

## Information Services

### QUB Defaulters Policy

#### Introduction

The QUB Defaulters Policy has been created in order to set down the responsibilities of QUB Library Services and users in terms of loans, fines and charges. This document has been produced to establish clear guidelines for all library service points, which is essential if users are to be treated fairly and consistently throughout the Library. By detailing the variety of methods that users can avail of to manage their loans and their library account, Library Services aims to encourage good library practice by users.

Library Services is the collective name for those libraries involved in the delivery of services to library users: The McClay Library, the Medical and HSC Library and the Biomedical Library. QUB staff and students using library services offered by HSC Library branches are also subject to this policy, as are AFBI members using QUB Library Services.

HSC users are covered by the HSC Defaulters Policy, available on the HSC Library website ([www.honni.qub.ac.uk](http://www.honni.qub.ac.uk)).

Users who have multiple borrowing cards and who are in default on one, will be considered in default on each card.

#### Operating Principles

##### Loans

- Books borrowed from the Library must be returned by the due date. A book will be overdue if kept beyond this date and will incur a fine. These are agreed by Queen's University Belfast and made public via the library webpages: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/UsingtheLibrary/AccessingLibraryResources/Borrowing/HowmanyitemscanIborrowandhowlongcanIkeepthem/>
- A book on loan remains the responsibility of the user until it is removed from their library account. Users can check their record with My Account via the QUB website ([www.qub.ac.uk/lib](http://www.qub.ac.uk/lib)) or Queen's Online ([www.qol.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qol.qub.ac.uk)).
- Standard loan items may be renewed up to 5 times. Short loan items may not be renewed.
- All standard and one week loan items are subject to recall.
- A book will be considered to be in demand if required by more than one user at any one time, and will be available for loan for one week only. If kept beyond this period, it will incur a fine at the agreed rate.
- A user, on receiving notice that a book on loan to him/her is required by another user, must return that book to the Library by the date stipulated in the notice. A book will be deemed to be overdue if kept beyond this date and will incur a fine at the agreed rate.

- Books borrowed from the designated short loan collections must be returned no later than the time specified. A fine at a higher rate will be charged for each book kept beyond this time. Short loan cannot be renewed. The maximum number of books from these collections which may be on loan to a user at any one time will be made public on the library webpages: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/UsingtheLibrary/AccessingLibraryResources/Borrowing/ShortLoanBooks/>

### **Overdues and invoices**

- Users will be considered to be in default if, within a reasonable time and without lodging an objection, they fail to (a) return any overdue book, (b) return any book recalled by the Library or (c) pay the charge incurred.
- Users who are in default will, after a third overdue warning, have their Library account suspended. The block will suspend the user's Library Account and will prevent them from borrowing, renewing or requesting material from the Library.
- A student who is in default with the Library is considered to be in breach of University Conduct Regulations and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- QUB staff and other categories will be referred to the Director of Information Services for further action.

### **Fines**

- Fines will be charged on overdue books. Fines rates can be found on the QUB website at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/UsingtheLibrary/AccessingLibraryResources/FinesandCharges/>
- The Library facilitates the payment of fines and charges using the following methods: cash, cheque, credit/debit card either in person, by telephone, by Smartcard or via My Account through the QUB website ([www.qub.ac.uk/lib](http://www.qub.ac.uk/lib)).
- Users with outstanding fines which exceed an agreed amount will have their Library Account suspended and will not be allowed to borrow, renew or request further books or material until the fines are paid. The Director or any other person nominated by the Director shall have the power to remit or reduce fines in a particular case.
- Users will be considered to be in default if, within a reasonable time and without lodging an objection, they fail to pay the fine incurred.
- A student who is in default with the Library is considered to be in breach of University Conduct Regulations and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- QUB staff and other categories will be referred to the Director of Information Services for further action.

### **Fines - The Library's Responsibilities**

A large number of items are regularly out of circulation because they are overdue. Library staff receive a significant number of complaints about this. Library Services has a responsibility to keep stock in circulation and to make items available to those who need them.

In order to assist users in managing their loans, the Library communicates with them regularly about their loans. Communications include:

- reminder notices
  - These alert users to the imminent due date of their loans. This is only available to users with a valid email address in their record.
- overdue notices
  - These alert users to the fact that their books are now overdue and that they should be returned or renewed as soon as possible. The third overdue notice results in an automatic block being applied to the user account which prevents users from borrowing, renewing or requesting material from the Library.
- invoices
  - An invoice will be issued for the replacement cost of the book plus an administration charge if the user fails to return the book within an agreed time after the due date.
  - As a courtesy, the Library will endeavour to contact users to inform them that an invoice has been raised.
  - The Library will consider a replacement copy of the book instead of payment of the invoice. This should be discussed and agreed between the user and the Subject Librarian / Branch Librarian prior to the copy being purchased. This is at the discretion of and per the conditions set by the Subject Librarian / Branch Librarian.
  - The Library will endeavour to refund the replacement cost of the book, minus the administration charge, should the user pay the invoice and subsequently return the item within one working week.
  - The administration charge is an overhead charge for the production of the invoice and the overdue fine.
- unpaid invoices
  - In the event that a library user fails to return or pay for the replacement cost of the book and the matter remains unresolved at 30 days after the date of the initial invoice, the Library will contact the user again.
  - If the matter remains unresolved at 60 days after the date of the initial invoice, it will be referred to the Director of Information Services or such person as is appropriate for the category of user.

### **Fines - The Users' Responsibilities**

Users who borrow material also have responsibilities to the Library and fellow users. The following services are available to help them avoid fines.

- My Account via the QUB website ([www.qub.ac.uk/lib](http://www.qub.ac.uk/lib)) or Queen's Online ([www.qol.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qol.qub.ac.uk))

- By being able to view what items are on loan to them and the due dates, users can effectively manage their loans and library account.
- Renewing books up to current renewal limits
  - Provided the item is not required by another user, there are a number of options for renewing books: in person, by telephone, by email, via selfservice machines and via the My Account facility on the QUB website or Queen's Online
- All items are subject to recall if required by another user in which case they will be due back by the date stipulated in the notice, and certain items, such as Short Loan material, may not be renewed or requested.

### **Enforcing the Policy**

Library Services will take the following actions if users are in default.

- Loans
  - An automatic block will be placed on the users account if s/he fails to return or renew the overdue books, which will prevent them from borrowing, renewing or requesting material from the Library.
  - The Library will charge for the replacement cost of the book plus an administration charge if the book has not been returned within an agreed time after the due date.
  - The Library will consider a replacement copy of the book instead of payment of the invoice. This should be discussed and agreed between the user and the Subject Librarian / Branch Librarian prior to the copy being purchased. This is at the discretion of and per the conditions set by the Subject Librarian / Branch Librarian.
- Fines
  - The fine on an overdue book starts to accumulate on the day after it is due for return.
- Charges
  - Library Services will place charges on the users account for the following services:
    - Inter-Library Loans book and article requests (not covered by the agreement between the School and Library Services)
    - Replacement Associate Membership library cards
  - Library Services will send a statement to users outlining charges incurred on a regular basis.

- An automatic block will be placed on users with fines which exceed an agreed amount, which will prevent them from borrowing, renewing or requesting material from the Library.
- Users with fines which exceed an agreed amount will not have Inter-Library Loan requests processed.
- Students with charges which exceed an agreed amount in the second half of the Spring semester will have a Library Year End suspension placed on their library record.
- QUB staff and other categories will be referred to the Director of Information Services for further action.

### **Dealing with Exceptional Circumstances**

In exceptional circumstances, the Library Services may

- waive or part-waive fines.
  - Such decisions have to be recorded to comply with audit requirements and will be closely monitored.
- renew items beyond the current renewal limits.

Such decisions are at the discretion of the Assistant Director (Library Services) or by any other person nominated by such.