



**University of London
External System Academic Committee**

Student re-registration in same field of study

Purpose

This paper sets out points for consideration in respect of External students who wish to re-register for an award in the same field of study.

ESAC is asked to consider:

- 1) Whether students should be permitted to cancel their own registration and register afresh for the same award (or an award in the same subject or field of study) without carrying forward their previous record, including attempts at assessment.
- 2) Whether an addition to the General Regulations is required to clarify what happens to the record of students who re-register on the same programme after their registration has been terminated.

This issue has arisen through discussions regarding LLB students who have made requests to terminate their registration and begin afresh, but has applicability in relation to other programmes.

The Director of the Undergraduate Laws Programme will also be providing an oral report on some current student cases, which relate to this issue.

Nina Worrall
Programme Manager
Corporate Performance and Quality Directorate
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1. Background

- 1.1 Under the General Regulations for External System programmes, there is no provision for students to be able to terminate their registration and start again on the same programme of study with a new record.
- 1.2 There is a regulation which allows students whose continuing registration fees have lapsed to cancel and then *renew* their registration. In this case however, the student's previous records, including their attempts at assessment and their initial registration date, remain valid even though they receive a new period of registration in which to complete. (See Regulation 5.13 in Appendix A)
- 1.3 In addition, the General Regulations provide for students whose registration has been terminated, either because they have graduated with an award, or because they have exhausted the permitted number of attempts at an examination, to apply to register again for a programme of study in the same subject or field of study. (See Regulation 2.10 in Appendix A) In this case, the regulations are silent as to what should occur with respect to the student's previous record. In practice, such students are assigned a new date of registration and a new examination record. The Lead College has discretion to decide whether any credits can be carried forward and whether there are any subjects which the students cannot retake based on their previous record.
- 1.4 The Student Assessment and Registry teams frequently receive requests from students who wish to register afresh and discount a previous registration period and/or assessment attempts. There are numerous reasons why a student may wish to restart their programme with a new record, including the following:
 - Students who are disappointed with their performance in assessment and who wish to improve upon their original results by making further attempts
 - Students who have been inactive for a number of years and wish to begin a programme again from the start
 - Students who have registered for a programme, but who did not study for a number of years and have never attempted assessment
 - Students who believe their performance has been affected by personal circumstances and who have made a mitigating circumstances claim, but where the Board of Examiners agreed an outcome of 'no action', or where the claim for mitigating circumstances was not notified to the Board at the appropriate time

In addition, on the LLB programme the reasons include:

- Students who will not complete the programme within the specified time period for a award with qualifying law degree (QLD) status
 - Students who have failed elements of the programme which are requirements for QLD status
- 1.5 The requests from students relating to this issue are so common that on the LLB alone, the number of enquiries runs into hundreds every year. Taking into account those students who have made requests previously and are still registered, the number of students who might wish to register afresh is estimated to be more than a thousand.

2. Specific LLB Issues

- 2.1 One of the conditions students on the LLB have to fulfil in order to obtain qualifying law degree status is that the programme is completed within six years of study. This time period is stipulated by the Solicitor's Regulation Authority (SRA) in the *Guidance for Providers of Recognised Law Programmes*.
- 2.2 The standard time period for registration for an undergraduate degree is eight years, with the provision to apply to renew registration for a further eight years for students who have not completed all the requirements of the award. Students who do not complete the LLB within the six-year period specified by the SRA may still continue to complete the degree, but their award would not have QLD status.
- 2.3 A number of students on the LLB programme who will either not complete within the SRA specified six-year time period and/or who have exceeded the number of permitted attempts at assessment for a degree with QLD, have enquired about whether they can restart the programme from the beginning, without carrying forward their previous records and attempts at assessment and thus commence a new six-year time period.
- 2.4 The Solicitor's Regulation Authority has confirmed in an email to the Director of the Undergraduate Laws Consortium that if students restart the LLB programme completely afresh, carrying forward no credits for previous study, then from the perspective of the SRA, the six-year period can begin again.

3. Options for Consideration

- 3.1 ESAC members are asked to consider the following options with regard to whether the General Regulations should be amended in light of this issue having arisen. These options represent some possible ways forward and are not exhaustive.

Part 1 –Registering Afresh:

ESAC is asked to consider whether:

A) The General Regulations should be amended to allow students to terminate their registration and to start afresh with a new record and registration period.

Or

B) Students should not be permitted to cancel their registration and start afresh with a new student record and registration period.

- 3.2 In considering these options, ESAC is asked to note the following:
 - The External System Academic Board (ESAB) determined in January 2003 that all examination attempts, passes and failures should be shown on the academic transcript for the qualification obtained. In communicating a student's achievement via the transcript, would **not** showing the full details of the time a student has been registered and all attempts at assessment provide an inaccurate picture, or potentially misrepresent their record of academic progress? **Is there continued support for the ESAB decision of January 2003, or does ESAC wish to revisit this decision in light of the issues highlighted in this paper?**

- In the case of LLB students, the Solicitor's Regulation Authority has its own process for dealing with exceptional cases where students have been unable to complete the programme within the specified time period. Factors which may be taken into consideration include:
 - Relocation to a different part of the country or overseas for domestic or occupational reasons
 - Serious financial hardship
 - Illness or a disability of a nature that necessitates the transfer
 - Illness or disability of a dependent for whom the student is the primary carer
 - Significant change in the student's circumstances that is sufficiently beyond the control of the student

Is it preferable to support students who may exceed the time parameters for a QLD degree through the SRA's process, rather than via amending the External System's General Regulations?

- Allowing students to register afresh with a new record would in effect mean that they would be allowed more attempts at assessment over their total number of registrations than is stipulated in the regulations for each programme.
Are there parity and/or quality issues inherent in allowing students to register afresh with a new record and not carry forward previous attempts?
 - Often students who are seeking an opportunity to register afresh have submitted claim(s) for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account, which have not been accepted as relevant by the Examination Board.
If a student were allowed to register afresh, could this in effect override a decision of the Examination Board regarding mitigating circumstances by allowing them further attempts at assessment without penalty?
 - If a student comes to the External System having previously studied for the same award with another institution, their prior study would not be reflected on their External System record.
Should existing External students be considered in the same way as new students who register through the External System having previously studied at another institution?
 - A change to the regulations as per **Option A** could allow LLB students to gain QLD status, who might otherwise not be eligible.
Would not amending the regulations as per Option A unduly disadvantage LLB students who seek another opportunity to gain QLD status, or students on other programmes who wish to begin afresh?
 - If **Option A** is pursued, there are significant operational and resource implications in terms of processing requests to register afresh due to the large volume and the timing of such enquiries -students often commonly raise this query as the closing date for examination entry approaches for example. **The means of handling such requests would need to be addressed.**
- 3.3 If **Option A** is agreed, ESAC is asked to consider:
- **In what circumstances registering afresh would be permitted.** The following factors might have a bearing for example:
 - a. The number of years the student has been registered
 - b. At what stage in the student lifecycle the request is made
 - c. How many examinations have been attempted/passed/failed

- **How many times a student would be allowed to register afresh on the same programme**

3.4 If **Option B** is agreed, ESAC is asked to consider:

- Whether a specific clause should be added to the General Regulations to clarify that students are **not** permitted to cancel their registration and start again with a new record?

Part 2 –Transcript Information:

If Option B is approved, ESAC is asked to consider whether there should be a change to the way that transcript information is presented to cater for cases where students have had a period of inactivity in their early registration.

- 3.5 For students who have not attempted any assessment and who have had a period of inactivity in their early registration, it could be possible to show on the transcript when the period of *active study* began i.e. the date at which the first examination(s) were attempted in addition to the overall registration period. This could ameliorate some student concerns in cases where individuals wish to start again after a period when they were not actively studying.
- 3.6 In considering Part 2, it should be noted that consideration would need to be given to how the wording on the transcript would be presented.

Part 3 –Students who start again on a programme after their registration has been terminated:

ESAC is asked to consider whether the General Regulations should indicate what happens to the prior record of students who begin again on a programme after the termination of their initial registration.

- 3.7 Under the current General Regulations, students may be able to register again for the same programme of study after they have received an award, or after their registration has been terminated because they have exhausted the permitted number of attempts at an examination. Such cases are considered on an individual basis and permission to re-register is granted at the discretion of the University. (See Regulation 2.10 in Appendix A)
- 3.8 In relation to the LLB programme, applications from students in these circumstances are normally only considered after a period of four years has elapsed since the student graduated, or his or her registration was terminated.
- 3.9 As noted above in paragraph 1.3, the General Regulations are silent in relation to what happens to the prior record of students in this category.

Appendix A**Extracts from the General Regulations for Degrees and Other Awards at Certificate, Intermediate and Honours Levels**

- 2.10 Unless paragraph 1 of the relevant Programme Regulations states otherwise, an applicant who has previously received an award of the University of London, or whose registration with the University was terminated because he or she had exhausted the permitted number of attempts at an examination, may apply to register again for a programme of study in the same subject or field of study. All applications will be considered on an individual basis. Permission to register in these circumstances will be given at the discretion of the University and will be subject to any further conditions specified in these General Regulations and in the relevant Programme Regulations, or by the University.
- 2.11 A former student of the University who is applying to register again as an External student under the provisions of paragraphs 2.9 or 2.10 will be required to satisfy the entrance requirements for the programme of study for which he or she is applying and the conditions given in paragraph 2.8.

Conditions for continued registration

- 5.13 Students who are required to pay a continuing registration fee in order to maintain their registration (see paragraph 7 of the Programme Regulations, where applicable) are required to pay this fee by 1 September (or by the date given in the continuing registration letter) in the year in which it is due. The registration of a student who does not pay this fee by the due date will be deemed to have lapsed. Registration may be re-instated upon payment of all outstanding continuing registration fees. Alternatively, a student may opt to cancel his or her registration and pay a new registration fee, receiving a new registration period of eight years. At its discretion, the University may require a student who wishes to continue his or her studies to take one or the other of these options. In either case, attempts at examinations, whether successful or otherwise, will remain valid and will count towards the number of attempts at that examination and towards the final award, as appropriate.