



## Senate

<b>Paper title</b>	<b>Student Casework Reports 2018/19</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	<p>The Senate is asked to <b>consider</b> and comment upon these reports.</p> <p>The Senate is asked to <b>approve</b> the appointments of Dr Andrejs Braun and Professor Séan McConville as Deputy Chairs of the Academic Misconduct Panel.</p>
<b>Points to note and further information</b>	<p>Three reports on student casework are included for consideration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeals.</li> <li>2. Assessment offences.</li> <li>3. Complaints, discipline, and fitness to practise.</li> </ol> <p>ARCS reports annually to the EQSB, the Senate, and the Council on these issues. The reports include the number and type of cases, case outcomes, and turnaround times. Anonymous and aggregated data on cases broken down by gender, ethnicity and fee status is included.</p> <p>The reports detail key themes from the year. The Senate is asked to note the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The percentage of students making appeals remains largely static, but the number of cases in absolute terms has increased.. The Senate is asked to consider the current use of results surgeries, whether these are working as intended, and whether the informal stage should be compulsory before submitting an appeal.</li> <li>2. The percentage of students alleged to have committed assessment offences has risen substantially but remains low overall. 30 per cent of allegations came from SBM, where the percentage of students alleged to have committed an offence was three times the Queen Mary average.</li> <li>3. The number of stage two complaints has dropped somewhat, but there has been a change in their nature, with most now focusing on non-academic rather than academic issues.</li> <li>4. Discipline cases have more than doubled, and their complexity has increased, including several allegations involving sexual misconduct and (separately) knife incidents. Queen Mary has retained the services of an independent investigator to investigate the most complex sexual misconduct cases.</li> <li>5. Only one fitness to practise hearing took place in 2018/19.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. There were (and remain) very significant delays in the appeals process due to the volume of cases. Staff resource has been increased from 3.5 to 5.0 FTE, 1.0FTE of which is a fixed-term post not funded beyond July 2020; this is welcome, but not sufficient to deal with the volume of cases. The absolute number of cases has increased, as has the complexity of some cases. This has contributed significantly to delays. The OIA has recently upheld Queen Mary cases on delay alone and has imposed financial penalties; the number of such cases is likely to increase considerably.</li> <li>7. There have been delays in the development of an electronic case management system, which would aid in the faster resolution of cases and permit much better reporting. Queen Mary has now engaged Tribal, the SITS suppliers, to deliver this element and it is hoped that rapid progress can be made.</li> <li>8. Minor changes to the appeals and assessment offence policies and limited but significant changes to the complaints and discipline policies will be presented to the next meeting of the EQSB. In the case of discipline, this will include a review of the role of the reporting student as a witness in the case.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Questions to consider</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Senate is asked to consider and comment on the report.</li> <li>2. How can the volume of appeals be reduced? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Additional permanent staff resource.</li> <li>b. Additional short-term staff resource to address the backlog, offset against future costs from OIA cases upheld on the basis of delay.</li> <li>c. Review of the appeal process itself, potentially requiring school-level intervention in the first instance, and review of the automatic dismissal stage.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Should the rapid development and deployment of an electronic case management system be deemed a priority?</li> <li>4. Academic misconduct occurring in assessments counting for 30 per cent or more of a module must be referred for central investigation. Should that threshold be increased, to allow for more investigations at school/institute-level?</li> <li>5. How can we attract more academic colleagues to act as Chairs and Deputy Chairs of panels and as panel members, particularly for academic misconduct? How can that additional work be recognised for these colleagues and others in similar roles?</li> <li>6. The Senate is also asked to <b>approve</b> the appointment of two new Deputy Chairs of the Academic Misconduct Panel, to take decisions on assessment offence allegations. Dr Andrejs Braun is the institute lead for academic misconduct in the Barts Cancer Institute, and Professor Séan McConville is a member of Senate from the Department of Law. Both nominees have previously taken part in institution-level academic misconduct panels (as members), and have all of the necessary experience for the roles. Their nominations are supported by their academic departments and by ARCS.</li> </ol>

<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education</li> <li>2. Office of the Independent Adjudicator: The Good Practice Framework</li> <li>3. Office for Students: Conditions of Registration – C2.</li> </ol>
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	<p>Aligns with the Queen Mary Strategy 2030</p> <p>Excellence in Education</p> <p>Excellence in Student Engagement</p> <p>Excellence in Student Employability</p> <p>Excellence in Learning Environment</p>
<b>Reporting/ consideration route for the paper</b>	<p>Considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board on 19 February 2020. The Board agreed/noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern over the increase in academic misconduct cases, particularly in certain schools.</li> <li>- That the current ‘results surgeries’ were not functioning adequately and that they should be replaced with a new formal stage of the appeal process at school/institute level prior to submission at an institutional level. 37% of resolved 2018/19 appeals had been successfully resolved outside of the process and did not need to be treated as full appeals, while a further 20.8% were automatically rejected as not meeting the criteria for appeal without being heard. No detailed proposals would be made until an electronic casework management system had been implemented.</li> <li>- Support for increasing the 30% weighting limit for investigation of academic misconduct at school/institute level, but again deferred until implementation of an electronic casework management system.</li> <li>- Support for the prioritisation of the development of the casework management system, and for resource in the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office.</li> <li>- Action points for further discussions on the recognition of staff involved in the casework processes.</li> </ul> <p>An abridged version of this report will be considered by the Council.</p>
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# Student Casework Reports 2018/19

## Report 1: Appeals

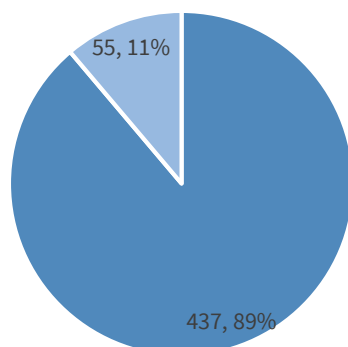
### Scope

- 1.1 This report concerns student appeals received in 2018/19. These have been broken down into academic and non-academic appeals, but all appeals were conducted under the [Appeal Regulations 2018/19](#), under which students could appeal outcomes from the following:
- decisions of examination boards or research degree examination panels on assessment, progression, or award.
  - the Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct.
  - decisions to terminate the registration of a student (including research students).
  - the Fitness to Practise and Professional Capability Regulations.
  - the Code of Student Discipline.
  - disciplinary action taken under the Library Regulations.
  - disciplinary action taken under the Halls of Residence Regulations.
  - decisions on student bursaries, scholarships, and grants where these are administered by Queen Mary.
- 1.2 The Appeal Regulations were replaced by the [Appeal Policy](#) in 2019/20, though there are few material differences between the two.

### Total case numbers

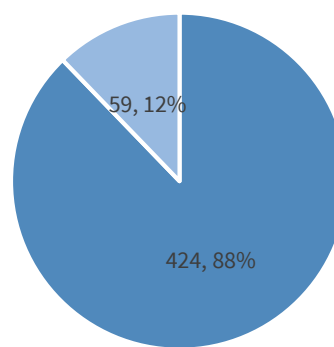
- 1.3 Queen Mary received 492 appeals in 2018/19, an increase of around three per cent since 2017/18 (483 appeals). The charts below show the breakdown of academic and non-academic appeals in 2018/19 and 2017/18. Academic appeals have slightly increased and non-academic appeals slightly decreased, but the differences are not statistically significant.

Appeals by type (2018/19)



■ Academic ■ Non-academic

Appeals by type (2017/18)



■ Academic ■ Non-academic

- 1.4 Although the total number of appeals has increased, there has been a fractional drop (-0.1) in appeals as a percentage of the student body. However, it is the raw number that presents practical challenges. Note that a handful of students submitted more than one appeal, which fractionally distorts the final column.

Year	Total appeals	Change	Student body	As % of student body
2014/15	309	(+13.0%)	18,905	1.6%
2015/16	318	+2.9%	21,187	1.5%
2016/17	460	+44.7%	23,114	2.0%
2017/18	483	+5.0%	23,792	2.0%
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>+1.9%</b>	<b>25,925</b>	<b>1.90%</b>

## Breakdown of case numbers

### Breakdown by category (academic and non-academic appeals)

- 1.5 Academic appeals relate to academic issues, and generally to examination board decisions (progression, classification, marking, deregistration for failure, etc). These comprise the great majority of cases. Students cannot challenge academic judgement, but many appeals nonetheless attempt to do so. There are no particular trends within this category this year. The number of academic appeals as a proportion of the student body has slightly decreased, but the absolute number has increased.

#### Academic appeals

Year	Academic appeals	Change	Student body	As % of student body
2014/15	237	+17.9%	18,905	1.25%
2015/16	259	+8.5%	21,187	1.22%
2016/17	352	+35.9%	23,114	1.52%
2017/18	424	+20.7%	23,792	1.78%
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>+3.1%</b>	<b>25,925</b>	<b>1.69%</b>

- 1.6 Non-academic appeals address non-academic decisions, for example deregistration for non-engagement or non-payment of fees, decisions relating to residences and accommodation, and financial issues such as designation of fee status or the award of bursaries. There are no new trends. Non-academic appeals have reduced both in number and as a proportion of the student body. There is a general downward trend for non-academic appeals, but these are small changes on a small sample. The significant drop in in 2017/18 was largely a result of changes to the policy on module deregistration that year.

#### Non-academic appeals

Year	Academic appeals	Change	Student body	As % of student body
2014/15	72	-1.3%	18,905	0.38%
2015/16	59	-18.0%	21,187	0.28%
2016/17	108	+83.0%	23,114	0.47%
2017/18	59	-45.3%	23,792	0.25%
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>-6.8%</b>	<b>25,925</b>	<b>0.21%</b>

### Breakdown by level and year of study

1.7 Breaking down appeal numbers by level of study gives the figures below. These are in line with expectations and correspond in large part with student numbers and the structure of the programmes and the number of decision points that may be appealed. As in past years, there are only a small number of postgraduate research cases, but those tend to be among the most complex to resolve.

Level of study	Appeals received	As a % of all appeals
Undergraduate and foundation	312	63.4%
Postgraduate taught	172	35.0%
Postgraduate research	8	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

1.8 The next table breaks down appeals by year of study (2017/18 figures in brackets). There has been some movement between categories since last year, but this can largely be attributed to natural variation. Interestingly, there is a higher percentage of appeals among second year than final year UG students – finalists normally make more appeals as decisions affecting them can have higher stakes. There is no obvious reason for this (relatively small) change.

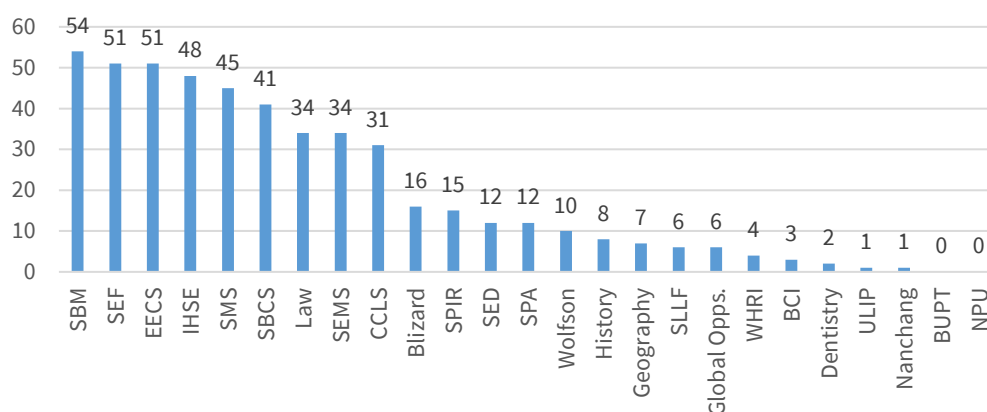
Year of study	Appeals received	As a % of all appeals
Foundation (Year 0)	2 (9)	0.4% (1.9%)
UG year 1	62 (102)	12.6% (21.1%)
UG year 2	101 (96)	20.5% (19.9%)
UG final year	81 (93)	16.5% (19.3%)
UG year 3 -5	66 (38)	13.4% (7.9%)
Postgraduate taught	172 (139)	35.0% (28.8%)
Postgraduate research	8 (6)	1.6% (1.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>492 (483)</b>	

### Breakdown by school/institute

1.9 This section of the report looks at the breakdown of cases between schools and institutes.

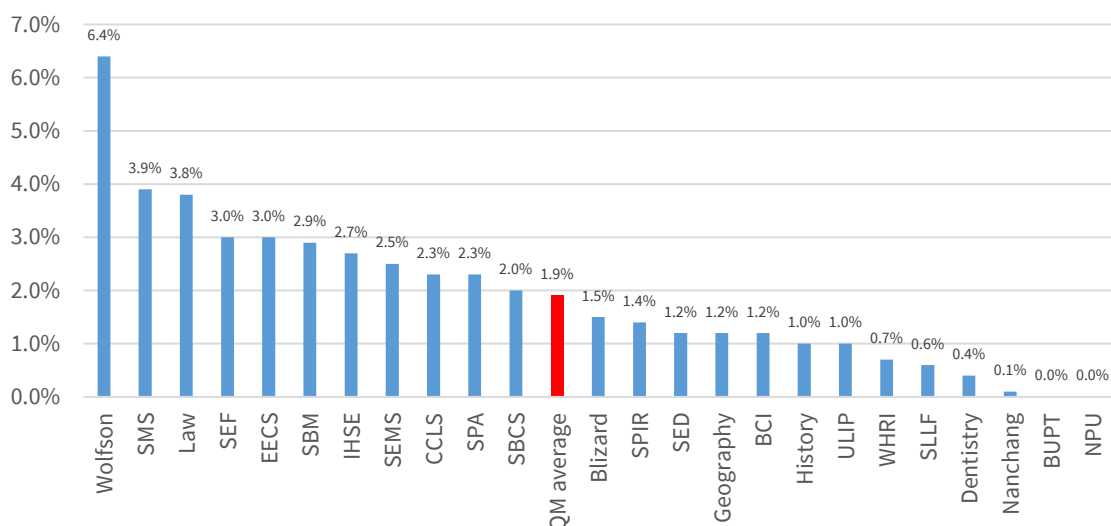
1.10 In raw numbers, Business and Management (11.0% of all appeals), Economics and Finance (10.4%), Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (10.4%), the Institute of Health Sciences Education (9.8%), and Mathematical Sciences (9.1%) had the most appeals.

Number of appeals by school/institute (2018/19)



1.11 While this is significant in terms of caseload, it is more important to consider the percentage of students in each school making an appeal. 1.9 per cent of students appealed overall. The following are substantially above that baseline: Wolfson Institute (6.4%), Mathematical Sciences (3.9%), Law (3.8%), Economics and Finance (3.0%), Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (3.0%), Business and Management (2.9%), and the Institute of Health Sciences Education (2.7%). The figure for the Wolfson Institute is particularly striking (ten cases among 156 students); there is no particular theme to those cases. Figures for the large TNE programmes have been disaggregated so as not to distort figures for the home schools.

### Percentage of students appealing (2018/19)



### Grounds for appeal and appeal outcomes

1.12 There are two grounds for appeal: procedural error, and exceptional circumstances that – for good reason – could not have been made known at the proper time. A student may appeal on either or both grounds. In 2018/19, 182 appeals were based on alleged procedural error, 225 on alleged exceptional circumstances, and 76 on both grounds. The remaining nine failed to specify any grounds for appeal.

1.13 Many 2018/19 appeals remain unresolved at the time of writing this report. However, the general content of those that have been considered remains unchanged from previous years. Common issues raised (with or without merit) included:

- a. an assessment mark was incorrect, because it did not accord with the student's idea of their own performance.
- b. a mark was incorrect because it was out of line with the student's other results.
- c. marking was not conducted in line with the published procedures.
- d. poor feedback or supervision led to a lower mark than the student felt they should have achieved.
- e. administrative errors in the calculation or recording of marks.
- f. assessment or award outcomes had been impaired by extenuating circumstances or other exceptional circumstances that, for alleged good reason, were either not made known at the proper time or were not properly considered (typically relating to mental health and alleged impaired judgement/ability to engage). A reasonable number relate to the fit to sit policy, with students who sat the exam claiming that they were unfit to determine their fitness to sit (often only after publication of the results).
- g. alleged good reason for the non-payment of fees which had led to deregistration.

1.14 Queen Mary does not have an electronic case management system, and data recording and reporting is a manual process. It is therefore difficult to comment in detail on trends within schools (eg, whether there was a high incidence of appeals concerning dissertation supervision in one school). Work is underway to implement such a system, and the Senate is asked to endorse the view that this should be viewed an institutional priority.

1.15 The table below details the outcomes of 2018/19 appeals, with 2017/18 figures in brackets. This includes appeals not yet concluded.

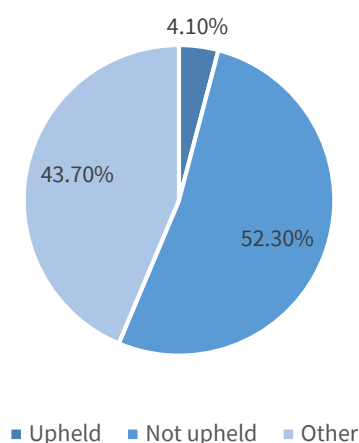
Outcome	Cases (as % of cases) 18/19	Cases (as % of cases) 17/18
Ongoing at time of report	295 (60.0%)	170 (35.2%)
Upheld	8 (1.6%)	27 (5.6%)
Not upheld	62 (12.6%)	172 (35.6%)
Automatic rejection	17 (3.4%)	15 (3.1%)
Out of time (rejected)	24 (4.9%)	31 (6.4%)
Resolved outside process	73 (14.8%)	48 (9.9%)
Withdrawn by student	13 (2.6%)	20 (4.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>483</b>

1.16 This table shows the outcomes only for 2018/19 cases that have been resolved.

Outcome	Cases (as % of cases) 18/19	Cases (as % of cases) 17/18
Upheld	8 (4.1%)	27 (5.6%)
Not upheld: heard and rejected	62 (31.5%)	172 (35.6%)
Not upheld: automatic rejection	17 (8.6%)	15 (3.1%)
Not upheld: out of time	24 (12.2%)	31 (6.4%)
Other: resolved outside process	73 (37.1%)	48 (9.9%)
Other: withdrawn by student	13 (6.6%)	20 (4.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>483</b>

1.17 The following chart visualises the same data, using only the broader top-level outcomes. 43.7 per cent of cases were resolved without even going through the appeal process. The Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office negotiated alternative informal resolutions in the majority of those cases. This is a positive outcome, but the majority of those issues could have been resolved by students and their schools without coming to the appeal stage.

Appeal outcomes 2018/19





## Appeal completion times

1.18 Queen Mary's appeal regulations state that all stages of an appeal (appeal and, where requested, final review) should be completed within three months of the date of receipt. The initial appeal should normally be concluded within two months. Where this is not possible, students are informed of the reason for delay, given (where possible) a revised timeline, and kept informed of progress.

1.19 The following table gives data on the time taken to resolve cases in 2018/19, plus historical data from 2017/18:

Time taken to resolve cases	2018/19 (%)	2017/18 (%)
Resolved within two months	73 (14.8%)	89 (18.4%)
Resolved in over two months	124 (25.2%)	191 (39.5%)
Unresolved at time of report	295 (60.0%)	203 (42.1%)

1.20 The proportion of cases resolved in longer than two months and the proportion unresolved is very high. There are reasons for this, outlined below, but this provides a poor experience for students and for staff, including staff dealing with the appeals. The Senate is asked to give particular consideration to means of addressing this issue.

1.21 The Appeals Complaints and Conduct Office had significant resourcing issues at the start of the 2018/19 year. Funding arrangements were made to increase the team from 3.5 to 4.0 FTE caseworkers plus one further 1.0 FTE caseworker on a 12-month fixed-term contract. This required three new appointments, with the appointees starting in August 2019. These staff then needed to become familiar with the role and Queen Mary's procedures. Prior to those appointments, a significant backlog of cases had amassed, including many 2017/18 cases. Part-time, short-term appointments had been made in the interim, but these were not sufficient to deal with the volume of cases.

1.22 The Office also deals with other categories of casework, including disciplinary cases and complaints. In 2019/20 there were a significant number of unusually complex cases which took a great deal of staff time, to the detriment of other processes.

1.23 The total number of appeals received is very high and increasing. Though the percentage of students making an appeal remains roughly constant, increases in student numbers mean that the Office is dealing with a higher volume of casework (of all kinds) each year.

1.24 Many appeals are without merit, but still require detailed consideration. Review of the process for automatic dismissal could expedite these cases, with caseworkers rather than the Appeal Chairs taking the decision, for cases purely based on grounds that warrant automatic dismissal under the current policy.

1.25 Many other appeals can be resolved informally, by discussion between the student and their school/institute. In many such cases there is no reason for these cases to reach the stage of an appeal – for example, where students feel there has been a procedural error in marking because they have not received or do not understand the feedback, or where there has been an administrative error in the recording of marks. If these cases were resolved at an informal stage without appeal, it would expedite the handling of the remaining cases.

- 1.26 Queen Mary has recently received several case outcomes from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) relating to cases considered in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Multiple cases have been partially or wholly upheld against Queen Mary purely on the grounds of unreasonable delay in the resolution of the cases. This has resulted in several significant costs. Queen Mary also receives complaints and queries ‘about’ delays, which add to the caseload and further impair our ability to resolve cases in a timely manner. The cases currently being returned from the OIA predate the issues in 2018/19; there are likely to be many more such, bringing considerable settlement costs.
- 1.27 The appeals process, together with all student casework processes, is largely manual, involving spreadsheets, emails, and paper files. An electronic casework management system would allow for online submission, seamless passing of cases between caseworkers and Chairs, allow the team to answer queries from students being supported by another caseworker (in the caseworker’s absence), and do away with much of the current manual recordkeeping. This would expedite the appeals process and reporting processes, both for annual summaries and for the many Freedom of Information requests. It would also improve the granularity of data, eg how many appeals in a given school related to supervision, or to fee status. Early discussions and preparatory work have been underway for some time but have hit delays and dead ends. A new solution has been identified and is due to be implemented in 2019/20; the Senate is asked to recognise this as a priority, particularly given Queen Mary’s more general move toward paperless working.
- 1.28 The current resourcing in the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office, even including the 12-month fixed-term post that expires in July 2020, is insufficient to deal with the volume of cases received, and focus may be better directed to reducing the number of appeals. Solutions might include:
- a. significant review of the appeals process, potentially with a requirement for a more robust ‘informal resolution’ stage at school/institute prior to submission of any appeal, with a requirement for students to complete this before submitting a formal appeal. As noted at 1.17, more than a third of cases are already resolved informally, but only after going into the appeals system.
  - b. assigning direct authority to caseworkers to automatically dismiss cases that – under the Appeal Policy – are not eligible to be heard.
  - c. implementation of the paperless casework management system, to better manage workload and reporting. ARCS has flagged this as a priority with IT Services and has done everything possible to ensure that this is expedited.
- 1.29 Progress has been made in a number of areas this year. In 2017/18 the annual report noted that a lack of appeal Chairs had led to delays in decision-making. Queen Mary appointed eight additional Deputy Chairs in 2018/19, which has helped considerably in this aspect. Further appointments will prove necessary if case numbers do not decrease. Some additional staff resource has been given to the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office, and the team has made a good deal of progress, despite the high number of cases still unresolved. Additionally, the appeal policy was reviewed, making a small number of process adjustments that have aided in the administration of cases.

## Final Review, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

- 1.30 A student dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal may submit a request for Final Review if they believe that the appeal procedures were not followed appropriately, and/or the appeal outcome was reasonable in light of the available evidence. Requests are submitted to the Appeals, Complaints and Casework Office, and considered by the nominee of the Principal (currently the Academic Registrar).
- 1.31 There have been seven requests for final review to date (four of these seven are ongoing at the time of writing), of which none were upheld. This is partial data, however, as many cases remain unresolved. In 2017/18 there were 36 requests for final review (7.5 per cent of the total), of which six were upheld.
- 1.32 Final review marks the end of Queen Mary's internal appeal procedures. A student still dissatisfied may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). A separate annual report is submitted to the Senate and the Council on OIA cases.

### Appendix: Appeal equalities data

- 1.33 The tables below give breakdowns of cases by the gender, ethnicity, and fee status of the students making the appeals.

Gender	No. appeals	As % of all appeals	
Male	272	55.3%	
Female	220	44.7%	

Ethnicity	No. appeals	As % of all appeals	% within ethnic group*	
			Male	Female
Arab	21	4.3%	61.9% (13)	38.1% (8)
Asian - Bangladeshi	46	9.3%	67.4% (31)	32.6% (15)
Asian - Chinese	64	13.0%	50.0% (32)	50.0% (32)
Asian - Indian	47	9.6%	55.3% (26)	44.7% (21)
Asian - Other	31	6.3%	51.6% (16)	48.4% (15)
Asian - Pakistani	55	11.2%	60.0% (33)	40.0% (22)
Black - African	39	7.9%	56.4% (22)	43.6% (17)
Black - Caribbean	11	2.2%	36.4% (4)	63.6% (7)
Black - Other	2	0.4%	50.0% (1)	50.0% (1)
I do not know	5	1.0%	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)
Information refused	9	1.8%	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)
Not given	11	2.2%	63.6% (7)	36.4% (4)
Other ethnic background	13	2.6%	46.2% (6)	53.8% (7)
Other mixed background	20	4.1%	50.0% (10)	50.0% (10)
White	102	20.7%	52.9% (54)	47.1% (48)
White and Asian	7	1.4%	71.4% (5)	28.6% (2)
White and Black African	4	0.8%	50.0% (2)	50.0% (2)
White and Black Caribbean	5	1.0%	80.0% (4)	20.0% (1)

\* absolute figures are in brackets

Fee status	No. appeals*	As % of all appeals*
Home/EU	324 (351)	65.9% (72.7%)
Overseas	168 (132)	34.1% (27.3%)

\* 2017/18 figures are in brackets

## Report 2: Academic misconduct

### Scope

- 2.1 This report considers cases considered under the [Regulations for Assessment Offences 2018/19](#). This was the last year in which the term ‘assessment offences’ was officially used; the procedure was revised and an amended policy approved for 2019/20 under the title of ‘academic misconduct’, which is more widely used in the sector. The new [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) includes amended penalties, but otherwise has few significant differences.
- 2.2 The 2018/19 Regulations defined the following as assessment offences:
- i. breach of any section of the Academic Regulations relating to the conduct of assessment;
  - ii. offences relating to an invigilated examination:
    - a. unauthorised access to an examination paper before an examination;
    - b. forgery of an examination timetable produced by Queen Mary;
    - c. removal of a question paper, answer script or other examination stationery from an examination venue;
    - d. causing a disturbance during an examination, either physically, verbally, or through an electronic device;
    - e. refusal to cooperate with an invigilator, or to follow an invigilator’s instructions;
    - f. possession of unauthorised materials whilst under examination conditions, or leaving unauthorised material in an examination venue (including cloakrooms and toilets);
    - g. access, possession or use of unauthorised material on a computer, mobile telephone, or other electronic device during an examination;
    - h. communicating with another candidate while under examination conditions;
    - i. copying, or attempting to copy, the work of another candidate;
    - j. having writing on the body in an examination venue;
  - iii. plagiarism;
  - iv. the fraudulent reporting of source material;
  - v. the fraudulent reporting of experimental results, research, or other investigative work;
  - vi. collusion in the preparation or production of submitted work, unless such joint or group work is explicitly permitted;
  - vii. use, or attempted use, of ghost writing services for any part of assessment;
  - viii. submission of work, or sections of work, for assessment in more than one module or assignment (including work previously submitted for assessment at another institution);
  - ix. impersonation of another student in an examination or assessment, or the employment of an impersonator in an examination or assessment.
- 2.3 Offences occurring in elements of assessment counting for 30 per cent or more of a module mark and all second or subsequent allegations are referred to ARCS for investigation. First offences in smaller elements are investigated at school/institute level. This report does not cover school/institute-level offences, for which complete data is not readily available. ARCS has asked that schools/institutes keep and forward records of these data so that they can be included in the next annual report. It is hoped that the implementation of an electronic casework management process will considerably streamline that process.

## Total case numbers

2.4 ARCS investigated 375 alleged offences in 2018/19. A handful of students were reported and investigated for more than one offence.

2.5 The table below shows the increase in alleged offences over the past five years. There have been significant increases in each of the past four years. In 2017/18 there was an issue with the reporting of cases from one school, and a significant number of cases that should have come to ARCS had to be investigated at school level. This has distorted the data, and it is likely that the increase in 2017/18 should be significantly higher, and in 2018/19 somewhat lower.

Year	No. alleged offences	Annual change	Student body	As % of student body
2014/15	155	(-7%)	18,905	0.8%
2015/16	208	+34%	21,187	1.0%
2016/17	260	+25%	23,114	1.1%
2017/18	277	+7%	23,792	1.2%
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>+35%</b>	<b>25,925</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

2.6 The number of alleged offences relative to the total student body remains very low, but is increasing. This may be due in part to improvements in detection methods, but should be monitored closely, particularly as certain schools have much higher incidences than others.

2.7 In 2018/19, 256 allegations related to UG students and 119 to PGT students. This represents an incidence of 1.2 per cent among UG and 2.2 per cent among PGT students. However, excluding allegations against TNE students and excluding TNE student numbers, the UG incidence rises to 1.8 per cent placing it closer to PGT. It is unclear whether TNE cases are genuinely lower, are under-reported, or are primarily dealt with locally.

## Breakdown of case numbers

### Breakdown by category of alleged offences

2.8 The 375 alleged assessment offences investigated by ARCS in 2018/19 broke down into the following broad categories:

Allegation	No. cases	of which UG	of which PGT
Plagiarism	221	149	72
Plagiarism – collusion	39	31	8
Exam offence – inc. possession of notes	58	35	23
Exam offence – possession of phone	43	35	8
Exam offence – writing on the body	6	3	3
Ghost writing	8	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>119</b>

2.9 Central investigations of allegations of both plagiarism and offences in examinations have risen markedly when compared with previous years. There were 173 allegations of all kinds of plagiarism in 2016/17 and 141 in 2015/16, compared with 2018/19's total of 260. There were 87 allegations of examination offences in 2016/17 and 57 in 2015/16, compared with 2018/19's total of 107. The increase in plagiarism cases may be partly explained by the issue of non-reporting from one school in 2017/18 [described above](#), but this does not explain the increase in examination offences.

## Breakdown by developmental year

2.10 The next table provides a breakdown by developmental year. As one might expect, there is a higher incidence of cases in the first year of study (at both UG and PGT levels) as students become familiar with expectations of behaviour and assessment conventions.

Year of study	Plagiarism	Exam offence	Ghost-writing	2018/19 total	As % of 2018/19 cases
0 (Foundation)	2	2	0	4	1%
1	64	30	2	96	25%
2	57	19	1	77	21%
3 (if not final year)	0	8	0	8	2%
4 (if not final year)	0	5	0	5	1%
Final year	57	9	0	66	18%
Postgraduate	80	34	5	119	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Breakdown by school/institute

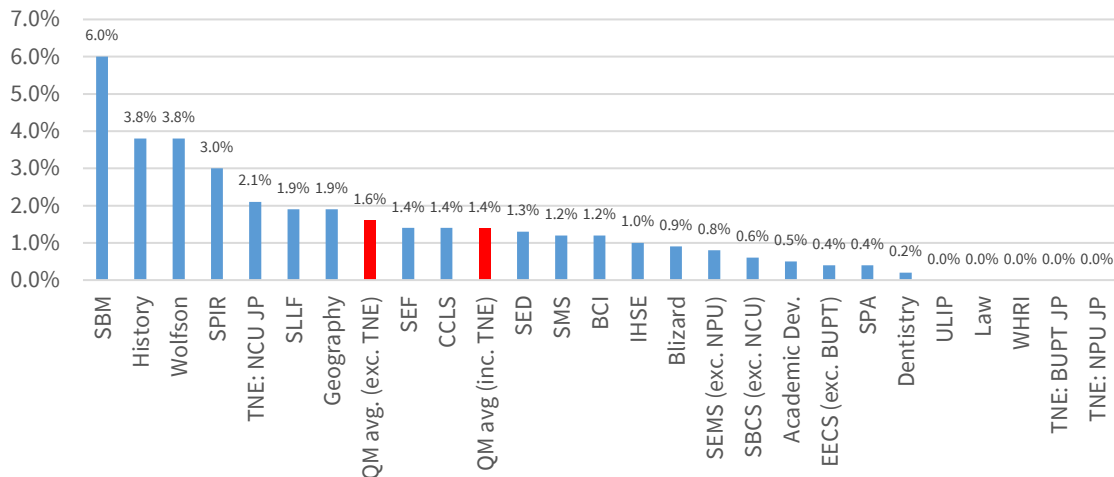
2.11 The table provides a breakdown of cases by school/institute and study level.

School/institute	No. cases*	UG cases	PGT cases
Business and Management	113 (176)	77	36
Biological and Chemical Sciences (inc. Nanchang)	38 (35)	38	0
Politics and International Relations	33 (29)	26	7
History	32 (6)	30	2
Economics and Finance	23 (30)	1	22
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	19 (16)	1	18
Languages, Linguistics and Film	19 (12)	17	2
Mathematical Sciences	14 (11)	12	2
English and Drama	13 (9)	12	1
Institute of Health Sciences Education	14 (12)	13	1
Engineering & Material Science	12 (9)	7	5
Geography	11 (6)	9	2
Blizard Institute	9 (11)	2	7
Electronic Engineering & Computer Science	7 (11)	3	4
Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine	6 (1)	0	6
International Office	5 (7)	5	0
Barts Cancer Institute	3 (0)	0	3
Physics and Astronomy	2 (6)	2	0
Academic Development	1 (0)	0	1
Dentistry	1 (0)	1	0
University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP)	0 (3)	0	0
Law	0 (0)	0	0
William Harvey Research Institute	0 (0)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>118</b>

\*2017/18 figures in brackets

2.12 This graph takes the same data and displays it as a percentage of the student body, showing the incidence of allegations in each school/institute. The three large transnational education (TNE) programmes have been split out from their home schools so as not to distort data.

### Alleged offences as percentage of student body by school/institute



2.13 The number of allegations in Business and Management remains very high and considerably out of line with other schools, both as an absolute figure and as a percentage (around four times the average). The School accounted for 30 per cent of all cases referred to ARCS in 2018/19. There has been a drop in absolute numbers, but there were problems in the reporting of data from SBM in 2017/18 and it is difficult to assess whether this is a drop in real terms or if more cases were handled locally last year. At its 2019 Periodic Review, the School received a formal recommendation from the Panel to put measures in place to reduce the incidence of assessment offences. SBM is due to report to the Education Quality and Standards Board on progress against that recommendation later in 2020.

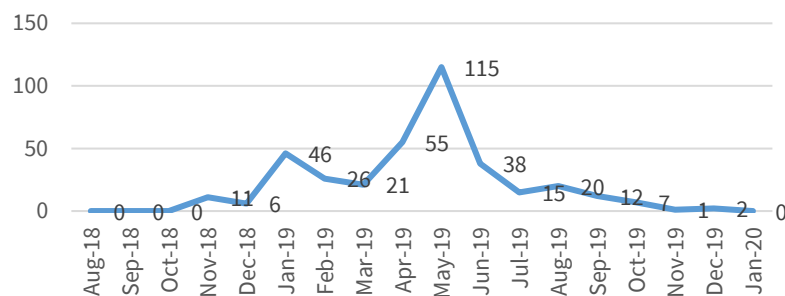
2.14 The Wolfson Institute, History, and Politics and International Relations (SPIR) also have rates of alleged cases well above the institutional average. In the case of the Wolfson this is partly attributable to the smaller student body – there were six cases among 156 students. History has seen a considerable increase since 2017/18, while SPIR’s figure is broadly consistent with past years. There are no readily apparent reasons for these high figures, and it is possible that the higher reporting rate is linked to increased vigilance for signs of misconduct rather than a change in student behaviour. All schools and institutes are asked to reflect on these figures.

2.15 It has been observed in past years that where schools/institutes include a dedicated induction and introduction to proper referencing techniques and the avoidance of plagiarism, allegations have dropped – sometimes substantially. ARCS can assist with these sessions, and schools/institutes should contact ARCS where this would be helpful. Sessions are best delivered alongside academic staff, to cover subject-specific referencing conventions, etc.

## Investigations and turnaround times

- 2.16 All students accused of committing an assessment offence were given the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing. Students were provided with evidence relating to the concern at the same time as they were informed of the allegation by the Academic Secretariat.
- 2.17 Where a student does not deny an offence the case is heard by the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Assessment Offence Panel alone. This also applies where a student denies an allegation but agrees to have it heard by the Chair/Deputy. In other cases, a full Panel is convened.
- 2.18 The Assessment Offence Regulations 2018/19 did not include specific guidance on turnaround times for cases. The mean average time taken to close a case in 2018/19 was 63 calendar days, up from 54 in 2017/18 and 56 in 2016/17.
- 2.19 The time taken to resolve a case is dependent on its complexity (ghost-writing, for example, is time-consuming to evidence), on the response times of students and staff, the availability of the Assessment Offence Panel and Chairs, and staff time in the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office.
- 2.20 As discussed in the preceding report on appeals, the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office was restructured in 2018/19. Cover was initially provided by temporary staff, with two permanent members of staff and one member of staff on a fixed-term contract starting in August 2019. This created a bottleneck of cases prior to that point, resulting in delays at significant points of the year, affecting progression and award. The Office is currently working to time on assessment offence cases, but the increase in absolute numbers and – particularly – the ongoing increases in absolute number of appeals, dealt with by the same staff, does make this an area of some concern.
- 2.21 Cases can be expedited by reporting them to ARCS as soon as possible, and by schools/institutes and students responding quickly to communications from the caseworkers. The graph below shows the peak periods in which cases are received, primarily linked to major assessment points. Faster identification and referral of non-examination cases helps to spread investigations out and expedite cases.

AO reports submitted for investigation  
in the 2018/19 academic year, by month





- 2.22 ARCS currently has only two Deputy Chairs considering assessment offences, following the completion of the Chair's term of office at the end of 2019. Appointing additional Chairs/Deputies could considerably expedite the process. ARCS will advertise shortly, but the Senate is asked to consider means of recognising staff for these critical and sometimes time-consuming roles, which are not remunerated or – necessarily - factored into workload allocation models. The same point applies for other central roles, such as DEB Chairs.
- 2.23 ARCS also seeks to appoint a standing pool of academic misconduct panel members. Until 2019/20, panellists had to be members of the Senate; these colleagues often had limited availability, which led to delays in scheduling panels. It is hoped that these additional appointments will resolve this and engage more staff across the institution with the process.
- 2.24 With the increasing volume of cases, the Senate might consider whether the threshold for central investigation should be raised above 30 per cent, perhaps to 40 or to 49 per cent.

### Case outcomes

- 2.25 In 2018/19, it was found that offences were committed in at least 341 of the 375 allegations referred for investigation. Two allegations were withdrawn, and 29 dismissed. As of 21 January 2020, three cases remain under investigation.
- 2.26 Where a student is found guilty of an offence, the Chair/Panel assigns a penalty from a list. The most severe penalties, suspension and expulsion, can only be recommended by a full Panel, and require approval from the Principal and President. If a student commits multiple offences, a more severe penalty will normally be applied on each occasion.
- 2.27 The tables below show the detailed outcomes of cases referred to ARCS in 2018/19. Note that the TNE programmes have a different set of penalties, so have been split into a separate table. The penalties for non-TNE programmes have been revised for 2019/20, partly to take account of the introduction of semester-based examinations – the old penalty v failed students outright in all modules for the year; under the new calendar, this would include modules that the student had not even started, which was deemed unfair.

Penalty/outcome (non-TNE programmes)*	Plagiarism	Exam offence	Ghost-writing
Case dismissed	19	10	0
i: formal reprimand.	14	20	0
ii: failure in element. Capped resubmission.	151	9	0
iii: failure in module.	58	25	5
iv: failure in module with no right of resit.	8	5	1
v: failure of year. Resits with non-standard caps.	0	0	0
vi: failure of year.	0	0	0
vii: suspension from Queen Mary.	1	0	0
viii: expulsion from Queen Mary.	0	6	0
iii. and v. in conjunction.	0	14	0
iv. and vi. in conjunction.	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>6</b>

\* the phrasing and detail of the penalties has been abbreviated for this report.

Penalty/outcome (TNE programmes)*	Plagiarism	Exam offence	Ghost-writing
Penalty i: formal warning;	0	0	0
Penalty ii. failure in element, uncapped resubmission.	1	0	0
Penalty iii. failure in element, capped resubmission.	1	10	0
Penalty iv: Failure in element.	0	3	0
Penalty v: Failure in module.	1	1	0
Penalty vi: reduction of classification by one level.	0	2	0
Penalty vii. Expulsion.	0	0	0
Penalties v. and vi. in conjunction	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>

\* the phrasing and detail of the penalties has been abbreviated for this report.

2.28 Penalty ii. was most frequently used in 2018/19, with 161 applications; it is generally used for first offences of relatively minor plagiarism or related offences. Penalty iii. was the next most used, with 99 applications.

2.29 Students found to have committed a plagiarism offence are advised to seek advice from their school/institute on avoiding plagiarism in future and are advised of support on academic practice offered by Student and Academic Services.

### Equalities data

2.30 The tables below break down the 2018/19 cases set by gender, fee status, and ethnicity.

Ethnicity	No. cases	As % of all cases	% of whom UG	% of whom PGT
Arab	12	3%	83%	17%
Asian - Bangladeshi	41	11%	98%	2%
Asian - Chinese	72	19%	50%	50%
Asian - Indian	35	9%	46%	54%
Asian - Other	22	6%	73%	27%
Asian - Pakistani	41	11%	76%	24%
Black - African	39	10%	56%	44%
Black - Caribbean	1	>1%	0%	100%
Black - other	3	1%	33%	67%
Other mixed background	14	4%	86%	14%
Others	4	1%	75%	25%
White - Other	1	>1%	100%	0%
White	78	21%	78%	22%
White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British	1	>1%	0%	100%
White and Asian	1	>1%	100%	0%
White and Black African	1	>1%	100%	0%
Spanish	1	>1%	100%	0%
I do not know my ethnic background	6	2%	100%	0%
I do not wish to give this information	1	>1%	100%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>			

	As % of all cases	As % of UG cases	As % of PGT cases
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	48.8%	44.5%	58.0%
Male	51.2%	55.5%	52.0%
<b>Fee status</b>			
Home/EU	59.2%	73.9%	22.5%
Overseas	40.8%	26.1%	77.5%

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## Report 3: Complaints, Discipline, and Fitness to Practise

### Scope

3.1 This third report concerns the smaller categories of student casework: complaints, discipline, and fitness to practise. Numbers are far lower than for appeals or academic misconduct, so it can be harder to draw out patterns of behaviour. These tend to be the most complex and time-consuming cases, however.

### Complaints

- 3.2 The [Student Complaints Policy](#) has three formal stages (plus an informal resolution stage). Stage one is handled at school/institute or service level. Stages two and stage three are coordinated by the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct team in ARCS. Decisions at stage two are taken by one of two Complaints Assessors, appointed from among the academic staff. Decisions at stage three are taken by a Vice-Principal. If a student remains unsatisfied after stage three, they have recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- 3.3 This report only covers complaints made at stages two and three. As discussed in the other casework reports, there is a clear institutional need for an electronic casework management system. A further benefit of such a system would be the ability for all departments to log cases for fuller, better, and more useful reporting data.
- 3.4 ARCS will present amendments to the Complaints Policy to the May 2020 meeting of the Education Quality and Standards Board, following a review of current practice and good practice guides.

#### Complaints: numbers and nature

- 3.5 In 2018/19, 23 stage two complaints were received. This is a substantial decrease on 2017/18 (33 cases), but numbers fluctuate. There were only 17 cases in 2016/17, and ten in 2015/16.
- 3.6 One complaint received in 2018/19 related to an academic matter (27 in 2017/18, ten in 2016/17) and 22 of the complaints related to non-academic matters (six in 2017/18 and four in 2016/17). This does represent a change in the nature of complaints.
- 3.7 The single academic complaint concerned the quality of teaching on a programme.
- 3.8 The 23 complaints on non-academic matters concerned:
- conditions in halls of residence (3).
  - facilities in a school (2)
  - IT issues (1).
  - the handling of a reported theft (1).
  - the handling of an allegation of bullying (1).
  - handling of the tuition fee refund policy (1).
  - the impact of industrial action on individual students (3).
  - marking procedures (1)
  - assessment arrangements (1)
  - admissions policies (1)
  - delay in concluding appeal cases (2).
  - the outcomes of student disciplinary investigations (4).
  - the outcome of a fitness to practice investigation (1)
  - the outcome of a Professional Capability Committee investigation (1)

3.9 Three of these categories are of note. Four students expressed dissatisfaction over aspects of student disciplinary processes; clarifications and revisions to certain aspects of those procedures are planned for 2020/21. Two complaints concerned long delays in the resolution of student appeals; as discussed in the preceding appeals report, the number of such complaints is likely to increase, and Queen Mary should consider how best to approach the issue. Three complaints related to the impact of 2018 industrial action; there are likely to be more such complaints in 2020/21 – students are advised to lodge stage one complaints with their school/institute, and the school/institute will need to demonstrate that they have made adequate adjustments so that students are not disadvantaged and do not miss learning opportunities without them being adequately replaced.

3.10 Four cases have so far gone on to be considered at stage three of the complaints process.

#### Complaints: outcomes and timescales

3.11 As of 16 January 2020, nine stage two complaints remain under investigation. Of the completed stage two complaints, nine were not upheld, two were partially upheld and two were rejected (one for being out of time, one for being outside the scope of the Complaints Policy). Of the four stage three complaints, two were not upheld and two are ongoing.

3.12 Queen Mary aims to resolve stage two complaints within one month. Where this is not possible, the complainant is informed and provided with the reason for the delay.

3.13 The mean time taken to resolve a complaint in 2018/19 was 127 days; the median was 87. This compares to 122 and 93 days in 2017/18 and 72 days and 79 days in 2016/17.

3.14 The timeframe for resolution of Stage 2 complaints is tight as it includes seven days for the student to submit any additional evidence for their complaint and a further seven days for the student to comment on a case summary before a decision is made. Many of the complaints have been complex and have required extended back and forth correspondence between the various parties. This has been compounded by the resourcing issues mentioned in the other reports; though complaints are relatively few in number, they take up a large proportion of staff time.

3.15 The table below details the length of time taken to resolve stage two complaints in 2018/19.

Time taken to resolve complaint	Number of complaints 2018/19*
Within 30 days	2 (1)
Between 30 and 90 days	5 (7)
More than 90 days	16 (8)

\*2017/18 figures in brackets

#### Complaints: equalities data and breakdowns

3.16 Full equalities data has not been included as numbers are small and could allow identification of individual cases. However, there is an almost equal split between male and female students, and no notable patterns in the breakdown by ethnicity. 70 per cent of complaints came from home/EU students, and 30 per cent from overseas students. There were no schools/institutes with disproportionately high case numbers.

## Discipline

- 3.17 The [Code of Student Discipline](#) deals with issues of student behaviour. It includes procedures for investigation at school/institute/department level, and at the institutional level. ARCS holds only institutional level data, and it is hoped that an electronic casework system will allow for better reporting. Institutional level cases are normally investigated by the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office. The Academic Registrar and a Vice-Principal then determine whether to proceed with the case, and if this occurs a dedicated Disciplinary Panel hears the case and may determine outcomes specified by the Code. A student may appeal the outcome in the usual way and go to the OIA if they remain unsatisfied with the procedure.
- 3.18 24 allegations of disciplinary offences were received by ARCS in 2018/19, up from 11 in 2017/18, and 10 in 2016/17. Cases have increased in severity and complexity as well as in number, which has posed difficulties for ARCS; these cases are hugely resource-intensive and time-consuming to investigate, and generally require prioritisation – this is often to the detriment of the resolution of other case types, notably appeals and academic misconduct.
- 3.19 The 24 allegations received in 2018/19 related to the following broad themes.
- a. Misuse of Queen Mary property.
  - b. Theft.
  - c. Abuse of staff.
  - d. Harassment/abuse on social media.
  - e. Drug dealing and misuse.
  - f. Sexual misconduct.
  - g. Incidents involving knives or other weapons.
  - h. Misconduct/abusive behaviour in lectures.
  - i. Animal cruelty.
  - j. Research misconduct.
- 3.20 Of the 24 referrals, it was agreed that no further action would be taken under the Code in nine cases. Of the remaining 15, four went on to be resolved outside of the process, seven were fully or partially proven at Panel, and three were dismissed at Panel.
- 3.21 Where cases were proven at Panel, penalties awarded included formal warnings, requirements for students to make apologies, restrictions of activity, temporary suspension from Queen Mary and, in one case, expulsion from Queen Mary. In one case that did not proceed to Panel, a student was required to engage with the Fitness to Study Policy.
- 3.22 To date in 2019/20, ARCS has investigated multiple further knife incidents, and has received increased requests for guidance from schools in dealing with violent and disruptive behaviour under school-level investigations.
- 3.23 Allegations of sexual misconduct have proved particularly difficult to investigate. These are particularly complex and sensitive, and reporting and responding students have been dissatisfied with the process and the policy. Under the Code of Discipline, a reporting student acts as a witness for Queen Mary's case against the responding student, which allows for only a limited role in the process. There has also been dissatisfaction over the limited amount of information that can be communicated to the reporting student on the conclusion of a case (beyond what directly affects them) as this is the responding student's personal data. ARCS

will propose amendments to the Code to address these points for 2020/21, potentially also including a new outcome of a requirement for a student to undergo specific training (eg consent training), irrespective of the outcome of a case. Student and Academic Services are in the process of identifying a suitable provider for online training of that type. Queen Mary has also retained the services of a specialist independent investigator for particularly complex cases of this type and is in the process of identifying specialist providers to train Panel Chairs. The introduction of [Report + Support](#) at Queen Mary has also proved helpful in ensuring students are properly informed of options, sources of support, and possible outcomes.

Discipline: equalities data and breakdown

3.24 Equalities data and other breakdowns of the data have not been included for student discipline cases as the numbers are small and this would potentially allow for identification of individual students.

### **Fitness to practise**

3.25 Fitness to practise cases relate only to qualifying medical and dental programmes, and specifically to whether a student's behaviour calls into question whether they would be a fit and proper practitioner. Cases are investigated under the [Fitness to Practise and Professional Capability Regulations](#). The Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office in ARCS administers the process, but investigations are led by the specialist Chair of the Fitness to Practise and Professional Capability Committee, or their appointed nominee. If a case proceeds to Panel, the Panel includes relevant professionals external to Queen Mary.

3.26 Queen Mary heard only one fitness to practise case in 2018/19 and there were no unusual circumstances in terms of procedure, so there is little to report. The case was proven and resulted in the deregistration of the student, but further details and equalities data cannot be included here without risking the identification of the student. In 2017/18 there were two fitness to practise cases.

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