



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate to note the Terms of Reference and summary of the work of the Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group 2021-2022
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	<p>The Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group (IASCG) has delegated responsibility to protect academic standards and the overall student experience during periods of industrial action.</p> <p>The group is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education) and has met 20 times between 3<sup>rd</sup> February and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Three of the members are sabbatical officers from the Students' Union (one for each of the faculties) who, together with senior staff on the group, perform an active role in assessing risks, monitoring impact, agreeing mitigations and advising on communications with the student body.</p>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	Do Senate members have any questions with regard to the work of the IASCG?
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	Office for Students, Regulatory Framework Academic Regulations 2021-22 Assessment Handbook 2021-22
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	Aligns with strategic risks: 1. Greater student satisfaction 4. Remove student attainment gap 7. Improved student progression 16. Compliance
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	IASCG Senate
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## **Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group (IASCG)**

### **Summary of business considered between 3<sup>rd</sup> February – 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

#### **1. Background**

The Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group (IASCG) has met 20 times since meetings commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022, and will continue to meet as required. The Group's remit is to consider the impact of industrial action on education and, where appropriate, to agree contingency measures. The Group is a standing group that is assembled during any period of industrial action. Terms of reference and membership are included as annex 1.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

2.1 In order to support the IASCG in monitoring the impact of the industrial action it has carried out two risk assessment exercises, relating to each of teaching delivery and assessment, both of which have been coordinated by the Faculty Deans for Education. Compilation of the risk assessment relating to teaching delivery (the Impact Assessment Logs) has been an ongoing process, coordinated by the relevant Head of School or Institute Director.

2.2 The second risk assessment exercise, relating to marking and mark entry, was conducted in May 2022. Heads of School and Institute Directors were provided with lists of modules assessed by examination and by other means, and with the Director of Education or Subject Examination Board (SEB) Chair, assessed the risk of all marks for that module not being available by the final mark entry deadline (15 June). Summaries of the risk assessments by Faculty have been considered by IASCG. In addition, Deans for Education are receiving a daily report on mark entry which, along with the risk assessments, is enabling outstanding marks to be identified and enquiries made with the relevant School or Institute.

#### **3. Approval of assessment design**

3.1 Following the resignation of external examiners from some Subject Examination Boards (SEBs), IASCG approved a suspension of regulations in relation to the following underlined section of the Academic Regulations: *"3.6 The design and setting of assessment is the responsibility of the relevant module organisers and internal examiners, in accordance with the approved module regulations, Assessment Handbook, and Assessment Strategy. In some cases (eg examinations) assessments are also subject to approval from the relevant Subject Examination Board and external examiner(s). In other cases (eg some professional capability assessments) approval from the relevant professional body may be required." [Academic Regulations 2021-22].*

3.2 IASCG noted that where assessments required approval from a Subject Examination Board, this had taken place as usual. Where specific approval from an external examiner was required, this had in some cases been impacted by resignations. A number of new externals had been appointed to fill vacancies, for many SEBs, fulfilling that requirement; the suspension of regulations was approved only for those cases where an external review of the assessment had not been possible in advance of the assessment being undertaken. In the limited cases where external input was not possible in advance of the assessment process, particular care was applied to internal scrutiny prior to SEB approval. This process of scrutiny is undertaken by the examination scrutiny committee of each SEB, and this work has taken place in the usual way across Queen Mary.

#### **4. Subject Examination Board quorum**

4.1 In the absence of the standing Chair or Deputy Chair of a Subject Examination Board, an Acting Chair may be appointed. At the time of writing, all Subject Examination Boards should have at least one external examiner by the time that meetings take place; however, there may be instances where there are issues with the quorum if an external examiner is unable to attend on the day of the SEB meeting. The policy already provides for the absence of an external from the meeting itself, provided that comments and feedback are subsequently received:

*“6.45 Exceptionally, a meeting may go ahead without the presence of an external examiner where a SEB has provided the external with the papers beforehand and given the external an opportunity to comment. After the meeting, the SEB Chair shall liaise with the external and, where necessary, the SEB to discuss the matters raised at the meeting and to seek the external’s endorsement for any decisions taken.” (Assessment Handbook 2021-22)*

4.2 In the event that it is not possible to liaise with an external examiner immediately after the meeting, a suspension of regulations will be required. The Assessment Handbook specifically provides for the possibility of suspension in these circumstances:

*“6.41 The SEB must ensure that it meets the quorum before it can proceed with the meeting. If the meeting does not meet the quorum then its decisions are not valid or binding. Where there is exceptionally good reason why a meeting will not meet the quorum, a suspension of regulations may be sought via the Assistant Academic Registrar (Assessment Governance) to make the board’s decisions binding. However, this should be sought in advance of the board, and SEBs are responsible for ensuring that members attend.” [Assessment Handbook].*

4.3 IASCG agreed that a suspension of regulations would be sought to permit Subject Examination Boards to proceed without the presence of an external examiner where there is no alternative. This course of action would be undertaken in limited cases, recognising that the assessments undertaken by students during the year had been informed by external examiner opinion from the previous year.

#### **5. Communication with students**

5.1 The IASCG has included representation from Marketing and Communications and from Queen Mary Students’ Union (QMSU). IASCG has referred to the published Frequently Asked Questions on the University website, and has as required recommended minor revisions to these in light of its discussions.

5.2 Meetings of IASCG have included a regular update from QMSU as a standing agenda item.

5.3 Representatives from Student and Academic Services have provided oversight of matters related to student welfare.

## Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group

### Membership

Professor Stephanie Marshall, Vice-Principal (Education) (**Chair**)  
Professor Tony Michael, Deputy Vice-Principal (Education)  
Dr Luke Bancroft (Appeals, Complaints and Conduct)  
Dr Chris Bray Deputy Dean for Education (Science & Engineering)  
Sarah Cowls, Director of Student and Academic Services  
Simon Hayter, Assistant Academic Registrar (Assessment Governance)  
Bilge Kacmaz, QMSU (VP S&E)  
Dr Maggie Leggett, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Trudy Mason, Deputy Academic Registrar  
Jane Pallant, Deputy Academic Registrar  
Professor Christina Perry, Dean for Education (Humanities & Social Sciences)  
Saynab Sharif, QMSU VP (HSS)  
Robert Tucker, QMSU VP (Barts and the London)  
Professor Anthony Warrens, Dean for Education (Medicine & Dentistry)

Alice de Havillan, Academic Quality and Standards Officer (**Secretary**)

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All members will attend in an *ex officio* capacity, and may nominate a deputy or invitee to attend in their place. Where the industrial action involves Unison and/or Unite other members may be invited to attend e.g. Estates or IT Services.

The Group will report to the Senior Executive Team (SET) as required, and will keep Senate informed with regard to the effects of mitigating measures on the student experience, teaching and assessment, academic progression, and award outcomes.

### Terms of reference

The Industrial Action Strategic Contingency Group will monitor and take steps to mitigate the effects of all industrial action that affects students at Queen Mary University of London. The Group will liaise with other contingency planning groups as required.

In the event of a potential marking boycott the Group has delegated authority to consider and approve measures to address possible scenarios in which assessment marks and processes are missing or incomplete, with the following aims:

- Protection of the overall student experience.
- Protection of academic standards;

Specific items for consideration shall include but not be limited to:

- Student wellbeing and welfare;
- Communications with students and staff;
- Delivery of taught content;
- Academic impact of missed content;
- Impact of missed learning (and other) opportunities on the student experience;
- Delivery of examinations and other assessments;
- Extenuating circumstances;
- Marking processes;
- Mark entry;
- Examination board processes and conduct;
- Eligibility for progression and award;
- Eligibility for resits;
- Award confirmation, transcripts, and certificates;
- Graduation.