



Senate

Paper Title	Annual report on Complaints submitted under the Student Complaints Policy. The report also includes Fitness to Practise cases and Disciplinary cases.
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to consider the findings in this report.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper provides statistics and data on the number and type of complaints received during the 2013/14 academic year. • The ethnic and gender data, although based on a statistically small sample does not suggest any group is over-represented in the figures or is being disadvantaged.
Questions for Senate to consider	Is Senate satisfied that complaint, disciplinary and Fitness to Practise cases are being handled effectively?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	This report has been produced to enable Queen Mary to monitor and evaluate complaints. The Quality Assurance Agency's <i>UK Quality Code for Higher Education</i> and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)'s Good Practice Framework provide the expectations for institutions on handling complaints. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator is the independent review scheme for student complaints for all Higher Education institutions.
Strategy and risk	<p>The complaints process helps manage institutional risk by identifying areas of Queen Mary provision that may require improvement.</p> <p>The complaint process aims to manage risk by resolving matters at an early stage where possible. Resolutions and outcomes from complaints processes can enhance the student experience.</p>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	
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2013/14 Annual report on complaints submitted under the Student Complaints Policy, Fitness to Practise and Disciplinary procedures

Scope

1. This is the annual report on complaints submitted under the Student Complaints Policy. This report focuses on complaints submitted at institutional level during the 2013/14 academic year.
2. Also included at the end of the report are cases investigated under Fitness to Practise and Disciplinary procedures.

Data analysis and trends

3. During the 2013/14 academic year 13 complaints were received at institutional level. This compares to 28 cases in 2012/13 and 31 cases received in the 2011/12.
4. 4 of the complaints received in 2013/14 related to academic matters and 9 of the complaints related to non-academic matters.
5. The 4 complaints received about academic matters included: 1 complaint about supervision; 1 complaint about disability support; 1 complaint about programme organisation and 1 complaint about a student's academic status.
6. The 9 complaints received during 2013/14 regarding non-academic matters included: 4 complaints regarding fee issues; 4 complaints about residences or housing related matters and 1 complaint about the QMUL not sponsoring a student's visa.

Timescales

7. Under the Student Complaints Policy Stage 1 complaints are dealt with at School/Institute/Head of Professional Service Directorate level and should be completed in 14 days. Stage 2 complaints are dealt with at institutional level and should be completed in 1 month. Stage 3 is a review by the Vice-Principal and should also be completed in 1 month.
8. Where it is not possible to complete complaints in this timescale the complainant is informed of this and provided with a reason for the complaint exceeding the timescale.
9. The table below provides a breakdown of the length of time taken to resolve cases in 2013/14.

Time taken to resolve case

Number of calendar days -30	3
Number of calendar days 31-60	7
Over 90 calendar days	3

10. The mean time taken to resolve a complaint at Stage 2 for 2013/14 was 55 working days; the median was 47 working days. This compares to 2012/13 when the corresponding figures were a mean of 36 working days and a median of 32 working days.
11. The main reasons cases exceeded the 1 month timescale were:
 - 4 cases owing to the complainant providing additional documentation
 - 4 cases owing to a resolution being worked out to resolve the complaint
 - 2 case owing to a settlement being negotiated

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. Senate receives a separate report on cases submitted to the OIA, together with the OIA's annual letter, in October each year.

Conclusions and developments for 2014/15 and beyond

13. A sector-wide Good Practice Framework for Appeals and Complaints was published in December 2014. Institutions are expected to review their processes in line with the Framework, and to have approved any revisions by September 2015. Under the Good Practice Framework it is recommended that a complaint is resolved within 90 calendar days for all stages. QMUL currently has 3 stages which total just under 90 calendar days so there may be scope to review our policies and procedures in light of the Good Practice Framework to ensure maximum flexibility in dealing with a complaint.
14. A key focus of the Good Practice Framework is on working on resolution rather than on procedure.

Fitness to Practise

1. There were 3 Fitness to Practise cases submitted to ARCS during 2013/14, only 1 of which went to a full hearing. In the 2 other cases, 1 student decided to withdraw from QMUL before the procedure was complete and the other case was referred back to the Professional Capability Committee for further consideration. No further information is disclosed regarding the cases in order to retain anonymity.

Discipline

1. There were 9 allegations of disciplinary offences investigated by the Academic Secretariat under the Code of Student Discipline during the 2013/14 academic year, which corresponds to 9 cases in the 2012/13 academic year.
2. The 9 cases included the following:
 - 3 incidents of alleged aggressive behaviour to QMUL staff
 - 1 incident involving alleged violent conduct in the library
 - 4 students involved in sending offensive material via electronic media, such as mobile phone/online/social media
 - 1 student falsifying their admission qualifications
3. In accordance with the Code of Student Discipline, interviews were held with all students about whom allegations were made. In 4 cases warnings were issued to the student about their conduct. In 1 of the cases the student was deregistered from QMUL. The remaining four cases were closed with no formal action under

the Code of Discipline since the investigation concluded that there was no case to hear.

Equality Impact Data for Complaint Cases

- Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of complaints received by level of study year. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown by ethnicity and gender, and by fee status.
- Due to the small number of complaint cases it is hard to draw significant conclusions from the data. The largest number of complaints was from undergraduate students which make up the largest cohort at Queen Mary. Overseas students accounted for a disproportionately large share of complaints in 2012/13, however there does not appear to be any significant or common theme to complaints from overseas students.

Appendix 1 Complaints by level of study

Level of study	Number of complaints 2013/14
UG	4
PG taught	6
MPhil/PhD	2
Not registered students	1

Appendix 2 Complaints received by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Complaints
Arab	1
Asian – Chinese	1
Asian – Pakistani	2
Other Mixed	1
White	6
Not given	2
Totals	13

Appendix 3 Complaints received by fee status

Status	Number of complaints	% of total complaints
Home/EU	7	54
Overseas	5	38