



Senate

Paper Title	Suspension of Regulations Report: June-September 2013 and 2012-13 Annual Report
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the report and consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	A summary of suspensions of regulations requested during the period June-September 2013, and the outcomes. Detailed annual summary data for the 2012-13 academic year is also supplied.
Questions for Senate to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are members concerned by the number of suspensions?• How can the number of suspensions be reduced?• Do members feel that the suspension decisions are appropriate?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	The paper concerns exceptions granted to the normal application of the <i>Academic Regulations</i> , the main regulatory document for the management of quality and standards in relation to our academic provision.
Strategy and risk	Security of academic standards and quality relies upon the approved frameworks being applied consistently. There should be no exceptions. This paper details action taken to address those exceptions that did arise.
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	N/A
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Sponsor	Professor Susan Dilly, Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)

Suspension of Regulations Summary Report June - September 2013 and 2012-13 Annual Report

Background

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

To obtain a suspension requires support from the appropriate Subject and Degree Examination Boards and the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) for regulatory issues associated with assessment, or from the Head of School or Institute and the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) for other regulatory issues (such as admissions regulations). All requests are passed through ARCS, and screened at that stage.

This report covers the period June to September 2013, and also the 2012/13 year as a whole. Tables showing a breakdown of requests by faculty and school/institute are provided, and a précis of each suspension and its cause is given in the appendix.

Summary data: June - September 2013

There were 55 requests for suspension in this quarter. In the preceding quarter there were four suspensions, and in the equivalent 2011/12 quarter there were 32 (51 in 2010/11). The summer period always has the highest number of suspensions, as this is when all undergraduate and many postgraduate examination boards meet. The figures are substantially higher than last year, and many of the cases could have been avoided. Suspensions on this scale are problematic, particularly given that some of these suspensions covered multiple students or modules under a single request.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Business and Management	6		6
Dentistry	1		1
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	3		3
English and Drama	6		6
Geography	6		6
History	4		4
Institute of Health Sciences Education	2		2
Law	3	1	4
Mathematical Sciences	4	1	5
Physics and Astronomy	2		2
Biological and Chemical Sciences	3		3
Engineering and Materials Science	4		4
Languages, Linguistics and Film	5		5
Politics and International Relations	4		4

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	34	1	35
Science and Engineering	16	1	17
Medicine and Dentistry	3	-	3
Other	-	-	-
Total	53	2	55

Summary data: 2012-13

The tables below detail the suspensions granted in the 2012-13 academic year as a whole. Numbers are noticeably higher than 2011-12, following falls over the previous two years. There is a notable increase in cases from S&E, though these remain significantly lower than in H&SS. It should be noted that in some instances a suspension can cover more than one student, module, etc. Bracketed figures denote the 2011/12 totals.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	46 (45)	1 (2)	47 (47)
Science and Engineering	25 (13)	1 (-)	26 (13)
Medicine and Dentistry	9 (8)	- (-)	9 (8)
Other	- (1)	- (-)	- (1)
Total	79 (67)	2 (2)	81 (69)

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Engineering and Materials Science	10 (2)	- (-)	10 (2)
Business and Management	8 (4)	- (-)	8 (4)
English and Drama	7 (7)	- (-)	7 (7)
History	7 (5)	- (-)	7 (5)
Geography	6 (2)	- (-)	6 (2)
Mathematical Sciences	5 (1)	1 (-)	6 (1)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	5 (3)	- (-)	5 (3)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	5 (6)	- (-)	5 (6)
Economics and Finance	4 (4)	- (1)	4 (5)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	3 (4)	1 (-)	4 (4)
Law	3 (1)	1 (-)	4 (1)
Politics and International Relations	4 (7)	- (-)	4 (7)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	3 (1)	- (-)	3 (1)
Blizard Institute	3 (4)	- (-)	3 (4)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	2 (6)	- (1)	2 (7)
Dentistry	2 (2)	- (-)	2 (2)
Physics and Astronomy	2 (1)	- (-)	2 (2)
Barts Cancer Institute	- (1)	- (-)	- (1)
Learning Institute	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)
William Harvey Research Institute	- (1)	- (-)	- (1)
Wolfson Institute	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)

Common or resolvable problems

Reweighting assessment schemes

Thirteen suspensions – 15 per cent of the total – were necessary to reweight assessment schemes so that they matched what had been delivered rather than what had been approved. In many cases, one element of assessment had been missed out; in several of these cases, SEBs reported that a new member of staff had been teaching the module. In other cases, suspensions were required to validate changes had been made to assessment patterns without seeking approval.

Suspensions of this type are a perennial issue, but are entirely avoidable. Although changes can often be minor, they can pose a risk to standards as they indicate that the approved processes for management of quality and standards are not being followed in all cases. Several measures that can be taken to reduce the incidence of these suspensions, including the proper induction of new colleagues to ensure that they know the correct assessment scheme, and having the SEB or Teaching and Learning Committee send details of the approved assessment for each module to the relevant module organisers. The correct assessments can be checked in MySIS at any time by looking at the 'View module assessment' task under the 'Academic Model' heading.

Cases in 2012/13:

History: 3 (covering 4 modules)

Economics and Finance: 3

Geography: 2

Blizard Institute: 1

Business and Management: 1

Institute of Health Sciences Education: 1

Dentistry: 1

Languages, Linguistics and Film: 1

Conferring awards with insufficient credit at the level of award

Eight suspensions were approved to make awards to students who had, under the regulations, taken insufficient credits at the level of the award (e.g. 90 credits at level six for a BA, BSc or BEng). These eight suspensions actually covered a total of 24 students. The vast majority of problems arose from students making module selections - approved by the relevant schools - with insufficient modules at the appropriate level. This was particularly common in joint honours programmes, where students typically had more choice in the modules taken. Other cases arose in the wake of a curriculum review that had not fully taken account of the level requirements and, in one case, the academic level of an intercollegiate module had been misunderstood.

These cases pose a genuine risk to academic standards, as it can be questioned whether the awards themselves are truly at the specified academic level. Avoiding future suspensions will require tighter controls in module selection. With correct diet set-up, SITS builds in the award rules and limits students' choices in order to force them to comply with the requirements. Choices are also given final approval by staff in schools. In the past, several suspensions have been necessary when students changed their selections for semester two after the initial module selection process was complete; these late changes were previously been handled outside of SITS, increasing the scope for error. From 2013/14, these changes will be handled in SITS; it is hoped that this will lead to a reduction in cases, but vigilance on the part of staff signing off students' choices is also needed.

Related suspensions (not covered under the figures above or below) included two suspensions where students had taken less than the required total number of credits for award (at any level), and one case where a student had taken too many credits at the lowest academic level.

Cases in 2012/13:

Electronic Engineering and Computer Science: 1 (9 students)

Geography: 1 (8 students)

Business and Management: 4

Languages, Linguistics and Film: 2 (3 students)

Politics and International Relations: 1

Suspending the fit to sit rule

The fit to sit rule holds that where a student has attempted an assessment they have declared themselves fit to do so, meaning that no subsequent claim for extenuating circumstances can be considered. QM expects to suspend this regulation in a very small number of cases each year, where it can be demonstrated that the very nature of a student's extenuating circumstances rendered them unable to determine fitness to sit. Eight suspensions of this regulation were made in 2012/13, which is an increase on previous years, but still just about within expectations. However, schools must clearly communicate the fit to sit policy to students, and should attempt to engage students whose fitness to study is in doubt – in many cases, students for whom this suspension has been made would have been better advised to interrupt. In at least two of the cases, the suspensions were necessary purely because students had been misadvised.

Schools and institutes should note that from 2013/14 the fit to sit policy applies explicitly to all types of assessment rather than just to examinations (this was not entirely clear, previously).

Cases in 2012/13

Law: 3

Mathematical Sciences: 2

Engineering and Materials Science: 2

Electronic Engineering and Computer Science: 1

Exceeding the maximum duration of study

QM's maximum permitted duration of study is twice the normal duration – for example, six years for a standard three year BA/BSc/BEng. Eight suspensions (for nine students) were made this year to extend that period. This has typically been because the students concerned had histories of either extenuating circumstances or failure, and then suffered extenuating circumstances and were granted certified absences in the final year. This is an area where QM expects an occasional suspension, but the numbers are high. Good academic advice can avoid the likelihood of these situations arising, by laying out exactly what students need to complete, and by when – there is good practice in a number of schools on this front. Wherever a suspension *has* been granted it has been with a caveat that only one extra year is permitted, with no possibility of any further extension.

Senate may wish to consider the issue of the maximum duration of study for postgraduate students. As with undergraduate students, this is twice the normal duration and therefore is two years for most standard full time programmes. Where a student has to resit but also has extenuating circumstances on either the first attempt or the resit, that student will always be pushed into a third year of study in schools that do not offer late summer resits. An extension to the maximum duration of study (perhaps, twice the normal duration plus one year?) or else the wider availability of late summer resits would resolve the issue.

Cases in 2012/13

English and Drama: 2

Centre for Commercial Law Studies: 1 (2 students)

Engineering and Materials Science: 1

Biological and Chemical Sciences: 1

Mathematical Sciences: 1

Physics and Astronomy: 1

Law: 1

'Unavoidable' cases

Finally, it should be noted that even some of the cases noted as 'unavoidable' in the appendix could, in fact, have been avoided by earlier engagement between the student and support services at QM. Schools and Institutes are asked to do their utmost to engage students through the academic advising process and the communication of details on processes such as interruption so that difficult cases can be headed off before they require suspension of regulations (often to achieve the same outcome).

Simon Hayter
Assistant Academic Registrar (Assessment Governance)
23 September 2013

Appendix – all suspensions 2012- 2013

Ref.	Regulation(s)	Desired outcome	Reason	School	Avoidable?	Upheld?
2012-68	Academic 2.127	Allow plagiarism resubmission and graduation immediately rather than in the next academic year.	School error.	English & Drama	✓	✓
2012-27	Programme	Amend programme diet (ten students).	Student's extenuating circumstances.	SEMS	✓	✓
2012-11	Programme	Amend programme diet (three students).	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓
2012-05	Programme	Amend programme diet.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✗	✓
2012-06	Programme	Amend programme diet.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✗	✓
2012-15	Programme	Amend programme diet.	School error.	Dentistry	✓	✓
2012-18	Programme	Amend programme diet.	School error.	EECS	✓	✓
2012-19	Programme	Amend programme diet.	School error.	SEMS	✓	✓
2012-34	Academic 7.25	Amend programme diet.	School error (caused by partner institution on joint programme).	History	?	✓
2012-09	Programme	Apply alternate award classification scheme.	School error.	CCLS	✓	✓
2012-01	Academic 4.62	Apply discretion outside of zone of consideration.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✗	✓
2012-47	Academic 4.77iii	Award despite excess L4 credits.	School error.	SLLF	✓	✓
2012-42	Programme	Award despite taking L4 credits in final year.	School error.	SPIR	✓	✓
2012-39	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award (eight students).	School error.	Geography	✓	✓
2012-65	Academic 4.77.ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award (nine students).	School error.	EECS	✓	✓
2012-44	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award (two students).	School error.	SLLF	✓	✓
2012-45	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award.	School error.	SLLF	✓	✓
2012-55	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓

Ref.	Regulation(s)	Desired outcome	Reason	School	Avoidable?	Upheld?
2012-56	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓
2012-57	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓
2012-58	Academic 4.77ii	Award with insufficient credits at the level of the award.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓
2012-41	Programme	Award without taking compulsory module.	Student's individual circumstances.	SPIR	✗	✓
2012-22	Academic, 5.27 (2011-12)	Condone a failed core module.	School error.	Blizard	✓	✓
2012-49	Academic 3.87ii	Discount 60 rather than 30 EC-affected credits from classification.	Error on part of an overseas institution.	English & Drama	✗	✓
2012-13	Academic 5.10 (11/12)	Exceed the maximum duration of study (two students).	Student's individual circumstances.	CCLS	✓	✓
2012-02	Academic 5.9	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✗	✓
2012-30	Academic	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	English & Drama	✗	✓
2012-48	Academic 4.11	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	English & Drama	✗	✓
2012-52	Academic 4.11	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	SBCS	✗	✓
2012-53	Academic 4.11	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	Mathematical Sciences	✗	✓
2012-54	Academic 4.11	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	Student's individual circumstances.	Physics	✗	✓
2012-76	Academic 4.11	Exceed the maximum duration of study.	OIA outcome (secondary effect).	Law	✗	✓
2012-63	Academic 4.82	Exclude 30 credits from classification.	Error on part of a partner institution.	SEMS	✗	✓
2012-77	Academic 2.126	Impose alternative assessment offence penalty.	Student's individual circumstances.	Business & Management	✗	✓
2012-35	Academic 3.3	Introduce late summer resits mid-year.	To harmonise practice on a joint programme	Mathematical Sciences	✗	✓
2012-51	Academic 4.77i	Permit classification on less than 360 credits.	School error.	SBCS	✓	✓
2012-81	Academic 4.77i	Permit classification on less than 360 credits.	Student and school error.	English & Drama	✓	✓
2012-67	Academic 2.70	Permit interruption after the deadline	Student's individual circumstances.	IHSE	✗	✓

Ref.	Regulation(s)	Desired outcome	Reason	School	Avoidable?	Upheld?
2012-64	Academic 3.86	Permit late summer first sits where not normally available.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✘	✓
2012-69	Academic 3.86	Permit late summer first sits where not normally available.	Student's individual circumstances.	SPIR	✘	✓
2012-70	Programme	Permit late summer first sits where not normally available.	School error.	SPIR	✓	✓
2012-74	Academic 2.40	Permit late summer first sits where not normally available.	School error.	Mathematical Sciences	✓	✘
2012-79	Academic 2.40	Permit one additional resit attempt.	School error.	Geography	✓	✓
2012-04	Academic 2.24	Permit part-time study.	Student's individual circumstances.	History	✘	✓
2012-29	Programme	Permit part-time study.	Student's individual circumstances.	Geography	✘	✓
2012-46	Programme	Permit part-time study.	Student's individual circumstances.	SLLF	✘	✓
2012-50	Academic 2.70	Permit retrospective interruption.	Student's individual circumstances.	English & Drama	✘	✓
2012-62	Academic 4.14	Permit under-registration on credits one year and over-registration the next.	School/student error.	SBCS	✓	✓
2012-03	Programme (AR 7.29)	Progress without meeting requirements.	School error (caused by partner institution on a joint programme).	History	✓	✓
2012-10	Programme	Progress without meeting requirements.	Student's individual circumstances.	EECS	✘	✓
2012-75	Academic 4.68iii and Academic 4.75	Progress without meeting requirements.	Student error and some level of school error.	History	✓	✓
2012-80	Academic 4.75	Progress without meeting requirements.	School error.	Physics	✓	✓
2012-20	Academic, 2.162	Reconsider an appeal case despite no evidence that it was not conducted according to the regulations.	Student's individual circumstances.	IHSE	?	✓
2012-21	Academic, 2.162	Reconsider an appeal case despite no evidence that it was not conducted according to the regulations.	Student's individual circumstances.	IHSE	?	✓
2012-17	Academic 4.49	Reinstate a missed first sit	Student's individual circumstances.	Mathematical Sciences	✘	✓
2012-08	Academic (2.43)	Reinstate missed first sit attempt.	Student's individual circumstances.	English & Drama	✘	✓
2012-40	Academic 2.40	Reinstate missed resit attempts.	Student's individual circumstances.	Geography	✘	✓

Ref.	Regulation(s)	Desired outcome	Reason	School	Avoidable?	Upheld?
2012-12	Academic 5.29 (11/12)	Remove cap on a resit mark.	School error.	Economics & Finance	✓	✓
2012-66	Programme	Remove progression hurdle entirely.	School error/change to regulations.	EECS	?	✓
2012-32	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme (two modules).	School error.	History	✓	✓
2012-07	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	History	✓	✓
2012-16	Programme/ module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Blizard	✓	✓
2012-23	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Economics & Finance	✓	✓
2012-24	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Economics & Finance	✓	✓
2012-25	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓
2012-26	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Economics & Finance	✓	✓
2012-28	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Dentistry	✓	✓
2012-31	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Geography	✓	✓
2012-33	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	Geography	✓	✓
2012-43	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	History	✓	✓
2012-59	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	IHSE	✓	✓
2012-82	Module	Reweight module assessment scheme.	School error.	SLLF	✓	✓
2012-14	Academic 2.38 (11/12)	Schedule exam outside of normal cycle.	Student's individual circumstances.	Blizard	✗	✓
2012-73	Academic 6.56 and 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule (i). Progress without meeting requirements (ii).	Student's individual circumstances and student error.	SEMS	✓	i) ✓ ii) ✗
2012-36	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	Student's individual circumstances.	Law	✗	✓
2012-37	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	Student's individual circumstances.	Law	✗	✗
2012-38	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	Student's individual circumstances.	Law	✗	✓

Ref.	Regulation(s)	Desired outcome	Reason	School	Avoidable?	Upheld?
2012-60	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	Student's individual circumstances.	Mathematical Sciences	✘	✓
2012-61	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	QM error (invigilator).	Mathematical Sciences	✓	✓
2012-71	Academic 3.55	Suspend the fit to sit rule.	School error.	EECS	✓	✓
2012-72	Academic 6.56 and 2.40	Suspend the fit to sit rule. Progress without meeting requirements.	Student's individual circumstances.	SEMS	✘	✓
2012-78	Academic 1.34	Validate a non-quorate SEB.	School error.	Business & Management	✓	✓