



Senate

Paper Title	Timetable and semester based examinations: update
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the updates on the implementation of availability based timetabling and semester based examinations.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	Availability based timetabling is being implemented for the 2019-20 academic year. Semester based exams will be introduced from 2019-20 onwards.
Questions for Senate to consider	n/a
Regulatory/statutory reference points	Academic Regulations, Queen Mary University of London
Strategy and risk	2.01 Student Experience
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	n/a
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Semester based exams

Colleagues from the Academic Registry Examinations team have met with academic and professional service representatives from schools and institutes to determine the optimum model for delivering semester based examinations in January (2 weeks) and May/June (4 weeks). Discussions with the Students' Union have also taken place and QMSU have recently assisted in the creation of a set of student FAQs.

The two-week assessment window in January presents a logistical challenge and colleagues reviewed a number of options for the delivery of examinations. The options included: additional capacity through timetabling at weekends; hiring additional external examination venues; and using existing resources to deliver exams using three sittings per day. To date, colleagues have been in support of three sittings per day within the hours of 9am – 6pm. A modelling exercise has been undertaken using existing student data which demonstrates that it is possible to deliver the current volume of examinations within a 2 week window with capacity for future growth. Allowing for 3 hour exams, the pattern of exam delivery is as follows:

Monday – Thursday, 09:00 – 12:00, 12:00 – 14:30, 15:00 – 17:30
Friday – 09:00 – 12:00, 12:00 – 14:30

Colleagues from ARCS are currently working with the Deans for Taught programmes to consider a number of issues raised in discussions with academic teams. Questions under discussion include: how to accommodate the academic teaching load when the Easter bank holidays fall within the 12 week teaching semester; how and when to give student feedback on marked exam scripts; and concerns regarding marking exam scripts whilst at the same time undertaking teaching commitments. A set of guidelines and FAQs will be provided to staff in due course.

An issue that has emerged from recent discussions is the potential impact on parents and carers of school-age children from those schools that arrange a reading week to coincide with school half-term holidays and the effect that the shift in semester dates has on the Easter vacation period. There is still scope for flexibility to include reading weeks; however, the potential impact on parents and carers will need to be balanced against other equality and welfare objectives. An equality impact assessment is being undertaken which will consider any EDI issues raised during the consultation period and any further concerns gathered during the planning stage.

Students have recently received a communication providing notice of the change to the exam process for 2019-20 and a list of FAQs placed on the Student Enquiry Centre website.

Availability-based timetabling

Schools within the Faculties of Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences are currently engaged in entering their timetabling information into the timetabling system. The deadline for the submission of all data, including teaching staff availability, is the 29th March.

Meanwhile, Timetabling Support staff are working closely with representatives in Schools to ensure that detailed requirements specific to individual programmes are captured and recorded. This important data-gathering exercise will enable Timetabling Support to detail the specific needs and aims of the timetable for each school

Once all data has been entered, work will begin immediately on the scheduling of level 3,4 and 7 teaching while the student module selection data for continuing students is awaited.