

## Senate

<b>Paper title</b>	Semester Based Examinations
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked:  [a] to <b>consider</b> the recommendations from the task and finish group that was established to develop operational proposals for implementing Senate's decision in June 2018 to introduce semester-based examinations in academic year 2019–20;  [b] to <b>approve</b> revised term dates for the academic year 2019–20 onwards.
<b>Points to note and further information</b>	The task and finish group comprised students and academic and professional services staff from across the university. The group's main recommendations are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• split the current six-week summer examination period into a two-week examination period in the beginning of January and a four-week period in early summer;</li> <li>• schedule coursework deadlines during the January examination period for students without formal written examinations in that period,</li> <li>• on occasions that Easter falls before the end of Semester B, only suspend teaching for the bank holidays in order to maintain the integrity of Semester B teaching and the three-week break before the summer examination period.</li> </ul>
<b>Questions to consider</b>	Is Senate content to approve the proposed term dates and structure?
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	Queen Mary Academic Regulations.
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	2.01 – student experience.
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	Senate
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## Semester-based examinations

### Key issues considered

The task and finish group on semester-based examinations met on two occasions following the June 2018 Senate meeting.

The group identified three main issues for consideration:

1. the structure of semesters;
2. arrangements for students without semester A examinations;
3. placement of the Semester B break.

### The structure of semesters

The group confirmed Senate's earlier decision to split the current six-week examination period into two blocks, with two weeks in January and four in early summer. Each semester would continue to be 12 weeks long. The group noted that the timing of reading weeks and associated equality impacts required further discussion, but that the recommendation to set overall term dates could proceed in the meantime.

The group also discussed the issues of assessment load, marking workloads and promptness of feedback. It was noted that the move to semester-based examinations presents an opportunity for schools and institutes to review the volume and timing of assessments. Currently 42% of all formal examinations relate to Semester B modules. Appendix B therefore sets out three options to accommodate this in the two-week January examination period pending a review of assessment in schools and institutes.

### Arrangements for students without semester A examinations

Following consultation with schools and institutes, the group agreed that coursework deadlines should be scheduled during the January examination period for students on programmes that do not include formal examinations. It was agreed that measures to prevent assessment bunching and to consider differential impacts on students on joint programmes could be agreed at the school and institute level. It was also noted that intercollegiate modules tend to be year-long and so will not be affected by the January examination period. A number of schools and institutes that make relatively little use of formal examinations indicated that they may consider alternative ways to use the January examination period in future.

### Placement of the Semester B break

The group agreed that it would be better for educational reasons to avoid a break in teaching during Semester B. It was therefore decided that the three-week break should also occur after the end of Semester B and that teaching should only be suspended for bank holidays. The

group did not support the option to reduce the length of the semester from 12 weeks in order to avoid this.

The group took a pragmatic approach to the issue of bank holidays, noting that Easter would fall within Semester B under 50% of the time, generally in weeks B11 and B12 and very rarely in week B10. In academic year 2019–20, only the last day of teaching in Semester B would be affected. It was noted that schools and institutes would have time to plan for impacts in subsequent years.

The group also discussed the impact that moving the Easter break may have on students and members of staff with school-age children. It was noted that school holidays vary across Greater London and that the current arrangement therefore affects people differently. It was agreed that an equality impact assessment should be undertaken and consulted upon.

### **Questions for consideration by Senate**

1. Is Senate content to approve the proposed term dates and structure? 12 week terms with reading week falling in week seven and the Semester B break falling at the end of the 12 weeks (with exceptions made where Easter falls early if appropriate).

## **Appendix A**

### **Options for delivery of examinations**

Based on current figures 42% of the overall examinations are Semester A based (c. 36,000 exam sittings). Under current arrangements it would not be feasible to deliver all Semester A examinations within the two-week examination period. There are a number of possible solutions:

#### **Option 1**

Use existing exam locations on campus and hire two large external venues, providing a total capacity of 37,500. Consideration would need to be given to the cost of venue hire, the additional invigilation cost and that using external venues would be less popular with students.

#### **Option 2**

Schedule three examination sittings per day, providing a total capacity of 39,000. Each exam would have to be no more than two hours in duration and held at: 9:30 – 11:30, 13:00 – 15:00 and 16:30 – 18:30. Consideration would need to be given to potential difficulties in recruiting invigilators for long days, but split shifts could be implemented. This option has the benefit of all exams being on campus.

#### **Option 3**

Introducing Saturday examinations alone would not provide the required capacity but a combination of two Saturdays plus three days per week of three sittings would provide an overall capacity of 39,300.

### Academic Year 2019/20

#### Semester 1

- 16 September - 13 December 2019

#### Semester 1 – Examination Period

- 6 January – 17 January 2020

#### Semester 2

- 20 January – 9 April 2020
- Bank holidays: 10 and 13 April 2020

#### Semester 3 - Examination period for Semester 2 & Year Long Modules

- 5 May – 29 May 2020
- Bank holidays: 4 and 25 May 2020

#### Late Summer Resit Period

- 3 Aug – 14 Aug 2020

### Academic Year 2020/21

#### Semester 1

- 14 September - 11 December 2020

#### Semester 1 – Examination Period

- 4 January – 15 January 2021

#### Semester 2

- 18 January – 9 April 2021
- Bank holidays: 2 and 5 April 2021

#### Semester 3 - Examination period for Semester 2 & Year Long Modules

- 4 May – 28 May 2021
- Bank holidays: 3 and 31 May 2021

#### Late Summer Resit Period

- 2 Aug – 13 Aug 2021

## Academic Year 2021/22

### Semester 1

- 13 September - 10 December 2021

### Semester 1 – Examination Period

- 10 January – 21 January 2022

### Semester 2

- 24 January – 14 April 2022
- Bank holidays: 15 and 18 April 2022

### Semester 3 - Examination period for Semester 2 & Year Long Modules

- 9 May – 3 June 2022
- Bank holidays: 2 and 30 May 2022

### Late Summer Resit Period

- 8 Aug – 19 Aug 2022

## Academic Year 2022/23

### Semester 1

- 19 September - 16 December 2022

### Semester 1 – Examination Period

- 9 January – 20 January 2023

### Semester 2

- 23 January – 14 April 2023
- Bank holidays: 7 and 10 April 2023

### Semester 3 - Examination period for Semester 2 & Year Long Modules

- 8 May – 2 June 2023
- Bank holidays: 1 and 29 May 2023

### Late Summer Resit Period

- 7 Aug – 18 Aug 2023

## **Academic Year 2023/24**

### **Semester 1**

- 18 September - 15 December 2023

### **Semester 1 – Examination Period**

- 8 January – 19 January 2024

### **Semester 2**

- 22 January – 12 April 2024
- Bank holidays: 29 March and 1 April 2024

### **Semester 3 - Examination period for Semester 2 & Year Long Modules**

- 7 May – 31 May 2024
- Bank holidays: 6 and 27 May 2024

### **Late Summer Resit Period**

- 5 Aug – 16 Aug 2024