



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2018</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the report and to consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	A summary of suspensions of regulations requested during the period October 2017 to September 2018.
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are members concerned by the number of suspensions?</li> <li>• Why has there been such an increase in cases?</li> <li>• How can the number of suspensions be reduced?</li> <li>• Why do particular schools/institutes have disproportionately high numbers of suspensions caused by error?</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>	Considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board.  Senate to consider.
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<b>Sponsor</b>	

## Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2017/18

### Background

A report on suspensions of regulations is submitted annually to the Senate. Suspension may be requested 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 that 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. In practice, numbers are high and Senate has repeatedly expressed concern regarding the number of cases, over several years. Numbers had been gradually falling, but cases have more than doubled this year.

To obtain a suspension requires support from the appropriate Subject and Degree Examination Boards for assessment issues, or the Head of School/Institute/Directorate for other issues. Approval is given by the Academic Registrar (for taught programmes) or the Vice-Principal Research (for research programmes). All requests are passed through ARCS, and screened at that stage, so the vast majority of cases that reach the stage of a formal request are approved.

This report covers the period October 2017 to September 2018. Tables showing a breakdown of requests by faculty and school/institute are provided, and a brief summary of each suspension and its cause is given in the appendix.

### Annual summary data 2017-18

#### *Total numbers*

Numbers have more than doubled, after several years of considerable decreases, from 52 cases to 107. Some of the additional cases relate to the industrial action that took place in the spring of 2018, though the majority do not. The table below shows total numbers over the past five years.

Academic year	Number of suspensions
2013-14	91
2014-15	64
2015-16	54
2016-17	52
2017-18	107

#### *Faculty numbers*

There are no new Faculty trends this year. Relative figures between the Faculties remain consistent with past years, with H&SS accounting for 63% of cases, S&E 28.0%, SMD 5.5%, and others 3.5%. This is principally due to the larger number of programmes in H&SS and the greater level of flexibility in module selection, though some schools account for disproportionately high numbers of cases. Figures in brackets are 2016/17 totals.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	64 (33)	3 (1)	67 (34)
Science and Engineering	28 (12)	2 (0)	30 (12)
Medicine and Dentistry	6 (4)	0 (0)	6 (4)
Other	4 (2)	0 (0)	4 (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>103 (51)</b>	<b>4 (1)</b>	<b>107 (52)</b>

### School and Institute numbers

Figures in brackets are 2016/17 totals.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Business and Management	18 (7)	0 (0)	18 (7)
History	15 (2)	1 (0)	16 (2)
Biological and Chemical Sciences	13 (2)	0 (0)	13 (2)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (inc. BUPT)	8 (0)	2 (0)	10 (0)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	9 (3)	0 (0)	9 (3)
Economics and Finance	6 (2)	0 (0)	6 (2)
Politics and International Relations	4 (7)	2 (0)	6 (7)
Geography	5 (4)	0 (0)	5 (4)
Mathematical Sciences	4 (2)	0 (0)	4 (2)
Blizard Institute	3 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0)
Educational Development	3 (2)	0 (0)	3 (2)
Engineering and Materials Science	2 (2)	0 (0)	2 (2)
English and Drama	2 (2)	0 (0)	2 (2)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	2 (3)	0 (0)	2 (3)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	1 (2)	0 (1)	1 (3)
Dentistry	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Senate (to suspend module deregistration)	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Science and Engineering Foundation Programme	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
University of London Institute in Paris	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Barts Cancer Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Law	0 (4)	0 (0)	0 (4)
Physics and Astronomy	0 (6)	0 (0)	0 (6)
William Harvey Research Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Wolfson Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

### Common themes and notable cases

#### Industrial action

A number of assessments were affected by the industrial action that occurred in spring 2018. In 19 cases, suspensions were approved to amend schemes to either exclude assessments entirely, or to introduce alternatives. These suspensions were unavoidable, and may be considered as an isolated subset of cases.

#### Assessment schemes

In 34 cases, suspension was requested to validate unapproved assessment schemes (this figure does not include the cases related to industrial action).

This is a perennial issue at Queen Mary, and numbers have further increased this year (from 18 in 2016/17), accounting for 31% of all suspensions. In a typical case, a module organiser has formally communicated incorrect assessment details or weightings to students, who have completed those assessments in good faith. It is therefore difficult to refuse approval, as students would otherwise be disadvantaged. Only one case was refused, where students had not yet commenced the assessments.

Explanations from schools and institutes have included that a module amendment was planned but never submitted, a module amendment was made but forgotten about, and – in many cases – the module organiser chose to deliver an alternative scheme without this being approved through the appropriate School/Institute or Queen Mary processes.

Assessment schemes are designed to test particular learning outcomes in accordance with broader school/institute assessment strategies and national subject benchmarks. Making unapproved changes on an ad hoc basis undermines that work. Further, Queen Mary

should be able to report with confidence on the accuracy of its assessment patterns – cases like these may suggest insufficient institutional control in this area, which presents a risk to academic standards.

The Senate is asked to specifically consider this issue. The matter has been raised in the past, but no specific measures to tackle the issue have been agreed. As it stands, cases are increasing year-on-year, to the detriment of the student experience, and creating additional work for all involved. Of the 34 cases in 2018/19, 26 came from just three schools, with 11 of those from a single school (Business and Management).

### **Qualifying marks**

Eight suspensions were granted to remove qualifying mark requirements from module assessment schemes. A qualifying mark is a requirement for students to pass one or more named elements of assessment outright to pass the module, in addition to the usual requirement of achieving an overall pass mark.

In the eight cases this year, schools and institutes appear not to have understood the function of a qualifying mark, thinking that this was simply the pass mark. They did not communicate the fact that qualifying marks were in place to students, and suspensions were approved on the basis that it would have been unfair to fail students because of a rule of which they had never been informed. This is not the first year in which this has been an issue.

Use of a qualifying mark is a specific part of the approval process and, those wishing to use it should ensure that it is made clear to students in module specification documents (or equivalent).

### **Progression**

Ten cases related to progression, seeking to allow the progression of students who did not meet the published requirements. The majority were the consequence of incorrect advice, for example schools explicitly telling individual students that they did not need to undertake late summer resits in order to progress. The details of the cases vary, but they relate to a common theme (across many categories of suspension) of poor and inconsistent advice.

### **Study abroad**

Students who study abroad are required to register for a number of credits equivalent to those that would have been taken in the same period at Queen Mary. Choices are signed off by the Queen Mary school/institute as part of a formal study agreement, but in some cases these choices do not meet the requirements (in the most extreme case this year a student registered for only 84 of the required 120 credits). In other cases, students made changes at the host institution after signing the agreement without informing Queen Mary.

A working group is currently reviewing a number of practices in relation to years abroad and in industry, and will consider approaches to remedy this issue.

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## Appendix – suspensions of regulations 2017-18 (grouped by type of suspension)

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable	School
2017-100	Programme: Diet	Allow student to take level four modules in the second year (explicitly prohibited by the programme regulations).	Student circs	No	No	SPiR
2017-038	Programme: Diet	Award a degree title for which the student does not meet the requirements.	Student circs	No	Yes	History
2017-107	Programme: Diet	Make the intended award despite not having met programme-specific diet requirements.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEF
2017-075	Programme: Diet	Permit a change of programme to a programme for which the student did not meet the requirements.	Student circs	Yes	Yes	History
2017-076	Programme: Diet	Permit a change of programme to a programme for which the student did not meet the requirements.	Student circs	Yes	Yes	History
2017-077	Programme: Diet	Permit a change of programme to a programme for which the student did not meet the requirements.	Student circs	Yes	Yes	History
2017-087	Programme: Diet	Permit a change of programme to a programme for which the student did not meet the requirements.	Student circs	No	Yes	EECS
2017-042	Programme: Diet	Take an alternative module in place of a compulsory one.	Student circs	Yes	No	SED
2017-018	Programme: Diet	Take modules from outside of the approved diet.	Error	Yes	Yes	Law
2017-021	Programme: Diet	Allow continued registration on a programme despite not having taken 45 credits of compulsory modules.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEFP
2017-008	Programme: Diet	Deliver an alternative module in place of a compulsory module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2017-003	Programme: Diet	Make the intended award despite not having taken sufficient credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS (NCU)
2017-015	Programme: Diet	Remove an advertised module from the programme diet.	Error	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2017-055	Programme: Diet	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	Geog
2017-056	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	Geog
2017-057	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	Geog
2017-058	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	Geog
2017-048	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	History
2017-064	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	History
2017-065	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	History
2017-049	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SBM
2017-083	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SBM
2017-078	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SED
2017-051	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SEF
2017-068	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF
2017-069	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF
2017-071	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF
2017-074	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF
2017-043	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF
2017-046	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SLLF

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable	School
2017-044	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SPIR
2017-047	Module: Assessment	Amend the approved assessment scheme as a result of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SPIR
2017-086	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme for one student, having lost their exam script.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS (BUPT)
2017-080	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme for one student, having lost their exam script.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-102	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2017-041	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	CCLS
2017-084	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	Ed Dev
2017-063	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS (BUPT)
2017-022	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-023	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-026	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-027	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-066	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-082	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-004	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-088	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	IHSE
2017-045	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-050	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-060	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-061	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-062	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-067	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-072	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-091	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-028	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-029	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-030	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-031	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-032	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-033	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-034	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-035	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-036	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-085	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-094	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-001	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEF
2017-093	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	Yes	Yes	SMS

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable	School
2017-007	Module: Assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme.	Error	No	Yes	Law
2017-040	Module: Assessment	Discount an element valued at >20% of a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEF
2017-081	Module: Assessment	Make a study-only module transcriptable (with no results) as a consequence of the assessment not having been delivered to all students as a consequence of industrial action.	Industrial action	Yes	No	SBCS
2017-059	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	Geog
2017-016	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	IHSE
2017-092	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	IoD
2017-070	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-095	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-096	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-097	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-098	Module: Assessment	Remove qualifying marks (must pass particular elements of assessment outright) from a module.	Error	Yes	Yes	SBM
2017-052	Academic: 4.70 iv & 4.13	Allow progression on fewer than the required number of credits. Allow over-registration of modules in the following academic year.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS
2017-053	Academic: 4.70 iv & 4.13	Allow progression on fewer than the required number of credits. Allow over-registration of modules in the following academic year.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS
2017-054	Academic: 4.70 iv & 4.13	Allow progression on fewer than the required number of credits. Allow over-registration of modules in the following academic year.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS
2017-013	Academic 7.6 (16/17)	Award a higher classification than that indicated by the regulations (for a collaborative programme with problematic special regulations).	External factor	Yes	No	History
2017-010	Academic 6.31 (16/17)	Allow progression despite having a weighted mark of <40.0	Error	Yes	Yes	SEMS
2017-024	Academic 5.9	Allow student to complete in less than the minimum programme duration.	Error	Yes	Yes	Blizard
2017-039	Academic 5.72	Allow an award on fewer than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	History
2017-104	Academic 4.86.v (15/16)	Make the intended award despite having passed insufficient credits at level six.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEMS
2017-090	Academic 4.78iii	Allow an award despite having exceeded the maximum permitted credits at level four.	Error	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2017-089	Academic 4.78i, 4.12, 4.84	Allow over-registration of modules and award on classify on more than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	SLLF
2017-106	Academic 4.71 and 4.78.i	Allow progression and award on fewer than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEF



Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Upheld?	Avoidable	School
2017-002	Academic 4.70iii (2016/17)	Allow progression despite having a weighted mark of <40.0	Error	Yes	Yes	SBCS
2017-009	Academic 4.70iii (2016/17)	Allow progression despite having a weighted mark of <40.0	Error	Yes	Yes	SMS
2017-101	Academic 4.70.iii	Allow progression despite having a weighted mark of <40.0	Error	Yes	Yes	ULIP
2017-012	Academic 4.70ii and iii (2016/17)	Allow progression despite having a weighted mark of <40.0 and fewer than 90 passed credits.	None	No	Yes	SPIR
2017-099	Academic 4.70.iv.c	Allow progression on fewer than the required number of credits. Allow over-registration of modules in the following academic year.	Error	Yes	Yes	SEF
2017-103	Academic 4.70.ii (16/17)	Allow progression despite having failed 45 credits in a single developmental year.	External factor	Yes	No	EECS
2017-073	Academic 4.69.v	Allow award on fewer than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	SPIR
2017-105	Academic 4.63 and 4.70.i (15/16)	Allow progression and award on fewer than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	SPIR
2017-011	Academic 4.62 iv b. & 4.69i (2015/16)	Allow progression and award on fewer than the required number of credits.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS
2017-014	Academic 4.49	As part of a first take, take a module that was not part of the original diet.	Student circs	Yes	No	SMS
2017-037	Academic 4.137	Allow (two-year) Senior Status LLB students to transfer onto four year 'with year abroad/in industry' programmes, in perpetuity, establishing means for classification for these non-standard diets.	External factor.	Yes	No	Law
2017-017	Academic 4.13	Allow over-registration of modules in one year, and under-registration the next.	Error	Yes	Yes	SMS
2017-006	Academic 4.11 (2016/17)	Allow student to complete in more than the maximum programme duration.	Error	Yes	Yes	Ed Dev
2017-005	Academic 4.10 (2016/17)	Allow student to complete in less than the minimum programme duration.	Error	Yes	Yes	Ed Dev
2017-025	Academic 2.19	Allow direct transfer to the final year of a Queen Mary programme.	Student circs	No	Yes	EECS
2017-020	Academic (2017/18): 2.88-94	Remove module deregistration from the Academic Regulations with immediate effect.	External factor	Yes	No	Senate
2017-019	Academic (2014/15): 4.62.iv.c, 4.14, 4.69i, 4.75	Allow progression and award on fewer than the required number of credits. Allow over-registration of modules in one year, and under-registration the next.	Error	Yes	Yes	EECS