



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Suspension of Regulations: June-September 2015 and 2014/15 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 2015, and the outcomes. Annual summary data for the 2014/15 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><li>• How can QMUL address suspensions required for cases where schools/institutes deliver unapproved assessments?</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>	Senate only.
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## Suspension of Regulations

### June to September 2015 and 2014/15 Annual Summary 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 Vice-Principal (SETL or Research) for regulatory issues associated with assessment, or from the Head of School/Institute/Directorate and Vice-Principal for other regulatory issues. All requests are passed through ARCS, and screened at that stage.

This report covers the period June to September 2015, and also the 2014/15 academic year as a whole. Tables showing a breakdown of requests by faculty and school/institute are provided, and a summary of each suspension and its cause is given in the appendix.

#### Summary data: June to September 2015

There were 43 requests for suspension in this quarter. In the equivalent quarter in 2013/14 there were 50, and in 2012/13 there were 55. This quarter always has the highest number of suspensions, as it covers the summer examination boards.

The column titled 'avoidable' indicates how many cases could have been avoided. Most avoidable suspensions are caused by school/institute error. Unavoidable suspensions typically relate to cases concerning an individual student's personal circumstances.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total	Avoidable
Mathematical Sciences	7	0	7	4
Geography	7	0	7	0
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	5	0	5	3
Biological and Chemical Sciences	5	0	5	2
Languages, Linguistics and Film	4	0	4	3
Blizard Institute	3	0	3	3
Physics and Astronomy	3	0	3	2
Law	2	0	2	1
Institute of Health Sciences Education (MBBS)	2	0	2	0
Business and Management	2	0	2	2
Engineering and Materials Science	2	0	2	0
History	1	0	1	1
English and Drama	1	0	1	0

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total	Avoidable
Humanities and Social Sciences	22	0	22	10
Science and Engineering	17	0	17	8
Medicine and Dentistry	5	0	5	3
Other	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>21</b>

## Common and resolvable issues

### **Students returning from interruption at a non-standard point**

*“2.82: Students returning from interruption shall only be permitted to enrol at the start of a semester, as designated in the Academic Calendar (not applicable to research students).”*

Two suspensions of this regulation were granted in this quarter, making a total of three in 2014/15. All three exceptions were granted to students returning from maternity or related leave, to allow them to rejoin programmes mid-semester. An amendment to the 2016/17 Academic Regulations is proposed, to allow discretion to grant exceptions for students with characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010). This would remove the need for suspension in future, while retaining the integrity of the regulation.

### **Late summer first sits for finalists**

*“3.88: Where a student cannot meet the requirements for award due to non-completion of assessment and there are valid, accepted extenuating circumstances, Subject Examination Boards may award first sits or recommend first takes in the affected modules to be taken in the following academic year.”*

Thirteen suspensions gave late summer assessment opportunities to students who would otherwise have had to wait until the following May. Twelve of these concerned finalists who had extenuating circumstances the nature of which would have seen them disadvantaged by having to wait a year. Until 2014/15, QMUL had a policy of not permitting finalists to take late summer resits/first sits. From 2015/16 resits/first sits will take place in August for all students as standard, which should considerably reduce the overall number of suspensions in future.

### **Delivery of unapproved assessment schemes**

Ten suspensions of module regulations on assessment schemes were made in this quarter, of which seven were cases in which schools/institutes had delivered incorrect and unapproved schemes to students. In one case (2014-30), a school knowingly altered the assessment scheme in-year without reference to the proper approval processes. In the majority of other cases, module organisers had not checked the approved assessment and had advertised incorrect schemes to students.

These suspensions are a perennial issue, with numerous cases each year. Although many of the differences are relatively small, they nonetheless pose a risk to academic standards, as they may suggest that QMUL is not in control of its quality assurance processes. QMUL is placed in a difficult position with these cases, as there is little option but to suspend – by the time that the issues are raised, students have already completed the incorrect assessments and there would be a severe disadvantage to them if the suspensions were not granted.

QMUL should be able to rely upon schools/institutes to deliver the approved assessment schemes, and Senate is asked to consider ways in which this can be achieved.

## Annual summary data 2014/15

The tables below detail the suspensions granted in the 2014/15 academic year as a whole. Bracketed figures denote the 2013/14 totals.

Numbers are considerably down on 2013/14 (from 91 to 64), which is positive news although there are still far more suspensions than should be the case – more than half of the situations necessitating suspension in 2014/15 were wholly avoidable.

Numbers of suspensions in S&E and SMD remain roughly static; those in H&SS have dropped by almost a third.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	29 (42)	2 (5)	31 (47)
Science and Engineering	26 (26)	1 (3)	27 (29)
Medicine and Dentistry	8 (9)	1 (1)	9 (10)
Other	0 (5)	0 (-)	0 (5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>63 (82)</b>	<b>4 (9)</b>	<b>67 (91)</b>

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Mathematical Sciences	9 (5)	0 (2)	9 (7)
Geography	7 (6)	0 (0)	7 (6)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	6 (2)	0 (0)	6 (2)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	6 (14)	0 (2)	6 (16)
Biological and Chemical Sciences (inc. NCU)	6 (2)	0 (0)	6 (2)
Physics and Astronomy	5 (4)	0 (0)	5 (4)
Engineering and Materials Science	3 (5)	0 (1)	3 (6)
Blizard Institute	3 (4)	0 (0)	3 (4)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (inc. BUPT)	3 (10)	0 (0)	3 (10)
Politics and International Relations	2 (7)	2 (1)	2 (8)
History	2 (6)	0 (1)	2 (7)
Business and Management	2 (4)	0 (1)	2 (5)
Law	2 (1)	0 (2)	2 (3)
Barts Cancer Institute	1 (1)	1 (0)	2 (1)
Economics and Finance	2 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)
English and Drama	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
Centre for Academic and Professional Development	0 (5)	0 (0)	0 (5)
Dentistry	0 (3)	0 (0)	0 (3)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	4 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)
William Harvey Research Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Wolfson Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Appendix – suspensions of regulations: June to September 2015

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2014-24	Module (assessment)	Amend assessment scheme (limited to how this was recorded, rather than actual changes to the assessments).	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	CCLS
2014-25	Module (assessment)	Use alternative assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2014-26	Module (assessment)	Amend assessment scheme	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SPA
2014-27	Academic 5.39	Resit an element of assessment that had already been passed.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	CCLS
2014-28	Module (assessment)	Exclude one element of assessment from the module mark for eight students.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBM
2014-29	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Law
2014-30	Module (assessment)	Use alternative assessment scheme.	School implemented alternative schemes without approval during the academic year.	Yes	Yes	SBM
2014-31	Academic 2.46	Allow students with resits/first sits who are not eligible for late summer assessments to take LSRs where exams are running for other students.	Regulations changing from 2015/16, and this was viewed as logical.	Yes	No (N/A)	SPA
2014-32	Module (assessment)	Use alternative assessment scheme.	Events beyond QMUL's control.	Yes	No	SBCS
2014-33	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SED
2014-34	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-35	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-36	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-37	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-38	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2014-39	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SLLF
2014-40	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-41	Academic 4.70iii	Award a BA with more than 150 credits (165) taken at level 4.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2014-42	Academic 4.132	Waive rule that if a student fails one module they must resit all modules, and use a combination of results from two attempts.	Records error (not on part of School).	Yes	Yes	Law
2014-43	Academic 5.73	Permit the exclusion of a module from classification.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2014-44	Module (assessment)	Remove the qualifying marks from a module assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2014-45	Programme (diet)	Treat core modules as compulsory (to ensure intended field of study could be awarded).	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Maths
2014-46	Programme (diet)	Treat core modules as compulsory (to ensure intended field of study could be awarded).	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Maths
2014-47	Programme (diet)	Treat core modules as compulsory (to ensure intended field of study could be awarded).	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Maths
2014-48	Academic 4.70iii	Award a BSc with more than 150 credits (165) taken at level 4.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	SPA
2014-49	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SBCS
2014-50	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SEMS
2014-51	Academic 3.88	Grant late summer first sits to a finalist.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SEMS
2014-52	Programme (diet)	Treat all core taught modules as compulsory.	School/institute error.	Yes	No	Blizard
2014-53	Academic 5.10	Extend maximum permitted duration of study by one year.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Maths

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable?	School
2014-54	Academic 5.10	Extend maximum permitted duration of study by one year.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Maths
2014-55	Module (assessment)	Amend reassessment method.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	CCLS
2014-56	Module (assessment)	Exclude examination (65%) from a module.	School/institute or QMUL error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2014-57	Module (assessment)	Exclude examination (65%) from a module.	School/institute or QMUL error.	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2014-58	Academic 2.49	Reinstate a resit attempt that the student had previously declined.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Maths
2014-59	Module (assessment)	Use alternative assessment scheme.	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2014-60	Academic 2.82	Allow a return from interruption mid-semester.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	IHSE
2014-61	Programme (diet)	Replace one core module with another in the diet.	Events beyond QMUL's control.	Yes	No	CCLS
2014-62	Programme (diet)	Amend the division of modules required in each subject (joint honours).	School/institute error.	Yes	Yes	History
2014-63	Academic 4.25	In place of a resit, give a retake with capped results and no further resit opportunity.	Events beyond QMUL's control.	Yes	No	Geog.
2014-64	Academic 2.82	Allow a return from interruption mid-semester.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	IHSE
2014-65	Academic 2.39	Suspend a student's enrolment.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	Maths
2014-66	Academic 8.39	Permit early submission of thesis.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	CCLS
2014-67	Academic 8.93/8.95	Permit a viva to take place by Skype.	Student's individual circumstances.	Yes	No	SBCS