

Assessment Handbook 2014/15 What's New?

Background

The Assessment Handbook contains QMUL's assessment policies, giving guidance and instruction on the implementation of the Academic Regulations. This covering document details changes of note since 2013-14.

Senate is asked to **note** the following points:

- there are very few notable changes this year. The majority of the changes recommended through the Assessment Governance Review would only come into effect from 2015/16;
- some changes are contingent upon the approval of other papers under consideration at the June 2014 meeting of Senate;
- minor changes to wording that do not affect meaning are not included in this cover document. The full document, which accompanies this paper, shows all amendments as track changes;

Item: 2.1 – University of London and QMUL awards

Text: The University of London delegates authority to QMUL to make awards of the University (Ordinances, 12-15). Queen Mary also possesses and exercises independent degree awarding powers. From 2014-15, all new cohorts are registered for QMUL awards unless individual programme/award regulations specify otherwise.

Change and reason: The second sentence is new, to reflect the fact that all awards issued to 2014-15 and later cohorts will be QMUL awards.

Item: 3.17 – oral examinations

Text: Oral examinations shall only be used as approved elements of module assessment for taught programmes, with detailed marking schemes. Where an oral assessment is used in this way, it must be conducted by no fewer than two examiners (Academic Regulations, 3.70). Where an oral assessment is recorded, the second examiner may mark the recording rather than (or in addition to) attending the examination. Oral examinations should not be used to determine classifications in borderline cases.

Change and reason: Provision for the oral examination to be recorded and second marked at a later point has been added. References to vivas have been removed, as these are a distinct form of assessment particular to research programmes.

Item: 3.20 – access to QMUL facilities for students resitting out of attendance

Text: The majority of resitting students are by status not enrolled, and therefore are not required to be in attendance; they have limited entitlement to use campus facilities (libraries, computer rooms, schools and institute facilities, laboratories, etc) (Academic Regulations, 2.33). These students are referred to as 'resitting out of attendance'. Resitting students must register by the specified deadline for the modules they wish to resit, and must take them at the first available opportunity (Academic Regulations, 2.46-50).

Change and reason: This previously stated that students resitting out of attendance were not normally entitled to use QMUL facilities. It has been updated to reflect the current policy.

Item: 3.21 – resit and first sit registration

Text: From 2014-15, students will be automatically registered for resit and first sit assessments. Students may opt out but in doing so they will forfeit any remaining attempts to pass the relevant module, and students resitting out of attendance may also have their registration terminated and cease to be a student (Academic Regulations, 2.48-50).

Change and reason: Self-explanatory. An outcome of the Assessment Governance Review.

Item: 5.40 – specific learning disabilities

Text: Various – refer to the Handbook.

Change and reason: There are no policy changes, but all references to dyslexia have been replaced with references to ‘specific learning disabilities’ in line with guidance from the Disability and Dyslexia Service.

Item: 5.65 - Viewing examination scripts under supervision

Text: Students are entitled to know the marks for examinations, but they are not entitled to receive their examination scripts; examiners shall not release these (*though with permission from the SEB, a student may view a script under supervision*). Examiners may discuss examination results with students on an individual basis, and this is strongly encouraged where students raise queries after the release of marks (this has a significant impact in reducing numbers of academic appeals).

Change and reason: Only the text in italics is new. This permits SEBs to discuss examination feedback with individual students in detail, where the SEB chooses to do so.

Item: 5.69 - Debtors

Text: Marks cannot be released to students with tuition fee debts to QMUL. The student view of marks in MySIS is blocked for debtors. Further information on debtors is provided in Section 10 of the Assessment Handbook.

Change and reason: This previously read ‘...students who are in debt...’, covering a wider range of debts. Following a decision of the Office of Fair Trading, universities can no longer withhold results from students with debts other than tuition fee debts.

Item: 6.39 – failure to meet the SEB quorum

Text: 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 well in advance of the board, and SEBs are responsible for ensuring that all members attend.

Change and reason: The final sentence previously stated that these suspensions ‘must’ be sought in advance. It has been amended in line with a proposed change to the regulations that would grant a little more flexibility in this area (please refer to the separate paper on the Academic Regulations.)

Item: 6.80 (and throughout) – borderline classification policy**Text:**

QMUL has a formal borderline policy that applies to all students completing classified awards in 2014/15 or later (with the exception of the LLB). Discretion outside of these bounds requires suspension of the Academic Regulations (4.55), and will not normally be approved. The borderline policy is as follows:

1. Students with College Marks within one per cent of a borderline (except at the pass/fail border) shall be determined to fall within the ‘zone of consideration’;
2. Students with College Marks within 1.5 per cent of a borderline and with significant extenuating circumstances in the final year not taken into account elsewhere may be determined to fall within the zone of consideration. However, if this approach is taken then the extenuating circumstances may not also be used as a reason to raise the classification itself;
3. All students falling within a zone of consideration shall be considered as possible cases for application of the borderline policy;
4. Students falling within the zone of consideration and with at least half of their final year credits (half of all credits at PG level) with marks at the level of the upper classification (or higher), shall be raised to the higher classification. The credits at the higher level may include the dissertation or project, but this is not a requirement;

4. Students falling within the one per cent zone of consideration and not meeting the requirements of point 4, but with significant extenuating circumstances in the final year not taken into account elsewhere shall be raised to the higher classification provided the SEB is confident that – without the effect of the extenuating circumstances – the student would have achieved the higher classification.

Change and reason: Replaces the old discretion conventions for everything except the LLB, MBBS and BDS from 2014/15 (not applicable to the October 2014 PG boards) as a result of the Assessment Governance Review.

Item: 10.7-8 – suspension of regulations

Text:

10.7: Requests for the suspension of regulations are reserved to Heads of Schools, Institutes, Directorates or equivalent, and to the Degree Examination Boards (Academic Regulations, 1.22).

10.8: Heads of Schools, Institutes, Directorates or equivalent may normally only request suspensions that do not relate to examination board proceedings, for example admissions decisions, but may act on behalf of a SEB Chair/Deputy where unavailable.

Change and reason: The only change is that ‘Heads of Directorate, or equivalent’ has been added, allowing a slightly wider range of individuals to request suspensions. This would mainly apply to suspensions concerning regulations on admissions, appeals, assessment offences, and other such general issues. Suspensions are rare in these areas, but have proved necessary in the past. Senate was consulted on this change earlier in 2014. The change is contingent upon a change to the Academic Regulations, also under consideration at the June 2014 meeting of Senate.

Item: 10.17 – assessment offences

Text:

Allegations of any of the following must be dealt with according to the Assessment Offences Regulations;

- 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 QMUL;
 - c. removal of an examination 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.

Change and reason: Updated to reflect the current regulations. Offence ii-j is of some note; this previously read, “entering an examination venue with writing on the body.” That was queried and challenged during the examination period, and it has been amended to give a more comprehensive definition.

Item: 10.32 – Debtors (withholding results)
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Text: Formal results shall be withheld from students who have tuition fee debts but who are still enrolled at QMUL.
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Change and reason: Amended in line with a ruling from the Office of Fair Trading. Only formal results can be withheld, and only where students have tuition fee debts (rather than any form of academic debt, as previously).
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Item: 10.33 – Debtors (appearance on board reports)
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Text: These students shall be assessed, and decisions on progression and award shall be made. However, formal notification of their results shall be withheld until clearance has been received.

Change and reason: Amended in line with the OFT ruling (see above, 10.32). This previously also stated that debtors would be identified on examination board reports; that will no longer be the case.

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