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# Assessment Regulations Report



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LSESU Assessment Regulations Project Artwork

# 1 | Executive Summary

This report has been written and compiled by the Student's Union in order to review the School's existing Assessment Regulations policies and procedures. Underpinning this review is the Union's aim to understand how Assessment Regulations at LSE operate in practice, whether their implementation impacts all students equally and whether, when combined with the School's academic standards, they are contributing to poor student satisfaction and wellbeing. As a Union we have arrived at this aim as the result of a number of considerations.

In regard to the scope of this report, we have reviewed seven Assessment Regulations policies:

- Fit to Sit.
- Exceptional Circumstances.
- Appeals.
- Academic Misconduct.
- Extensions.
- Late Submissions.
- Evidence Requirements.

Whilst these policies have been examined in turn, it is important to note that students will rarely have interacted with only one of these policies and that they often interact during a student's academic journey.

The following five research components were completed and have informed this report:

- ❑ **Benchmark** exercise of LSE's Assessment Regulations against the **OIA Good Practice Framework**
- ❑ **Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs)** carried out for each of the seven Assessment Regulations policies using LSE's EIA template
- ❑ **Benchmark** exercise of LSE's Assessment Regulations against the Regulations policies and procedures of the ten highest ranking **universities in the UK** using each of the seven Assessment Regulations policies
- ❑ **Survey** open to current LSE students and alumni which was operated through SurveyMonkey and collected data on experiences of LSE's Assessment Regulations procedures
  - ❑ 260 responses were recorded
- ❑ Eight Student **Case Studies** collected from a small number of Survey respondents who opted-in to further outlining their experience of LSE's Assessment Regulations procedures

## Overview of Findings

Dissatisfaction and a perceived need for change was high for all policies, with the lowest percentage of students who believed change was needed being 45% (Extensions) and three scores above 80% (Exceptional Circumstances, Academic Appeals, and Late Submissions). Whilst numbers for Academic Misconduct were too small for statistical data, further work is needed as all respondents believed the process was unfair or very unfair and needed changing.

Across the long-answer questions on the regulations a few aspects are raised repeatedly: clarity/transparency, compassion and timing. Further to this, two regulations seemed to underpin issues across the regulations: namely exceptional circumstances and evidence requirements.

### **Clarity & Transparency.**

Confusion was a common sentiment across the regulations, some students directly noted they did not understand the regulation whilst others indicated a lack of understanding through their responses to long-answer questions (e.g. by confounding the regulation with another regulation). This suggests that there is work to be done to increase the clarity of the regulations, as well as how they are communicated to students.

Transparency refers to students feeling the regulations and processes were not just unclear, but even purposefully opaque to prevent students from appealing decisions or obtaining a beneficial outcome. This was associated with feelings of distress.

### **Compassion.**

Students expressed feeling that many of the regulations were uncompassionate and made a difficult time in their life even more difficult. Students felt that the processes assumed that they were attempting to game the system until proven otherwise. They noted that there was a lack of integrated pastoral support. Overall, regulations were not perceived to be student-centred.

### **Timing**

Across the regulations, students highlighted that timing on their side of the equation was too limited (from submitting evidence to length of extensions) but that the timing for the School to reply was too extensive (e.g. granting of extensions and processing of ECs and appeals). As such, timing was seen to disadvantage students across the board and make the process as difficult as possible, this was noted as part of a wider sense that the regulations were designed to discourage students from engaging with the processes.

## **Exceptional Circumstances & Evidence Requirements.**

Both policies were mentioned across several other regulations, underpinning some of the major issues with assessment regulations at LSE. Whilst these did not receive the highest percentage of students who felt change was needed, their far-reaching nature makes them a priority to address. ECs should be addressed in combination with Fit-to-Sit, due to the potential for the latter to negate the former. Whilst improving ECs and Evidence Requirements would not solve all issues across the other regulations, they would go a long way to reducing student stress and implementing a student-centred and compassionate approach to Academic Regulations.

## Overview of Recommendations

### **General Recommendations**

- Improve the clarity and accessibility of the Assessment Regulations (AR) interface including language, tone and terminology
- Ensure students are signposted to wrap-around support services whilst submitting AR applications
- The School should allow self-certification for deferrals as standard

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

- Adjustments for successful EC applications should be made at the module level, not at the degree classification level. This is because ECs are submitted per assessment and so should be adjusted accordingly

### **Fit to Sit**

- The School should cease the enforcement of its 'Fit to Sit' policy because of its disproportionate impact on students with disabilities, mental health concerns and international students with visa constraints

### **Academic Misconduct**

- The School should agree to record all investigatory panels and this recording should be available to the accused student.
- The School must ensure the accused student is informed, in writing, which offence they are suspected of committing and the specific details of the offence as it relates to their work within their first correspondence.
  - This notice should inform them of the potential penalties and consequences associated with the misconduct they are accused of committing

### **Evidence Requirements**

- Alternatives to death certificates should be accepted by the School, such as supporting letters from an Academic Mentor, family or friends, newspaper obituaries or news reports
- The School should formalise its translation offer from the LSE Language Centre and should explore alternatives to requiring students to obtain evidence and/or translations which require fees (including Doctor's Notes)

### **Appeals**

- The School should alter the current 10-day deadline to an explicit 10-day deadline after receipt of grades and feedback from their department (where feedback is offered)

### **Extensions**

- Departments should establish emergency routes for granting extensions for those students who face unexpected circumstances close to the submission deadline.

### **Late Submission**

- Reduce the percent at which marks are deducted from the late submitted work after the initial 24 hours past the deadline from a rate of 5 marks to a rate of 3 marks

## **Concluding Remarks**

This report has highlighted the need for significant changes to LSE's Academic Regulations. The recommendations provided show a path for these regulations to no longer form a barrier to inclusivity and belonging at the school, but be the heart of a student-centred approach which exemplifies the mission of LSE's 2030 strategy to 'Educate for Impact' and 'Develop LSE for Everyone'.

The Student Union looks forward to working together with LSE on implementing these recommendations and ensuring that Academic Regulations are transparent, compassionate, fair, and work for all LSE students.

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## 2 | Introduction

This report has been written and compiled by the Student's Union in order to review the School's existing Assessment Regulations policies and procedures. Underpinning this review is the Union's aim to understand how Assessment Regulations at LSE operate in practice, whether their implementation impacts all students equally and whether, when combined with the School's academic standards, they are contributing to poor student satisfaction and wellbeing. As a Union we have arrived at this aim as the result of a number of considerations.

Firstly, the LSESU Advice Service provides independent advice and support to students as they navigate several of LSE's assessment processes, including exceptional circumstances, appeals, deferrals and academic misconduct. Each year the Advice Service sees hundreds of student cases within these categories and for many years the Service has been concerned about the fairness and parity of outcomes. Particularly, students who use our service have, worryingly, expressed feelings of being unheard and uncared for by their university at their time of greatest need.

Secondly, this report involved the work of three Sabbatical Officers who all have had detrimental or negative experiences of LSE's Assessment Regulations procedures during their time as students at LSE, in both an undergraduate and postgraduate capacity. Furthermore, in their day-to-day support of the student population, they frequently encounter the fact that LSE's Assessment policies and academic culture are a point of considerable stress and anxiety for many students.

In regard to the scope of this report, we have reviewed seven Assessment Regulations policies; Fit to Sit, Exceptional Circumstances, Appeals, Academic Misconduct, Extensions, Late Submissions and Evidence Requirements[1]. Whilst these policies have been examined in turn, it is important to note that students will rarely have interacted with only one of these policies and that they often interact during a student's academic journey.

The following five research components were completed and have informed this report:

- ❑ **Benchmark** exercise of LSE's Assessment Regulations against the **OIA Good Practice Framework**
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The LSESU Assessment Regulations Report was written by Bali Birch Lee (Education Officer) and Laura Goddard (Community and Welfare Officer). The research and analysis of the report's data was carried out by Morgan Fairless (Postgraduate Officer), Ricardo Visinho (Advice Manager) and Declan Katwala (Adviser).

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[1] See Appendix A for the definitions of each of these policies.



## 3 | Methodology

This report has been undertaken by the Assessment Regulations Project Team at LSESU, a collaboration of Sabbatical Officers and the Advice Service team.

The report covers regulations regarding: Exceptional Circumstances, Fit-to-Sit, Academic Misconduct, Appeals, Extensions, Deferrals, and Late Submission. These regulations were chosen as the experience of the project team (as student representatives, former students, and student advisors) suggested that these were the most commonly encountered or problematic.

Research for this report consists of five major sources: survey data; case studies; UK universities' Assessment Regulations; the OIA Good Practice Framework; and LSE specific policies and guidance (most notably the School's Assessment Regulations and Equality Impact Assessment process).

### 3a) Survey data:

**Collection method:** Survey Monkey, see Appendix (B) for a full list of questions.

**Justification:** A survey allowed for the largest number of students to be involved, a mix of ratings based questions and long-text answers allowed for both breadth and depth.

**Days open:** The survey was opened from 29 January until 14 February (i.e. it was open for 17 days).

#### **Survey Advertisement:**

- An email was sent to all students who have accessed the LSESU Advice Service in the last 5 years with a link to the survey.
- A website was created for the Assessment Regulations Review. The survey was embedded on that page.
- The survey was promoted via various stakeholders within LSE, LSESU and also various social media channels.

**Number of responses:** 260 started the survey; 102 completed it until the optional demographic questions.

**Analysis:** A brief statistical overview of the data was undertaken, utilising Survey Monkey's filter system. Long text answers for each regulation were coded thematically, with the most common themes forming the basis of the findings section.

### 3b) Case Studies:

**Collection method:** Most case studies were emailed to the project team, with some being taken orally by the team and transcribed (to ensure accessibility).

**Justification:** Case studies were collected to give a more holistic view of the experience of students navigating intersecting regulations.

**Advertisement:** The survey asked for students to sign up if they were willing to submit a full case-study.

**Number of responses:** 8 Case Studies were collected.

**Analysis:** Case studies were coded thematically and compared to the themes obtained through survey data. Particular attention was given to intersecting regulations.

### **3c) UK Universities' Assessment Regulations:**

**Collection method:** Ten Universities were chosen for their similar reputation to LSE, note was made of the assessment regulations that fit the seven that we focus on in this report.

**Justification:** This exercise sought to establish a sense of common practice in the sector.

**Analysis:** The regulations were compared to LSE's own regulations, and used for inspiration for the 'recommendations' for the report.

### **3d) OIA Good Practice Framework:**

**Collection method:** All references in the Good Practice Framework related to the seven regulations were recorded, for comparison purposes to LSE's own regulations.

**Justification:** This OIA Good Practice Framework is a form of sector wide guidance.

**Analysis:** Comparison to LSE's regulations was made. The OIA Good Practice Framework was then used to uniform the recommendations of the report.

### **3d) LSE Regulations & EIAs:**

**Collection method:** Regulations were collected from across the LSE's website. EIAs were not available and thus conducted by the Project Team.

**Justification:** EIAs are a core mode of understanding how regulations affect different and overlapping minoritised groups, the team believe it to be an oversight that there were not already EIAs in place to identify areas for improvement and mitigation.

**Analysis:** The regulations were analysed through comparison to the OIA Good Practice Framework and other University Policy, through the student facing survey, as well as the conduction of EIAs. EIAs were then compared to the data gained by the surveys and used to evaluate recommendations.

## 4 | Survey Findings & Themes by Regulation

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

Just over half of students who returned the survey responded that they had submitted or considered submitting Exceptional Circumstances. Of this group half went on to give their options on the process. 64%<sup>1</sup> reported that they believed them to be 'very unfair' or 'unfair', 16% felt they were neither fair nor unfair and 20% believed that they were 'fair' or 'very fair'. 84% believed that the policy needed changing.

When we restrict this data by characteristic, there are some concerning trends. The data does become smaller so these can only be used as indications of potential themes. For disabled students two-thirds reported submitting or considering submitting ECs, those who believed the process to be either very unfair or unfair rose to 83%, and 100% of respondents felt the regulations need to be changed.

Similar trends appear in the views of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Black students, with circa 80% of each group believing the regulations were either unfair or very unfair - and 90% of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds believing changes were necessary. Asian students were less likely to have submitted or considered submitting Exceptional Circumstances (30%). Further research should be done to establish whether there are cultural barriers to considering or submitting Exceptional Circumstance.

Written responses most commonly complained about the lack of clarity and transparency in the process and decision making; high, insensitive and inappropriate evidence requirements; insufficient changes to results; no response or long wait periods; rejection due to fit-to-sit and deferral; insufficient emotional support; and distressing process. A few students noted that the process had worked well for them. It is also important to note that some students' answers indicated that they did not understand what ECs were and confused them with alternative Assessment Regulations (such as deferrals). Comments that concern other aspects of the report (specifically fit-to-sit and evidence requirements) have been collated in the relevant sections, to avoid repetition.

Transparency:

Students expressed frustration that they did not find out the result of their EC request until the end of their degree, many also noted they were unsure on whether their EC had been accepted or had any effect on their grades. It was noted that this does not help ease students' anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup> All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

After submitting my forms I didn't receive anything back from LSE.

It is completely untransparent to me whether or how my exceptional circumstances were processed and/or had any effect on my assessment in general.

I was granted the exceptional circumstances status, however I wasn't fully sure how it influenced by grades or markings at the time, it did reassure me, but I wouldn't say it took away the entirety of my concerns.

It does not help your mental health problems. When something happens abruptly to you when doing exams, then you submitted a form to hope someone will get it.

It was further expressed that guidelines and decision making processes were not clear, particularly when it came to why an EC had been rejected.

Include a longer list of examples of conditions that are included in that description to give struggling students some clarity

Once, I submitted an EC with strong evidence which was rejected without reason twice. The staff reviewing the EC said she couldn't explain the reasons for the rejection. I had no idea if this was merely due to a formatting issue or if even more evidence was wanted. By not codifying into the EC policy that an explanation has to be provided, staff members have full discretion to decide to accept or reject the EC without accountability or oversight.

I experienced multiple close bereavements and multiple family illnesses within a year whilst submitting my dissertation and my exams for a one year masters. However, my exceptional circumstances were not awarded based on the fact they were not 'compelling enough'. I received my results and was not told until after the period of appeal whether or not they had been awarded meaning that I was unable to appeal this.

## Undue Stress

Students highlighted a variety of ways in which the process was distressing. As noted above, students felt that the wait time was unnecessarily stressful. Other concerns included insensitivity to students experiencing trauma and grief and a lack of emotional support.

The language and evidence requirements need to change and to take into account that specific circumstances require different expectations and sensitivity.

The process is particularly traumatic for survivors of sexual violence. I would have expected there to be a separate policy for such situations, or at least some acknowledgement that these experiences necessitate sensitivity.

As a GTA at LSE, a student's parent died and the amount of bureaucracy required there - printing extra death certificates during a time of grief etc - appeared onerous and inhumane

I think more support from Academic Mentors in general is required. i.e, when emailing my AA about my family bereavement, I didn't even receive a reply like 'sorry for your loss'. More like, if you want to defer you can (a reply of very few words) - fair enough though, it is what it is. It's a shame when you reach out for support, and you don't really get any.

## Changes to Results

Students voiced concerns regarding the effectiveness of Exceptional Circumstances to assist students whose applications are accepted.

I am quite pessimistic about the EC's and really unsure how they will help me. Personally, I suffered a family tragedy a week before my Jan 2021 exams and was told EC's will only be taken into consideration if I am 3 marks off the next grade boundary in a paper.

Although one can see why it's hard to just simply add some amount of marks for students facing such circumstances, without such mechanisms that include adding marks or asking tutors to leniently mark the papers, the EC policy seems useless for the most part

I think EC forms should have a guaranteed outcome rather than "we may shift your mark in favour of a grade if only on a boundary"

## **Fit to Sit**

66% of students stated that they were aware of the 'fit to sit', leaving a third of students unaware of the regulation. Of those who were aware, views were very split - with a slight lean towards feeling the policy was unfair (42%) rather than fair (34%) and a large section who thought neither (24%). 61% felt that the policy should be changed. None of the disabled respondents felt that 'Fit to Sit' was fair,

43% felt it was unfair and 57% felt it was neither fair nor unfair. 71% believed that the policy should be changed.

The comments highlighted that students did not have a complete grasp of the policy, notably including 8 of the 15 responses from those who believed the policy to be 'fair' or 'very fair'. The majority conflated Fit-to-Sit with some version of Exceptional Circumstances.

Within the free text sections, the most common issues raised were: 'Exceptional Circumstances Trap' whereby declaring yourself fit-to-sit prevents you from later submitting ECs; 'Unfit to declare oneself fit', challenging the assumption that students who are unfit necessarily realise this; that it is difficult to define and unsuitable for those with chronic or long-term health issues; and that the policy relies on the accessibility of deferrals, which are not always a suitable option.

Exceptional Circumstances Trap:

Fit to sit's existence means the EC process is almost impossible or unattainable for students who actually need the latter...Many students will 'soldier on' through fear of missing an exam or a lack of faith in the EC process.

It needs to be replaced with something that works with other assessment regulations and works for students not against them. The EC process also needs to be improved so that students have faith in not sitting an exam.

Unfit to Declare Oneself Fit:

If you are unfit to sit, then you are unfit to make the judgment call about sitting or not.

LSE's Fit to Sit Policy fails to recognise that some students may not be in the right state of mind to make this decision.

I believe that the pressure to perform at a certain level is immense at LSE and that our inability to perform at the best of our capacity due to external circumstances might not become apparent until after we have submitted the assignment.

How fit is fit-to-sit?:

Especially for individuals with chronic mental health issues declaring themselves fit to sit can be daunting and place an unfair burden on those individuals.

Just because I feel I am disadvantaged when taking an exam, doesn't mean I am not fit to take my exam.

Nothing is done for those who are not 'fit to sit' (how do they define this?)

Unsuitable alternatives:

The declaration is too extreme. In some cases there are simply no other options than to take the assessment, even without being fully healthy. The policy fails to consider that entirely.

In my case, I was compelled to sit an exam when I was by no means 'fit to sit' because the alternative option was not possible for me to take...As the university did not offer summer resits for MSc students, I was compelled to sit the exam as my visa would have been cancelled if I chose not to, as I would not have completed the course. I would have then lost the four month period following the programme to find a job in the UK, and then sent back to my home country. In essence, my options were to give up what I'd worked towards for years, or to sit an exam I knew I wasn't in the right state of mind to sit and hope I didn't fail.

[It] doesn't take into account that students evaluate tons of factors before being forced into sitting as their best option and their exam grade can suffer as the least bad result.

You could be experiencing a long term mental or physical health condition that affects your ability to sit the exam/submit your work, yet deferring this does not resolve the issue; you do not know if you will be in a better position during the deferral period.

### **Academic Appeals**

29% of respondents noted that they had submitted or considered submitting an Academic Appeal. Of these 42% felt that the policy was 'very unfair' and a further 26% said it was 'unfair', 21% believed it to be 'neither fair nor unfair' and 10% reported it was 'fair'. No respondents believed that it was 'very fair'. 89% of the respondents believed that the policy should be changed, including all undergraduates who responded.

There were common themes and points of issue which ran throughout the free-text answers given by respondents including: The appeals process as *unfair* or *uncompassionate*, the *short window* to appeal, the lack of *transparency and support*, and a *harmful institutional culture* at LSE towards students.

The appeals process as unfair or uncompassionate:

The different processes from EC to Appeals to fit to sit in my experience seemed as if they never communicated and the more I pressed my case to show that I have been wronged the more the school became vindictive as if it was a personal issue. My department's admins one told me "you can file all the appeals you want you will still lose". I should've believed him.

It was fair, as in I believe all the evidence I submitted was considered. However, it seemed unfair that after consideration of these factors, the fit to sit policy allows the Appeals Committee to overlook any evidence submitted by the student - hence deeming the entire process somewhat ineffectual.

The short window of time allowed to submit an appeal:

I wanted to submit an appeal based on my exceptional circumstances not being awarded. However, I was not offered the information until after the very narrow 10 day window in which you can appeal.

LSE's Academic Appeals policy provides only a minimal timeframe for appeals. This fails to recognise that some students may not be capable of adhering to the deadline at the time (e.g. due to a mental health condition).

A lack of transparency and support in the appeals process:

The process was completely opaque from my end, and never gave me a chance to speak with anyone for advice. It also took months for a decision.

Harmful institutional culture that students perceive to be unique to LSE:

An appeals process should be a collaborative, conversational process in which the student and the original assessor of the work can participate in arbitration led by a third party, who can assess the particular context of the situation and decide whether a regrade is required. As structured, the system heavily favors the institution/the original graders' judgments. This is explicitly stated in guidelines around filing appeals, which is discouraging to a student who believes their complaint will not be given fair consideration. Indeed, I knew of multiple instances where a classmate filed a legitimate appeal and was nevertheless denied...The appeals policy at LSE speaks to a mistrust of students that harms morale.

It is extremely difficult to raise appeals in courses where there is a degree of subjectivity, as that constitutes "academic judgment" (and is therefore not challengeable). Further, academics are aware of this and can (and do) use academic judgment as an umbrella term to avoid providing clear reasoning on the rationale for a given grade. For instance, I experienced a situation where an academic essentially refused to provide feedback for a grade that I considered to be unfair. However, without recourse to appeal I



could not obtain sufficient information to understand the process of marking, or reasoning behind the grade award. This lack of appeal or right to clear reasoning is a serious shortcoming of LSE in my mind.

Finally, students seemed to have greater faith in the complaints (as opposed to appeals) process which allows a cohort or a large group to flag an issue(s) within a specific course:

There was an instance where a course (GY209 during the 2019/20 period) was marked extremely harshly. The overwhelming majority of students (possibly 85%) scored a 2:2 or less. However, upon taking this complaint as a cohort to the Department, scores were largely corrected and upgraded after 6 months.

Had the situation provided not had an entire class coming forward, it may not have been taken as seriously. Individual cases need to be taken more seriously, as to the best of my knowledge academic appeals don't extend beyond an administrative check.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Only 4% of respondents had experience with the Academic Misconduct procedure, so this data pool is very small. However, all respondents believed the procedure to be 'very unfair' or 'unfair' and that it needed to be changed. The number of respondents was too small for this section to check for disparities by characteristic.

As only a limited number of students had gone through this process it is difficult to group issues into themes but all comments shared similar notions that they had been treated harshly or unfairly by their panels and the School.

The process[es] never communicate with each other and my medical condition that took place and escalated throughout the year was ignored. I was judged by a panel (not the professors) that had no idea what I had to go through.

[Panels] don't take into consideration extenuating circumstances. Penalties are so severe rather than allowing students to correct their mistakes like humans.

### **Extensions**

37% declared that they had applied or considered applying for an extension, 50% believed the process to be fair and 23% felt that they were 'neither fair nor unfair'. However, 28% felt that they were unfair or very unfair. 45% believed that changes

should be made to the policy. Disabled students were more likely to apply or consider applying for an extension (56% of respondents). 60% believed extensions to be unfair or very unfair and should be changed.

Written comments offered contradictory accounts of the Extension process, most likely due to changes to the process and examination styles during Covid and the decentralised nature of the policy.

#### Approval:

Those who felt the policy to be fair most commonly referenced the approval of extension requests. In contrast to feedback on other regulations, students did not mention their requests being unfairly denied.

The process is fair because they are generally accepted

Extensions have been granted quite readily in my experience.

#### Timing:

Some students criticised the length of time that extensions took to process, noting particular issues with specific departmental approaches.

Takes up to 5 working days to grant, you have to know you need one way in advance.

I did not have enough time to submit the extensions policy because my difficulties occurred very shortly before the exam...I also did not have time to follow the Methodology department's procedure for this in addition to the university's overall because their department requires a meeting with the professor who will decide whether to allow your extension to progress for further consideration.

In a time crunch where you think you could finish by the deadline but it turns out you're unable to at the last minute due to anxiety attacks - realizing that you're not at your best and aren't submitting the best assessment reflective of your capabilities - there needs to be emergency extension protocols.

Whilst others noted that their experience of the process had been swift:

Heard back within 48 hours.

Within my department they have been approved quickly and fairly

I applied for an extension during the rather relaxed Covid regulations, received a quick response that immediately extended my deadline to the day I had requested

**Evidence & Clarity:**

The changes to requirements due to the pandemic have been appreciated. However, some students noted issues with getting evidence for mental health concerns and complex situations, as well as feeling unclear as to what is expected from them. This will be addressed in the section of evidence requirements.

**Maximum Time:**

Some students highlighted the issue of maximum timelines on extensions, detailing specific issues such as bereavement and disabilities. The School does allow longer extensions exceptional circumstances but in these cases that had not been offered:

I had a summative due recently where I had been given a 10 day (the max) extension. Because this wouldn't be extended by one day I had to come home from a funeral and work on my essay right away. The fact the extension policy is so inflexible means I can't grieve a bereavement and I find it pretty abhorrent

My father faced a critical heart event and I wasn't able to make use of the two week extension period that the sociology department gave.

**Late Submissions**

15% of respondents had experience with the late submissions policy/process, whilst 12% felt that it was 'very fair', the rest of the answers were equally divided leaving just over 29% believing it was neither fair nor unfair, and 59% believing it was unfair or very unfair. 88% stated that the policy should be changed. These numbers are higher for international students (88% said unfair or very unfair), the small samples from PGT (83% said unfair or very unfair) disabled students and Black students suggested similar dissatisfaction (with 100% believing the regulations need changing).

The most common theme amongst students who have had a negative experience with the Late Submission policy was the perception that the School lacked empathy during its implementation:

There should be an option to have a grace period with no penalty, given an unexpected circumstance, that does not necessarily require proof. Sometimes unfortunate incidents happen unexpectedly and it is extremely burdensome to require the student to prove that their circumstance falls in one of the extenuating circumstance categories; we are also not often thinking to collect the necessary 'evidence' when in the midst of an unfortunate situation

Late submission penalisation should consider mental health or disability, and should include participation of counsellors or disability advisers.

Some of the respondents related their negative view of Late Submission to their lack of faith in the Extensions and/or Exceptional Circumstances procedures:

I chose to submit late because LSE's exceptional circumstances requirements were infeasible to satisfy in the short time frame that I had to collect all of the evidence and submit them, whilst working on my assessment. The time to submit the form and documentation would have eaten up too large a portion of the time that I could've spent writing my paper, so I chose to suffer the points penalty because I wasn't certain my request would be approved and I couldn't take the risk of it not being approved then losing an additional 5 or more points.

Other students noted specific issues that have arisen in the context of Covid-19 and online assessments, particularly with connectivity problems:

For timed online exams they should have longer scanning times. For the exams I have sat the scanning time has been 30 minutes. In an ideal situation, yes, 30 minutes is ample time. However, people including myself live in student accommodation or flats with cheap/unreliable wifi. I have only submitted an exam late once - but the issue was to do with wifi and internet connectivity issues.

### **Evidence Requirements**

43% of students had submitted or considered submitting an application that required them to provide evidence. Of this group, views on the policy were very split, with 16% believing it to be very unfair, 32% unfair, 27% fair, and just 2% very fair. 23% felt it was neither fair nor unfair. However, 70% felt that changes needed to be made. This goes up to 84% for disabled students.

A key issue identified by students was the deadlines set by the School to submit medical evidence. Many expressed that the need to submit evidence within a short deadline couple with long waiting times in the NHS, particularly for mental health support, created a high-pressured, distressing environment for them:

I required medical evidence for mental health issues which given the NHS and its long waits for mental health related matters it was a stressful and long process that made me feel even worse than when I started.

I had a brain aneurysm in 2016 which left me with long term brain damage. I applied for extra time and rest breaks in my exams, but they would only permit me to have them in my first year, even when I reapplied. They said that the doctors letters were not detailed enough.

I once needed evidence to ask for a deferral of a summative test because I was very sick and could not get out of bed. I was feeling bad enough and did not want to have to sit in the cold NHS waiting room for 2+ hours, but had to force myself to do so, to be able to show proof of my being sick. The only alternative is to pay for a Qured doctor home visit, but this is very pricey and costs over 80 pounds. I believe LSE should allow self-diagnosis or give an extended timeframe for students to gather medical evidence.

Others noted the particularly distressing experience of collecting evidence for family or friends' deaths:

I didn't have my late friend's death certificate, but it didn't make her death any less real or any less impactful on me. I chose not to badger her family for it because they have suffered enough. LSE standards of evidence shouldn't cause more trauma or hardship to fulfill.

The standards of evidence are exceptionally high and put a huge burden on students to write in a clear and comprehensive style to prove that they are not able to perform well academically, which seems like a contradiction. They can also require a huge amount of emotional labour. I submitted evidence for a deferral after my brother passed away during my masters course and required me to gather a huge amount of evidence including death certificates and doctors notes which are not ideal when experiencing immediate grief.

The extent of proof needed to demonstrate I had been affected by a bereavement was excessive and was almost enough to put me off applying.

A similar sentiment was expressed by students who sadly had experienced sexual violence and who found the evidence requirements surrounding such cases to be distressing and problematic.

Many students felt the School needed to shift its narrative around evidence requirements and be less sceptical of students, particularly in cases of personal struggle:

It is overly burdensome and can create stress in an already stressful situation - greater trust should be given to students' word.

When asked how they would change the current evidence requirements, students gave numerous examples:

Do not require death certificates and allow family members' statements to be valid forms of evidence.

Change the language around evidence requirements. LSE should have the language reviewed by a third party.

# Overview of Themes.

Across the regulations a few aspects are raised repeatedly, namely clarity/transparency, compassion and timing. Further to this, two regulations seemed to underpin issues across the regulations.

## Clarity & Transparency.

Confusion was a common sentiment across regulations, some students directly noted they did not understand the regulation whilst others indicated a lack of understanding through their responses to long-answer questions (e.g. by confusing the regulation with another regulation). This suggests that there is work to be done to increase the clarity of the regulations, as well as how they are communicated to students.

Transparency alludes to students feeling the regulations and processes were not just unclear, but even purposefully opaque to prevent students from appealing decisions or obtaining a beneficial outcome. This was associated with feelings of stress.

## Compassion.

Students expressed feeling that many of the regulations were uncompassionate and made a difficult time in their life even more difficult. Students felt that the processes assumed that they were attempting to game the system until proven otherwise. They noted that there was a lack of integrated pastoral support. Overall, regulations were not perceived to be student-centred.

## Timing.

Across the regulations, students highlighted that time was too limited for them (from submitting evidence to length of extensions) but that the timing for the School to reply was too extensive (e.g. granting of extensions and processing of ECs and appeals). As such, timing was seen to disadvantage students across the board and make the process as difficult as possible, this was noted as part of a wider sense that the regulations were designed to discourage students from engaging with the processes.

## Exceptional Circumstances & Evidence Requirements.

Both policies were mentioned across several other regulations, underpinning some of the major issues with assessment regulations at LSE. Whilst these did not receive the highest percentage of students who felt change was needed, their far-reaching nature makes them a priority to address. ECs should be addressed in combination with Fit-to-Sit, due to the potential for the latter to negate the

former. Whilst improving ECs and Evidence Requirements would not solve all issues across the other regulations, they would go a long way to reducing student stress and implementing a student-centred and compassionate approach to Academic Regulations.

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## 5 | Recommendations Table

The following divisions and posts have been assigned recommendations that fall or could potentially fall within their jurisdiction:

- Education Committee and Academic Board
- Pro-director for Education
- Academic Registrar's Division (ARD)
- Communication Division
- LSE Departments
- LSE Language Centre
- Harassment and Safeguarding Forum
- LSESU Advice Service

There are 26 recommendations made, across the seven Assessment Regulations policies. Following the recommendations table, are a series of student case studies which outline, in depth, their experience with a particular regulation. We have then highlighted how the recommendations made would have prevented or mitigated the negative impact felt by the student as they went through the procedure.

No.	Recommendation	OIA Good Practice/ EIA/ Other Reference	Comments
<b>General Recommendations</b>			
<b>1</b>	Improve the clarity and accessibility of the AR interface including language, tone and terminology.	[OIA] Regulations and procedures should be written in a clear and easy to understand manner. <b>S125, p26, 1.</b>	
<b>2</b>	Ensure students are signposted to wrap-around support services whilst submitting AR applications.	Student consultation EIAs (see Appendix C)	This is especially pertinent for AR procedures which require interviews and panels.
<b>3</b>	The School should allow self-certification for deferrals as standard.	[OIA] Good practice to allow students to declare themselves not 'fit to sit', without having to approve that declaration. I.e., automatic deferrals. <b>S60, p22, 2.</b>	Remove the contentious wording "Deferral is not a right" from LSE's interface



<b>Exceptional Circumstances</b>			
<b>4</b>	Options for students facing difficulty during an assessment period (e.g. waving late submission policies and uncapped resits) should be collated in an Exceptional Circumstance form, allowing students to see all the options available to them and note any preference in outcome.	Generated from consultation with ARD.	<p>Consultation made us aware of a variety of options for students, collating these would offer increased clarity of available options for students.</p> <p>Time should also be taken to explore additional options for students facing exceptional circumstances.</p>
<b>5</b>	Adjustments for successful EC applications should be made at the module level, not at the degree classification level. This is because ECs are submitted per assessment and so should be adjusted accordingly.	Student consultation and universities benchmarking exercise	Options include a standardised increase, a staged increase, and a change at classification level of the module (similar to the current process at degree level). Other aspects that ECs should allow include: non-capped resits and waving of late penalties.
<b>6</b>	Requests for ECs should be considered on an annual basis and decisions to be communicated within one week of the panel reaching a conclusion.	<p>[OIA] Requests should be considered quickly. <b>S31, p13, 2.</b></p> <p>Should end with a written decision, including reasons, being sent to the student. <b>S19, p11, 2.</b></p> <p>This should provide enough detail to enable the student to understand why a decision was made and covering the right to appeal. <b>S105, p33, 2.</b></p>	<p>Decisions should be sent to students via email and include details of the reasoning behind the decision to address the transparency issue which students face.</p> <p>Appeals should be allowed on the basis of these details or on the basis of new evidence.</p>
<b>7</b>	Whilst evidence and details of impact are ideal, deliberation of ECs should give the benefit of the doubt to students.	<p>[OIA] A student who is grappling with serious circumstances that are very likely to have had an impact on their performance should normally be given the benefit of the doubt (if they can't supply evidence). <b>S46, p17, 2.</b></p> <p><a href="#">Exceptional Circumstances EIA</a></p>	<p>E.g. if a student has a family member die, obtaining a death certificate can be difficult and they may not be in the best place to describe the impact this is having on their capacity to study</p> <p>This addresses the lack of compassion that some students feel underpins the current AR procedures</p>

<b>Fit to Sit</b>			
<b>8</b>	<p>The School should review the policy and implementation of 'Fit to Sit' because of its disproportionate impact on students with disabilities, mental health concerns and international students with visa constraints with the aim of</p> <p><i>EITHER</i>; ceasing the use of the Fit to Sit policy</p> <p><i>OR</i>; delivering a mitigation plan which addresses the EDI concerns outlined in the Fit to Sit EIA</p> <p><i>AND</i> addresses a lack of student understanding of Fit to Sit and its implications.</p>	<p><a href="#">Fit to Sit EIA</a></p> <p>Student consultation</p>	<p>It conflicts with the Exceptional Circumstances procedure and undermines the applications of students with legitimate cases.</p> <p>It is not well understood by students and causes unnecessary stress.</p> <p>Students who are not fit to sit often do not have the capacity to make the decision, nor is there clarity on what degree of 'fit to sit' one is.</p> <p>Some other top UK Universities do not operate this policy.</p>
<b>Academic Misconduct</b>			
<b>9</b>	<p>The School should agree to record all investigatory panels and this recording should be available to the accused student.</p>	<p>Student consultation</p> <p>[OIA] The provider should have a process for ensuring that cases are treated consistently across all departments.</p> <p><b>S53, p16, 3.</b></p>	<p>Alongside the appeals process there must be a clear process for complaints from students or their SU advisor based on the conduct of investigators.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p>The School must ensure the accused student is informed, in writing, which offence they are suspected of committing and the specific details of the offence as it relates to their work within their first correspondence. This should <i>include</i> the investigation stage prior to a formal allegation. This notice should inform them of the potential penalties and consequences associated with the misconduct they are suspected or accused of committing.</p>	<p>[OIA] Students must be told in writing which offence they are suspected of committing, and why.</p> <p><b>S50, p16, 3.</b></p> <p>Students should be made aware of the consequences of any penalties imposed.</p> <p><b>S50, p16, 3.</b></p>	<p>This should include which module and the specific assessment, what kind of plagiarism is suspected, and what has led to the department or staff member believing that plagiarism has occurred.</p> <p>Students must be allowed to respond to the allegations both before and during the initial investigation.</p> <p>When informed of the allegation, the student should be pointed towards the LSESU Advice Service for assistance. The student should be encouraged to have a member of the advice team, representative from the SU, or friend to be a silent attendee at the initial investigation meeting.</p>

11	The School should commit to initial investigations taking place within 60 days of an allegation and to appeals being heard within 30 days from the decision date of the initial investigation.	[OIA] Good practice for the initial investigation to take 60 days from allegation and a further 30 to hear appeals. <b>S17, p8, 3.</b>	
12	LSE must do further work to help students from all academic backgrounds understand its regulations, particularly concerning plagiarism.  Students must be treated with respect throughout academic misconduct investigations. Training on sensitive investigation should be given to all members of staff who are investigating allegations and conducting panels.	[OIA] Students should be provided guidance, particularly for international students from different academic backgrounds, to ensure all students are aware of the LSE standard for plagiarism.  <a href="#">Academic Misconduct EIA</a>	Investigators should give students the benefit of the doubt that misconduct is the result of an accident or lack of understanding and not a deliberate attempt at cheating.  Where departmental or module policies differ from the wider LSE policy, this should be made available as a resource through moodle and be discussed at the beginning of the year and ahead of all assessments.
13	LSE must set up an audit process to ensure the consistency of Academic Misconduct processes across the School.	[OIA] The provider should have a process for ensuring that cases are treated consistently across all departments. <b>S53, p16, 3.</b>	The SU acknowledges the check already in place by ARD of penalties levied by departments but believes an audit process should encompass the entire process start to finish, including communications.
<b>Evidence Requirements</b>			
14	Alternatives to death certificates should be accepted by the School, such as supporting letters from an Academic Mentor, family or friends, newspaper obituaries or news reports. Fact of death should be sufficient rather than requiring evidence or details of impact (for close family - we suggest this includes. parents/guardians, children/dependants, grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins). Beyond this, indications of closeness should be given.	[OIA] It may be insensitive or difficult for a student to obtain a death certificate in case of bereavement. Providers should a) consider evidence from other sources such as supporting letters from personal tutor/family/friends, newspaper obituaries or news reports <b>S55, p20, 2.</b>	Benefit of the doubt to be applied where the student explains difficulty in obtaining evidence.  The School should acknowledge that obtaining a death certificate may be highly traumatising for a student, and in some cultures it may not be appropriate for a student to request one.

15	The School should invite a 3rd party organisation such as Lime Culture to review its language and 'evidence' requirements for ECs in cases of sexual assault and violence.	<a href="#">Exceptional Circumstances EIA</a>  Student consultation	This recommendation invites the School to consider whether evidence is possible in these situations, if they are forcing students to disclose to the School in order to obtain evidence (e.g. Safe Contact letter) and whether the term evidence is appropriate in these contexts.
16	The School should formalise its translation offer from the LSE Language Centre and should explore alternatives to requiring students to obtain evidence and/or translations which require fees (including Doctor's Notes).	[OIA] Students may not be able to afford to use professional certified translation services, providers should be willing to explore alternatives to certified translations. <b>S48, p18, 2.</b>  <a href="#">Evidence Requirements EIA</a>	The School should also consider offering a route for students to have accelerated access to its Hardship Funds if they are struggling financially to meet the costs of the School's evidence requirements. Deadlines for evidence should be extended to allow for long waiting times with medical professionals and translation of documents.
17	The School should establish a 'special circumstances' route for students who face barriers obtaining a diagnosis and/or evidence.	[OIA] A student who is grappling with serious circumstances that are very likely to have had an impact on their performance should normally be given the benefit of the doubt (if they can't supply evidence). <b>S46, p17, 2.</b>  <a href="#">Evidence Requirements EIA</a>  Student consultation	This includes but is not limited to non-compliant GPs and complex, undiagnosed health conditions.  BAME individuals, women and trans/non-binary people are more likely to be dismissed or not believed by medical professionals which can lead to diagnoses taking well over the 3-4 years that a student may spend at LSE.
18	Where an Inclusion Plan is already in place for a student detailing a long term health issue or disability, the School should not require the student to submit evidence for a flare-up as the School will already be aware that this could unexpectedly affect a student.	[OIA] If a student has a long-term condition which has been disclosed to the school, the provider should not ask for further evidence in the case of "flare ups". <b>S54, p20, 2.</b>  <a href="#">Evidence Requirements EIA</a>	

<b>Appeals and Department Feedback</b>			
<b>19</b>	The School should alter the current 10-day deadline to an explicit 10-day deadline after receipt of grades and feedback from their department (where feedback is offered).	Student consultation  University benchmarking	Consultation with the School indicated that some key stakeholders feel this recommendation is unworkable due to feedback not being required for many assessments and the deadline being too short. We have chosen to retain the recommendation for two reasons. 1) Reflecting on work and feedback is essential for learning, summative work should still allow for formative learning experiences. 2) Feedback can indicate that there has been an administrative error (which is a basis for an appeal), e.g. if the feedback does not appear on the same topic.
<b>20</b>	The School should improve its transparency and communication around departmental feedback and its relation to the appeal process.	[OIA] Regulations and procedures should be written in a clear and easy to understand manner. <b>S125, p26, 1.</b>	The fact that many students do not understand why they have received a grade indicates insufficient feedback methods and understanding of marking processes. LSE should set up a plan to address transparency and student feedback, including extensive student consultation as well as reviewing departmental consistency.
<b>21</b>	The School should commit to a timeframe for the appeals process whereby: a) The full appeal process takes no longer than 90 days b) AND The School takes no longer than 60 days to identify if there are valid grounds for an appeal and no longer than 30 days for the board to make and communicate the decision.	[OIA] 90 calendar days for appeal and review to be completed. <b>S25, p11, 1.</b>  Student consultation	The School already commits to a maximum of 90 days for appeals decisions but we encourage the adoption of 20b) within this timeframe.
<b>22</b>	Where an entire cohort of a module has seemingly underperformed, the School should implement a procedure whereby an investigation is automatically established.	Student consultation	

<b>Extensions</b>			
<b>23</b>	Departments should establish emergency routes for granting extensions for those students who face unexpected circumstances close to the submission deadline. This would prevent those students from having to apply for ECs.	<a href="#">Extensions EIA</a> Student consultation	This can be supported by a counsellor, disability or mental health advisor at SWS/DWS as well as the student's Academic Mentor.
<b>24</b>	The School should commit to a two working-day turnaround for granting extensions.	Student consultation	The current turnaround time of 5 working days requires students to be aware they will need an extension far in advance of the deadline and prohibits those with sudden and unforeseen negative circumstances accessing the policy.
<b>25</b>	The School should better communicate the length of extension students can apply for, particularly for undergraduate and postgraduate students completing a dissertation.	Student consultation	
<b>Late Submissions</b>			
<b>26</b>	Reduce the percent at which marks are deducted from the late submitted work after the initial 24 hours past the deadline from a rate of 5 marks to 3 marks.	Universities benchmarking Student consultation <a href="#">Late Submission EIA</a>	This still penalises students for late submissions but does not paralyse their prospects of achieving an acceptable (albeit affected) mark.

**N.B.** The implementation of the other policies' recommendations - mainly Exceptional Circumstances and Extensions - would mitigate many of the issues students communicated around the Late Submission policy.

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### Case study A

In this case, a student experienced panic attacks and acute anxiety which they felt paralysed them during their exam and they did not achieve what they felt they would have without mental health concerns. Importantly, the student attempted to prevent this happening before their exam by taking beta blockers.

*“While it might work well for other circumstances (e.g. physical illness), the time limitations within the EC process do not reflect that **the very circumstances that might make a student eligible to submit a claim can be the ones preventing them to do so** within a very narrow timeframe. Since the same applies to the Appeals Process, I think the university should take steps to create longer timeframes to allow students to submit claims once they become capable of doing so”*

Here we argue that the student would have benefitted from recommendation 6, aiming to improve the level of compassion given to students submitting ECs and that, given they were experiencing a period of heightened anxiety, their application should’ve been given the benefit of the doubt if it was of a ‘poorer’ standard.

### Case Study B

A student unfortunately fell ill with bacterial tonsillitis four days before their exam date and suffered “severe pain” and symptoms as a result. They felt that because of their concerns around visas and their fear of what it meant to declare themselves unfit for their exam, they sat the exam. Moreover, they expressed that the doctor’s note they had to secure for their ECs application cost them £25 which is a large up-front fee for a student facing financial hardship or who is from a low-income background.

When asked whether they agreed with LSE’s argument that the current regulations exist to uphold the university’s academic rigour, they replied:

*“No human being should be forced to make the choice that their physical pain is worth making them take the exam... I do not believe the current exam structure is what safeguards LSE’s academic rigor”.*

The recommendation to reform Fit to Sit would mitigate cases such as this and could have prevented this student’s experience from happening (particularly as

they were constrained by visa concerns and felt their only real choice was to take an exam despite being very unwell).

### Case Study C

A student with a poor experience of the appeals process expressed disappointment that their feedback was released “*one or two days before the appeals deadline*”, giving the little time to write a comprehensive appeal. In the meantime, they had been told by both professors and student representatives that

*“the appeals process essentially was there to prevent students from formally petitioning and that they should not expect a successful appeal in almost any case”.*

This case in point demonstrates how essential it is for the School to commit to a timeframe for the appeals process and that the appeals deadline is extended to 10 days **after** the student receives their grade/feedback from their department (recommendation 18).

### Case Study D

A student told us that they had tragically been a victim of a crime that had left them with significant health problems as well as a disability. They highlighted that it was difficult to complete the extension application and subsequent evidence requirements as for them, they were only just coming to understand what the incident meant and how it would affect their ability to study:

*“The process of requesting deadline extensions has been particularly difficult for me, as I need to substantiate my request but I couldn’t even comprehend the reasons why I wasn’t able to complete the tasks.”*

They added that they hoped the School would implement,

*“A more inclusive treatment [that] would consider the evidence I provided to grant an extension time reasonable and proportional to my difficulties.”*

Recommendation 22, giving departments the ability to allow longer extended deadlines in complex or particularly traumatic cases without requiring the student to complete applications and secure evidence, would’ve saved this student considerable stress in an already traumatic period.



## 6 | Proposal for Implementation / Education Committee Proposal

Implementing these recommendations requires us to think in terms of large-scale transformational change as well as smaller-scale remedial changes. COVID-19 has created significant challenges for the LSE community in the remit of education and assessments. However, one significant positive that we can draw from the past year, is that transformational changes to assessment regulations in response to evolving student and staff needs have been achieved by the School in impressively short timeframes.

After extensive consultation with key School stakeholders and students, following the publication of the LSESU Assessment Regulations Report, we present the following proposal to Education Committee for its consideration.

**1 | Education Committee approves the notion and scope of changing aspects of the school's current Assessment Regulations due to;**

- a. significant concerns related to EDI and student experience
- b. and the risk that many of the policies are in need of review



**2 | Education Committee approves the recommendation to establish a) a Task and Finish group within ARD to implement remedial, process-related changes with shorter timelines and b) a Business Improvement Unit project to review and implement transformational policy changes with longer timelines**

- a. Members of RPSSC gave approval of a BIU Project



**3.a | Business Improvement Unit (BIU) Project**

**Purpose:** to explore and deliver transformational policy changes within longer timescales similar to a functional review of Assessment Regulations at LSE which ensures the co-existence of compassion and academic rigour in their implementation.

**Composition:** terms of reference and Board composition to be agreed and approved by the School and the Students' Union in advance of the BIU's establishment. Suggested deadline: Friday 25th June.

**Remit:**

	<b>Scope of BIU Project</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>OIA Reference?</b>
1	<p>To improve the clarity and accessibility of the AR interface including language, tone and terminology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To include the creation of a live, process-tracking feature for students undergoing an EC application</li> <li>b) To involve extensive student consultation</li> <li>c) To include greater communication the length(s) of extension students can apply for, particularly for undergraduate and postgraduate students completing a dissertation</li> <li>d) To include clarifying different standards of evidence requirements e.g. the standard of evidence required for Individual Exam Adjustments versus the Standards of Evidence applied to ECs, Appeals etc.</li> </ul>	General	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Regulations and procedures should be written in a clear and easy to understand manner. <b>S125, p26, 1.</b></p>
2	<p>To review the 'Fit to Sit' policy and implementation and its impact on equality and inclusion with the purpose of <i>either</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ceasing the use of the Fit to Sit policy</li> <li>b) OR delivering a mitigation plan which addresses the EDI concerns outlined in the <a href="#">Fit to Sit EIA</a></li> </ul> <p>AND addresses a lack of student understanding of Fit to Sit and the issues associated with how the Fit to Sit policy negatively interacts with other assessment regulations, such as appeals and exceptional circumstances</p> <p>As well as examining the deferral process and how it interacts with fit to sit, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The case to allow self-certification for deferrals as standard</li> <li>b) To remove references to "deferral is not a right" from ARD interface</li> </ul>	Fit to Sit  Deferrals	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Students should be reminded of the fit to sit policy at relevant points throughout the year, particularly before exams start. <b>S60, p22, 2.</b></p> <p>Good practice to allow students to declare themselves not 'fit to sit', without having to approve that declaration i.e, automatic deferrals. <b>S60, p22, 2.</b></p>

3	<p>To develop and deliver an audit process for the Academic Misconduct process that ensures the following standard:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The accused student is informed, in writing, which offence they are suspected of committing and the specific details of the offence as it relates to their work within their first correspondence</li> <li>b) This notice should inform them of the potential penalties and consequences associated with the misconduct they are accused of committing</li> <li>c) This should include which module and the specific assessment, what kind of plagiarism is suspected, and what has led to the department or staff member believing that plagiarism has occurred <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Copies of Turnitin reports or other relevant documents that constitute a part of the allegation should also be circulated in advance - this is key as it enables the student to see what the basis of the allegation is</li> </ol> </li> <li>d) Students must be allowed to respond to the allegations both before and during the initial investigation.</li> <li>e) When informed of the allegation, the student should be signposted to the LSESU Advice Service for assistance. The student should be encouraged to have a member of the advice team, representative from the SU, or friend to be a silent attendee at the initial investigation meeting</li> <li>f) The School should commit to initial investigations taking place within 60 days of an allegation and to appeals being heard within 30 days from the decision</li> </ol>	Academic Misconduct	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>The provider should have a process for ensuring that cases are treated consistently across all departments. <b>S53, p16, 3.</b></p> <p>Students must be told in writing which offence they are suspected of committing, and why. <b>S50, p16, 3.</b></p> <p>Students should be made aware of the consequences of any penalties imposed. <b>S50, p16, 3.</b></p> <p>It is good practice for the initial investigation to take 60 days from allegation and a further 30 to hear appeals. <b>S17, p8, 3.</b></p>
4	<p>To review and improve the Exceptional Circumstances policy and implementation including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Increasing capacity to allow requests for ECs to be considered on an annual basis and ensure</li> </ol>	Exceptional Circumstances	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Requests should be considered quickly. <b>S31, p13, 2.</b></p> <p>Should end with a</p>

	<p>decisions to be communicated within one week of the panel reaching a conclusion</p> <p>b) Explore options for making EC adjustments at the module level, not at the degree classification level including the option to raise a classification course “grade” where a student has a borderline course mark and ECs at the end of each year rather than considering adjusting only the overall award at the end of the programme</p> <p>c) Explore a variety of options for students who have difficulty during an assessment period, including waving late submission penalties and obtaining an uncapped resit. We suggest that these be collated into an Exceptional Circumstances form, whereby students can see the options available to them and note any preference in outcome. This would offer clarity of the available options open to students. The BIU should take time to explore what other options can be offered for students facing Exceptional Circumstances</p> <p>d) Policy details which acknowledge that, whilst evidence and details of impact are ideal, deliberation of ECs should give the benefit of the doubt to students</p> <p>e) See 1.a)</p>		<p>written decision, including reasons, being sent to the student.  <b>S19, p11, 2.</b>                  This should provide enough detail to enable the student to understand why a decision was made and covering the right to appeal.  <b>S105, p33, 2.</b></p> <p>A student who is grappling with serious circumstances that are very likely to have had an impact on their performance should normally be given the benefit of the doubt (if they can't supply evidence)  <b>S46, p17, 2.</b></p>
5	<p>To review and improve the Appeals policy and implementation including:</p> <p>a) The transparency of the appeals process and a process to ensure departmental consistency</p> <p>b) To review assessment feedback and departmental inconsistencies with feedback</p> <p>c) Altering the current 10-day deadline to an explicit 10-working day deadline after receipt of grades and feedback from their department (where feedback is offered)</p> <p>d) Delivering a timeframe for the</p>	Appeals	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>90 calendar days for appeal and review to be completed.  <b>S25, p11, 1.</b></p>

	<p>appeals process whereby:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The full appeal process should take no longer than 90 days</li> <li>ii) The School takes no longer than 60 days to identify if there are valid grounds for an appeal and no longer than 30 days for the board to make and communicate the decision</li> </ul>		
6	<p>To review and improve the Extensions policy and implementation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Explore options to deliver a two working day turnaround for granting extensions</li> <li>b) See 1.c)</li> <li>c) To establish and deliver an emergency route within departments for granting extensions for those students who face unexpected circumstances close to the submission deadline</li> </ul>	Extensions	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>Extensions are not explicitly referenced by the OIA Good Practice Framework</p>

### 3.b | Assessment Regulations Task and Finish Group

**Purpose:** to implement smaller-scale process changes to existing regulations within short-term timescales. These recommended changes would be at risk of being buried in a large-scale BIU and/or need to be implemented more urgently than a BIU would allow.

**Composition:** to be confirmed but with student representation at the core, including the LSESU Education Officer as co-chair alongside a co-chair from ARD.

**Remit:**

	Recommended Process Change (Task)	Policy	OIA Reference?	Urgency (Red, Amber, Green)
1	To establish a recording process for the initial selective/ investigative interview and this recording should be made available to the accused student to ensure fair treatment and consistency	Academic Misconduct	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>The provider should have a process for ensuring that cases are treated consistently across all departments. <b>S53, p16, 3.</b></p>	
2	<p>To make aspects of current Evidence Requirements for Academic Regulations more inclusive, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Allow alternatives to death certificates, such as supporting letters from an Academic Mentor, family or friends, newspaper obituaries or news reports</li> <li>b) In cases of sexual violence, allow students to submit a supporting letter from an Academic Mentor, counsellor, specialist support worker (e.g. Rape Crisis, Survivors UK) as well as from a Safe Contact to minimise the need for the victim to make multiple disclosures and to avoid the word 'evidence'</li> <li>c) Formalising its translation offer from the LSE Language Centre and exploring alternatives to requiring</li> </ul>	Evidence Requirements	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>It may be insensitive or difficult for a student to obtain a death certificate in case of bereavement. Providers should a) consider evidence from other sources such as supporting letters from personal tutor/family/friend, newspaper obituaries or news reports. <b>S55, p20, 2.</b></p> <p>Students may not be able to afford to use professional certified translation services, providers should be willing to explore alternatives to certified translations. <b>S48, p18, 2.</b></p> <p>If a student has a long-term condition which has been</p>	

	<p>students to obtain evidence and/or translations which require fees (including Doctor's Notes)</p> <p>d) Where an Inclusion Plan is already in place for a student detailing a long term health issue or disability, the School should not require the student to submit evidence for a flare-up as the School will already be aware that this could unexpectedly affect a student</p>		<p>disclosed to the school, the provider should not ask for further evidence in the case of "flare ups".</p> <p><b>S54, p20, 2.</b></p>	
3	<p>To reduce the percent at which marks are deducted (on working days) from the late submitted work after the initial 24 hours past the deadline from a rate of 5 marks to a rate of 3 marks</p> <p>a) This still penalises students for late submissions but does not paralyse their prospects of achieving an acceptable (albeit affected) mark</p>	Late Submission	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>This recommended change arose from best practice, HE benchmarking and student consultation</p>	
4	<p>To establish signposting to support and representation services for students interacting with AR policies within its interface and in communications with students</p> <p>a) Including the LSE Counselling Service, the LSESU Advice Service and the procedure for complaints</p>	General	<p><b>X</b></p>	

The distinction between the remits of the BIU and T&F lies in the latter incorporating changes that are needed urgently, are altering the existing AR policies, are low-resource and/or do not require structural, large-scale BIU consideration to implement.

## 7 | Concluding Remarks

This report has highlighted the need for significant changes to LSE's Academic Regulations. The recommendations provided show a path for these regulations to no longer form a barrier to inclusivity and belonging at the school, but be the heart of a student-centred approach which exemplifies the mission of LSE's 2030 strategy to 'Educate for Impact' and 'Develop LSE for Everyone'.

LSE has the opportunity to set the bar for Academic Regulations across the HE sector, both in terms of policy and student partnership. Recommendations have been drawn from the OIA good practice framework, benchmarking with comparative HE institutions and extensive student consultation. All recommendations have been considered carefully by the project team and we are confident that their implementation is both achievable and would preserve the School's academic rigour.

The Students' Union looks forward to working together with LSE on implementing these recommendations and ensuring that Academic Regulations are transparent, compassionate, fair, and work for all LSE students.

### Report Writers:

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## 8 | Report Appendices

### Appendix A - Assessment Regulations Definitions

Regulation	Definition
Exceptional Circumstances	As defined by LSE in the General Academic Regulations, exceptional circumstances are “sudden, unforeseen, out of the student’s own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question”. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, illness, being victim to a crime, injury, personal/family problems or bereavement.
Fit to Sit	By submitting an assessment or attending an examination, the School considers the student to be declaring themselves ‘fit to sit’. Thus, in by submitting or attending an examination students are declaring their fitness (mentally and/or physically) to undertake the assessment. According to LSE, “Fit” in this instance does not only apply to physical or mental health, but other factors which may affect academic performance. Examples include, but are not limited to, concerns about an unwell family member, caring responsibilities, or lack of technical resources to complete an online assessment.
Appeals	Academic appeals regulations at LSE apply to all undergraduate and taught masters students of the School and are designed to protect students against unfair assessment resulting from omission or error on the part of the School or from unforeseen circumstances affecting a student.
Academic Misconduct	Academic misconduct refers to an act, whether deliberate or not, that amounts to plagiarism. The Regulations cover only alleged academic misconduct in summative assessed work submitted in connection with the requirements for an LSE programme or course.
Extensions	Extensions can only be considered and granted for coursework assessments at LSE, (in other words, assessments with a duration longer than 24 hours). For

	<p>assessments with durations of 3 weeks or less, the maximum extension granted is 50% of the assessment period concerned, e.g. for a two-week assessment, the maximum permitted extension will be one week. In light of the pandemic, a reason for an extension request must be given, with a clear supporting statement, but evidence will not necessarily be required, although LSE states it may help a request be more successful.</p>
Late Submission	<p>LSE applies significant penalties in the case of late submissions of summative assessments. Five marks will be deducted for an essay submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. A further five marks will be deducted for each subsequent 24 hour period (LSE working days only) until the essay is submitted. Essays more than five days late will only be accepted with the permission of the Chair of the Sub-Board of Examiners.</p>
Evidence Requirements	<p>Many of LSE's assessment regulations require some form of evidence to be submitted by the student including but not limited to exceptional circumstances, appeals, academic misconduct and some extensions. In an updated policy for COVID-19 affected assessments, LSE has acknowledged the difficulty obtaining evidence during a pandemic. As part of its regulations, LSE outlines its standards of evidence.</p>

## Appendix B - Survey Questions and Data

### PREAMBLE

The LSE Students' Union (LSESU) is currently in the process of undertaking a review of LSE's assessment regulations, with a view to establishing whether there are any areas in need of reform. This survey, alongside other research tasks we will be undertaking, feeds into that review. Once all research tasks have been undertaken a report will be written alongside a series of recommendations. LSESU will then lobby LSE to adopt the recommendations.

As current or former students, it is imperative that we get an insight into your experience of LSE's assessment regulations. The review (and by consequence, this survey) will specifically be looking at the following 7 regulations, policies and processes:

1. Exceptional Circumstances
2. Fit to Sit policy
3. Appeals
4. Academic Misconduct
5. Extensions
6. Late Submissions
7. Evidence Requirements

The survey closes on 14 February 2021.

### Survey structure

The survey is broken down according to the 7 aforementioned areas. You only need to answer the questions relating to the categories you have direct experience or knowledge of.

The survey concludes with a series of demographic questions. These responses will be kept anonymous. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, there is a 'prefer not to say' option that you can tick in each instance.

### Case studies

Stories are important. As a part of the review we are looking to include a number of student case studies which help to demonstrate the human impact of the assessment regulations in their current form, how they might be failing students and why they might be in need of reform. If you are happy to contribute a case study, please indicate this in the appropriate section of the survey and we will then contact you separately.

All answers, comments and entries will be kept completely anonymous unless you specifically state that you wish to be named in a case study.

## QUESTIONS

### Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional Circumstances are defined by LSE in the General Academic Regulations as "sudden, unforeseen, out

of the student's own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question". Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, illness, being victim to a crime, injury,

personal/family problems or bereavement.

You can find LSE's Exceptional Circumstances policy [here](#).

Have you ever submitted or considered submitting an Exceptional Circumstances application?

Yes

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section - Fit to Sit policy*

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Exceptional Circumstances policy/process? (MANDATORY)

It is:

Very Unfair

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

Please tell us why:

Do you feel LSE's Exceptional Circumstances policy/process should be changed in any way?

Yes

No

Please state why:

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Exceptional Circumstances policy/process? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

Yes

No

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this

### Fit to Sit

By submitting an assessment or attending an examination, the School considers the student to be declaring themselves 'fit to sit'. Thus, in your submission or attendance you are declaring your fitness (mentally and/or physically) to undertake the assessment.

According to LSE, "Fit" in this instance does not only apply to physical or mental health, but also to other factors which may affect your academic performance. Examples include, but are not limited to, concerns about an unwell family member, caring responsibilities, or lack of technical resources to complete an online assessment.

You can find more about LSE's Fit to Sit policy [here](#).

Are you aware of LSE's Fit to Sit policy?

Yes

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section - Appeals policy*

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Fit to Sit policy? (MANDATORY)

It is:

Very Unfair

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

Please tell us why:

Do you feel LSE's Fit to Sit policy should be changed in any way?

Yes

No

Please state why:

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Fit to Sit policy? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

Yes

No

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

Appeals

Academic appeals regulations at LSE apply to all undergraduate and taught master's students and are designed to protect students against unfair assessment resulting from omission or error on the part of the School or from unforeseen circumstances affecting a student.

You can find more about LSE's Appeals policy [here](#).

Have you ever submitted or considered submitting an Academic Appeal? (MANDATORY)

Yes

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section – Academic Misconduct policy*

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Academic Appeals policy/process?

It is:

Very Unfair

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

Please tell us why:

Do you feel LSE's Academic Appeals policy/process should be changed in any way?

Yes

Have you ever had to go through LSE's Academic Misconduct process?  
(MANDATORY)

No

Yes

Please state why:

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section - Extensions policy*

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Academic Appeals policy/process? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Academic Misconduct policy/process?

Yes

It is:

No

Very Unfair

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Academic Misconduct

Very Fair

Academic misconduct refers to any breach of LSE's Regulations on Assessment Offences. Most typically, although not exclusively, this will refer to an act, whether deliberate or not, that amounts to plagiarism.

Please tell us why:

Do you feel LSE's Academic Misconduct policy/process should be changed in any way?

Yes

The Regulations cover only alleged academic misconduct in summative assessed work submitted in connection with the requirements for an LSE programme or course."

No

Please state why:

You can find more about LSE's Academic Misconduct policy [here](#).

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Academic Misconduct policy/process? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

Yes

Very Unfair

No

Unfair

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

### Extensions

Please tell us why:

Extensions are only considered and granted for coursework assessments, i.e. assessments with a duration longer than 24 hours. For assessments with durations of 3 weeks or less, the maximum extension granted is 50% of the assessment period concerned, e.g. for a two-week assessment, the maximum permitted extension would be one week.

Do you feel LSE's Extensions policy/process should be changed in any way?

Yes

No

In light of the pandemic, a reason for an extension request must be given, with a clear supporting statement, but evidence is not necessarily required (although LSE states that it can help a request be more successful).

Please state why:

You can find more about LSE's Extensions policy [here](#).

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Extensions policy/process? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

Yes

No

Have you ever applied for or considered applying for an Extension at LSE? (MANDATORY)

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

Yes

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section – Late Submissions policy*

### Late Submissions

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Extensions policy/process?

LSE applies significant penalties in the case of late submissions for Summative assessments. Five marks are deducted for an essay submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. A further five marks are deducted for each subsequent 24 hour period (LSE working days only) until the essay is submitted. Essays more than five

It is:

days late are then only accepted with the permission of the Chair of the Sub-Board of Examiners.

You can find more about LSE's Late Submissions policy [here](#).

Do you have any experience of LSE's Late Submissions process? (MANDATORY)

Yes

No

*NOTE: All who answer no will automatically be moved to the next section – Evidence Requirements*

If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Late Submissions policy/process?

It is:

Very Unfair

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

Please tell us why:

Do you feel LSE's Late Submissions policy/process should be changed in any way?

Yes

No

Please state why:

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of the Late Submissions policy/process? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

Yes

No

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

### Standards of Evidence

Many of LSE's assessment regulations require some form of evidence to be submitted by the student including but not limited to exceptional circumstances, appeals, academic misconduct and some extensions.

In an updated policy for COVID-19 affected assessments, LSE has acknowledged the difficulty obtaining evidence during a pandemic. As part of its regulations, LSE outlines its standards of evidence.

You can find more about LSE's Standards of Evidence [here](#).

Have you ever submitted or considered submitting an application for a process (such as Exceptional Circumstances) at LSE which required you to provide evidence? (MANDATORY)

Yes

No



If yes, what is your opinion of LSE's Standards of Evidence requirements?

Yes

No

It is:

Very Unfair

Unfair

Neither Unfair nor Fair

Fair

Very Fair

Please tell us why:

If yes, please enter your email address below so that we can contact you about this:

Do you feel LSE's Standards of Evidence should be changed in any way?

Yes

No

Please state why:

Would you be willing to provide a case study on your experience of LSE's Standards of Evidence requirements? We are able to keep all case studies anonymous (unless you specifically want to be named)

## Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs)

To view the EIAs in full, please follow the hyperlinks below where you can access the information in PDF form. They are also available as Word documents on request. Please email [su.communitywelfare@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.communitywelfare@lse.ac.uk) if you wish to view them in this format.

All EIAs were completed by the report writers and all were preceded by the following information on evidence gathering and sources:

<b>Evidence Gathering and Engagement</b>
<p>a. What <b>evidence</b> has been used for this assessment? For example, national statistics, LSE statistics,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Anecdotal evidence from LSESU Advice Service LSESU Assessment Regulations Review Survey LSESU Assessment Regulations Review Case Studies National statistics including government reports</p>
<p>b. Who have you <b>engaged and consulted with</b> as part of your assessment?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">LSESU Advice Service LSESU Sabbatical Officer Team Jay Crosbie – LSESU Campaigns &amp; Policy Officer Jennifer Hastings – LSESU Head of Student Voice LSE students via the Assessment Regulations Review Survey</p>

[Fit to Sit EIA](#)

[Exceptional Circumstances EIA](#)

[Academic Misconduct EIA](#)

[Appeals EIA](#)

[Late Submission EIA](#)

[Extensions EIA](#)

[Evidence Requirements EIA](#)

## Appendix D - OIA Good Practice Framework Benchmarking

The Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA) is the independent body which performs an ombudsman like role in the higher education sector, with a particular focus on the fairness of institutional regulations and their administration. They have a series of good practice frameworks which set out a guide for how higher education institutions should administer their procedures, including assessment regulations. It is important to note that these documents are not binding, however they should provide a strong foundation with which LSE can compare its own regulations.

This benchmarking exercise compared the 7 LSE regulations identified by the review with these frameworks to see if there are any clear incompatibilities, as well as other points of note.

### Exceptional Circumstances

<i>OIA</i>	<i>LSE</i>
Should end with a written decision, including reasons, being sent to the student. S19, p11, 2. This should provide enough detail to enable the student to understand why a decision was made and covering the right to appeal. S105, p33, 2.	Students do not find out if their ECs have been accepted until the end of their course, and even then only if they have been accepted <i>and</i> altered the classification.
Requests should be considered quickly. S31, p13, 2.	
Easy to understand and follow. S20, p11, 2.	The process/guidance can feel convoluted at a very stressful time for students.
Students should be treated compassionately at a difficult time. S18, p11, 2.	
A student who is grappling with serious circumstances that are very likely to have had an impact on their performance should normally be given the benefit of the doubt (if they can't supply evidence). S46, p17, 2.	There doesn't seem to be any scope in the LSE regulations for ECs to be accepted without evidence.
Students should have the right to appeal if their ECs are rejected. S111, p35, 2.	The current system permits ECs appeals based on new evidence or that the exam board did not follow the correct procedure.

### Fit to Sit

<i>OIA</i>	<i>LSE</i>
Good practice to allow students to declare themselves not 'fit to sit', without having to approve that declaration. I.e., automatic deferrals. S60, p22, 2.	In a non-Covid year, deferrals are subject to approval: "Deferral is not a right".

If approval is needed, any decisions should be made before the assessment deadline. S61, p22, 2.	Deferrals can take up to 3 working days, longer at busy periods.
Students should be reminded of the fit to sit policy at relevant points throughout the year, particularly before exams start. S60, p22, 2.	
A number of factors have been identified as allowing a student to withdraw their 'fit to sit' declaration after attempting an assessment, such as not being able to take the exam at the next window due to health, visa, financial or loss of employment concerns. S63, p22, 2.	

### Academic Misconduct

<i>OIA</i>	<i>LSE</i>
Good practice for the initial investigation to take 60 days from allegation and a further 30 to hear appeals. S17, p8, 3.	Panels can often take weeks, even months to convene.
Students should be provided guidance, particularly for international students from different academic backgrounds, to ensure all students are aware of the LSE standard for plagiarism.	
Students should be given an opportunity to respond to allegations. S49, p16, 3.	Departments do this in different ways. Some hold meetings with students, others just ask for email statements.
Students must be told in writing which offence they are suspected of committing, and why. S50, p16, 3.	Not all departments do this. Some just tell students they have been accused of 'academic misconduct' in a general sense. Students will frequently be told that they have been accused of plagiarism and a penalty is being considered without students automatically being told which sections of their work are problematic.
Students should be made aware of the consequences of any penalties imposed. S50, p16, 3.	
The provider should have a process for ensuring that cases are treated consistently across all departments. S53, p16, 3.	ART does suggest how departments should administer the process.

Evidence Requirements

<i>OIA</i>	<i>LSE</i>
A student who is grappling with serious circumstances that are very likely to have had an impact on their performance should normally be given the benefit of the doubt (if they can't supply evidence). S46, p17, 2.	There doesn't seem to be any scope in the LSE regulations for ECs to be accepted without evidence.
Students may not be able to afford to use professional certified translation services, providers should be willing to explore alternatives to certified translations. S48, p18, 2.	LSE guidance explicitly states that students must cover the cost of official translation (Section 1 <a href="#">here</a> .) This includes if the student uses the LSE Language Centre for translations.
Self-certification should be permitted for short-term illnesses (eg stomach bug), where the student would not reasonably seek medical treatment. Suggests that this only applies to deferral requests. S50/51, p18, 2.	Currently LSE permits no-evidence deferrals and considers no-evidence extensions requests, however this is only as a result of Covid and is not standard procedure.
Good practice for providers to have a template evidence request form that students can give to a GP/medical professional. S52, p20, 2.	Doesn't currently happen.
If a student has a long-term condition which has been disclosed to the school, the provider should not ask for further evidence in the case of "flare ups". S54, p20, 2.	Typically, a student would be required to submit evidence of the 'flare-up'.
It may be insensitive or difficult for a student to obtain a death certificate in case of bereavement. Providers should a) consider evidence from other sources such as supporting letters from personal tutor/family/friends, newspaper obituaries or news reports. S55, p20, 2.	Students must normally provide a death certificate.
Fact of death may be enough for students' EC request i.e., without need for supplying evidence showing the impact on the student. OIA suggests this is for close family members who die shortly before an assessment. S56, p20, 2.	Students must normally provide a death certificate and explanation as to the impact on their studies.

Appeal

<i>OIA</i>	<i>LSE</i>
90 calendar days for appeal and review to be completed. S25, p11, 1.	Appeals can take up to 90 days to identify if there are valid grounds and a further 20 days for Exam Board consideration. Reviews can take a significant period of time to conclude.
Regulations and procedures should be written in a clear and easy to understand manner. S125, p26, 1.	

*NB:* Extensions and Late Submissions are not explicitly mentioned in the OIA Good Practise Frameworks.

Framework documents:

1. <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/1859/oia-good-practice-framework.pdf>
2. <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2544/oia-gpf-requests-for-additional-consideration.pdf>
3. <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2045/good-practice-framework-disciplinary-procedures-section.pdf>

## Appendix E - Top 10 UK Universities Benchmarking

The following table is a condensed, summary version of the Benchmarking exercise we conducted:

Assessment Regulations Comparison of the Top 10 Universities by NSS Student Satisfaction Score v. LSE

AR Policy	Comparison/Comments
Fit to Sit	Across the sector it seems that the Fit to Sit policy seems to broadly be the same as LSE. However, key difference to note is that there is often clearer language around Fit to Sit. Additionally, the majority of them allow retroactive evidence to be provided to secure a resit.
Exceptional Circumstances	Most providers ensure students are told the result of their EC application in a short period of time, ranging from 7 days after the panel decision, to once the academic year has finished (alongside interim results). Only one university (the University of Bristol) considers ECs at the end of a student's academic progression (final year).
Academic Misconduct	The nature of academic misconduct is similar across the board (i.e what counts as misconduct). We noted that communication to students was significantly easier to understand than at LSE, however.
Appeals	Like LSE, most universities also refer to the inability to challenge "academic judgement". Thus, appeals guidance focuses on procedural irregularities, bias, and in some cases explicitly mentioning the withdrawal of academic provision.
Late Submission	Penalty guidelines are different in the universities examined. LSE sits somewhere in the middle in terms of how little or how much students are punished for late work submissions.
Evidence Requirements	Most universities examined have similar evidence requirements, including independence and time-specificity. Notably, some universities (including Oxford University) do not require an official translation into English, but reserve the right to request one later on. Some universities retain the right to suspend evidence requirements. One, Edinburgh University, allows for self-certification and the provision of statements and accompanying

	statements as evidence. It recognises, however, that independent time-specific may provide stronger evidence for the claim.
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If you are interested in the full benchmarking document of the top 10 Universities Assessment Regulations (36 page document), please email [su.info@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.info@lse.ac.uk) and request access.

## Appendix F - Student Case Studies Questions

The case studies template included the following questions for students to complete:

1. Please tell us about your experience of going through the complaint process in as much detail as you feel comfortable in disclosing.
  - a. If you're struggling to put it into words, here are some things you might want to consider: what the situation was, what the outcome was, any obstacles/issues you encountered, what communication was like, how you found the language in any documentation/correspondence, how the process made you feel, any aspects you thought were particularly good/bad, fair/unfair, accessible/inaccessible.
2. LSE is extremely proud of its academic reputation. Historically it has tended to defend its assessment regulations on the basis that they help to preserve academic rigour and the value of LSE awards.
  - a. Given your experience with the complaints (insert process), how would you respond to that?
3. Do you want your case study to be anonymised:
  - a. If you do not want your case study to be anonymised (i.e. if you are happy for your name to appear next to it), please enter your name as would like it to appear.

To see the case study template in PDF form, click [here](#).





## WITH THANKS TO

Ricardo Visinho  
Declan Katwala  
Jennifer Hastings