



Senate

Paper Title	Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2020
Outcome requested	The Senate is asked to note the report and to consider approaches for the reduction of situations resulting in suspensions.
Points for members to note and further information	<p>A summary of suspensions of regulations requested during the period 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.</p> <p>2019-20 was an unusual year, and large numbers of suspensions were required to make rapid changes to module assessment schemes and other matters around programme design and delivery. The Covid-19 suspensions have been recorded separately, but the figures for this year should not be used as a benchmark against previous or future years – the Covid-19 suspensions will also have masked or removed the need for more usual suspensions where there were errors with assessment schemes.</p>
Questions for to consider	<p>None requiring specific action this year, but as general questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the number of suspensions be reduced? • Why do particular schools/institutes have disproportionately high numbers of suspensions caused by error? Should action be taken on this? • Do members feel that the suspension decisions are appropriate?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	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.
Strategy and risk	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.
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	<p>Considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board.</p> <p>Senate to consider.</p>
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Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2020

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 have remained high. 2019-20 is an exceptional year, as many suspensions were required to deal with the impact of the coronavirus; this has resulted in a large number of suspensions, but at the same time the need to make significant changes to modules and in some cases programmes will have removed the need for suspensions to deal with issues in the delivery of the original module design (which is normally the largest category of suspensions).

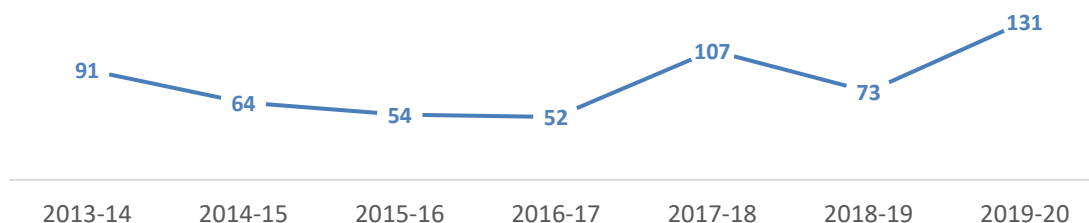
To obtain a suspension requires support from the appropriate Subject and Degree Examination Boards for assessment issues, or the Head of School/Institute/Directorate for other issues. Approval is given by the nominees of the President and Principal: the Academic Registrar (for taught programmes) or the 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 2019 to 30 September 2020. 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

Total numbers have increased, but 2019-20 data should not be used as a comparison as so many requests relate to the coronavirus (similarly, the spike in 2017-18 related to industrial action so it is difficult to make substantive findings). Normally, each instance of suspension is recorded individually; in 2019-20 mass suspensions were made, covering multiple modules. Most schools/institutes did this in one go, but some sent additional suspensions for changes that were missed, or where further changes were required, which also distorts the data this year.



Faculty numbers

Relative figures between the Faculties tend to remain broadly consistent year-on-year (partly due to the larger number of schools in H&SS and the greater level of flexibility in module selection), but there has been a sharper increase in S&E and SMD than in H&SS this year. However, this is not necessarily meaningful as all schools were forced to make suspensions in response to the impact of the coronavirus. Figures in brackets are 2018-19 totals.

Faculty	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Humanities and Social Sciences	54 (42)	0 (0)	54 (42)
Science and Engineering	40 (19)	2 (0)	42 (19)
Medicine and Dentistry	28 (1)	1 (0)	29 (11)
Other*	6 (1)	0 (0)	6 (1)
Total	128 (73)	3 (0)	131 (73)

*Queen Mary Academy, Queen Mary as a whole, and University of London External Programme managed by Queen Mary.

School and institute numbers

There has been a shift in the relative numbers of cases from each school/institute, but as discussed above this is not meaningful in most cases. For example, the two schools with the highest numbers are SLLF and SEMS, which each had 14 cases. Ten of SLLF's cases related to mitigation of the impact of the coronavirus, whereas only three in SEMS related to the coronavirus – this inconsistency applies across Queen Mary, and the data should not be used to make judgements this year. Figures in brackets are 2018-19 totals.

School or Institute	Upheld	Rejected	Total
Languages, Linguistics and Film	14 (8)	0 (0)	14 (8)
Engineering and Materials Science	14 (6)	0 (0)	14 (6)
Biological and Chemical Sciences (inc NCU)	8 (5)	2 (0)	10 (5)
Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (inc. BUPT)	8 (8)	0 (0)	8 (8)
Institute of Health Sciences Education	7 (1)	1 (0)	8 (1)
Law	7 (0)	0 (0)	7 (6)
Politics and International Relations	7 (5)	0 (0)	7 (5)
Dentistry	7 (2)	0 (0)	7 (2)
Business and Management	7 (11)	0 (0)	7 (11)
Mathematical Sciences	7 (0)	0 (0)	7 (0)
Geography	2 (2)	0 (0)	5 (2)
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	5 (0)	0 (0)	5 (0)
Blizard Institute	4 (4)	0 (0)	4 (4)
William Harvey Research Institute	4 (4)	0 (0)	4 (4)
History	3 (6)	0 (0)	3 (6)
Other*	3 (1)	0 (0)	3 (1)
Barts Cancer Institute	3 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0)
Queen Mary Academy	3 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0)
Physics and Astronomy	3 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0)
English and Drama	2 (3)	0 (0)	2 (3)
Economics and Finance	2 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)
University of London Institute in Paris	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
Wolfson Institute	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
Institute of Population Health Sciences	1 (N/A)	0 (N/A)	1 (N/A)

*one wide-ranging suspension was made at institutional level, to validate the contingency arrangements around assessment, progression, and award. Two suspensions related to the University of London External MBA programme, which Queen Mary administers.

Common themes and notable cases

Coronavirus

A large number of suspension requests (72 – 55 per cent of the total) were made to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus. These included changes to module assessment schemes to deliver assessments that could be conducted remotely (these accounted for the majority of cases), and in a much smaller number of cases changes to the delivery of programmes, including term dates, module availability, and practical arrangements. There was also one institutional-level suspension which confirmed the contingency arrangements for assessment, progression and award as derogations from the standard regulations. These suspensions were almost without exception unavoidable. Requests often related to multiple modules – these were logged for the purpose of this summary report as one case per request made, but Queen Mary holds the details of each individual change in the accompanying documentation for each change.

Assessment schemes

In 19 cases (15% of the total), suspension was requested to validate unapproved assessment schemes in cases unrelated to mitigation of the coronavirus (most of them relating to semester one). 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 forgotten about, and – in many cases – the module organiser chose to deliver 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 can undermine that work. Queen Mary should be able to report with confidence on the accuracy of its assessment patterns, and this is an area that would benefit from review. It is very likely that a large number of additional suspensions of this type have been concealed or made redundant this year by the coronavirus suspensions – typically Queen Mary receives a significant number of these requests in May each year, when schools attempt to enter marks and find that the scheme delivered does not match the scheme approved (for which mark entry has been set-up).

Appendix – suspensions of regulations approved in 2019-20

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2019-01	4.79.iii (2018/19)	Exceed maximum permitted credits at level 4.	External factor	Yes	SPIR
2019-02	Module: assessment	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-03	Module: assessment	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-04	Module: assessment	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-05	Module: assessment	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-06	Module: assessment	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-07	4.133 (2017/18)	Progress without meeting all progression requirements.	External factor	No	Law
2019-08	Module: assessment & 4.68iii 2018/19)	Discount an element of assessment counting for more than 20% of the module, and exclude a second module from the calculation of the College Mark	Error	Yes	SBCS
2019-09	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2019-10	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2019-11	Programme: diet	Permit students to not take a compulsory module and a specified elective, taking others (not part of the diet) in their place.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-12	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SPA
2019-13	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBM
2019-14	Programme: diet	Allow unapproved credit split of 120/60 rather than 90/90 on a part-time PGT programme for one student	Error	Yes	Geography
2019-15	Academic: 4.68 iii	Permit the student to progress with too low average.	Error	Yes	SEMS
2019-16	Programme: diet	Depart from the standard module diet	Error	Yes	EECS (BUPT)
2019-17	Programme: diet	Take a split of credits (75/45) different to that specified (60/60) for a joint programme diet.	Error	Yes	SED
2019-18	Academic 2.36	Return in January rather at the point of deregistration following an Ordinance C3 deregistration.	Other	No	Maths
2019-19	Programme: diet	Allow unapproved part-time module split following period of interruption.	Error	Yes	WHRI
2019-20	Programme: diet	Remove, mid-year, a compulsory module in favour of another specified module.	Other	Possibly	SEMS
2019-21	Programme: diet	Remove, mid-year, a compulsory module in favour of a choice of other modules.	Other	No	SEMS
2019-22	Programme: diet	Depart from the standard module diet	Other	Yes	History
2019-23	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	EECS
2019-24	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	EECS
2019-25	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SLLF
2019-26	2.17 (2019/20)	To permit a mid semester return from interruption.	Error	YES	SMS
2019-27	Programme: condoned failure	Introduce an award rule change mid-cycle. (UoL external programme)	Error	Yes	Other
2019-28	Academic 2.111 Academic 4.28.ii	Exclude a module from classification of the College Mark where it would deflate it, and allow award to students who have failed the module and meet all award requirements except that they have passed only 75 of the required 90 credits at level 6.	External factor	No	Maths

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2019-29	Programme: diet	Take 15 credits fewer of specified and required L6 electives, taking an alternative L6 elective in its place.	Error	Yes	SLLF
2019-30	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	SBCS
2019-31	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	External factor	No	History
2019-32	Module: assessment	Validate unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	EECS
2019-33	Module: assessment	Change exam duration	Error	Yes	SBCS
2019-34	Module: assessment	Change exam duration	Error	Yes	SBCS
2019-35	Programme: Duration of study	Change normal duration of study	External factor	No	CAPD
2019-36	Programme: Duration of study	Change normal duration of study	External factor	No	CAPD
2019-37	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment scheme	Error	Yes	CCLS
2019-38	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment scheme	External factor	No	SBCS
2019-39	Module: assessment	Apply unapproved assessment scheme	External factor	No	SEMS (NPU)
2019-40	Programme: diet	Apply 'new' diet following curriculum review	Student circumstances	No	SLLF
2019-41	Module: assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	IHSE
2019-42	Programme: Diet	Apply unapproved module diet	Error	Yes	IoD
2019-43	Module: assessment	Alternative assessment	COVID-19	No	SEF
2019-44	Module: assessment	Do not assess a module	COVID-19	Yes	IHSE
2019-45	Module: assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	IHSE
2019-46	Programme: progression	Waive requirement to pass a non-credit-bearing module for progression to year 2 for 2019/20 only.	COVID-19	No	SMS
2019-47	Module: assessment	Alternative assessment	COVID-19	No	CCLS
2019-48	Module: assessment	Alternative assessment	COVID-19	No	CCLS
2019-49	Module: assessment	Alternative assessment	COVID-19	No	IHSE
2019-50	Academic: 6.25	Waive progression to dissertation hurdle for 2019/20 students only.	COVID-19	No	EECS
2019-51	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	SPIR
2019-52	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	History
2019-53	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	Law
2019-54	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	Law
2019-55	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	BCI
2019-56	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	WHRI
2019-57	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended assessment	COVID-19	No	Blizard
2019-58	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	Law
2019-59	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SMS
2019-60	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	WIPM
2019-61	Various	Queen Mary contingency arrangements for assessment, progression and award.	COVID-19	No	N/A
2019-62	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SMS
2019-63	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SEMS
2019-64	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SBM

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2019-65	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SBM
2019-65	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SLLF
2019-66	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	Geography
2019-67	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SED
2019-68	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	EECS
2019-69	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	LAW
2019-70	Academic 6.47	Permit minimum registration of 15 rather than 30 credits	COVID-19	No	CCLS
2019-71	Academic: 6.51 i	Permit condoned failure from a mark of 40.0 rather than 45.0	COVID-19	No	CCLS
2019-73	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SPIR
2019-74	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	Law
2019-75	Programme: diet	Amended diet	COVID-19	No	IHSE
2019-76	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SLLF
2019-77	Programme: Diet	To permit an alternative exit award title and nonstandard final year diet.	Error	Yes	SMS
2019-78	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	COVID-19/Technical	No	SBM
2019-79	Module: Assessment	Alternative/amended reassessment	COVID-19	No	SBCS
2019-80	Module: Assessment and award rules	Amended assessment pattern and honours matrix	COVID-19	No	IoD
2019-81	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SPIR
2019-83	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SBM
2019-84	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	IPHS
2019-85	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern. Change overlooked in 2018/19 assessment review	Error	Yes	Geography
2019-86	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	EECS
2019-87	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SLLF
2019-88	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	IoD
2019-89	Module: Assessment Programme: Duration of study	Amended assessment pattern & extend minimum duration of study to July 21	Covid-19	No	IoD
2019-90	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SLLF
2019-91	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SLLF
2019-92	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SBCS
2019-93	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SBM
2019-94	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	ULIP
2019-95	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	ULIP
2019-96	Programme: Diet	Permit award despite not taking a compulsory module	Internal Factor	Yes	SPA
2019-97	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SBCS
2019-98	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	WIPM
2019-99	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SLLF
2019-100	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SLLF

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2019-101	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment weighting for certain students	Error	Yes	SPiR
2019-102	Module: Reassessment	Amended reassessment weighting for resit students	Covid-19	No	SPiR
2019-103	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment scheme	Error	No	SBCS
2019-104	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment scheme	Error	No	SBCS
2019-105	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment weighting	Error	No	SEMS
2019-106	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	IoD
2019-107	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	Geography
2019-108	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	SEMS
2019-109	Module: Assessment	Apply unapproved assessment weighting	Error	No	SEMS
2019-110	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	EECS (BUPT)
2019-111	Programme: Diet	Permit unapproved diet: student called into frontline work and unable to study standard VM diet	Covid-19	No	WHRI
2019-112	Module: Assessment	Amended assessment pattern	Covid-19	No	IoD
2019-113	N/A	Waive qualifying mark rule (from University of London Regulations for the Global MBA - this is not a QM student, award, or regulation)	Error	Yes	N/A
2019-114	Module: Assessment	Amended reassessment pattern to reflect adjusted 2019/20 pattern	Covid - 19	No	BCI
2019-115	Module: Assessment	Amended reassessment pattern to reflect adjusted 2019/20 pattern	Covid - 19	No	BCI
2019-116	Academic: 2.41	To permit early completion	Error	Yes	Blizard
2019-117	Academic: 2.41	To permit early completion	Error	Yes	Blizard
2019-118	Academic: 2.41	To permit early completion	Error	Yes	Blizard
2019-119	Academic: 2.41	To extend minimum duration from 9 to 12 months.	Covid-19	No	IHSE
2019-120	Academic: 2.41	To permit early completion	Error	Yes	WHRI

Ref.	Regulation	Desired outcome	Reason for request	Avoidable	School
2019-121	Module: Assessment	Amend reassessment pattern from synoptic to standard	Covid - 19	No	Geography
2019-122	Module: Assessment	condone incomplete assessments	Covid - 19	No	IHSE
2019-123	Academic 3.56.ii	Discount an assessment counting for >20% of a module	Covid - 19	No	Law
2019-124	Programme: Diet	to amend assessment and module order to bring year 2 study into year one	Covid - 19	No	IHSE
2019-125	Module: Assessment	amend assessment pattern	Covid -19	No	SLLF
2019-126	Module: Assessment	amend assessment pattern	Covid -19	No	SLLF
2019-127	Module: Assessment	amend assessment pattern	Covid -19	No	SLLF
2019-128	Programme: diet	Permit transfer to MSci without certain compulsory modules	Regulatory issue	No	SPA
2019-129	Module: assessment	Permit exclusion of a 50% element	Error	No	SEF
2019-130	Module: assessment	Permit exclusion of a 50% element	Error	Yes	SPIR
2019-131	Programme: Diet & Duration	Permit FT study to enable the student to finish 6 months early.	Internal Factor	No	QMA
2019-132	Programme: Diet	Amend selection status of a module from Core to Compulsory	Error	yes	IoD