



Senate

Paper title	Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2024-25
Outcome requested	The Senate is asked to consider this report and endorse the actions proposed and taken by Education Quality and Standards Board to reduce avoidable suspension of regulations, strengthen regulatory compliance, and improve oversight—particularly in high-incidence areas.
Points to note and further information	<p>This report provides an annual overview of suspensions of regulations at Queen Mary during the 2024–25 academic year. It is submitted to the Senate and the Education Quality and Standards Board to support institutional oversight, identify recurring issues, and prompt action to reduce avoidable suspensions.</p> <p>Suspensions are intended to be rare and used only where the application of regulations would be manifestly unfair or where the regulations do not account for an unforeseen situation. However, the data from this year show that 92% of suspensions were avoidable, continuing an upward trend from 90% last year and 74% the year before.</p> <p>Key points from this year’s report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume and distribution: A total of 69 suspensions were recorded—unchanged from last year. The overall number has plateaued, and the nature and concentration of cases may raise concerns. Three schools accounted for over half of all suspensions, and one school for more than a quarter. • Trends: Suspensions related to programme and module diets rose significantly (30 cases, up from 15). Module assessment suspensions fell, but remain high (25 cases, down from 42). However, all assessment-related suspensions were avoidable and largely stemmed from procedural issues. • Root causes: Common issues include delivery of unapproved assessment schemes, poor communication of programme changes, and misalignment with partner institutions. These may reflect a need for intervention in curriculum management, oversight, and staff briefing. <p>The report outlines practical suggestions to reduce suspensions, including improved briefing for module organisers, better use of MySIS and the new curriculum manager system, strengthened programme review processes, and enhanced training for staff and partners.</p> <p>Consideration by the Education Quality and Standards Board The Education Quality and Standards Board considered the Suspension of Regulations Annual Report at its meeting on 17 September 2025. The Board endorsed the report and proposed a series of actions in response to its findings.</p>

	<p>EQSB discussions focused on the need for stronger governance, improved briefing and training for staff, and enhanced use of systems such as Curriculum Manager and MySIS. The Board identified procedural lapses—particularly in assessment delivery and programme diet management—as key contributors to avoidable suspensions. It was noted that many issues stemmed from poor communication, misalignment with partner institutions, and a lack of sufficiently robust oversight and accountability mechanisms.</p> <p>The Board noted that the ongoing governance review included proposals for formal Faculty-level Education Committees. It felt that this was currently a missing layer of governance, providing a formal bridge between the University-level EQSB and the school/institute-level education committees. Changes to management arrangements (for example, the new Faculty-level professional services team in Science and Engineering) also provided opportunities to better coordinate and manage, and proactively report on issues leading to suspensions, supporting the Deans and Directors of Education, who were key figures in this space.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the Vice-Principal (Education) would write to IT Services to request that assessment schemes in QMplus be locked to match the official, approved versions held in MySIS and Curriculum Manager, to prevent opportunities for miscommunication. The EQSB had previously established with ITS that such a change was possible.</p> <p>The Board considered the distribution of suspensions, and especially cases where there were persistently high numbers. It tasked Faculties with conducting detailed analyses and interventions in these schools.</p> <p>EQSB agreed that while suspensions remain a necessary tool in exceptional cases, their current volume and nature suggest systemic issues that require address. The Board emphasised the importance of reducing reliance on suspensions and strengthening institutional resilience through preventative measures.</p>
<p>Questions to consider</p>	<p>The following questions were also posed to the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB). Actions and considerations from the EQSB are outlined above; the Senate is asked whether it supports the conclusions and actions of the EQSB, and whether it had any additional recommendations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What practical steps can Queen Mary take to reduce the high proportion of avoidable suspensions (92%)? <i>Are current processes for briefing staff, reviewing modules, and approving changes sufficiently robust?</i> 2. How can we ensure that assessment schemes and programme diets are consistently delivered as approved? <i>Would more regular and engaged use of systems like the curriculum manager, or mandatory sign-off procedures, improve compliance?</i> 3. Why do a small number of schools routinely account for the majority of suspensions? <i>What targeted support or oversight could help address recurring issues?</i>

	<p>4. Are current governance structures effective in identifying and resolving the root causes of suspensions? <i>Should there be clearer escalation routes or accountability mechanisms for repeated procedural lapses?</i></p>
Regulatory/statutory reference points	<p>This paper addresses formal exceptions to Queen Mary’s academic, programme, and module regulations—core frameworks that underpin academic standards and quality. These regulations are central to compliance with the Office for Students’ B Conditions, which require consistent and secure academic outcomes.</p> <p>While suspensions are permitted in exceptional cases, a high proportion of avoidable requests may be suggestive of procedural issues that risk undermining regulatory integrity. Monitoring and reducing suspensions is important to maintaining confidence in Queen Mary’s governance and ensuring continued compliance.</p>
Strategy and risk	<p>Addressing avoidable suspensions is essential to reduce reliance on exceptions and further strengthen confidence in our regulatory framework.</p> <p>A high proportion of avoidable suspensions could present operational risks—particularly in assessment delivery and curriculum oversight—that could in principle have the potential to undermine student outcomes and institutional credibility.</p>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Quality and Standards Board (September 2025) • Senate (October 2025)
Author	Simon Hayter, Head of Academic Quality and Standards



Suspension of Regulations: Annual Summary Report 2024-25

What is a suspension of regulations?

1. A suspension of regulations is a formal governance mechanism used in exceptional circumstances to temporarily set aside a specific academic regulation. This may be necessary when applying the regulation as written would result in manifest unfairness to one or more students, or when an unforeseen situation arises that the current regulatory framework does not adequately address. Suspensions are intended to be rare and should not serve as routine solutions to operational issues.
2. At Queen Mary, requests for suspension typically originate from Subject Examination Boards or Heads of School and must be supported by the relevant Degree Examination Board. Final approval is granted under delegated authority from the Senate, by nominees of the President and Principal—currently the Directors of Governance and Legal Services and Registry Services. The Directorate of Governance and Legal Services manages the process, applying scrutiny to ensure each case meets the criteria for fairness and necessity. Most requests that reach formal consideration are approved, as unsuitable cases are filtered out beforehand.
3. Used judiciously, this process helps safeguard academic standards while ensuring students are not disadvantaged by institutional shortcomings.

Why is it important to monitor suspensions?

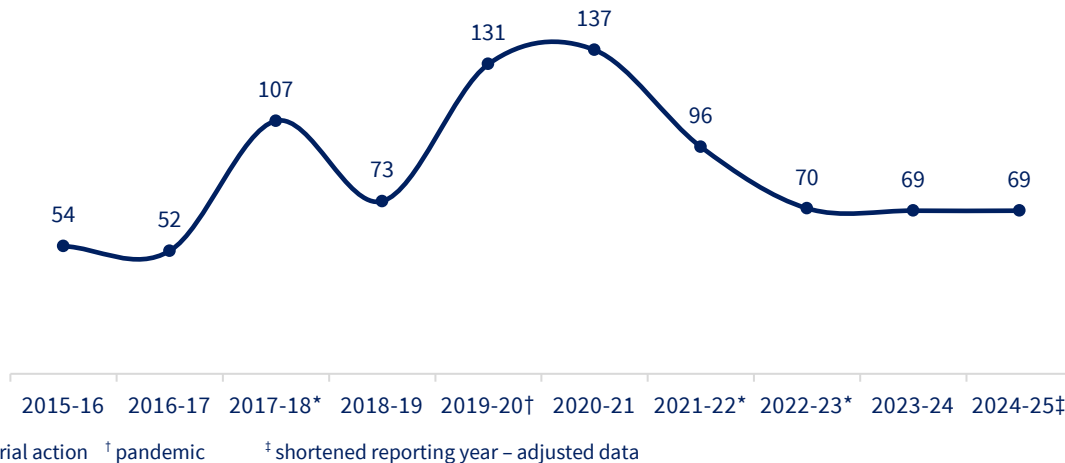
4. While suspensions play an important role in maintaining fairness, high numbers—particularly of avoidable cases—may indicate underlying issues in academic delivery and governance. Frequent suspensions may suggest inconsistent application of regulations, potentially posing risks to compliance with the Office for Students' B Conditions, which require universities to uphold secure academic standards and reliable student outcomes.
5. Concentrations of suspensions in certain schools or faculties may point to systemic issues, such as inadequate oversight, poor communication, or flawed curriculum management. Common issues such as errors in assessment schemes and programme diets should be preventable through effective planning and review.
6. Although suspensions can resolve immediate problems, they do not address root causes. Over-reliance on this mechanism risks normalising exceptions and undermining confidence in regulatory frameworks. Monitoring and reducing suspensions is therefore essential—not only for operational efficiency, but for the strategic assurance of quality, compliance, and student trust.

Purpose and scope of this report

7. This report considers suspensions of regulations sought and approved during the 2024–25 academic year. It is submitted annually to the Education Quality and Standards Board and the Senate to support oversight of regulatory exceptions and inform institutional quality assurance.
8. Following an agreement made in 2024, the reporting period has been realigned to match the academic calendar (1 August – 31 July). Accordingly, this year's report covers a ten-month period (1 October 2024 – 31 July 2025). To enable year-on-year comparison, institutional-level figures include data from August and September 2024; however, faculty and school/institute-level data reflect only the ten-month period (to avoid double-counting) and may appear lower than in previous full-year reports.

9. The Board is invited to consider the volume, nature, and distribution of suspensions, reflect on their implications for academic governance, and endorse any proposed actions to reduce avoidable cases and strengthen regulatory compliance.

University-level data

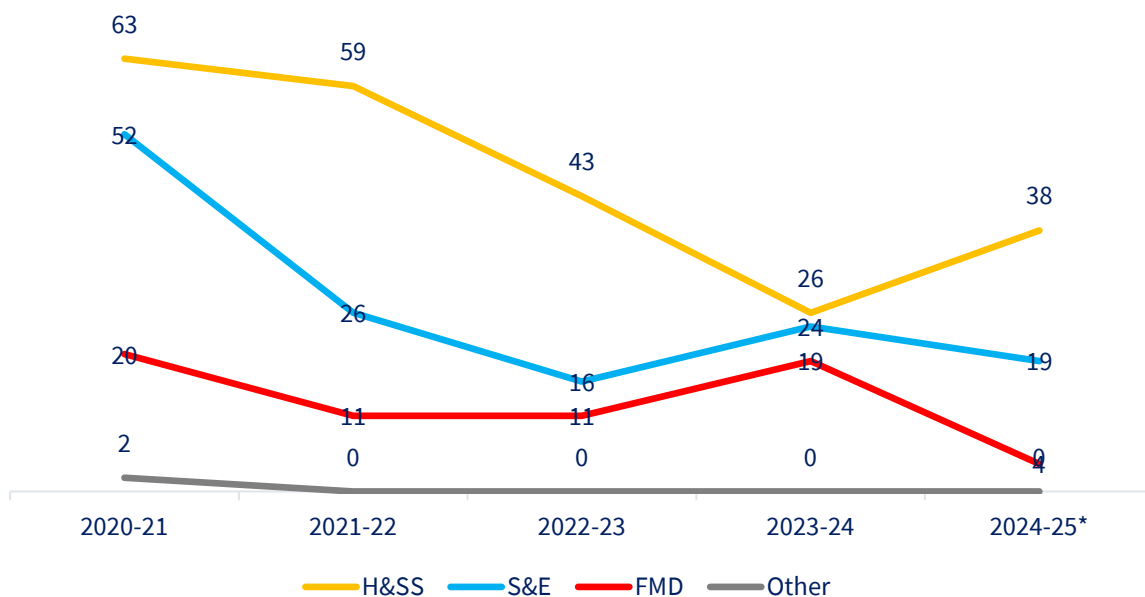
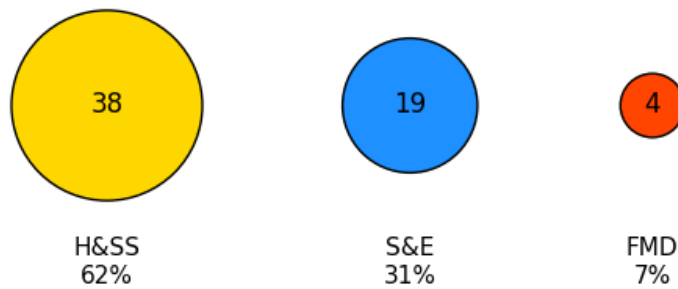


10. The graph above presents a decade-long view of suspensions of regulations at Queen Mary, highlighting key inflection points such as the pandemic and periods of industrial action. While the peak in 2020–21 (137 suspensions) was in large part understandable, the current total of 69 suspensions—essentially unchanged from the previous two years—raises questions. This figure includes 61 cases from the adjusted ten-month reporting period (October 2024 to July 2025), plus 8 from August and September 2024. Despite the absence of major external disruptions, the volume remains high and, crucially, largely avoidable.
11. This plateau in progress suggests that persistent structural or procedural challenges in some areas. Continued reliance on suspensions in a “normal” academic year points to issues that go beyond isolated errors.
12. 92% of suspensions in 2024–25 were avoidable, up from 90% the previous year and 74% in 2022–23. This rise in clearly avoidable cases reflects a growing pattern of procedural and planning errors—most originating from Education Committees at the approval stage or individual module organisers at the delivery stage. These include failures in assessment design, poor communication of approved module specifications, and administrative oversights that directly impact students.
13. One contributing factor is an increase in programme-specific “special regulations”. These bespoke rules, while occasionally necessary, introduce complexity and increase the risk of misapplication. Harmonisation efforts between 2013 and 2017 had successfully reduced such risks, but a recent increase in bespoke, non-standard provision has led to a reversal that warrants close attention. Unnecessary exceptions to the standard regulations should be avoided in programme design.
14. These data should prompt reflection and action. Members are invited to consider not only the volume of suspensions but the underlying causes and their implications for academic governance. Addressing these issues is essential to reduce reliance on suspensions and to strengthen institutional resilience and regulatory compliance.



Faculty-level data

15. The distribution of suspensions across Faculties during the current ten-month reporting period shows Humanities and Social Sciences (H&SS) once again accounting for the majority of cases—38 out of 61. This reaffirms H&SS’s position as the primary source of suspensions, which is consistent with its broader academic footprint. As the Faculty with the most schools, programmes, and modules—and with programmes that often include much greater module choice—H&SS faces greater complexity in delivery and oversight, increasing the likelihood of issues arising through error, necessity, or chance.

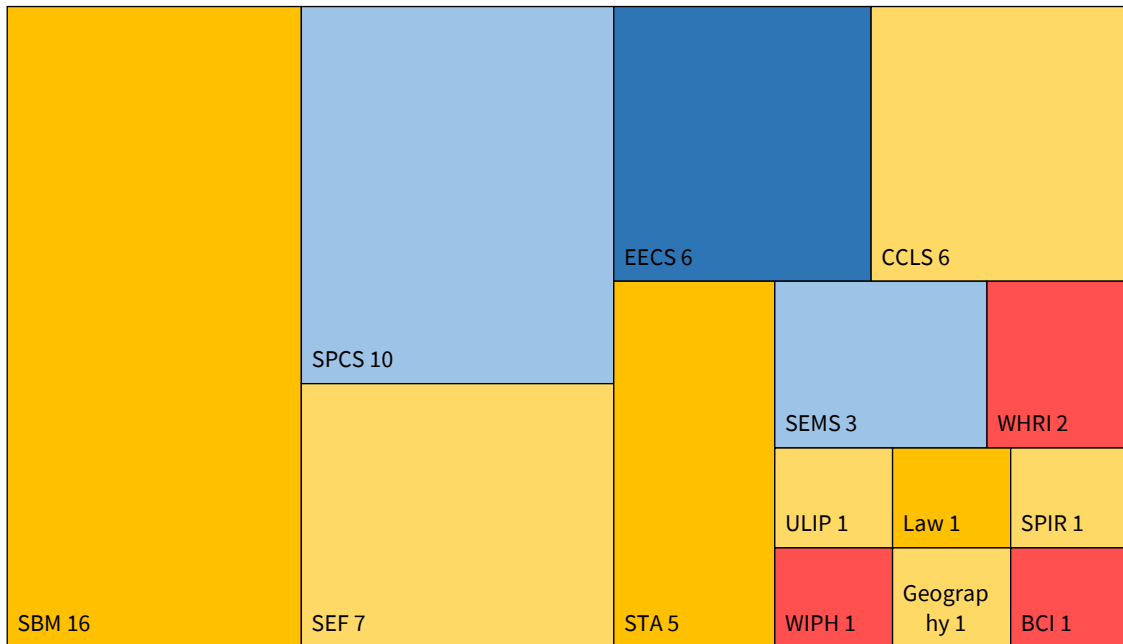


* 10-month reporting period

16. However, this year’s data marks a resurgence in H&SS suspensions, reversing the downward trend observed in recent years and shown in the graph above. In contrast, Science and Engineering (S&E) reported 19 cases, and the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (FMD) just four. The widening gap between Faculties raises important questions: why has H&SS seen an increase in suspensions this year, despite previous improvements? Is this a reflection of structural challenges, localised issues, or a breakdown in previously effective interventions? Are there opportunities to reduce curriculum complexity in some areas to reduce the likelihood of suspensions?

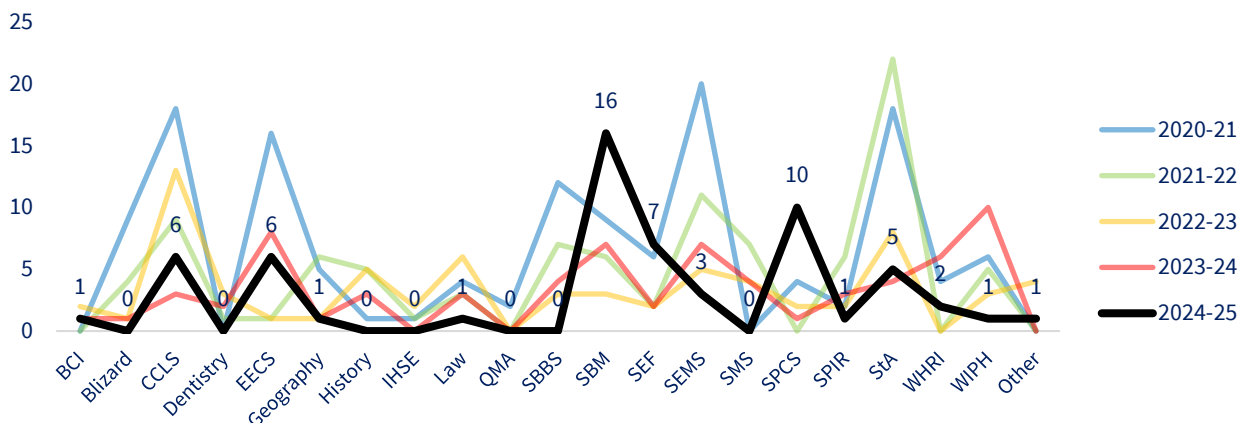
17. Within each Faculty, a small number of schools or institutes are disproportionately responsible for the suspensions. The next section of this report explores this in greater detail, but the overall pattern suggests that targeted, school-level action may be more effective than broad Faculty-wide measures.

School/institute-level data



18. The chart above illustrates the distribution of suspensions across schools and institutes during the ten-month 2024–25 reporting period. Cells are colour-coded by faculty, with the size reflecting the school or institute’s proportional contribution to the overall total. Schools and institutes not represented in the chart recorded no suspensions during this period.

19. The graph below presents a longitudinal view of suspension incidence by school/institute over the past five academic years, enabling comparison and trend identification.

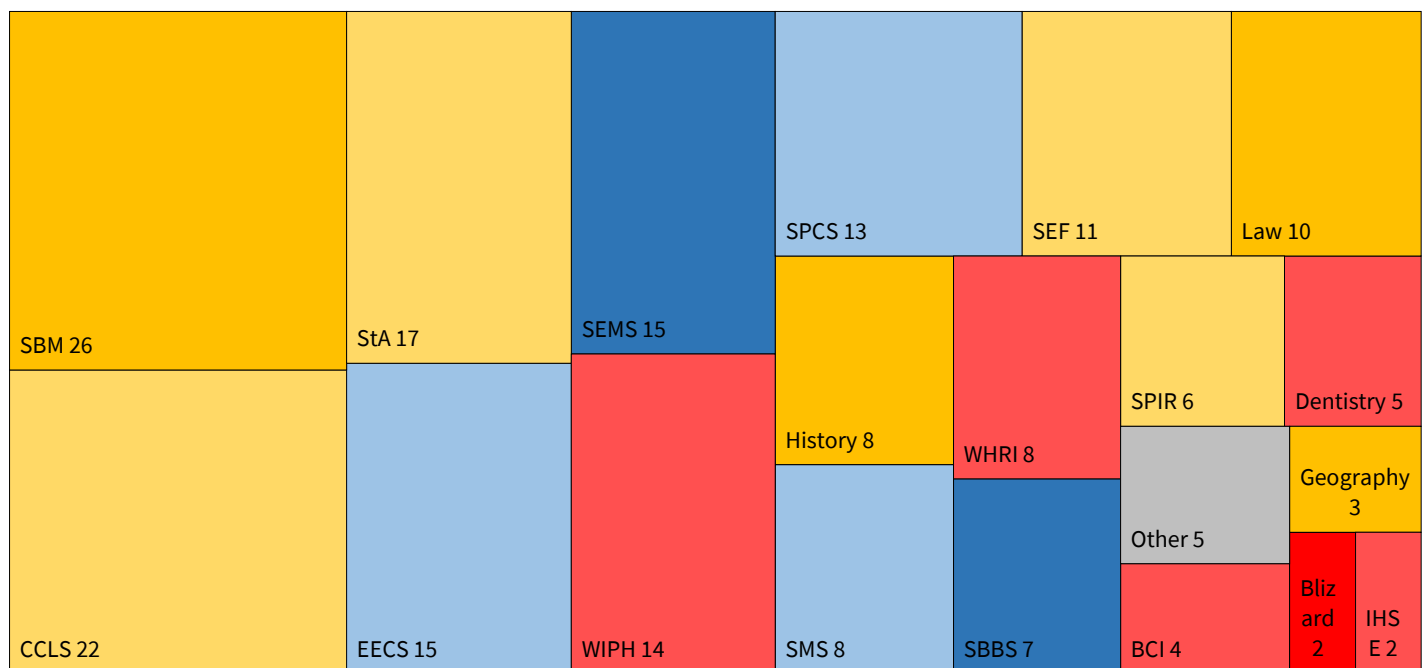


20. Business and Management (SBM) continues to show a relatively high volume of suspensions, with 16 cases (26% of the total). The majority stemmed from programme diet issues—specifically, students taking modules outside approved diets—and assessment-related concerns. These included incorrect delivery of assessment schemes, uncommunicated changes to module weightings, and qualifying marks approved without student notification. Notably, several cases involved approval decisions made by the Education Committee that were either incorrect or were not effectively cascaded.

21. Ten cases (16%) represents an unusual spike for SPCS. Seven cases were nearly identical, involving students enrolled in off-diet modules due to a programme design flaw that has since been amended. One additional

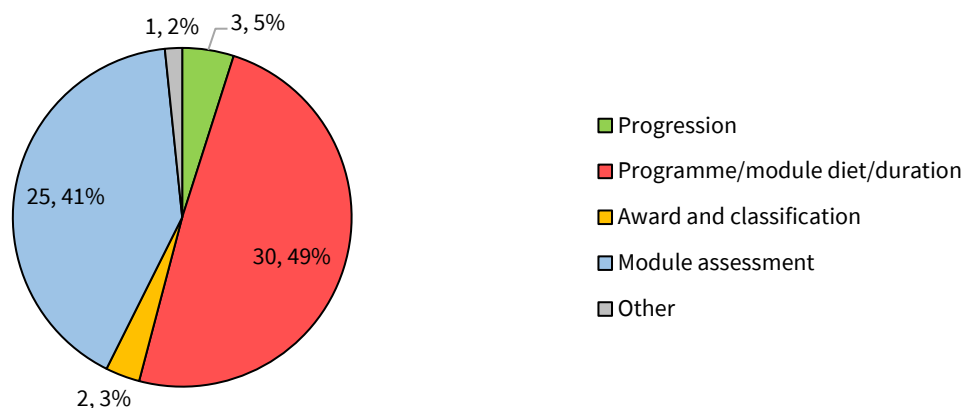
case was similar in nature. The remaining two suspensions involved an incorrectly delivered assessment scheme, and a TNE-related issue where four students over-registered by 15 credits each.

22. Economics and Finance (SEF) is another school that does not typically report high suspension numbers but which has a high number this year (7, or 11%). Five cases were assessment-related, with four involving the implementation of new schemes after the July 2024 amendment deadline. This aligns with a pattern of late module amendment requests received from SEF, which has also been seen in 2025 for PGT provision.
23. The suspensions from EECS, SEMS, and SPCS each include one suspension relating to their transnational provision. Three of the six CCLS suspensions also relate to TNE.
24. Three schools (SBM, SPCS, SEF) account for 54% of all suspensions. Six schools (SBM, SPCS, SEF, EECS, CCLS, STA) account for 82% of all suspensions. Seven schools and institutes generated no suspensions (IoD, History, IHSE, QMA, SBBS, SMS, Blizard).
25. Schools and institutes are responsible for maintaining records of their own suspension requests. While DGLS has previously provided suspension logs to Faculty Education Managers (or equivalents) and will do so again, these are intended for reference only. As suspension requests originate from local staff, it is essential that schools and institutes keep and share accurate, accessible records internally.
26. The chart below highlights the schools and institutes with the highest total suspensions over the past three years (2022-23 – 2024-25); consideration may be given as to whether these could benefit from investigation and support.



Suspension details

27. This section explores categories of suspension from 2024-25. This chart visualises the broad categories.



28. Although **module assessment** suspensions are no longer the largest category, they remain a significant concern, with 25 cases recorded in 2024–25. This marks a welcome drop from last year’s 42, even accounting for the shorter ten-month reporting period. However, the nature of these suspensions continues to frustrate: all were classified as avoidable. Most stemmed from procedural lapses—particularly the delivery of incorrect or unapproved assessment schemes and weightings. A recurring issue was the unintended inclusion of qualifying marks, often approved without a full understanding of their implications. While the volume has decreased, the underlying causes remain unresolved and require targeted intervention.
29. **Programme and module diet** suspensions rose sharply to 30 cases, up from 15 the previous year. Of these, 24 were avoidable. Common causes included off-diet module selections following programme amendments or student transfers, inaccurate communication of module availability, and resourcing constraints that prevented delivery of the full approved diet. Several cases involved joint or transnational programmes, where misalignment between Queen Mary and partner institutions led to over-registration or inappropriate module choices. These issues highlight the need for stronger oversight of programme amendments and clearer guidance for schools managing complex structures.
30. **Progression**-related suspensions fell to three cases, down from seven last year. All were avoidable and related variously to under-registration during study abroad, removal of progression hurdles to align January- and September-start cohorts, and administrative oversights affecting credit loads. While fewer in number, these cases underscore the importance of maintaining consistency and clarity in progression pathways, especially where programme variants differ.
31. **Award and classification** suspensions remain rare but serious, with two cases recorded this year. Both were avoidable. One involved a student who failed to meet the level 6 credit requirements for a BA due to ULIP including a compulsory level 4 module in the final year diet. The other concerned the titling of exit awards for WIPH students who did not meet the requirements of PSRB-accredited programmes. These cases reinforce the need for vigilance in programme design and award mapping, particularly where accreditation is involved.
32. One suspension was categorised as “**Other**,” relating to a school implementing its own late submission policy that conflicted with University regulations. The University policy has since been revised for 2025–26, and all schools and institutes are now required to follow the central framework in full. This case serves as a reminder that local policies must align with institutional regulations to avoid confusion and inconsistency.
33. Taken together, these patterns show that while some progress has been made, there is still considerable scope for improvement. The data point to clear opportunities for action—particularly in strengthening

communication, improving oversight of programme amendments, and ensuring staff are fully briefed on approved assessment and progression structures. These are practical, solvable issues that, if addressed, could significantly reduce the need for suspension and improve the student experience.

How can suspensions be reduced?

34. Suspensions of regulations remain an essential tool for resolving academic and procedural issues. However, the volume and nature of cases in 2024–25 suggest that many could have been avoided through better communication, clearer guidance, and more consistent processes. Queen Mary is encouraged to take targeted steps to reduce suspensions, particularly in areas where recurring patterns are evident.
35. A key area of concern continues to be the delivery of unapproved assessment schemes. All 25 module assessment suspensions this year were avoidable. These typically involved incorrect formats or weightings, or the unintended inclusion of qualifying marks. In many cases, the approved scheme was available in MySIS or the Module Directory but had not been consulted or communicated effectively. This points to a persistent gap in dissemination and verification. To address this, Queen Mary could:
- introduce mandatory **pre-delivery briefings for module organisers** to confirm assessment structures.
 - ensure that it engages fully with the new **curriculum management system**.
 - explore possibilities for **locking assessment schemes in QMplus** to match Curriculum Manager and SITS.
 - encourage internal **audit checks** at the start of each semester to ensure delivery matches approval.
36. Suspensions related to programme and module diets also rose sharply, with 30 cases compared to 15 last year. These were often linked to off-diet module selections, inaccurate module availability information, or misalignment with partner institutions' expectations. Many could have been prevented through:
- **clearer guidance from schools to students on programme changes**, especially for students resitting or returning from interruption.
 - improved **tracking of shared modules** and dependencies across programmes.
 - **training and checklists for partner institutions** to ensure alignment with Queen Mary's structures.
 - the annual programme and module sign-off process remains a vital opportunity to catch issues before they result in suspensions. Strengthening this process by introducing **faculty-level oversight** could significantly reduce risk.
37. It is also clear that many suspensions stem from gaps in understanding rather than deliberate non-compliance. **Targeted training for academic and administrative staff**, supported by **quick-reference guides**, could build confidence in navigating regulations. Periodic reports summarising suspension trends and recognising good practice would support continuous improvement and reinforce positive behaviours.
38. While suspensions may offer a short-term fix, they do not resolve root causes—and they create significant additional work for both schools/institutes and central teams. By investing in preventative measures, Queen Mary could reduce reliance on suspensions and strengthen the integrity of its academic processes.