

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

University Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 14 January 2011
at 2.15 pm in H/G09, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr David Efird (Chair), Philosophy
Dr Victoria Gould, Mathematics
Dr David Halliday, Electronics
Dr Adrian Lee, Centre for Life Long Learning
Dr Linda Perriton, Management
Graham Osbourne, YUSU

In attendance: Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Mel Fox, YUSU
Rosemary Goerisch, Assistant Registrar
Rosemary Royds, Manager: Registry Services

Apologies: Isha Arora, GSA representative
Dr Geoff Cubitt, History
Dr Jim Watt, English
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader, Learning Enhancement
Kathryn Lucas, Secretary Special Cases Committee

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

10-11/36 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2010 were **approved**, subject to clarification of the second sentence in the fourth paragraph of item 10-11/26. '*Students will be handed a slip*', refers to individual students not the entire cohort of students taking the examination.

10-11/37 **Matters arising from the minutes**
(a) **Timing of completion of the Academic Integrity Tutorial**
The Committee **considered** the responses from departments about the timing of completion of the Academic Integrity Tutorial and a proposed system for reducing the number of exam paper errors.

The Committee **proposed** the following to departments about the timing of completion of the Academic Integrity Tutorial for students on postgraduate programmes:

Because of the short duration of postgraduate taught programmes, it is proposed that postgraduate taught students be required to complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial module successfully before their first assignment is marked; however, the assignment will be received regardless of whether the student has completed the Academic Integrity Tutorial or not.

and **noted** that 75% of the responses received were in favour of the proposal. The Committee **noted** that if this proposal is adopted it will not prevent plagiarism in the first assessment but departments can take that into account should a case arise, and can, if they choose, require students to complete the tutorial successfully before the accepting submission of the first assignment.

The Committee **decided to recommend** to Teaching Committee that students on postgraduate taught programmes be required to complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial module successfully before their first assignment is marked, although submission of the assignment will be accepted regardless of whether the student has completed the Tutorial.

(b) **Reducing the number of errors in exam papers**

The Committee proposed that departments should implement independent checks of exam papers in order to minimise errors and made recommendations about the timing of these checks. Following discussion the following revised recommendation was **agreed**:

Because it is important that examination papers be as error-free as possible, it is proposed that all examination papers should have two checks, independent of each other, made by academics who have the relevant specialist knowledge of the content of the examination paper. These may be a combination of the paper setter, the convener of the paper or the internal checker, but should not include the external examiner. These independent checks should take place at the final stage of the paper's development, after the point where it has been formatted as

it will appear to students in their examination.

The Committee **decided to recommend** the proposal to Teaching Committee to be promulgated as guidance for departments rather than University policy, as it would be difficult to monitor the implementation of or enforcement of such a policy.

(c) **Feedback from UTC 08/11/2010 on SCA recommendations from its meeting on 08/10/2010**

The Committee **considered** issues arising from the SCA meeting on 08 October 2010, raised by Teaching Committee at its meeting on 08 November 2010.

The Committee **noted** that its revised Terms of Reference, proposed Annual Priorities and the proposed production by July 2011 of guidance in Mandarin about academic integrity had been approved.

Action: Secretary: SCA

The proposal that the external examiner is able to confirm an award without the need to be physically present at the Board of Examiners, where the award of a postgraduate qualification (i.e. an exit award) is an automatic consequence of failure, was also approved.

The Committee **noted** that Teaching Committee had not approved the proposal that an appropriate person be present for the first hour of an examination to answer any queries, but had approved a proposal requiring relevant staff to be available to answer queries. The Committee **noted** that staff being physically present in an exam venue for a short period of time is not always effective, may not be the best use of their time nor is it always viable.

The Committee **decided** that paper setters or other relevant staff able to respond to queries should be required to remain contactable for the duration of the examination. It is acceptable for them to be physically present for a portion of the examination session if they prefer, but once they leave the venue they must remain contactable for the full period of the examination, for example by mobile phone.

10-11/38 Chair's Oral Report

The Committee **received** feedback from the Assessment, Policies and Procedures Forum, held on 1 December 2010. The Chair reported that the Forum was well attended by students based on campus, but a blizzard had prevented many academic staff from attending. Discussion took place on the policy for late submission of assessments and plagiarism and will be taken forward at subsequent SCA meetings.

10-11/39 Student Representatives' Oral Reports

The Committee's Student Representative did not have anything to report.

10-11/40 Templates for the classification of combined degrees

The Committee **considered** the completed templates for programmes identified by external examiners as requiring a review (History of Art/History; English/History; all joint programmes with Philosophy) to determine if the criteria are transparent and clear. Templates for History of Art/History and English/History were reviewed and demonstrated that each department dealt with its results independently and then brought them together to create an overall result. The Committee **noted** that the criteria for doing so were as clear as they could be given the practice of 'signaling'.

Action: Secretary: SCA

Secretary's note: The Committee requested that the department of English be contacted regarding the following statement in the template ' external examiners may occasionally decide to modify a mark as part of the final examining process' and that they be asked to modify it in line with current University policy. This has been done.

10-11/41 Review of Rules for Assessment, Progression and Award D13 and D14

The Committee **considered** a proposed amendment to the guidance provided to Category 2 students in sections D13 and D14 of the Rules for Assessment, Progression and Award in the *Guide to Assessment Standards, Marking and Feedback 2010/11* (pp 129-130).

The current relevant sections of the Rules for Assessment, Progression and Award state:

- D.13 In stage 2, if a student fails one or more modules (i.e., achieves a module mark below 40) in the stage s/he may still receive the credit for the failed module(s) and progress provided that:
- (i) s/he has failed no more than 40 credits, and
 - (ii) no module marks are lower than 30, and
 - (iii) the rounded credit-weighted mean over all modules taken in the stage (including the failed module(s)) is at least 55.
- D.14 In stage 3, if a student fails one or more modules s/he may still receive the credit and progress provided that:
- (i) s/he has failed no more than 40 credits, and
 - (ii) no module mark falls below the threshold for compensation appropriate for its level, and
 - (iii) the rounded credit-weighted mean over all modules taken in the stage (including the failed module(s)) is at least 40, and
 - (iv) the rounded credit-weighted mean over all modules taken in stages 2 and 3 (including the failed module(s)) is at least 50.

These sections do not state what should happen when an integrated masters student does not successfully meet the stage 2 or 3 criteria, including after possible reassessment.

The Committee **decided to recommend** to Teaching Committee that the following clarification be added to the wording in sections D13 and 14, for implementation from October 2011

D13 Where a student has not met the criteria for stage 2 of the Integrated Masters programme but has met the criteria for the Bachelors programme, the student will be transferred to the Bachelors programme for continuing study.

D14 Where a student has not met the criteria for stage 3 of the Integrated Masters programme but has met the criteria for the Bachelors programme, the student will be eligible for the award of a Bachelors degree on the basis of their results in stages 1 to 3.

CATEGORY II Business

10-11/42 Appointment of internal examiners for 2010/11 (Chair's action) including HYMS internal examiners

The Committee **noted** that all internal examiners for all departments have been approved for 2010/11.

10-11/43 Remuneration paid to external examiners

The Committee **noted** that at the request of UTC, a review of the level remuneration paid to external examiners (M10-11/10/22 refers) at York should be undertaken. SCA **decided** the remuneration paid to external examiners to be appropriate and decided that the workload of the external examiner who raised the issue of remuneration should be considered. The department has decided that this workload should now be shared with a second external examiner.

10-11/44 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting as Friday 25 February 2011 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Reserved Business

- *10-11/45 The Committee **approved** the reserved minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2010 (previously circulated).
- *10-11/46 **Matters arising:**
There were no matters arising

CATEGORY II Reserved Business

- *10-11/47 **Special examination arrangements**
The Committee **received** recommendations for special examination arrangements approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.
- *10-11/48 **Appointment of external examiners**
The Committee **received** notification of the appointment of external examiners approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.
- *10-11/49 **Examiners reports and result lists**
The Committee **received** notification of recommendations for the award of degrees approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.