

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/14b

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

Agenda Item 11.2

STUDENT ADMINISTRATION ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IN
EXAMINATION VENUES 201819

COVER SHEET

Presenter: Dr A Moore

To consider the report.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

STUDENT ADMINISTRATION ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IN EXAMINATION VENUES 201819

1 BREACH OF EXAMINATION REGULATIONS

The University has in place procedures for dealing with reports of offences in connection with examinations as authorised under Section 35 of the Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study and Ordinance XLI: Student Discipline.

At each examination period, students are advised via their personal timetables, broadcast email, notices around the examination venues and in the announcement before the start of each exam, that students found to be in possession of unauthorised notes, mobile phones, smart watches or similar electronic devices will be required to leave the venue and their exam declared void with a mark of zero being awarded.

Disciplinary proceedings are instigated with the Provost of the campus interviewing the student(s) in accordance with Ordinance XLI (Executive Dean for QAHE students). Students do have the right of appeal under this ordinance.

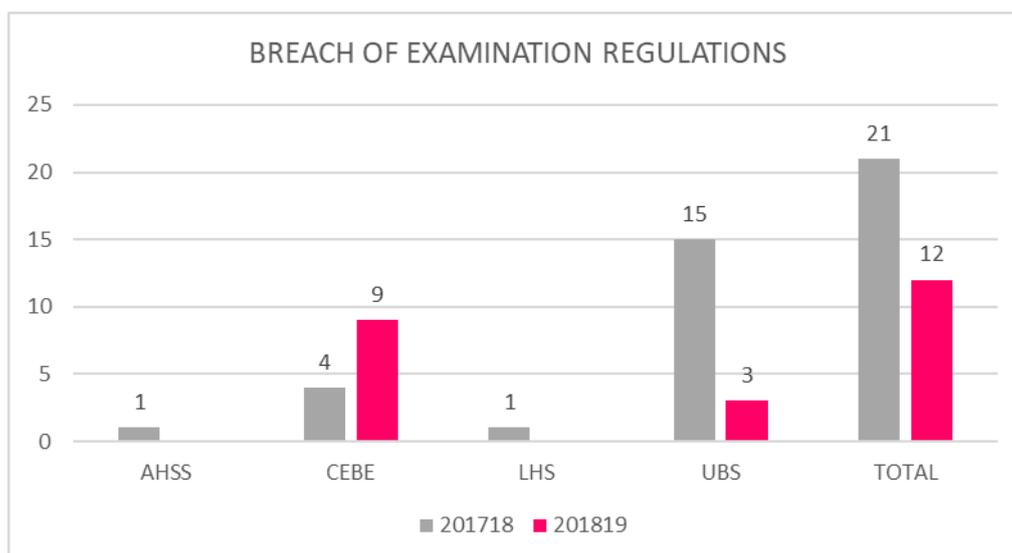
The following table is a summary of incidents recorded in 201819.

Faculty	Belfast	Coleraine	Jordanstown	Magee	QAHE	Totals
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences						
Computing, Engineering & Built Environment		1	5		3	9
Life and Health Sciences						
Ulster Business School			3			3
Total		1	8		3	12

- Of the students found to have breached the Regulations, six had a mobile phone on their person, one of which was in use; four had unauthorised notes; one had the use of a computer during their exam and had a USB pen inserted into the computer uploading notes; and one was whispering to a student at another desk during the exam and failed to stop after a verbal warning.
- Six of the students were final year students.
- No student appealed the outcome of the disciplinary meeting.

Comparative figures by faculty are available for the past two years as follows:

	AHSS	CEBE	LHS	UBS	TOTAL
201819	0	9	0	3	12
201718	1	4	1	15	21



2 REPORT ON TOILET BREAKS DURING EXAMINATIONS

The Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee meeting, 5 December 2019, asked Student Administration to review practice in an attempt to reset expectations for student behaviour.

The frequency of toilet breaks during examinations has been reviewed several times over the last number of years and continues to be a source of concern within the sector as a whole. Our research with other institutions indicates that Ulster is not unique in this regard.

The matter has been raised through the Academic Registrars Council, with responses indicating a strong suspicion that excessive toilet breaks were associated with attempts at cheating. Feedback from senior invigilators and invigilators would also indicate this. Indeed, feedback from senior invigilators indicates that if students become aware that a student has been asked to leave a hall due to a breach of regulations, there is a dramatic decrease in requests for a toilet break.

There is also evidence from feedback that shorter duration exams reduced the number of toilet breaks as students may be under more pressure to complete. There are instances of examinations of three hours duration and the bulk of students have left after two hours.

Student Administration have not received any feedback from invigilators to suggest that requests for toilet breaks are associated with examination anxiety. Students experiencing anxiety or panic attacks during examinations are taken outside by an invigilator to a quiet area and assisted as necessary.

In 2007, in a bid to reduce the number of toilet breaks, a paper was presented to Academic Development and Students Services Committee with a view to enforcing Regulation 21 of the Examination Regulations, which prohibits food or drink being brought into an examination room without prior permission from the Senior Invigilator. Senate rejected the proposal at its meeting in March 2008 as it considered it would be a breach of the students' human rights.

Conclusion

The committee might wish to consider the following:

- Faculties review the duration of their examinations to ensure that the time allocated is actually required.

- Some institutions require students to empty their pockets before going to the toilets. Is this a practice that the University would wish to introduce and would invigilators enforce it?
- Follow best practice on writing exam scripts to ensure that questions are not simply testing memory and repeated facts.