



Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 2.15pm on Friday 19 January 2007 in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Present: Dr Chris J Fewster (Chair) Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz Health Sciences, Dr Harold Mytum Archaeology, Professor Colin Runciman Computer Science, Professor John Sparrow Biology, Dr Ros Temple Language & Linguistics, Dr Richard Walsh English & Related Literature, Ms Amy Foxton YUSU Member 2006/07

Apologies: Professor Geoff Hall Psychology, Dr Oleg Lisagor Research Associate

In attendance: Mrs Rosemary Goerisch Student Progress: SAS, Ms Sue Hardman Academic Registrar, Mr Philip Simison Graduate Schools Office, Ms Rosemary Royds Manager: Student Administrative Services

07/02 Minutes

The Committee **considered** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2006 (previously circulated). Two amendments were **noted:** (a) in 06/105 'the final report, shown in Appendix 4', should read, 'the final report, shown in Appendix 3'; (b) in 06/107, 'contained in Appendix 6, should read, 'contained in Appendix 5'. These changes will be reflected in the Blue Minutes.

07/03 Matters arising:

(a) **Annual Report on Invigilation** (M06/104 iv)

The Committee **received** the, previously requested, information about rates of pay across the HE sector for invigilators. The information had been sought to ensure that the University's rate was in line with that of other institutions. The average rate across the institutions surveyed is £7.69; the rate currently paid by the University is £10.15. The Committee discussed the options to reduce the fee, maintain it or increase it. A two-year freeze of the current rate was **approved** as reducing it was seen as a possible disincentive to recruitment of new invigilators and a rise was unwarranted.

(b) **Terms of Reference**

The Chair **noted** two minor changes to the Committee's Terms of Reference. Firstly, that Term of Reference item 12, stating that student members will not receive papers relating to individual students, staff or external examiners, would be relocated as shown in Appendix 1, as it is a directive rather than a term of reference. Secondly, rather than repeating the different types of students throughout the terms of reference they should be collectively referred to as 'all levels' in all items below item 1, as the Committee now has responsibility for issues relating to students at all levels.

(Appendix 1)

(c) **Postgraduate Transfers of Registration**

Previously the Board for Graduate Schools has approved all up-gradings, down gradings and transfers between programmes for postgraduate students. It was **noted** that the Committee's Terms of Reference makes no mention of these changes to postgraduate student registrations. The Committee **decided** that a new Term of Reference should be introduced at item 9 which will state that the Committee will approve all transfers of registration for graduate and postgraduate students. See Appendix 1.

Student Representation

The Board for Graduate Schools had asked that the Committee consider the possibility of increasing the number of postgraduate student representatives to two: one of whom should be a student from a taught postgraduate programme and one should be a research student. The rationale for this was that taught and research students have very different student experiences. As the Committee's remit now includes issues relating to research students, it was considered appropriate for their interests to be represented and the Committee **approved** the recommendation.

(Action point – CF/RG)

e) Cross-Representation with the Board for Graduate Schools Representation

The Constituency of members for the Committee requires that a member of the Committee should be a member of the Board for Graduate Schools, and that the Deputy Chair of the Board can be an *ex officio* member of the Committee. It was **noted** that the first requirement was presently met by the Chair of the Committee, who is an *ex officio* member of the Board. The Academic Registrar clarified the point that *ex officio* members are full committee members and so the requirements of the Constituency of Members are met by the current arrangement.

SCA Representation on SCC

The Constituency of Members for the Committee also requires that a member of the committee should be a member of the Special Cases Committee. The Committee's current representative on SCC will shortly no longer be able to fulfil this role and the appropriateness of maintaining this link was discussed. It was **noted** that having a link between the committees was very useful in informing policy decisions in the SCA although any one member of the SCC would only be aware of a proportion of the cases considered at SCC, which has a system of rotating attendance at meetings. Notwithstanding this consideration, the SCA **recommended** its Constituency of Members should include a current or recent member of the SCC.

(Action point – RG to inform SCC)

07/04 Oral report from the Chair

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

(a) Single system of degree classification

The Chair **reported** that a small group had met to consider responses from departments to the proposal from UTC and a report has been compiled incorporating that feedback.

(b) **Plagiarism Awareness** (M06/102(h))

The Chair **noted** that all members had received login access for the programme.

(c) Report on Briefing to Chairs & Secretaries of Boards of Examiners

The Chair **reported** on the recent successful briefing given to the Chairs and Secretaries of Boards of Examiners. It was **noted** that with the change in the

Committee's remit that briefings should now be extended to the Chairs and Secretaries of Graduate School Boards. The Chair **reported** that he had been involved in a separate briefing of this type in October 2006 and it was now likely that both briefings would be an annual POD event.

07/05 Revision of Regulation 5.2 (M 06/112)

The Committee **received** a paper from the Chair (deferred item M 06/112) on the revision of regulation 5.2.

Regulation 5.2 (Regulations for University Assessments) refers only to first degrees although its action is extended to other degrees by a footnote on page 35/Regulation 2 of the 2006-7 Ordinances and Regulations, and in Section 10.2 of the Guide to Assessment. It was **agreed** that this was not satisfactory, and that a revision of the Regulations should be undertaken to remedy this point.

The paper also pointed out that Regulation 5.2 (c), on reassessment, was not implemented in a uniform way across the institution, and that the straightforward interpretation of the Regulation in relation to the maximum mark obtainable from a reassessment could lead to inequity between students in some systems of classification. Some departments have accordingly departed from the letter of the regulation in favour of more equitable approaches. Owing to the lack of a university-wide classification system it was difficult to envisage a rewriting of the regulation which would meet the needs of all departments so the paper firstly invited the **consideration** of principles for the revision of resit regulations outlined in the paper and intended to be fed into the Modularisation Review exercise.

Principles (a)(i) and (ii) were approved by the Committee. In considering the principles the Committee decided that students should not be disadvantaged, in that candidates should not go forward with less than they achieved in the first instance. As such it was **decided** an additional principle to this effect was required as (a) (iii).

(**Action point** – RG paper to be amended and added as an appendix and assess any impact on postgraduate students)

The Committee **approved** the principles outlined in section 2 parts a-e of the discussion paper. The Committee also **approved** the proposal that an amended version of regulation 5.2(c) would be drawn up, which would augment the existing rules to permit different interpretations of the regulation under the remit of 'other approved procedures', which would have to conform to the principles agreed by the Committee. It was **noted** that in all cases, the "pass mark" should refer to the pass mark on the appropriate University mark scale, as defined in section 3.2.3 of the Guide to Assessment.

(Appendix 2)

The Committee **agreed** that the principles should be forwarded to the Modularisation Review Group and should be incorporated in the next version of the Guide to Assessment.

(**Action point** – RG & CF to update)

07/06 Convening Meetings of Postgraduate Boards of Examiners

The Examinations Office reported that some Graduate School Boards were failing to hold Boards of Examiners meetings at the conclusion of a graduate programme of study. Rather, they were holding meetings mid-programme where, with the external examiners present, decisions were taken on progression to the dissertation stage. The Board did not then reconvene at the conclusion of the programme but sent samples to the external examiner.

The Committee **considered** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress concerning meetings of Boards of Examiners for taught postgraduate programmes. Following discussion, the following points were **agreed**:

- (a) every programme should convene a final Board of Examiners meeting to take award decisions;
- (b) the final meeting must be attended by at least one External Examiner, as it is otherwise inquorate. In particular, it is not appropriate for external examiners to attend a progression board but not a final meeting of the Board of Examiners;
- (c) section 7.5.2 of the Guide to Assessment should be amended to indicate at which points in the administration of the programme the external examiner's involvement is required: (**Action Point** – amendment to the Guide required)
- (d) those departments not complying with these regulations should be informed of the SCA's decisions. (**Action Point** – LB)

07/07 Statistical analysis of classification of degrees I (M04/16, M04/96, M05/97, M06/102(g))

The Committee **received** a shallow analysis of degree classification data for the cohort of students graduating in Summer 2006. The Committee expressed its thanks to Celean Camp for producing the analysis.

The Committee **considered** how this analysis should be reported to University Teaching Committee and Senate. It was **noted** that although the University was in line with comparator universities in respect of the proportion of good degrees awarded, the number would equally remain comparable if it were to increase somewhat. It was also **noted** that most comparator institutions have increased the proportion of good degrees awarded to a greater extent than York. The Committee **recommended** that Senate and UTC **note** this trend to ensure the University's comparability is not lost.

The Committee **considered** the results by department. It was **noted** that the very high proportions of good degrees in the departments of History and English might suggest scope for these departments to be more discriminating at the 2:1/2:2 borderline. In addition, it was **noted** that the proportion of good degrees in Chemistry was lower than might be expected by comparison with the qualifications of the graduating cohort on entry and with other science departments at the University. The Committee **recommended** that departments with high proportions of third class degrees (notably Chemistry and Electronics) be asked by UTC to reflect on this in their Annual Programme Review process.

The Committee asked that the two-tabled scatter plots and the graph showing the percentage of good degrees awarded over six years by other institutions should be incorporated into the amended report

and that, following approval of the minutes, the report should be forwarded to Senate with a copy to University Teaching Committee. The Committee **recommended** to Senate and UTC that these results are sent to Chairs of Board of Examiners requesting comments in Annual Programme Review reports to UTC.

(**Action Point** – UTC & Senate's approval)

07/08 Demands on available space for formal examinations

The Committee **received** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress in respect of options available for meeting the ever-increasing demand for examination space, particularly in the first week of the Spring term. Of the options presented, the Committee expressed a preference for the use of Alcuin ATB056/057. The options of reducing the number of examinations conducted by the University and examining in the second week of term were not regarded as practical. The Committee **noted** the increased workload of Examinations Office staff in servicing another examination venue.

07/09 Veiled students in formal examinations

The Committee **received** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress containing proposals for confirming the identity of veiled students in formal examinations, which had been prepared following discussions with other institutions and Student Welfare Services. Following discussion, and with the clarification that a senior female member of the Examination Office staff would conduct identity checking with sensitivity and awareness, the Committee **approved** the proposed procedure.

(**Action Point** – Procedure to be included in the Examinations Guide & departments to be informed)

07/10 Management of Scripts for Dyslexic Students

The Committee **received** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress proposing a revision of Section 8.4.3 of the Guide to Assessment. It was reported that the current approved procedure has proved impractical and labour intensive and that, in consequence, some departments have continued with their own practices. The Committee **approved** the proposals.

(**Action Point** – Section 8.4.3 of The Guide will need to be revised in 07/08, departments need to be informed of the change by the Examinations Office)

07/11 Checking students' previous work during academic misconduct investigations

The Committee **received** a paper from the Chair (deferred item M 06/111) to consider proposals for amendment to paragraph 3.3(c) of the Academic

Misconduct: Policies, Guidelines and Procedures booklet. The current procedure, which requires investigating subcommittees to check students previous work for academic misconduct has proved to be time consuming and there were concerns that it may discourage some staff from fully implementing the misconduct procedures. The changes proposed seek to reduce the workload on staff and improve compliance.

After discussion, it was **decided** that the requirement should be replaced by a statement that investigating subcommittees have the right to consider other work previously submitted by the candidate. This proposal is to be sent to Special Cases Committee for comment prior to incorporation

in the revised Academic Misconduct booklet. It was also **decided** to seek views on how an investigating subcommittee should treat a candidate who incriminates themselves during a misconduct investigation by disclosing misconduct in pieces of work other than those under consideration.

(**Action Point** – RR, booklet to be revised, RG to SCC)

07/12 Appointment of internal examiners

The Committee was advised that the process for the approving of internal examiners for the academic year 2006/07 in the named departments was almost complete. Examinations Office personnel are dealing with a few outstanding queries.

07/13 Appointment of External Examiners

The Committee **received** a paper from the Student Progress Administrator and the Deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools on the University guidelines for the appointment of external examiners, particularly in relation to the frequency of reappointment of examiners and reciprocal examining arrangements.

The current rules have proved to be too restrictive, especially for departments that regularly have several research degree candidates per year in a field with a limited number of potential external examiners. In addition, a survey of other institutions had revealed that the University's rules on were more stringent than those operated elsewhere. To overcome the difficulties now faced by some departments the Committee **approved** three proposals in respect of the number of candidates an external examiner could examine within a given period; what constituted a research candidate and what the time limits are. This guidance will take immediate effect.

(**Action Point** – PS to inform departments)

07/14 Distance Education Programmes (M06/109)

The Committee was asked to **note** that two replacement distant examination centres in Denmark and Nigeria for the Health Economics for Health Care Professionals programme have been approved by Chair's action.

Secretary's note: the Examinations Office holds details of examination centre addresses.

07/15 Draft policy for recording of research degree vivas

The Committee **received** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress outlining a proposed policy for the recording of vivas for research degrees, arising from the requirements of the QAA code of practice on research. The Board for Graduate Schools **decided** that the audio recording of MPhil and PhD students' oral examinations was the best method of providing an objective record in the event of an appeal or dispute between the examiners. The responsibility for the implementation of this scheme has been passed over to the SCA as part of the wider transfer of responsibilities.

The Committee **approved** the proposals with the following amendments:

1. During the trial, a record should be kept of any cases in which external examiners refuse to be recorded. The viva will continue, unrecorded, if there are any objections.

2. That the recordings will be stored on the original minidisk, rather than being copied to CD.
3. Students will not have a choice regarding the recording; it will be obligatory for them.
4. The tapes will be stored centrally and securely by the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress; it was also noted that the Deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools would be the first person to listen to the recording in the event of an appeal being lodged.
5. If the equipment fails or was not available for some reason then the viva will continue unrecorded, and such incidents would be noted.

(**Action Point** – RG to update proposal and inform departments)

07/16 External Examiners' Induction Procedures (M06/110)

The Committee **received** a briefing from committee members, deferred from the November 2006 meeting, on external examiners' induction procedures at other institutions. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

07/17 Undergraduate External Examiner Reports for 2005/6 (M* 06/53)

The Committee **received** a summary of the undergraduate programme External Examiner Reports for 2005/06. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

07/18 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting as Friday 9 March 2007 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[January, 2006]