



# Teaching Committee

## Standing Committee on Assessment

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 21 November 2008 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

*Present:* Dr David Efird (Chair), Philosophy; Dr Simon Eveson, Mathematics; Dr Amanda Rees, Sociology; Dr Anne Duhme-Klair, Chemistry; Dr Pat Ansell, BfGS and Health Sciences; Richard Mitchell, GSA representative

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

### 08/83 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Brown, Social Policy and Social Work and Rosemary Royds: SAS.

## CATEGORY I BUSINESS

### 08/84 Minutes

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2008.

### 08/85 Matters arising from the minutes:

- i. Penalties for late submission of assessments – a review of Departments' Statement of Assessment (M08/64 (5))

The Committee **noted** the wide range of penalties applied across Departments and that the penalty was not proportionate to the size or the significance of the assessment. The Committee **agreed** that a consistent and equitable approach should be taken and **decided** to recommend to University Teaching Committee that this matter be considered as part of the modularisation process.

- ii. Student Guide to Assessment (M08/65 iii)

This matter is deferred until January 2009.

- iii. Determine the need for a policy to assist students observing Ramadan during the University's (M08/67)

The Assistant Registrar: Student Progress contacted the University of Leicester regarding any special arrangements they made for students observing Ramadan during University's closed examinations. Leicester stated they did not make any special arrangements for such students but recommended contacting the Muslim Students Society at York. This has been done and as yet no response has been received.

- iv. Academic Misconduct Annual Report 2007/8 (M08/68), department feedback

At the October meeting the Committee **noted** that in the past three years the following have not submitted one case of academic misconduct: History of Art, Medieval Studies and Women's Studies. They were contacted and invited to share best practice which they have all done. No issues have arisen from their responses and their results will be reviewed again next year.

## 08/86 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair **reported** that:

The Chair **reported** that he had received a more than expected number of requests for internal observers at research students' oral examinations. This is because the external examiner refused to be orally recorded. Departments are to be reminded, by way of a memorandum, from the Chair and Professor Alastair Fitter, PVC Research, that independent observers are to be requested only in exceptional circumstances.

*Secretary's note: The memorandum was sent to Heads of Departments and Graduate Chairs on 26 November 2008*

## 08/87 Statistical analysis of classification of degrees I

The report on the cohort of students graduating in Summer 2008, information on York graduation statistics and on York and national entry statistics for that cohort (shallow analysis) was deferred until January 2009.

## 08/88 Annual Report on Invigilation

The Committee **received** the annual report on invigilation in formal examinations at York for academic year 2007/08 and **considered** actions arising from issues raised in the report. The Committee **noted** that the range of duties required of invigilators is becoming time consuming and distracting them from invigilating. These duties include having to take students to the toilet and collecting scripts from large numbers of students leaving examinations early. Invigilators have additional duties of checking attendance, identity and items brought into the examination room in the first 30 minutes of an examination. To enable invigilators to fulfil their role during this period, it was **decided** that students would not normally be allowed to go to the toilet during the first 30 minutes of an examination. This change will be implemented from January 2009. The impact of this change will be

monitored and any further recommendations considered at a later date.

The Committee also **considered** the proposal that from October 2009 academic staff be relieved of invigilation responsibilities and invigilators will be provided, where possible, by the Examinations Office. Departments will be asked to finance the invigilation for their examination slots, if they are unable to do so the University may be asked to underwrite the costs involved. The Committee **decided** to make this **recommendation** to University Teaching Committee.

## **08/89 Undergraduate External Examiner Reports for 2007/8**

The Committee **received** a summary of the External Examiner Reports for undergraduate programmes 2007/8 and **considered** actions arising from issues raised in the summary. The Chair **noted** that most of the issues would be addressed in the respective programme reviews and their responses will be monitored; also, that many issues will be resolved when programmes are modularised.

The Committee **noted** the comment that academic penalties are too lenient and do not act as a deterrent. There was some support for this among members and it was **decided** that Clare Wiggins, Project Officer, Learning Enhancement, should be asked to review the penalties applied by comparator institutions and report the findings to the Committee.

**Action Point: RG**

*Secretary's Note: The Academic Registrar has provided a JISC report on Academic Misconduct and it states that resubmission of an assessment for a reduced or capped mark was the most widely applied penalty in the study. (Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project: Part II May 2008)*

## **08/90 Teleconferencing of Research Students Oral Examinations**

The Committee **received** a proposal regarding the teleconferencing of research students' oral examinations. It was acknowledged that it is exceptional for an external examiner to be unable to attend a viva at York, but, in order to facilitate any further such requests, the proposed procedure was **approved**.

## **08/91 The Role of External Examiners – changing marks for taught degree programmes (M07/114)**

The Committee **received** a proposal from the Chair relating to the role of External Examiners in regard to changing marks for taught degree programmes.

In November 2007 the Committee **considered** the role of external examiners in taught programmes. Two issues were **considered**, firstly, that External Examiners for taught programmes should not act as markers under any circumstances. This was **recommended** to and **approved** by University Teaching Committee. Secondly, that External Examiners in taught programmes should not be permitted to alter marks produced by the internal examiners. Externals would be asked instead to monitor the process of adjusting marks or any remarking of scripts, and to draw attention to assessments where the run of marks appears out of line but would not take a direct part in any remarking or adjustment. It was noted that the proposal would require Boards of Examiners to develop internal moderation procedures

to replace work that may currently be undertaken by External Examiners. The Committee accepted this proposal in principle and requested that Chairs of Boards of Examiners be consulted on this recommendation before it is submitted to UTC. Responses have been received from departments and after consideration the Committee **decided to recommend** to University Teaching Committee that External Examiners should not be permitted to alter marks produced by internal examiners as this is a decision should rest with the Board.

### **08/92 Fitness to Practice and Academic Misconduct**

The Committee **received** a proposal from the department of Health Sciences for minor amendments to the Academic Misconduct Policies, Guidelines and Procedures. Under the present procedures students who commit academic misconduct on a programme that has fitness to practice issues is submitted to two separate hearings, one to address the academic misconduct and the other to review their suitability to practice within the associated profession. This is very stressful for students and time consuming for staff. On appeal, however, these two issues would be considered at the same hearing. The Committee **approved** in principle, the proposal that where an academic misconduct case raises concern about a student's fitness to practice both the academic misconduct and fitness to practice issues are considered at the one hearing but **decided** to consult with all departments on this proposal before making a final decision.

A proposal was also **received** regarding the consequences of issuing a formal warning to students on programmes with fitness to practice issues. It was proposed that in such cases a full investigation must be held. The Committee **approved** the proposal.

### **08/93 Calculation and application of penalties for academic misconduct**

The Committee **received** a proposal regarding the calculation and application of penalties for academic misconduct. The Committee **approved** the proposal that where the best of a number of marks be used to determine a final mark, that marks that have a penalty applied must be included in the calculation.

**Action Point:** Academic Misconduct Guide to be updated

## **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.**

### **08/94 Date of the next meeting**

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting as Friday 9 January 2009 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch  
Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

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