

Senate

Paper title	Appeals, Complaints & Conduct Office Annual Report
Outcome requested	The Senate is asked to consider the attached report outlining case data related to academic misconduct, appeals, complaints & disciplinary matters during the academic year 2022/23.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<p>The report provides details on themes and trends notable in 2022/23, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first of recent years where academic misconduct cases have not increased. This trend is noted across all Schools/Institutes. • Improved processing and completion times for academic misconduct, with the previously reported backlog of academic misconduct cases now completed. • Continued increase in appeal submissions by students, and dramatic increases in the number of requests for Final Review. • Appeal outcome data highlighting the need for further consideration of issues related to feedback and assessment and extenuating circumstances, given the high number of appeals received and extremely low rate of appeals upheld. • Inconsistencies in the handling of complaint and disciplinary matters across Schools/Institutes which warrant more detailed consideration in the year ahead.
Questions to consider	Senate is asked to consider the data contained in the report and provide commentary to inform upcoming policy review for the 2024/25 academic year.
Regulatory/statutory reference points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2. Office of the Independent Adjudicator: The Good Practice Framework 3. Office for Students: Conditions of Registration – C2
Strategy and risk	Aligns with the Queen Mary Strategy 2030
Reporting/consideration route	Consideration by EQSB (31/1/2024), Senate to consider.
Author	Haylee Fuller, Head of the Appeals, Complaints & Conduct Office
Sponsor	Jonathan Morgan, Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

Appeals, Complaints & Conduct Office

Annual Report 2022/23

Report 1: Academic misconduct

Scope

- 1.1 This report covers cases of academic misconduct considered under the [Academic Misconduct Policy 2022/23](#).
- 1.2 In line with the Policy for 2022/23, misconduct occurring in any elements of assessment worth 31 per cent or more of a module mark, and all second or subsequent allegations, are referred to the Appeals, Complaints & Conduct Office (ACCO), while first instances of misconduct in smaller elements are considered locally by the School/Institute.
- 1.3 Schools/Institutes were requested to provide data on cases considered they considered. Not all Schools/Institutes recorded data in the same way or detail, which results in some inconsistencies in the data available for cases considered at the local level. In future academic years, Schools/Institutes have been requested to log all cases of misconduct, whether referred to ACCO or considered locally, via the MySIS Academic Misconduct Workflow. It is anticipated that this will improve the data quality in future reports.

2021/22 Academic Misconduct cases carried forward

- 1.4 536 academic misconduct cases from the 2021/22 academic year remain outstanding at submission of the annual report for that academic year (January 2022). This represented 37.2% of all academic misconduct referrals received in 2021-22, which were carried forward into the 2022/23 academic year.
- 1.5 None of these cases remain outstanding at the time of writing (January 2024). All 2021/22 academic misconduct cases have now been concluded.

2022/23 academic misconduct cases

- 1.6 There were 1238 academic misconduct cases recorded at QMUL in 2022/23. Of these, 1,024 were referred to ACCO for consideration, and the remainder considered at the local School/Institute level. This is the first of recent years where the incidence of academic misconduct referred to ACCO has not increased, as outlined below.

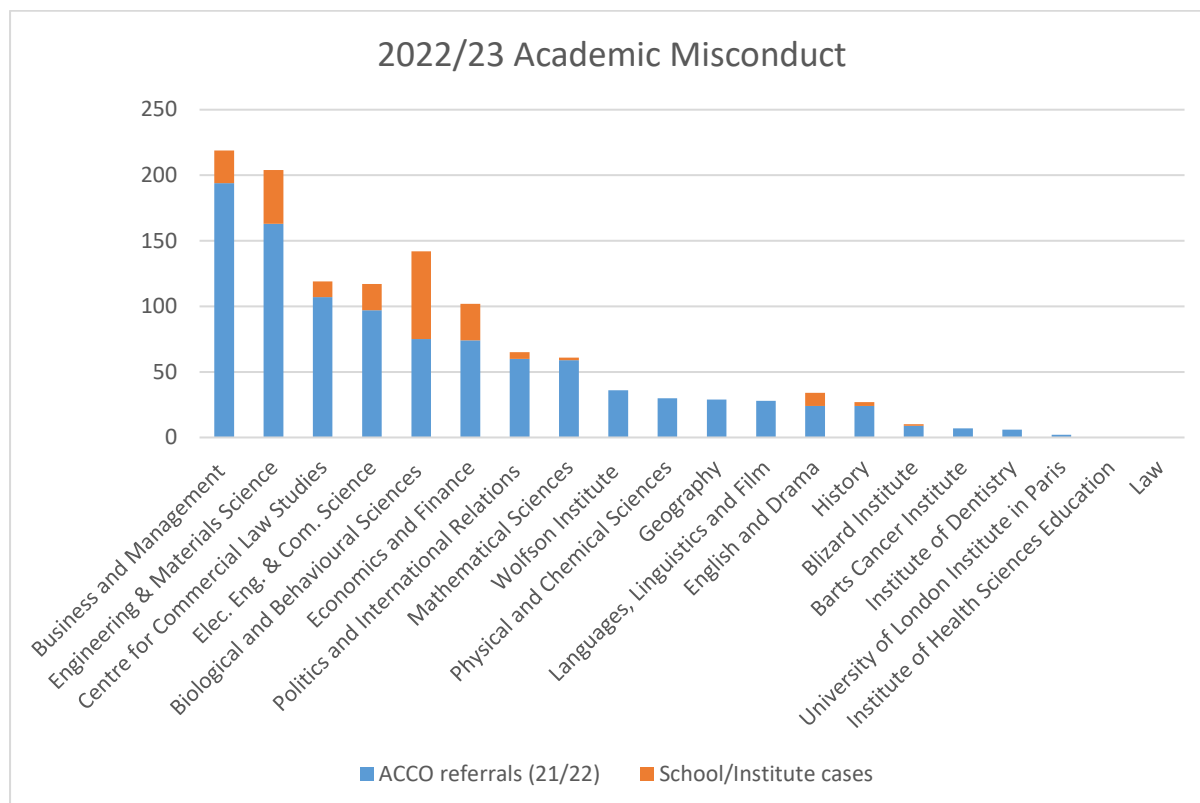
Year	ACCO cases	Annual change	Student body	As % of student body
2015-16	208	+34%	21,187	1.0%
2016-17	260	+25%	23,114	1.1%
2017-18	277	+7%	23,792	1.2%
2018-19	375	+35%	25,925	1.4%
2019-20	628	+67%	27,120	2.3%
2020-21	1,112	+77%	28,715	3.9%
2021-22	1,440	+29%	32,207	4.5%
2022-23	1024	-29%	33,000	3.1%

The figures above include only those cases referred centrally for consideration by ACCO and the central Academic Misconduct Panel. Data for academic misconduct cases considered locally by the School/Institute in 2022/23 is provided below. Comparison data from previous years is not available.

School/Institute

1.7 The table provides a breakdown of cases in 2021-22 by School/Institute, including those cases considered locally.

School/institute	ACCO referrals (21/22)	School/Institute cases	Total cases for School /Institute	% referred to ACCO	% of QMUL cases
Business and Management	194 (338)	25	219	88.6%	17.7%
Elec. Eng. & Com. Science	97 (232)	20	117	81.5%	9.5%
Engineering & Materials Science	163 (134)	41	204	79.9%	16.5%
Politics and International Relations	60 (118)	5	65	92.3%	5.3%
Economics and Finance	74 (114)	28	102	72.5%	8.2%
Biological and Behavioural Sciences	75 (111)	67	142	52.8%	11.5%
Mathematical Sciences	59 (75)	2	61	96.7%	4.9%
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	107 (64)	12	119	89.9%	9.6%
Physical and Chemical Sciences	30 (56)	-	30	100%	2.4%
Wolfson Institute	36 (41)	-	36	100%	2.9%
Languages, Linguistics and Film	28 (34)	-	28	100%	2.2%
History	24 (33)	3	27	88.8%	2.2%
English and Drama	24 (24)	10	34	70%	2.7%
Geography	29 (23)	-	29	100%	2.3%
Law	0 (14)	0	0	#	0%
Blizard Institute	9 (9)	1	10	90%	0.8%
Institute of Dentistry	6 (8)	-	6	100%	0.4%
Institute of Health Sciences Education	0 (5)	-	0	#	0%
Barts Cancer Institute	7 (3)	-	7	100%	0.5%
William Harvey Research Institute	0 (1)	-	0	#	0%
University of London Institute in Paris	2 (3)	-	2	100%	0.1%
Total	1024	214	1238	Average 78.5%	



Misconduct category

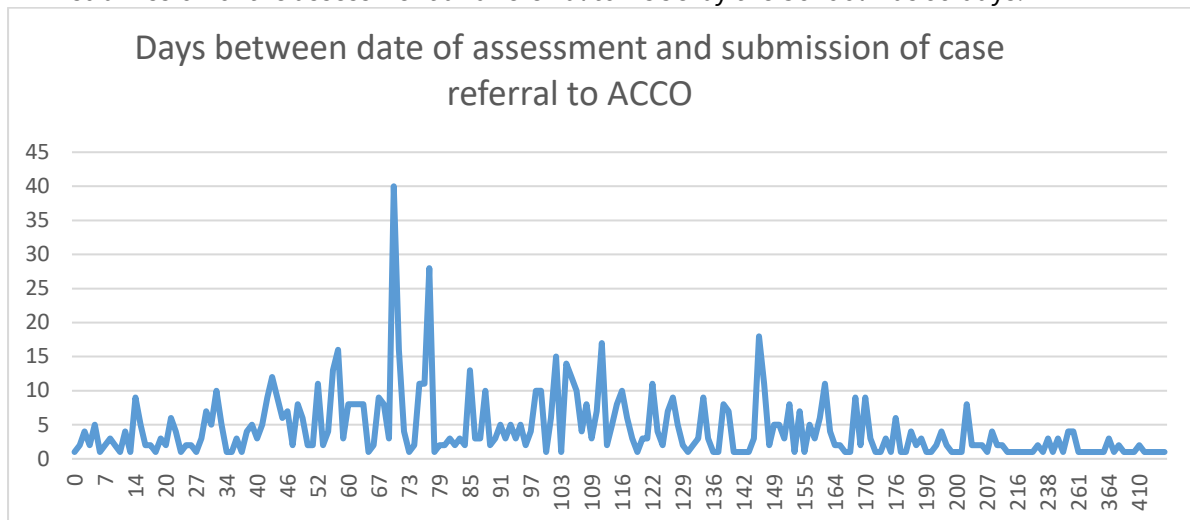
1.8 The academic misconduct cases for 2022/23 are related to the categories below. The large number of “Other” cases this year is predominantly related to the use of Artificial Intelligence.

Category	No. cases
Plagiarism	614
Collusion	469
Exam misconduct	49
Ghostwriting	44
Other	62
Total	1238

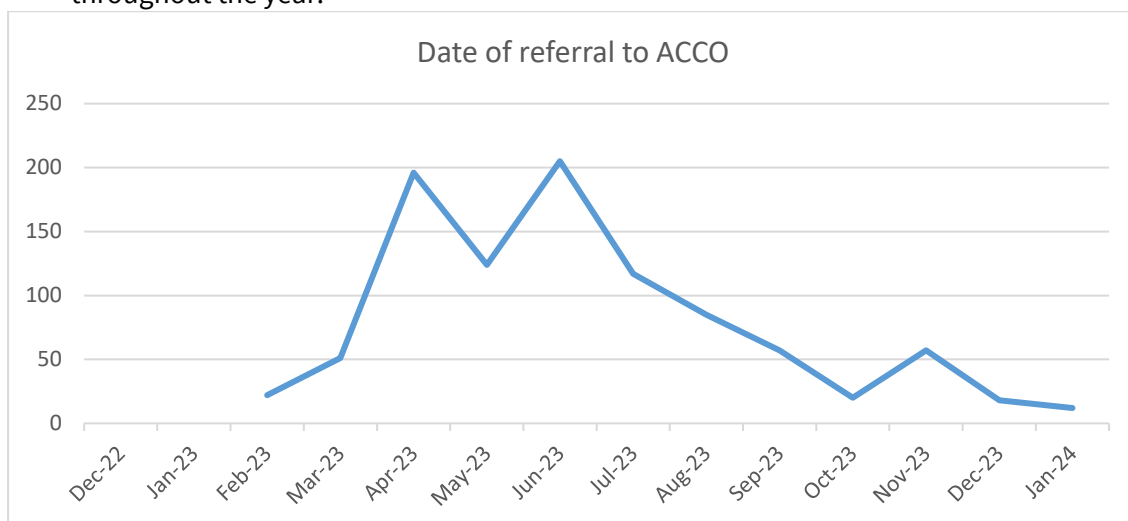
1.9 Additionally, 18 students were issued with informal cautions by ACCO as a result of minor breaches of the examination rules.

Referrals to ACCO

1.10 The graph below shows the time (in days) between the date of an assessment and the submission of a referral to ACCO. The average number of days taken between the students submission of the assessment and referral to ACCO by the School was 99 days.



1.11 The graph below shows the distribution of academic misconduct referrals received by ACCO throughout the year.



- 1.12 The average time for an academic misconduct case to be completed once the full documentation was submitted to ACCO was 43 days.
- 1.13 Previous years' completion times were: 2020-21 (102), 2019-20 (76), 2018-19 (63) and 2017-18 (54).
- 1.14 This makes the completion time for 2022/23 less than half the previous year, and the fastest turnaround in the last five years. It is also less than half the time taken for Schools/Institutes to submit the paperwork for consideration.
- 1.15 The average completion time for cases considered by a full panel was 145 days, while the completion time for cases considered by a Chair was 39 days. While full panel hearings do require significantly more planning and resourcing than decisions by Chair alone, reducing the gap between these timeframes has been identified as an important objective for the coming year.
- 1.16 The average completion time for misconduct cases considered locally by the School/Institute was 31 days [this average is calculated only for those cases recorded via MySIS, as the data is not available for others. However, this represents the majority of cases].

Case outcomes

- 1.17 Overall, 95% of academic misconduct referrals made to ACCO were upheld. This was slightly lower for collusion (91%) than all other forms of misconduct (97%).
- 1.18 A common misconception is that ghostwriting or AI use is 'impossible' to prove, however, 97% of these cases were upheld.
- 1.19 The tables below show the detailed outcomes of cases referred to the ACCO in 2022/23.

	Outcome	Plagiarism or collusion	Ghostwriting	Exam Misconduct	All other misconduct
Case dismissed/withdrawn/returned					
i.) formal reprimand		24		5	2
ii.) element of assessment capped		56	1	4	2
iii.) fail element, capped resubmission		368	5	15	16
iv.) module capped		9	1		
v.) fail module, capped resit, subsequent attempt		185	10	12	10
vi.) fail module with no right to resit/retake		19	8		7
i.) and ii.) in conjunction		2			
i.) and iii.) in conjunction		43		2	
i.) and v.) in conjunction		38		2	6
i.) and vi.) in conjunction		11	3		3
i.) and vi.) in conjunction		1			
vi.) and vii.) in conjunction		2	2		

- 1.20 The table below provides the details of case outcomes considered at School/Institute level, where available (that is, those cases recorded via MySIS).

	Outcome	Collusion / Plagiarism	Ghostwriting	Other
i) Formal Reprimand		15		
ii) fail element, capped resubmission		53	1	1
ii) fail element, no right to resubmit		51		
Case dismissed		9	1	

Cases carried forward to 2023/23

- 1.21 At the time of writing, 21 cases from 2022/23 that were referred to ACCO remain outstanding. 9 of these cases are awaiting a hearing by a Full Panel and 7 are currently awaiting the decision of a Misconduct Chair, leaving only 5 cases pending action by ACCO.
- 1.22 This is a significant improvement on the 536 cases which remained outstanding at the same time last year. Although the overall number of academic misconduct cases declined in 2022/23, when taking into account the 536 cases carried forth from the previous academic year which have also been completed, the number of cases concluded during the 2022/23 year is higher than those received in either academic year – pointing to a significant improvement in processing capacity.
- 1.23 Of those cases considered locally by the School/Institute in 2022/23, 2 of these remain outstanding at the time of writing.

Actions & Future Planning

- 1.24 Three additional roles focused on appeals and academic misconduct have been confirmed as permanent posts within ACCO. Following a lengthy recruitment process it is anticipated that all three permanent positions will be occupied in April 2024.
- 1.25 While the temporary resource has been of evident benefit in increasing the processing capacity of the team, we hope that having permanent staff members in the role will bring further process improvements and contribute to enhancing the procedural guidance available for staff and students during academic misconduct proceedings.
- 1.26 One important area for improvement which these roles will contribute to is the coordination of panel hearings, so that students who opt to exercise their right to a panel do not experience disproportionate delays.
- 1.27 The introduction of the MySIS Workflow for academic misconduct has reduced the administrative burden of processing misconduct cases. In the coming academic year ACCO plans to work more closely with School/Institute contacts to improve efficiencies across the process lifecycle, and deliver training to maximise the benefits of the system for all users.
- 1.28 Work with colleagues in IT, Data Quality and Planning is underway to utilise the data available from MySIS to create a PowerBi Dashboard with live misconduct data to inform educational activities and planning.
- 1.29 Changes to the academic misconduct policy in 2023/24 allow for Schools/Institutes to consider first instances of potential misconduct more often, with the view to improve student experience and learning. The results of this change will be monitored in 2023/24.
- 1.30 A deeper review of the Academic Misconduct Policy is planned, with oversight of the Policy Scrutiny Group. Consultation with a wide range of relevant stakeholders is scheduled for January – February, with an initial draft to be discussed at the February EQSB Assessment sub-Board. This review aims to incorporate academic integrity as the central principle of the policy.
- 1.31 Additional training and supportive activities planned for 2024 will focus on consistent decision-making and the evidence/investigation supporting misconduct referrals.

Report 2: Appeals

This report concerns student appeals received and considered in the academic 2022/23 under the [Appeal Policy](#).

2021/22 Appeals carried forward

- 2.1 278 Appeals from the 2021/22 academic year remain outstanding at submission of the annual report for that academic year (January 2022). This represents 36.2% of all appeals received in 2021-22, which were carried forward into the 2022/23 academic year.
- 2.2 None of these appeals remain outstanding at the time of writing (January 2024).
- 2.3 In all 272 other cases, the appeal has now been responded to and resolved.
- 2.4 31 requests for Final Review remained outstanding in January 2022, and were carried forward into the 2022/23 academic year. An additional 44 requests for Final Review for 2021/22 appeal cases were subsequently received, totalling 75 Final Review cases carried forth into the 2022/23 academic year.

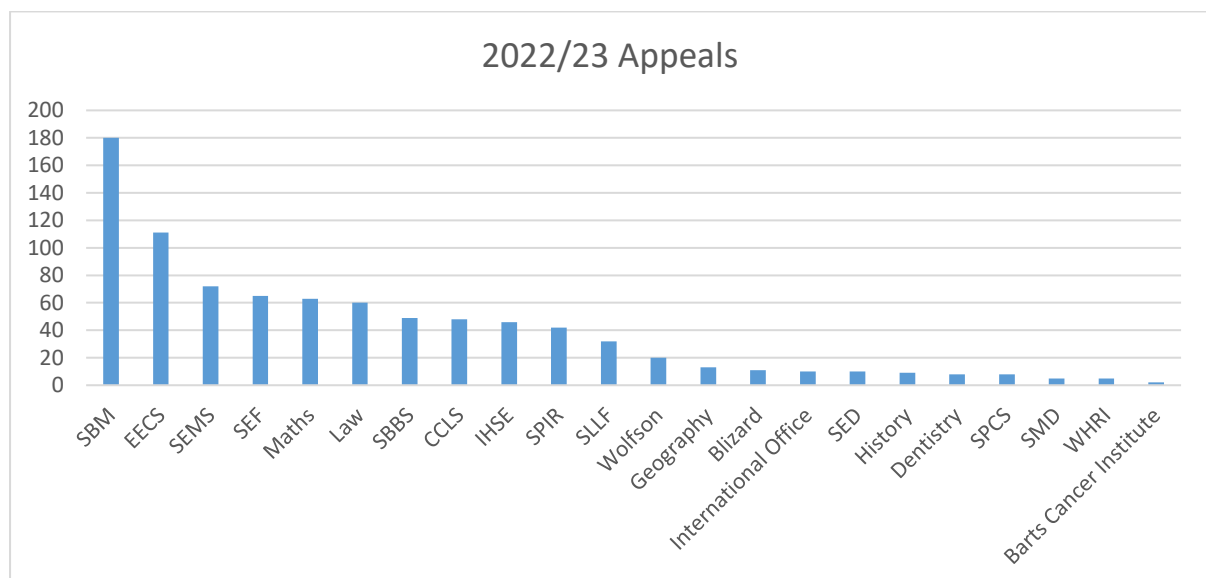
2022/23 Appeal cases

- 2.5 Queen Mary received 869 appeals in 2022/23, continuing the trend of increasing case numbers.

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%
2018-19	492	+1.9%	25,925	1.9%
2019-20	283	-42.5%	27,120	1.0%
2020-21	431	+52.3%	28,715	1.5%
2021-22	769	+78.4%	32,207	2.4%
2022-23	869	+13%	33,000	2.6%

Breakdown by school/institute

School/Institute	Appeals	% of total
SBM	180	20.71%
EECS	111	12.77%
SEMS	72	8.29%
SEF	65	7.48%
Maths	63	7.25%
Law	60	6.90%
SBBS	49	5.64%
CCLS	48	5.52%
IHSE	46	5.30%
SPIR	42	4.83%
SLLF	32	3.68%
Wolfson	20	2.30%
Geography	13	1.50%
Blizard	11	1.27%
International Office	10	1.15%
SED	10	1.15%
History	9	1.04%
Dentistry	8	0.92%
SPCS	8	0.92%
SMD	5	0.58%
WHRI	5	0.58%
Barts Cancer Institute	2	0.23%
Grand Total	869	100.00%



Grounds for appeal and appeal outcomes

2.6 The table below shows the number of appeals by the reason for the appeal (as stated by the student), and the outcome (where known)

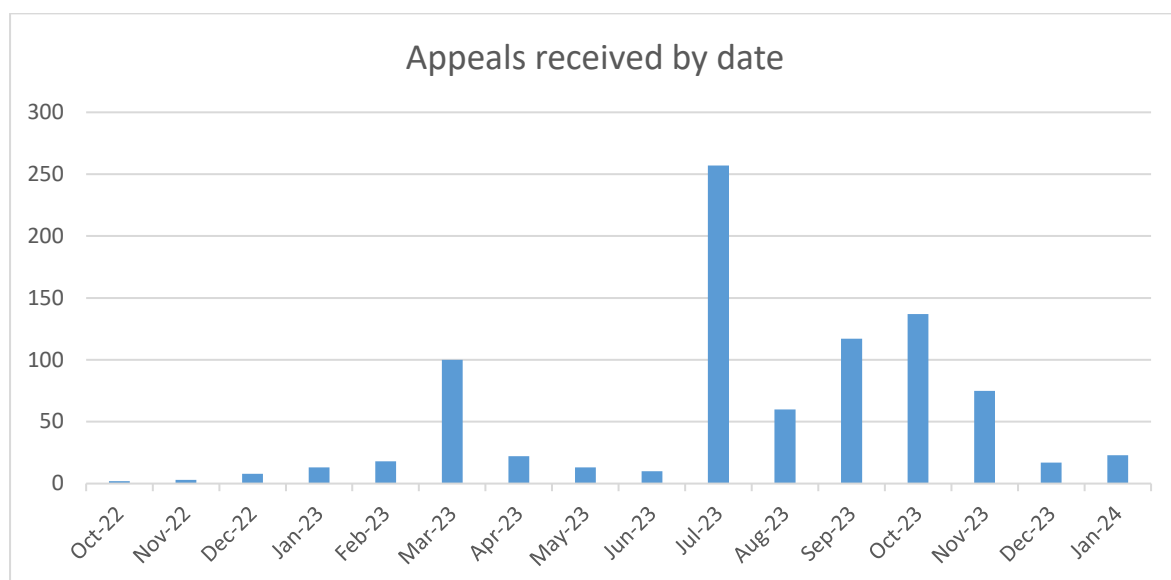
Grounds for appeal	Appeals Received	Resolved Informally	Upheld	Not Upheld	Pending
Exceptional Circumstances	421	65	4	174	178
Procedural Error	311	63	5	161	82
Both grounds	111	14	0	50	47
No grounds specified	26	11	0	12	3
Total	869	146	9	397	310

Observations

2.7 **Resolved Informally:** The high number of cases “Resolved Informally” is due to ACCO’s practice of initially triaging all appeals within (approximately) two working days of receipt. Any appeals that will clearly be upheld are expedited for resolution, so that students’ circumstances are corrected without delay and unnecessary processing.

2.8 **Pending cases:** 310 cases remain pending from the 2022/23 academic year. Similar to the previous academic year, this represents around 35% of appeals which remain pending in January. The primary reason for this is due to the percentage of appeals which arise from Late Summer Resit results (and subsequent awards / exit) which are not formally confirmed and published until October/November. 287 of the pending appeals are in this category, having been submitted after the formal end of the academic year.

2.9 The table below shows the number of appeal submissions received by month. When viewed alongside the academic misconduct graphs in 1.12 this demonstrates the extreme peaks experienced by ACCO during the summer, July in particular.



Final Review

2.10 There have been 63 requests for Final Review to date from appeals submitted in the 2022-23 academic year. Additionally, 74 requests for Final Review from appeals related to 2021/22 were received and/or considered during the 2022/23 academic year.

Year	Total Final Review Requests
2020-21	33
2021-22	77
2022-23	63*

2.11 The 2022/23 data should be considered as partial, given the outstanding appeal cases that remain unresolved and may result in the receipt of additional Final Review requests. It is noted that 50% of Final Review requests for the 2021/22 academic year were received after January 2023.

Actions & Future Planning

2.12 Following the review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) of several appeal cases from 2021/22 which experienced substantial delays in processing, Queen Mary is required to report actions taken to improve the appeals process and policy by May 2024.

2.13 To ensure thorough process review in meeting this requirement, the appeals process has been put forward for review by the newly established Queen Mary Community of Practice for Process Improvement.

2.14 It is hoped that this process will uncover both efficiency opportunities for the administration, decision-making and processing of appeals cases, and opportunities to reduce the number of appeals through early resolution of those cases that are currently resolved informally.

Report 3: Complaints, Disciplinary & Fitness to Practise

Complaints

- 3.1 The Queen Mary [Student Complaints Policy](#) sets out that the first stage (Formal Complaint) is normally handled at the school/institute/service level, while the second stage (Complaint Review) is considered by the Appeals, Complaints, and Conduct Office (ACCO). Notwithstanding, Formal Complaints may be considered by ACCO where there is good reason that this is more appropriate than the School/Institute/Service.
- 3.2 There were 11 incomplete Complaint Review cases from 2021/22 academic year carried forward into 2022/23. All cases are now complete.

Complaint cases

School/institute	ACCO Complaints	School/Institute Complaints	Total Complaints for School/Institute	Complaint Reviews
Business and Management	2	6	8	2
Elec. Eng. & Com. Science	5	4	9	7
Engineering & Materials Science	0	3	3	1
Politics and International Relations	0	7	7	1
Economics and Finance	0	N/A	N/A	1
Biological and Behavioural Sciences	0	N/A	N/A	3
Mathematical Sciences	0	1	1	2
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	1	11	12	
Physical and Chemical Sciences	1	N/A	N/A	1
Wolfson Institute	1	N/A	N/A	1
Languages, Linguistics and Film	1	N/A	N/A	0
History	0	0	0	0
English and Drama	0	5	5	3
Geography	0	N/A	N/A	0
Law	2	1	3	1
Blizard Institute	0	4	4	1
Institute of Dentistry	0	N/A	N/A	0
Institute of Health Sciences Education	1	2	3	0
Barts Cancer Institute	0	N/A	N/A	0
William Harvey Research Institute	0	N/A	N/A	1
Professional Services (inc. Fees, Residence, DDS etc)	2	N/A	N/A	9
Total	16	44	60	34

Complaints themes and outcomes

- 3.3 Themes in complaint: conduct of staff/students (inc. sexual harassment and discrimination), industrial action, fees, quality of educational experience, supervision (research students).
- 3.4 Nine Complaints and/or Reviews have been upheld by ACCO, with appropriate remedies and/or compensation offered. Eight complaints remain open for investigation.

Disciplinary misconduct

3.5 The Queen Mary [Code of Student Discipline](#) deals with issues of student behaviour. It includes procedures for investigation at School/Institute level and at the institutional level.

3.6 The table below provides information about the disciplinary investigations conducted by ACCO. Twenty-seven disciplinary cases were referred to ACCO in 2022/23.

Category	Sexual Misconduct	Bullying / Harassment	Discrimination (inc. racism)	Other
Number of cases	8	8	5	6

3.7 Nineteen cases were resolved informally, or no further action was taken. The most common reason for No Further Action was withdrawal of consent or lack of engagement by the reporting student.

3.8 Three cases were referred to panels (including Student Disciplinary Panel and Professional Capability Panel).

3.9 Four cases remain pending, with two of these on hold due to police/criminal proceedings.

3.10 The table below includes data about the number of disciplinary investigations conducted at School/Institute level. Due to inconsistent data collection within Schools/Institutes, more detailed information about the case types and outcomes is not available for 2022/23.

School/institute	School/Institute cases
Business and Management	0
Elec. Eng. & Com. Science	0
Engineering & Materials Science	0
Politics and International Relations	0
Economics and Finance	N/A
Biological and Behavioural Sciences	0
Mathematical Sciences	0
Centre for Commercial Law Studies	0
Physical and Chemical Sciences	N/A
Wolfson Institute	N/A
Languages, Linguistics and Film	N/A
History	0
English and Drama	2
Geography	N/A
Law	0
Blizard Institute	0
Institute of Dentistry	N/A
Institute of Health Sciences Education	0
Barts Cancer Institute	N/A
William Harvey Research Institute	N/A

Fitness to practise

- 3.11 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](#).
- 3.12 There were two fitness to practise cases heard in the 20223 academic year. In both cases the Fitness to Practise concerns were proven, with remedial action required in one case and the other case resulting in the termination of the student's registration.

Actions & Future Planning

- 3.13 Two new "Conduct & Complaints Officer" posts have been introduced for the 2023/24 academic year (fixed term). These roles have already delivered significant improvements in the response time for Report + Support referrals, complaints and disciplinary matters.
- 3.14 In addition to casework, the introduction of these roles aims to provide training, support and guidance to Schools/Institutes responding to complaints, and develop new resources for students about navigating these procedures.
- 3.15 Recent OIA recommendations have set requirements for all staff members engaged in investigating and responding to complaints to receive training. This is currently in development by the new Conduct & Complaint Officers.
- 3.16 In collaboration with the Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisors from Advice & Counselling, the Conduct & Complaints Officers will also deliver training for panel members hearing sensitive disciplinary matters (including sexual misconduct and hate crimes).