarised work are given the opportunity to meet with the Academic Secretary's Nominee for an interview; 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 the Language Centre.
- 13. The table below details the distribution of penalties for undergraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2012/13 academic year with a comparison to the previous year's figures.

Penalty applied	Percentage of total cases 2012/13	Percentage of total cases 2011/12
i. a requirement that the element of assessment be reworked and resubmitted (this shall not count as an additional attempt at the assessment);	3	2
ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with a resubmission permitted with no limit to the mark that may be obtained;	1	4
iii. 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;	30	57
iv. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with no permission to resubmit the assessment;	1	8
v. 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;	49	23
vi. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	3	8
vi. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module; and ix. 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;	1	0
vii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the marks that may be awarded on resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	0	0
viii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence	0	0

occurred, with the maximum mark on any resits or retakes limited to the minimum pass mark;		
ix. 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
x. 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
xi. 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
xii. 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

Note: Figures rounded to whole numbers.

14. The table below presents the number of cases by year of study:

Year of study	Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 in brackets)
UG year 1	13 (13)
UG year 2	38 (33)
UG final year	44 (48)
UG year 3 (of 4 or 5)	4 (0)
UG year 4 (of 5)	0 (0)
MBBS year 5	0 (2)
Associate/Erasmus	2 (5)

Note: Figures rounded to whole numbers.

15. The largest proportion of undergraduate plagiarism cases, as in 2011/12, involved students in the final year of their programme. This is of concern because of the impact of any penalty on the students' overall degree. This large proportion may be explained by additional pressure on finalists, or perhaps the setting of more written assignments which are worth more than 31% of modules.

16. The number of undergraduate plagiarism cases by home School is detailed below:

School	Number of cases
	(2011/12 figures in
	brackets)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	7 (4)
Business and Management	35 (15)
BUPT	1 (0)
Economics	1 (2)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	9 (10)
Engineering and Materials Science	11 (8)
English and Drama	2 (3)
Geography	6 (2)
History	13 (6)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	17 (5)
Law	2 (0)
Mathematical Sciences	3 (0)
Politics	2 (2)
Physics and Astronomy	1 (0)
UGA exchange programme	2 (3)

- 17. In 2012/13 there was an increase in the number of cases forwarded by the School of Business and Management. Of the cases shown above, 48 are from Business and Management modules, representing 43% of the total number of cases.
- 18. Owing to the high number of cases ARCS met with the School to review procedures and provided talks on avoiding plagiarism at the School's induction during enrolment week.
- 19. Professor Mike Noon, Chair of the School of Business and Management Undergraduate Subject Exambaord has commented:

 We have reviewed the procedures for handling suspected plagiarism within SBM. All cases are now dealt with jointly by the Chairs of the UG and PG Subject Examination Board. There are 2 strands to our approach. (1) We continue to maintain our vigilance in detecting incidences of plagiarism using Turnitin and to refer in line with the regulations. (2) We have introduced new preventative measures, with first year students in particular receiving clearer guidance and advice at induction about the meaning of plagiarism and good academic practice. All staff are advised to ensure clear guidance on plagiarism is contained in their module handbooks and also when providing assignment briefings.

Plagiarism by Postgraduate Students

- 20. There were 31 allegations of plagiarism against postgraduate students during the 2012/13 academic year, compared to 30 cases in 2011/12. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 27 of the 31 cases.
- 21. In 4 cases the allegation was dismissed by either the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Assessment Offences Panel or the Panel itself.
- 22. The average mean time taken to complete an allegation of plagiarism for postgraduate students in the 2012/13 academic year was 33 working days, the

- median was 32 working days. This compares favourably with the mean average of 36 working days and the median average of 41 days in 2011/12.
- 23. The table below details the distribution of penalties for postgraduate plagiarism cases imposed during the 2012/13 academic year with a comparison to the previous year's figures.

Penalty Applied	Percentage of total cases 2012/13	Percentage of total cases 2011/12
i. a requirement that the element of assessment be reworked and resubmitted (this shall not count as an additional attempt at the assessment);	7	0
ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with a resubmission permitted with no limit to the mark that may be obtained;	0	0
iii. 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;	36	56
iv. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with no permission to resubmit the assessment;	0	0
v. 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;	40	30
vi. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	0	11
vii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the marks that may be awarded on resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	0	0
viii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the 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
ix. 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
x. 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;00	3	0
xi. 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
xii. 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

Note: Figures rounded to nearest whole number.

24. The following Schools submitted postgraduate plagiarism cases for investigation.

School	Number of cases
	(2011/12 figure in
	brackets)
Blizard Institute	1 (1)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	1 (1)
Business and Management	15 (11)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	2 (1)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	2 (0)
Engineering and Materials Science	5 (10)
Politics	2 (6)
Geography	1 (0)
Mathematical Sciences	1 (0)

Breaches of Regulations in an Invigilated Examination

- 25. In total there were 41 allegations of breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations during 2012/13, including the late summer resit period. In 2011/12 there were 15 allegations of major breaches of the regulations in an invigilated exam.
- 26. It was determined that an offence had been committed in 35 of the 41 cases. In one case the student was expelled, having been found guilty by the Assessment Offences Panel of multiple breaches of the Regulations whilst under examination conditions.
- 27. In five cases the allegation was dismissed by the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Assessment Offences Panel on behalf of the Panel.
- 28. In one case the allegation was not taken forward because the student's registration was terminated for lack of progress.
- 29. The mean time taken to complete cases involving breaches of the regulations in invigilated exams during the 2012/13 academic year was 23. The median was 20 working days. This compares favourably with the mean of 41 working days and the median of 39 working days in the 2011/12 academic year.
- 30. Of the 41 cases, 17 involved undergraduate students and 24 involved postgraduates.
- 31. The table below details the distribution of penalties for exam offences cases imposed during the 2012/13 academic year with a comparison to the previous year's figures.

Penalty Applied	Percentage of total	Percentage of total
	cases 2012/13	cases 2011/12
i. a requirement that the element of assessment be reworked and resubmitted (this shall not count as an additional attempt at the assessment);	7	0
ii. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with a resubmission permitted with no limit to the mark that may be obtained;	0	0
iii. 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;	36	56

iv. failure (a mark of 0) in the element of assessment in which the offence occurred, with no permission to resubmit the assessment;	0	0
v. 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;	40	30
vi. failure (a mark of 0X) in the module which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module;	0	11
vii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the diet of modules taken during the academic year in which the offence occurred, but with no limit on the marks that may be awarded on resit, irrespective of the regulations for that programme of study;	0	0
viii. failure (with marks of 0X) of a portion of the 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
ix. 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
x. 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;00	3	0
xi. 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
xii. 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

Note: Figures rounded to nearest whole number.

- 32. As in 2011/12, assessment offences in invigilated examinations during 2012/13 most commonly involved the possession of unauthorised material in the form of notes (on mobile phones and paper, written on calculator lids or written on the student's person). All students are given an opportunity to hand in any material that they may have inadvertently brought into the examination room: warnings are contained in the candidate notes, and the invigilator also warns students verbally before the start of the examination.
- 33. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of students caught with material on their mobile phones. The introduction in 2011/12 of the use of clear plastic bags for students to store their possessions in before placing the bag under their desks has been successful in reducing the number of mobile phone offences but there were still a number of students caught in possession of mobiles once the exam had commenced. In 2012/13 a particular problem was students caught with notes written on calculator lids.
- 34. From interviews with students accused of taking devices or unauthorised material into the exam the most commonly cited reason is that they forgot they had the unauthorised material in their possession. Students often cited being late for an exam as a reason why unauthorised material remained on their person, and most stated they were stressed or anxious due to their exams.

Other allegations of assessment offences

35. There were a small number of cases which involved other breaches of the Regulations for Assessment Offences. There were two cases of alleged collusion against four undergraduate students. In both cases one student was found guilty of the offence and the other was found not guilty. There were also two allegations against undergraduate students that they had used a ghost-writing service. One case was dismissed due to a lack of sufficient evidence; in one case the student was instead found guilty of plagiarism.

Enhancements for 2013/14 and beyond

- 36. An Assessment Offence Task and Finish Group met during the 2012/13 academic and a number of recommendations were approved by Senate for the 2013/14 academic year.
- 37. One of the key recommendations of the group that has been implemented for the 2013/14 regulations is that the list of available penalties has been reduced. The key principle behind this recommendation was to ensure that resubmission/resits are always capped. Academic staff and external examiners had commented that uncapped resubmission were rather lenient. There was also concern that some of the lower penalties relating to the element of assessment could advantage a student who has committed an assessment offence over a student who had failed due to academic reasons, as the penalty grants an uncapped resit at the module component, whereas a student who failed for academic reasons would be capped. In addition the Group felt that the existing list was confusing for students and staff as there were currently 12 penalties that could be applied, and reducing the number of penalties would make it clearer what penalties might be imposed for an assessment offence.
- 38. ARCS continues to seek to consider other points raised by the Group including: Guidance for students; how school level penalties are recorded, and penalties for research students. ARCS is planning to improve information on the QML website advising students about how to avoid plagiarism. In addition members of the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office have met with colleagues in schools forwarding high numbers of cases to discuss the issue and to try to improve the situation in 2013/14.

Equality Impact Data

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

Undergraduate Plagiarism cases

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

Gender

	Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)	Percentage of undergraduate student population 2012/13
Female	53 (49)	51
Male	47 (51)	49

Fee Status

	Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)	Percentage of undergraduate student population 2012/13
Home/EU Fee	75 (69)	67
Status		
Overseas Fee	25 (31)	33
Status		

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)
Asian or Asian British-Indian	8 (13)
Asian or Asian British- Pakistani	10 (8)
Asian or Asian British- Bangladeshi	8 (15)
Black or Black British- African/Caribbean	10 (10)
Chinese	3 (5)
Mixed White and Asian	1 (2)
Mixed	5 (3)
Other Asian	13 (10)
Other ethnic background	3 (2)
White	32 (28)
Information withheld	7 (5)

Note: Figures rounded to whole numbers.

Postgraduate Plagiarism cases

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

Gender

		
	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)	Percentage of postgraduate student population 2012/13
Female	73 (60)	51
Male	27 (40)	49

Fee Status

	Percentage of undergraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)	Percentage of undergraduate student population 2012/13
Home/EU Fee	23 (69)	67
Status		
Overseas Fee	77 (31)	33
Status	, ,	

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)
Arab	7 (0)
Asian or Asian British-Indian	10 (13)
Asian or Asian British-Pakistani	3 (13)
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	0 (6)
Black or Black British- African/Caribbean	10 (16)
Chinese	33 (22)
Mixed White and Asian	0 (3)
Mixed	10 (3)
Other Asian	7 (6)
Other ethnic background	3 (3)
White	17 (9)
Information withheld	0 (6)

Note: Figures rounded to whole numbers.

Breaches of the Regulations in invigilated examinations

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

Gender

	Percentage of Exam Offence cases	Percentage of QMUL students
	(2011/12 figures in brackets)	
Female	39 (47)	51
Male	61 (53)	49

Fee Status

1 00 Otatao		
Percentage of Exam Offence cases (2011/12 figures in brackets)		Percentage of QMUL students
Home/EU Fee Status	42 (80)	67
Overseas Fee Status	58 (20)	33

Ethnic Origin

	Percentage of postgraduate plagiarism
	cases
A I-	(2011/12 figures in brackets)
Arab	0 (0)
Asian or Asian	13 (20)
British-Indian	, ·
Asian or Asian	10 (13)
British-Pakistani	, ,
Asian or Asian	5 (7)
British-Bangladeshi	
Black or Black	10 (7)
British-	
African/Caribbean	
Chinese	32 (7)
Mixed White and	2 (0)
Asian	, ,
Mixed	2 (7)
Other Asian	7 (13)
Other ethnic	0 (0)
background	
White	12 (13)
Information withheld	7 (13)

Note: Figures rounded to whole numbers.