



Executive summary of Senate on 15 October 2015

Outcome requested:	Council is asked to note the executive summary of the meeting of Senate held on 15 October 2015.
Executive Summary:	<p>The summary provides Council with an update on business considered by Senate.</p> <p>The following documents are included in the electronic background reading for Council members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Prevent duty guidance: for higher education institutions in England and Wales ii. Competition and Markets Authority: guidance for higher education iii. Office of the Independent Adjudicator Annual Letter 2014
QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1]	n/a
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	n/a
Strategic Risks:	n/a
Equality Impact Assessment:	n/a
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	n/a
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA	n/a
Timing:	n/a
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Date:	19 October 2015
Senior Management/External Sponsor	Jonathan Morgan, Academic Registrar and Council Secretary

SENATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A full set of the minutes will be available online (following confirmation at the next meeting of Senate) at the following URL: <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/Senate/index.html>
Alternatively, contact the Secretary of the Committee: Jane Pallant j.pallant@qmul.ac.uk

Date of Meeting: 15 October 2015

Main Items Discussed

1. Prevent duty guidance: for higher education institutions in England and Wales

Senate received the 'Prevent' duty guidance for higher education institutions (attached for information). Section 26 of the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on QMUL to give appropriate weight, considered against all other factors in the course of its business, to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The Government issued revised guidance for higher education institutions on the Prevent duty in August 2015 and delegated the statutory function of 'monitoring authority' to HEFCE in September 2015. HEFCE has launched a consultation on its approach to monitoring institutions' compliance which closes on the 23 October 2015.

Senate members noted that QMUL had established a Counter-terrorism Legislation Task and Finish Group to develop QMUL's response to the Prevent guidance. The Group is supported by the local Prevent Co-ordinator and is working through a detailed plan to comply with the Prevent duty as follows:

- establish a QMUL Channel Panel (to prevent vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism);
- nominate a single point of contact for the Prevent Duty within QMUL and arrangements to collate and share information appropriately about vulnerable individuals;
- secure active engagement from senior management;
- establish effective partnership with the local police and Prevent co-ordinators;
- ensure that key individuals are trained to enable them to recognise vulnerable individuals and understand what action to take where appropriate;
- review IT policies in reference to the Prevent duty;
- work effectively in partnership with the Students' Union;
- review the Freedom of Expression Policy and the event management policy and procedure in reference to the Prevent duty;
- undertake an assessment on where and how individuals at QMUL might be at risk of being drawn into terrorism and develop an action plan from this exercise;
- establish a secure data store for record keeping;
- establish whistleblowing arrangements for reporting on activities that risk drawing individuals into terrorism;
- develop a communications plan.

Central to QMUL's approach to the Prevent duty is the relationship of our values to the compliance requirements. There is clearly a potential conflict of interest between freedom of expression and the Prevent duty; QMUL will explore these tensions further as the action plan develops. Audit and Risk Committee and Council will receive more detailed updates on QMUL's Prevent duty risk assessment and action plan in November.

2. Competition and Markets Authority: guidance for higher education

Senate received the Universities UK briefing note on the implications of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance for higher education institutions (attached for information). Members noted the following:

- The CMA guidance provides advice to higher education institutions about their consumer law obligations to undergraduate students.
- The guidance has a particular focus on: information provision, the fairness of universities' terms and conditions and complaint handling.
- QMUL has established a Consumer Protection Legislation Task and Finish Group to advise QMSE on actions necessary to comply with the guidance. The Group will also make regular reports to Senate.
- The Academic Registry and Council Secretariat (ARCS) will provide briefings for schools and institutes to discuss the implications of the guidance and to address any specific questions or concerns. These briefing sessions will also enable ARCS to identify any training needs, and to make arrangements for these as appropriate.

Senate agreed that the guidance represented good practice in terms of the provision of information, fairness of terms and conditions and effective complaint handling. The Consumer Protection Legislation Task and Finish Group had commenced its work by reviewing immediate risks in the key areas and actions to mitigate these risks. Audit and Risk Committee will consider updates on progress through its regular reviews of legal compliance.

3. Office of the Independent Adjudicator Annual Letter 2014

Senate considered QMUL's annual letter from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for 2014 (attached for information). The OIA publishes an annual letter for each subscribing institution, reporting on complaints received and closed by the OIA in the previous year.

Members noted that the number of QMUL students who complained to the OIA remains higher than the mean for institutions of a similar size. It was further noted that the proportion of complaints found to be justified or partly justified was also higher than for the same comparator group.

ARCS has made significant amendments to case handling procedures in the last twelve months and this has not yet had an impact on our annual report from the OIA since the cases reported in the annual letter are from 2013–14. QMUL re-introduced a final review stage for appeals from 2015–16 onwards; this stage of the process was removed in 2013 to try to reduce the time taken for cases to complete QMUL's procedures before these could be submitted to the OIA. It is likely that the reinstatement of the final internal review stage may reduce the number of complaints submitted to the OIA. Council will consider a more detailed paper on student complaints and appeals in November.

4. Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes

Senate considered and approved some amendments to the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes. These amendments had been made as part of a review of the Academic Regulations and Code of Practice for research degree programmes undertaken by the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board in reference to the QAA Quality Code.

Further changes to the regulations are proposed, together with a review of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees; these documents will be considered at the December 2015 meeting of Senate once further consultation with schools and institutes has completed.

6. Suspensions of regulations

Senate also considered one of its regular reports on recent requests to suspend the academic regulations for individual students, together with an overview report of requests received throughout the year. Senate monitors these requests to identify whether the circumstances leading to a suspension of regulations could be avoided in future. Each case is considered by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) and the outcome is reported to Senate.

Members noted that the volume of requests had not reduced significantly, particularly those cases where the suspension of regulations should have been entirely avoidable. Senate would consider further methods for reducing these requests for suspensions of the academic regulations, noting that it was essential to provide accurate information to students on module assessment methods.

Jane Pallant
Deputy Academic Registrar
October 2015