



**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2019</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	The Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the report and to consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
<b>Points for members to note and further information</b>	A summary of suspensions of regulations requested during the period 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019.
<b>Questions for to consider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can the number of suspensions be reduced?</li><li>• A high number of suspensions have been caused by error. Should action be taken to reduce instances of 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.
<b>Author</b>	Simon Hayter, Assistant Academic Registrar (Assessment Governance)

## Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2019

### Background

A report on suspensions of regulations is submitted annually to the Education Quality and Standards Board and 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 and nature of cases. Numbers had been gradually falling, but more than doubled between 2017 and 2018 and remain high 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; those that would be rejected seldom reach the stage of formal consideration, following discussion with the proposers.

This report covers the period 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019, though an additional 15 cases (not included in this report) have already been received since 1 October 2019. 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 2018-19

#### Total numbers

Numbers have dropped, but remain high. A significant number of 2017-18 suspensions related to the industrial action, so the apparent decrease does not necessarily reflect any improvement in practices.

Reporting year	Suspensions
2013-14	91
2014-15	64
2015-16	54
2016-17	52
2017-18	107
2018-19	73

### Faculty numbers

Relative figures between the Faculties remain broadly consistent with past years, with H&SS accounting for 58% of cases, S&E 26%, SMD 15%, and others <1%. This is partly due to the larger number of schools in H&SS and the greater level of flexibility in module selection, though certain schools account for disproportionately high case numbers. Figures in brackets are 2017-18 totals.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	42 (64)	0 (3)	42 (67)
Science and Engineering	19 (28)	0 (2)	19 (30)
Medicine and Dentistry	11 (6)	0 (0)	11 (6)
Other	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(103)</b>	<b>0 (4)</b>	<b>(107)</b>

### School and institute numbers

Business and Management has the highest number of suspensions, and these exclusively concern cases where either incorrect module assessment or incorrect programme diets were delivered to students. ARCS and the Faculty Dean for Education met with the School earlier in the year to agree measures to address this, but these do not yet appear to have had an effect – multiple suspensions of this type have already been put forward for the 2019-20 year (not included in these figures).

EECS and SLLF have relatively high numbers; the majority of EECS cases relate to the joint programme with BUPT in China. SBCS and History have achieved significant decreases against last year, though numbers remain relatively high. Conversely, multiple schools/institutes have a long record of few, if any, suspensions. Figures in brackets are 2017-18 totals.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Business and Management	11 (18)	0 (0)	11 (18)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (inc. BUPT)	8 <sup>†</sup> (8)	0 (2)	8 <sup>†</sup> (10)
Languages, Linguistics and Film	8 (9)	0 (0)	8 (9)
Engineering and Materials Science	6 (2)	0 (0)	6 (2)
History	6 (15)	0 (1)	6 (16)
Law	6 (0)	0 (0)	6 (0)
Biological and Chemical Sciences (inc NCU)	5* (13)	0 (0)	5* (13)
Politics and International Relations	5 (4)	0 (2)	5 (6)
Blizard Institute	4 (3)	0 (0)	4 (3)
William Harvey Research Institute	4 (0)	0 (0)	4 (0)
English and Drama	3 (2)	0 (0)	3 (2)
Geography	2 (5)	0 (0)	2 (5)
Dentistry	2 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)
Economics and Finance	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (6)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	1 (2)	0 (0)	1 (2)
Other	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Mathematical Sciences	0 (4)	0 (0)	0 (4)
Educational Development	0 (3)	0 (0)	0 (3)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
Science and Engineering Foundation Programme	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
University of London Institute in Paris	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
Barts Cancer Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Physics and Astronomy	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Wolfson Institute	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

\* of which six relate to BUPT.

† of which one relates to NCU.

## Common themes and notable cases

### Assessment schemes

In 28 cases (38% of the total), suspension was requested to validate unapproved assessment schemes. This is a perennial problem. In a typical case, a module organiser has formally communicated incorrect assessment details, conditions, 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 for a school/institute's error.

Explanations from schools and institutes have included that a module amendment was planned but never submitted, a module amendment was made but not actioned, and – in many cases – the module organiser delivered an alternative scheme without this being approved through the appropriate process.

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. 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 matter has been raised in the past, but no specific institutional measures to tackle the issue have proved to be effective. As it stands case numbers remain high, to the detriment of the student experience. One third of cases came from the School of Business and Management as has been the case in previous years. ARCS and the Faculty Dean for Education met with the School earlier in the year to agree measures to address this, but these do not appear to have had an effect – multiple suspensions of this type have already been put forward in 2019-20 (not included in the figures in this present report).

### Programme diet and structure

14 cases (19% of the total) related to issues with the structure of a programme. These included the non-delivery of modules specified in the programme regulations (including some core modules), delivering programmes over a different period to that specified (eg a part-time PGT programme over three years rather than two), or taking modules out of sequence. While suspensions have generally been made in students' favour, these cases are often problematic in terms of regulation from the Competition and Markets Authority, if Queen Mary has not delivered the provision that was promised at the point of application/admission. Other cases create inequality among students – for example, the student who took the programme over three years rather than two had a much reduced workload compared to other students in that cohort.

### Programme changes

Six cases (8% of the total) relate to programme changes. In most of these cases students were permitted to transfer to (often significantly different) programmes for which they did not meet the entry requirements and/or the necessary pre-requisites. The Academic Regulations have been made more stringent on this point for 2019/20, and in particular changes for applicants and first year students require an additional layer of approval from the Head of Admissions (or nominee). These cases tend to be problematic in that students have already been attending classes for the new programme (and not for the original programme) for some time before these cases are raised as suspensions, making them difficult to refuse. There have already been two cases in 2019/20 through which students who fell short of the entry criteria for one programme have gained entry through transfer from a wholly different programme in another school.

## Appendix – suspensions of regulations approved in 2018-19

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2018-001	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SPIR
2018-002	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	External factor	No	SLLF
2018-003	Academic 2.67	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	Geography
2018-004	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error/external factor	Partly	SBM
2018-005	Academic 5.72	Allow an award despite taking too few credits at level 7.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-006	Academic 5.72	Allow an award despite taking too few credits at level 7.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-007	Academic 5.72	Allow an award despite taking too few credits at level 7.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-008	Academic: 6.47	Permit progression despite having failed modules.	Error	Yes	Blizard
2018-009	Academic: 5.29	Condone a failed core module.	Error	Yes	Dentistry
2018-010	Programme: duration of study	Permit early completion of the programme.	Error	Yes	WHRI
2018-011	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SED
2018-012	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SED
2018-013	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBCS
2018-014	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	Law
2018-015	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-016	Programme: structure	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-017	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-018	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-019	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-020	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-021	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-022	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	History
2018-023	Academic: 2.16 iii	Permit re-admission to top-up a programme after more than 5 years	External factor	No	Blizard
2018-024	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved reassessment scheme	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-025	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-026	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	WHRI
2018-027	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-028	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-029	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-030	Academic 4.57	Take alternative modules in place of the originals as part of a first take.	Error	Yes	SED
2018-031	Module: credit/assessment	Artificially create a 15 credit module from half of a 30 credit module.	Error	Yes	GOO
2018-032	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-033	Module: assessment	Exclude a 20% element of assessment for one student.	External factor	No	Geography
2018-034	Academic Regulations 2016/17, 4.70.iv.c, 4.79.i	Exclude 15 credits from the progression/award requirements.	Error	Yes	SLLF

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2018-035	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2018-036	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2018-037	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme <i>and</i> the approved scheme	Error	Yes	History
2018-038	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBCS
2018-039	Programme: Diet Programme: Exit award title	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	IHSE
2018-040	Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error	Yes	History
2018-041	Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error	Yes	History
2018-042	Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error	Yes	History
2018-043	Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error	Yes	History
2018-044	Academic 2.79	Interrupt and return in the same year	Error	Yes	SPIR
2018-045	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2018-046	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2018-047	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBCS
2018-048	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBCS
2018-049	Academic: Special Reg 8.1.	To permit compensation as per 2015/16 revised regulations.	Error	yes	SBCS
2018-050	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-051	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-052	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-053	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	Blizard
2018-054	Academic: Marking Scheme	Classify using integers for the College Mark rather than one decimal place.	Error	Yes	Dentistry
2018-055	Academic 4.78.vi	Allow an award despite passing too few credits at level 6.	Error	Yes	SLLF
2018-056	Academic 4.76.iii	Allow an award despite taking too many credits at level 4.	Error	Yes	SPIR
2018-057	Module: assessment	Exclude a 50% element of assessment for one student.	Error	Yes	SEF
2018-058	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-059	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	SBM
2018-060	Programme: duration of study	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Error	Yes	WHRI
2018-061	Module: assessment	Exclude a 30% element of assessment for one student.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2018-062	Academic: 4.118	Permit partial resits where more than 30 have not been passed	Student circumstances	No	Law
2018-063	Academic: 4.118	Permit partial resits where more than 30 have not been passed	Student circumstances	No	Law
2018-064	Programme: diet	Make an award to a student who had not taken a core module	Error	Yes	Law
2018-065	Academic: 4.130	Permit progression while still carrying an open first sit.	Error	Yes	Law
2018-066	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-067	Module: assessment	Deliver an unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	Blizard
2018-068	Academic: 4.76.i	Take 375 credits rather than 360 for award.	Student circumstances	No	SPIR

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2018-069	Programme: diet	Deliver an unapproved programme structure/diet	Student circumstances	Yes	WHRI
2018-070	Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error/student circumstances	Possibly	Law
2018-071	Academic 7.6: 6.3 (2015/16)	Allow marks to stand for a resit that students were not entitled to take.	Error	Yes	EECS
2018-072	Academic Regulation 4.77 (iii) (2016/17); Programme: diet	Allow a programme transfer despite the student not meeting all requirements	Error/student circumstances	Possibly	SPIR
2018-073	Module: assessment	Exclude a 25% element of assessment for one student.	Error	Yes	SLLF