



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Suspension of Regulations: June-September 2014 and 2013/14 Annual Summary Report</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the report and consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	A detailed summary of suspensions of regulations requested during the period June to September 2014, and the outcomes. Annual summary data for the 2013/14 academic year is also supplied.
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are members concerned by the number of suspensions?</li><li>• How can the number of suspensions be reduced?</li><li>• Do members feel that the suspension decisions are appropriate?</li></ul>
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	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.
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	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.
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	N/A
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## Suspension of Regulations

### June - September 2014 and Annual Summary Report 2013/14

#### 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/Institute/Directorate or equivalent and the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) for other issues (such as admissions regulations). All requests are passed through ARCS, and screened.

This report covers the period June to September 2014, and also the 2013/14 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 to September 2014

There were 50 requests for suspension in this quarter. In the equivalent quarter in 2012/13 there were 55. The high number of suspensions in SLLF is notable.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Languages, Linguistics and Film	12	1	13
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	5	-	5
Geography	5	-	5
Mathematical Sciences	3	2	5
Engineering and Materials Science	3	1	4
History	3	1	4
Physics and Astronomy	4	-	4
Business and Management	3	-	3
Politics and International Relations	2	1	3
Law	2*	-	2
Blizard Institute	1	-	1
Dentistry	1	-	1

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	27	3	30
Science and Engineering	15	3	18
Medicine and Dentistry	2	-	2
Other	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50</b>

## **Common or resolvable problems: June – September 2014**

### **Award and classify on less than the required number of credits**

There were six requests (all approved) to make awards and classify undergraduate students who had taken fewer than the required 360 credits. Two of those suspensions covered entire module cohorts, and in total 35 students were affected. In the two cases affecting whole cohorts, final year modules had to be withdrawn several weeks into teaching due to staff illness and a lack of suitable cover. The remaining four individual cases resulted from errors in module registration, and could have been avoided. Suspensions of this type have previously been rare.

### **Make awards to students with too many/too few credits at the specified levels**

Six suspensions were requested for students who had taken too few credits at the academic level of the award, or too many at the lowest available academic level. This has been a problem for several years. Two of the cases in this quarter were difficult to avoid (one was caused by a curriculum review, and another by a programme change), but the remainder resulted from the approval of inappropriate module selections. From 2015/16, following the Assessment Governance Review, there will be a requirement for undergraduate students to take at least 90 credits per year at the directly corresponding academic level, which should see a reduction in these cases. Schools and institutes are reminded of the need to ensure that 2015/16 diets will be compliant with this requirement.

### **Extend the maximum duration of study**

There were five requests to extend the maximum permitted duration of study for students. Four were turned down, and the one that was upheld was only approved on the basis of both the student's extenuating circumstances and an institutional error in telling the student that a resit was permitted. QMUL's maximum duration policy is very generous; students have twice the normal duration in which to complete, which corresponds to six years for a standard bachelors degree. This excludes first takes and periods of interruption. With the introduction of late summer resits from 2015/16 it is recommended that the maximum permitted duration should be considerably reduced, as there will be no need for years spent out of attendance.

### **Grant late summer assessments where not normally available**

Eight suspensions were sought and approved to grant late summer resits or first sits where a school or institute did not normally offer them. This included undergraduate finalists in some cases. The majority of suspensions were for students for whom the nature of their extenuating circumstances would have seen them materially disadvantaged by waiting until the following May/June examination period. Suspensions of this type will become unnecessary for the vast majority of programmes from 2015/16, when late summer resits will become available as standard.

### **Reweight assessment schemes**

Six requests were made to alter assessment schemes for individual modules, of which five were approved on the grounds that it was too late in the year to revert to the approved patterns as students had been assessed on the wrong scheme. This is a perennial issue, and is wholly avoidable. Suspensions in the June to September period (the final quarter) are particularly difficult to justify given that the correct patterns have been available for review in SITS since the previous October. There were 12 such suspensions across the whole year, of which seven came from just two schools.

### **Award first takes in passed modules**

Two suspensions were approved to grant first takes (repeat of teaching) in modules that had been passed. This is not currently permitted. It is suggested that the phrasing of the regulation should be amended to 'shall not normally be permitted' to allow for cases where a student has passed a module very badly (for example, by doing well in the coursework but not attempting the examination due to the extenuating circumstances).

### Suspend the fit to sit policy

Five suspensions were made to waive the fit to sit policy and grant first sits to students who had attended one or more examinations. In three cases this was due to the specific nature and severity of extenuating circumstances, while in the others there had been incidents during the examinations that had affected the students. Numbers remain low and in line with past years, and it is recommended that suspension should be retained as the method for handling these cases to ensure that the rules are applied consistently.

### Annual summary data 2013/14

The tables below detail the suspensions granted in the 2013/14 academic year as a whole. Numbers are broadly comparable to 2012/13, and although the number of requests is slightly higher, the number of rejections rose considerably meaning that roughly equal numbers were approved. However, it would be desirable to see a decrease in cases each year, especially as the same few avoidable issues necessitate a significant number of suspensions each year. The division of cases between the faculties remains consistent, but there is considerable variance by school/institute. Bracketed figures denote the 2012/13 totals.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	42 (46)	5 (1)	47 (47)
Science and Engineering	26 (25)	3 (1)	29 (26)
Medicine and Dentistry	9 (9)	1 (1)	10 (9)
Other	5 (2)	- (-)	5 (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>82 (79)</b>	<b>9 (3)</b>	<b>91 (84)</b>

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Languages, Linguistics and Film	14 (5)	2 (-)	16 (5)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science	8 (5)	- (-)	8 (5)
Politics and International Relations	7 (4)	1 (-)	8 (4)
History	6 (7)	1 (-)	7 (7)
Mathematical Sciences	5 (5)	2 (1)	7 (6)
Engineering and Materials Science	5 (10)	1 (-)	6 (10)
Business and Management	4 (8)	1 (-)	5 (8)
Geography	5 (6)	- (-)	5 (6)
Law (including CCLS)	5 (3)	(1)	5 (4)
Centre for Academic and Professional Development	5 (2)	- (-)	5 (2)
Blizard Institute	4 (3)	- (-)	4 (3)
Physics and Astronomy	4 (2)	- (-)	4 (2)
Dentistry	3 (2)	- (-)	3 (2)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	1 (3)	1 (1)	2 (4)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	2 (3)	- (-)	2 (3)
QMUL-BUPT Joint Programme	2 (-)	- (-)	2 (-)
Economics and Finance	1 (4)	- (-)	1 (4)
Barts Cancer Institute	1 (-)	- (-)	1 (-)
English and Drama	- (7)	- (-)	- (7)
William Harvey Research Institute	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)
Wolfson Institute	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)

Appendix – suspensions of regulations June to September 2014 (ordered by suspension type)

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2013-76	Academic 2.18 and 4.8	Admit a past student, who received an exit award, directly to the final year.	Student's (unreported) extenuating circumstances during previous registration.	No	N/A	SLLF
2013-65	Academic 4.70i/4.76	Award and classify on 345 credits.	Student error. School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-54	Academic 4.70i/4.76; Module (credit)	Award and classify on less than the required number of credits by treating a 30 credit module as 15 credits.	Staffing issue.	Yes	No	History
2013-43	Academic 4.70i/4.76	Award and classify on less than the required number of credits.	Staffing issue.	Yes	No	SLLF
2013-49	Academic 4.70i/4.76	Award and classify on less than the required number of credits.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SPA
2013-50	Academic 4.70i/4.76	Award and classify on less than the required number of credits.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Maths
2013-51	Academic 4.70i/4.76	Award and classify on less than the required number of credits.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBM
2013-61	Academic 4.70ii	Award despite having taken too few credits at the level of award.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-62	Academic 4.70ii	Award despite having taken too few credits at the level of award.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-52	Academic 4.70iii	Award despite having taken too many credits at level four.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBM
2013-58	Academic 4.70iii	Award despite having taken too many credits at level four.	Consequence of programme change.	Yes	No	SPIR
2013-64	Academic 4.70iii	Award despite having taken too many credits at level four.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-67	Academic 4.70iii	Award despite having taken too many credits at level four.	Consequence of curriculum review.	Yes	No	EECS
2013-53	Module (assessment)	Exclude an assessment element from a module mark.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBM
2013-60	Module (assessment)	Exclude an assessment element from a module mark.	Student's error.	No	Yes	SPIR

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2013-66	Module (assessment)	Exclude an assessment element from a module mark.	Student error. Problem with regulations.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-80	Academic 4.11	Extend maximum duration of study by one year.	School/institute error.	No	Yes	Maths
2013-81	Academic 4.11	Extend maximum duration of study by one year.	School/institute error. Student's extenuating circumstances.	No	Yes	Maths
2013-82	Academic 4.11	Extend maximum duration of study by one year.	School/institute error.	No	Yes	Maths
2013-86	Academic 4.11	Extend maximum duration of study by one year.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	No (alternative found)	No	Law
2013-87	Academic 4.11	Extend maximum duration of study by one year.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	No (alternative found)	No	Law
2013-70	Academic 4.45/4.68	Grant a first take in one module outside of normal criteria, and permit progression on less than the required number of credits.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-78	Academic 3.55/4.55	Grant a first take of the year outside of usual remit.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	SEMS
2013-44	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	Geography
2013-45	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	Geography
2013-46	Academic 2.44	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Students' extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	SPA
2013-55	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	Geography
2013-59	Academic 2.44	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	SPIR
2013-68	Academic 2.44	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SEMS
2013-69	Academic 2.44	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	Yes	SEMS
2013-72	Academic 2.44	Grant late summer assessment where not normally permitted.	Examination incident.	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2013-79	Programme: Diet	Make a compulsory module into an elective and add additional electives.	Staffing issue.	Yes	No	History

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2013-85	Academic 4.23	Permit a first take in a passed module.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	SPA
2013-84	Academic 4.23	Permit first takes in passed modules.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	SPA
2013-75	Academic 6.36	Permit progression to project despite not meeting criteria.	School/institute error.	No (alternative found)	Yes	SEMS
2013-56	Academic 2.47	Reinstate a first sit attempt missed due to failure to register.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	Geography
2013-47	Academic 7.6 (6.12.d)	Remove cap on coursework resit.	Problem with regulations.	Yes	No	EECS (JP)
2013-48	Academic 7.6 (6.12.d)	Remove cap on coursework resit.	Problem with regulations.	Yes	No	EECS (JP)
2013-37	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-38	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-39	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-40	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-41	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	No	Yes	History
2013-42	Module (assessment)	Reweight assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	History
2013-63	Academic 4.70ii	School/institute error.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2013-77	Academic 3.55	Suspend fit to sit and grant first sit.	Examination incident.	Yes (with caveat)	No	Dentistry
2013-57	Academic 3.55/3.85	Suspend fit to sit and grant first sits in all exams, including those attended and those passed.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	Geography
2013-73	Academic 3.85	Suspend fit to sit and grant first sits in all exams, including those attended.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	EECS
2013-74	Academic 3.85	Suspend fit to sit and grant first sits in all exams, including those attended.	Student's extenuating circumstances.	Yes	No	EECS
2013-71	Academic 3.55	Suspend fit to sit to give first sit.	Examination incident.	Yes	No	Maths