



Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 9 March 2007 at 2.15pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr Chris Fewster (Chair) Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz Health Sciences, Prof Geoff Hall Psychology, Dr Harold Mytum Archaeology, Professor Colin Runciman Computer Science, Professor John Sparrow Biology, Dr Ros Temple Language & Linguistics, Ms Amy Foxtan YUSU Member 2006/07, Mr Oleg Lisagor GSA Member 2006/7

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

07/25 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Richard Walsh and Rosemary Royds.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

07/26 Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2007 (previously circulated). One amendment was noted; in 07/07 Statistical Analysis of Classification of Degrees, the graph showing the percentage breakdown of degree classes awarded by each department should also be included in the Committee's report to UTC and Senate.

07/27 Matters arising from the minutes:

Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2006

a) **06/103 Analysis of academic misconduct cases** (M05/20 c), M05/04 f), M*05/87) The Committee had not received all the relevant details of academic misconduct cases for 05/06 in November and the analysis has been deferred. The Committee **received** the completed report and **considered** the results.

The Committee **noted** two particular concerns: firstly, the significant variation in the number of cases reported by different departments, with some reporting no cases over the past two years; secondly, that around 10% of undergraduate Chinese students at the University were investigated for suspected academic misconduct in 2005/6. It was also **noted** that looking at these statistics in isolation could be misleading and it was suggested that the Chair and Secretary should compile a matrix of the statistics for the past two years, which could be used as a basis for dealing with these and other concerns. This would enable the Committee to determine and **approve** an action plan for dealing with these and any other concerns at its next meeting.

(Action point: RG)

The Committee acknowledged that despite efforts from all concerned to educate overseas students about academic misconduct, perhaps the most effect means were not being employed. One Committee member found it particularly effective to teach students from different cultural backgrounds together about academic misconduct rather than teaching a specific group in isolation. The Committee agreed to **recommend** to UTC that the university reflect on the problem of communicating to overseas students, both individually and as a group the University's expectations policies on academic misconduct.

b) Issues raised at UTC on 5 February 2007

i) 07/21 Abolition of Reading Time in Examinations (SCA 06/101, 06/60c, 06/78c)

UTC **approved** a proposal from the SCA with effect from October 2007.

(**Action Point** – RG & LB to inform departments)

ii) 07/22 Actions arising from the Annual Report on Invigilation (SCA06/104, 05/81a)

UTC approved the SCA's recommendation that all new invigilators should be required to attend at least one training session before being permitted to invigilate, and that existing staff should undergo essential training on a three-year cycle. There was, however, concern that this could place an additional burden on academic staff and therefore the examinations Office should ensure that training was as brief as possible and offered in a range of time slots. It was hoped that, in the medium term, training might be offered via the VLE.

(**Action Point** – RG & LB to inform departments)

UTC agreed that the appointment of a professional senior invigilator should be a priority for the University.

The Standing Committee on Assessment **noted** that professional senior invigilators would be available for the examination period in the 2007 Summer Term. The Academic Registrar informed the Committee that this post would be added to her financial plan for 2007/8 onwards and hoped that it would receive University approval.

iii) 07/23 Policy on Dictionaries in Formal Examinations (SCA 06/106, 06/06a)

UTC **approved** SCA's recommendations that:

(a) the entitlement to use individual dictionaries in formal examinations be withdrawn with effect from 2007/08;

(b) the Examinations Office should purchase sufficient English dictionaries for each examination venue, which would be available to any student on request in any examination.

The Standing Committee on Assessment **agreed** that a Concise Oxford English dictionary would be the most appropriate dictionary for this purpose.

v) 07/25 Academic Misconduct (SCA 06/108, 06/79c, 06/43)

UTC **approved** the proposal from the SCA with effect from 2007/8, that changes, in the application of

penalties arising from academic misconduct, be implemented.

c) Fundamental review of Regulation 5.2: Discussion Paper (SCA 06/112, 07/05)

The Committee **received** an amended copy of the discussion paper as requested at the previous meeting. It was **noted** that the extension of the principles of regulation 5 to postgraduate students would best be achieved in the context of a full revision of regulation 2.

(Action point-PS to submit to BfGS June 2007)

07/28 Oral report from the Chair

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

a) Committee Membership

The Chair **reported** that Dr Ros Temple would be leaving the University shortly thusb creating a vacancy on the Committee. On behalf of all members who have served with Dr Temple, the Chair thanked her for her efforts over the last two years and wished her well at Oxford University.

b) Committee's link with SCC (07/03(f))

The Chair **reported** that as yet no recent or former member from SCC was available to join the SCA . In order to maintain the link the Chair and Secretary would attend the SCC's policy meeting in October, unless the situation was resolved in the meantime.

c) Academic Misconduct Guidelines

The Chair **reported** that new guidelines were being drafted in an attempt to reduce the complexity of the procedures and to increase the autonomy with in departments. The new procedures should be clearer and more user-friendly.

It was **noted** that the extension of the Committee's remit to include post-graduate research students necessitates a revision of the academic misconduct guidelines for these students to ensure that the Deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools is permitted to chair resulting hearings. A revision to this effect will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

(Action point –PS,)

07/29 External Examiners Induction – Good Practice Recommendations (06/110, 07/16)

The Committee **received** a briefing from committee members, deferred from the November and January meetings, on external examiners' induction procedures at other institutions to **consider** any recommendations of good practice. Members **reported** a range of procedures and experiences at a variety of other institutions. It was felt that travelling long distances for induction meetings was an ineffective use of resources and that having all relevant information on-line would be much more efficient and appropriate. In order to establish best practice the Committee requested that a survey of similar institutions be conducted and the results be made available at the next meeting. Some members requested copies of the information sent to the University's external examiners so that they could make an assessment of the appropriateness of the current provision.

(Action point – RG&LB)

07/30 Undergraduate External Examiners Reports 2005/6

The Committee **received** a summary of the undergraduate programme External Examiner Reports for 2005/06 (M*06/53) (M07/17) deferred from the November and January meetings. The Committee **considered** the External Examiners comments to determine any need to produce or amend policy. It was **noted** that policy on the following was needed: the use of vivas for taught students and the consequences of non-attendance; how discrepancies between markers should be resolved; and hand-written amendments to class lists.

(**Action point** – Policy to be developed)

The Committee **noted** that overall this was an extremely positive set of reports and also noted that no external examiner had reported that the AUT/UCU dispute, or the University's contingency arrangements, had had a negative impact on students.

07/31 Devolving Responsibility for Routine Committee Business

The Committee **received** a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress, proposing that the Committee devolve responsibility for some routine business to senior members of Student Administration Services, acting within clear guidelines. Unusual cases, or those requiring academic judgement would continue to be dealt with by the Committee.

The Committee **approved** the proposal with minor amendments and **noted** that the Board for Graduate Schools had also agreed devolution of some responsibilities as part of the same process. As this is a major change to the way in which the Committee conducts its business; UTC's approval will be sought for the relevant aspects of the proposal.

Appendix 1

07/32 Amendments to the External Examiners Annual Report Form

The Committee **considered** a request from UTC to amend the External Examiner's Annual report forms for all taught degree programmes to enable continued measurement of performance following changes to the TQI Website. The results would form part of a report to Council who would use them to measure peer review evaluation of standards of student performance.

The Committee **approved**, with minor textual modifications, the introduction of three additional yes/no questions placed at the end of the report form, which could be used for these purposes. Although the questions partly repeat others asked earlier in the form, it was felt that a yes/no answer would give a focused judgement by the external examiner, in addition to their narrative assessment. This would provide an efficient means of collating the required data, and it was **noted** that any concerns causing an external examiner to answer 'no' to any of these questions would be flagged thereby at a high level within the University. A minor change to Section B was also **approved** namely the introduction of the phrase 'and other assessments' to cover programmes in which examinations are not employed.

Secretary's note: the grammatical corrections have been made and the forms have been sent to the Chair of UTC at his request.

07/33 Annual Priorities Progress Report (06/81)

The Committee **received** a progress report on annual priorities. The Chair **reported** that all actions required of the Committee by March have been successfully completed, plus the confirming of an hourly rate for invigilators which as timetabled for June. Priorities yet to be completed include:

- ii) The Committee **noted** that the governance of combined programmes will now be taken forward as part of the implementation of the Modularisation Review.
- v) The implementation of actions from the review of academic misconduct policies, guidelines and procedures, has begun and is ongoing.
- viii) Considering the issues of managing academic misconduct within foundation degree programmes.
- ix) The fundamental review of Regulation 5.2 has begun and is on going.
- b) Issues arising from QAA Code of Practice, Section 6: Assessment of Students 2006, is still outstanding.

07/34 Review of Routine Double Marking

The Committee **considered** a discussion paper, by Professor Trevor Sheldon, on the issues surrounding the relative merits of moving away from routine double marking.

This procedure has proved to be onerous and time consuming and is not universally applied. As there is no statutory requirement to maintain the policy it was considered an opportune time to reconsider the practice. The Committee's discussion was focused on the basic principles of the paper rather than on the specific discussion points in the paper's summary. During the discussion, several points were **noted**:

- a) The scripts of some students with disabilities can easily be identified (forexample, as the only script in a cohort, produced on PC, in a closed exam). It is important that these students have their work double-marked to ensure that they were not disadvantaged.
- b) Double marking is a means of supporting academic judgement; against which the students have no right of appeal.
- c) Individual marks for individual modules are important to students and are on their transcripts. Though any anomalies may be addressed in an academic reference this may not prove satisfactory or sufficient.
- d) Double marking should be maintained for taught post-graduate courses where a module mark could have more of an impact on the students results. Transcripts are routinely used by TPG students to try and secure employment or further study opportunities. Though some undergraduate students could have their degree classifications calculated on 8, 40-credit modules, the Committee **agreed** that recommendation 1 should not apply to TPG programmes.
- e) The Committee did question if recommendation 8 was suggesting the implementation of double marking in areas it had not previously been applied such as examination scripts.
- f) It was also **noted** that non-written or non-recorded assessments with a weighting of 5% or more towards the final award must be double marked. (Guide to Assessment 2.1.2)
- g) Members **reported** that where double marking is no longer applied students received their feedback much quicker but that corollary to that is academic staff no longer have a common understanding of what colleagues do.

The Chair will report the Committee's comments to the next meeting of UTC.

07/35 Options Open to MPhil/PhD Examiners

The Committee **received** a paper from the Student Progress Administrator, proposing changes to the options open to MPhil/PhD examiners. This has been discussed by the Board for Graduate Schools previously. The Committee **approved** the proposals.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

NOTE: approval of Category II business will be assumed unless a member indicates that they wish to bring forward an item to Category I business.

07/36 Draft Award Regulations

No member of the committee requested discussion of Category II business.

06/37 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting as Friday 11 May 2007 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[March, 2007]