



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 report.
Points to note and further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper provides statistics and data on complaints received during the 2014/15 academic year. • The report also provides an equality impact analysis of the cases by ethnicity, gender and fee status.
Questions to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is Senate content that cases are being handled in a satisfactory manner? • are there any areas of concern? • are there any opportunities for enhancement? • are there any issues relating to the report that members would wish to highlight to Council?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	<p>This report has been produced to enable Queen Mary to monitor and evaluate the appeals process and to provide commentary for enhancement purposes.</p> <p>The Quality Assurance Agency provide the expectations for institutions on handling complaints and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator is the independent review scheme for student complaints for all Higher Education institutions.</p>
Strategy and risk	<p>The complaints process helps manage institutional risk by identifying areas of Queen Mary provision that may need enhancement.</p> <p>The complaint process helps manage risk by resolving matters that may escalate into more serious matters and outcomes from complaints processes can enhance the student experience.</p>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	EQB considered this paper on 16 February 2016. Council will receive this report at its meeting of 05 April 2016.
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2014/15 Annual report on case submitted under the Student Complaints Policy, Fitness to Practise and Code of Student Discipline

Scope

1. This is the annual report on cases submitted under the Student Complaints Policy. This report focuses on complaints submitted at institutional level during the 2014/15 academic year.
2. Also included at the end of the report are cases investigated under the Fitness to Practise Regulations and Code of Student Discipline.

Data analysis and trends

3. During the 2014/15 academic year 17 complaints were received at institutional level. This compares to 13 cases received in the 2013/14 year and 28 cases in 2012/13
4. 5 of the complaints received in 2014/15 related to academic matters and 12 of the complaints related to non-academic matters.
5. The 5 complaints received about academic matters comprised the following: 1 complaint about PhD supervision; 1 complaint about disability support; 1 complaint about programme organisation; 1 complaint about the timing of resits for PGT students; and 1 complaint about the length of time taken to convene an assessment offence panel.
6. The 12 complaints received regarding non-academic matters during 2014/15 comprised the following: 9 complaints about residences; 1 complaint regarding fee issues; 1 complaint about student Oyster card; and 1 complaint about a charge for damaging equipment.

Timescales

7. Under the Complaints policy QMUL aims to complete all Stage 2 complaints within 1 month. 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.
8. The mean time taken to resolve a complaint for 2014/15 was 54 days; the median was 46 days. This compares to 2013/14 when the corresponding figures were a mean of 55 working days and a median of 47 working days.
9. The main reasons for cases exceeding the 1 month timescale were: waiting for the complainant to submit documentation and correspondence with the complainant about the complaint.
10. The table below provides a breakdown of the length of time taken to resolve cases in 2014/5.

Days taken to resolve case

Number of cases 0-30	2
Number of cases 31-60	13
Over 90 calendar days	2

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

11. 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. Applications made to the OIA are reported separately to Senate.

Conclusions and developments for 2014/15 and beyond

12. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have for higher education providers to help them comply with consumer law when dealing with students. One of the key aspects of the CMA guidance is that institutions must ensure that their complaint handling processes are accessible, clear and fair. There is also an expectation that any member of QMUL staff should be able to handle a complaint and a focus on informal resolution. ARCS are meeting with all Schools/Institutes during February and March 2016 to discuss issues arising from the CMA, particularly around complaint handling and information provision.

Fitness to Practise

13. There were no referrals to Fitness to Practise during 2014/15, (3 in 2013/14).

Discipline

14. There were 9 allegations of disciplinary offences investigated by the Academic Secretariat under the Code of Student Discipline during the 2014/15 academic year, which corresponds to 9 cases in the 2013/14 academic year.
15. The 9 allegations incidents can be categorised as follows:
 - 2 allegations involving disputes among students
 - 2 allegations of alleged assault
 - 1 incident involving illegal material on social media
 - 1 incident of alleged sexual harassment
 - 2 cases of students falsifying official qualifications
 - 1 case involving theft of QMUL property
16. In all cases the participants were interviewed. In 4 cases warnings were issued to the student about their conduct. In 2 of the cases the students were deregistered from QMUL. In the other cases after investigation no formal action was taken under the Code of Discipline as there was no case to hear.

Equality Impact Data for Complaint Cases

17. 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.
18. 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 is 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 2014/15
UG	10
PG taught	6
MPhil/PhD	1

Appendix 2 Complaints received by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Complaints
Arab	2
Asian – Chinese	1
Asian – Indian	3
Asian – Other	1
Asian – Pakistani	1
White	9
Totals	17

Appendix 3 Complaints received by fee status

Status	Number of complaints	% of total complaints
Home/EU	11	65
Overseas	6	35