

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 26 February 2010 at 2.15 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr David Efird (Chair), Philosophy
Dr Linda Perriton, Management
Mr John Brown, Social Policy and Social Work
Dr Pat Ansell, Health Sciences
Dr Anne Duhme-Klair, Chemistry
Ben Humphrys and Mel Fox, SU representatives
Kieran Alden, GSA representative

In attendance: Mrs Rosemary Goerisch, Student Progress: SAS
Mr Philip Simison, Student Progress: SAS
Mrs Nadia Fenn, Special Cases Committee

09-10/138 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Dr Amanda Rees, Sociology; Dr Jim Watt, Eighteenth Century Studies; Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar; and Cecilia Lowe, ASO.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

09-10/139 The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2010.

09-10/140 **Matters arising from the minutes**

(i) 09/10-105 iii Classifying joint degrees

Teaching Committee requested that SCA ask all combined executives to provide a clear a statement on the classification of degrees for their programmes. The Committee **received** the statements and **noted** that only 40% of statements had been submitted.

The Committee **noted** that the statements revealed a great diversity in the way combined degrees are classified and that it was very unclear generally what the processes are.

The Committee **decided** to recommend to Teaching Committee that a template be constructed, which combined Executives would be obliged to use, to make the process clearer to students and external examiners.

(ii) 09/10-109 iii Invigilation Issues

The Committee **received** a statement provided for internal examiners giving guidance on writing examination questions for students whose first language is not English. The Committee approved the statement but asked that 'confounding' be removed.

Action: include in GtoA 10/11

(iii) 09-10/111 PGT modularisation – attendance of external examiners

The Committee **received** proposals regarding external examiners attendance at Progressional and Award Boards for taught postgraduate programmes. The Committee **decided to recommend** to UTC that an external examiner is present at Progressional Boards in person or via teleconferencing, or if this is not possible the department's UTC representative, to ensure the Board conducts its business fairly. Permission from the SCA for teleconferencing in this instance will not be required.

(iv) 09-10/124 SU proposal that a responsible person is present during exams to address queries.

Departments have been consulted and two responses were received. Members **noted** that it was not always possible to be present at the start of an examination particularly if they were teaching. The Committee **recommended** that the Student Union submit a revised proposal to the Committee's April meeting.

Action: SU

The Committee also **noted** that departments must have a robust system for checking examination papers prior to them being submitted to the Examinations Office.

Action: update GtoA 10/11

(v) Annual priority 2 – consultation with departments on the less than 11% of the overall module mark limit before recording is required. The Committee **noted** that departments had been consulted and no objections were received and so **decided** this proportion was appropriate.

09-10/141

Chair's Oral Report

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair on:

- a) Chair of Boards of Examiners forum on 3 March 2010
- b) Senate's response to the mitigating circumstances policy
- c) Reducing the academic misconduct penalty for students who did not intend to commit an offence. Members **decided** that reducing

the penalty was not appropriate. **Action:** update the Guide

09-10/142 The Committee **received** an oral report from student representatives.

The Student Union reported that the Academic Integrity event had gone well and that they had received very good feedback.

The GSA reported that: they had received funding to hold a postgraduate forum; Mel Fox is no longer employed by the GSA; and there will be a review of cases of academic misconduct that is not revealed until the end of a student's programme.

09-10/143 **Complaints and appeals**

The Committee **received** the annual report on student complaints and appeals and thanked all those involved in compiling this report for their efforts in this regard.

Members **noted** the decline in appeals from Health Sciences students since the department introduced a robust system of informing students about the need to submit mitigating circumstances requests at the appropriate time.

The Student Union **requested** that in future the report indicates which students had received support with their appeal from any of the following SU/GSA/supervisor. **Action:** KD/PS

The Student Union noted that the total number of appeals was dependent upon the completion date of the appeal rather than the date of receipt of an appeal. They queried the reasoning for this.

Action: KD

The Committee concluded that the system for appeals and complaints at the University is fair and robust. It was also **noted** that the OIA had yet to uphold a complaint against the University.

09-10/144 **Academic Misconduct**

The Committee **received** proposals from the Working Party on Academic Misconduct regarding changes to University's Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures.

The Student Union noted that the term 'academic integrity' was

inappropriate and should be changed as it seems to imply that those who commit academic misconduct are without integrity. The Committee **recommended** that a proposal for amendment be submitted to the next meeting.

Action: SU

The Committee reviewed and **approved** the proposed principles; **noting** that the current principles focus on detecting misconduct not teaching good scholarship. The current penalty is not a disincentive and fails to address the issue. It was further noted that: marking practices are not addressing misconduct effectively, for example, some final year students are not referencing correctly; the current procedure is entirely reliant on the amount of work the investigating academic can devote to the process. This time will be reduced when the common assessment period increases and condenses the marking workload.

The Committee reviewed the proposed options:

1. Option A

This is the Committee's preferred option if the funding is available. This option addresses the issue at institutional level and will ensure equity for all students. The Committee requested that a penalty for poor referencing be included.

Secretary's note: The paper was reviewed at the Chair of Boards of Examiners Forum on 3 March 2010 and this was their preferred option. They also decided that Option C was their second choice if no funding was available for Option A, but requested that criteria for each of the penalties were developed.

2. Option B

This option received no support from the Committee or the chairs of Boards of Examiners.

3. Option C

The Committee rejected this option because the current system is not effective.

4. Option D

Received no support from either group.

The Committee **decided to recommend** Option A to Teaching

Committee.

Action: RG

09-10/145 Review of the University's External Examiner process

The Committee **received** proposals on the review of the University's external examiners process. The Committee **approved** the proposed parameters. The Chair will submit a report to the Committee's June meeting. **Action:** Chair

Secretary's note: Chairs of Boards of Examiners were invited to raise any issues about the University's external examining process at the recent forum meeting; all present were complimentary about the process.

09-10/146 Application of academic misconduct penalty for a module taken at another university

The Committee **received** a request to determine if the penalty given for academic misconduct committed on a module taken at another institution should be applied to the student's York masters programme.

The Committee **decided** that as the student had not been informed in the programme rules that such a penalty would apply to the overall programme at the commencement of his studies, it was not appropriate to apply the penalty to the overall programme. However, the Academic Misconduct Guidelines will be revised to make it clear that such penalties will apply in the future. **Action:** Update AMGuide

09-10/147 Early submission of PhD, MPhil and EngD theses for examination

The Committee **received** a proposal on the early submission of theses. Currently the earliest candidates can submit is two years and nine months from their date of registration. It was proposed that this be reduced to two years six months. The Committee **approved** the proposal with the proviso that the department approves the early submission.

09-10/148 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting is Friday 30 April 2010 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

