

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 19 November 2010

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

In attendance: Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Rosemary Goerisch, Assistant Registrar
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader, Learning Enhancement
Kathryn Lucas, Secretary Special Cases Committee
Kay Mitchell, Graduate Students Association
Rosemary Royds, Manager Registry Services

Apologies: Isha Arora, GSA representative
Dr Geoff Cubitt, History
Dr David Halliday, Electronics
Dr Jim Watt, English

10-11/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2010 were **approved**.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

10-11/22 Matters arising from the minutes

- i. 10/11-5 Student Representatives' Oral Report
The Chair reported that he contacted the Chair of the Working Party on the distribution of degree classifications regarding its progress but has not received a reply.
- ii. 10/11-10 External Examiners' reports 2009/10
Several external examiners expressed concern about the full range of marks not being used in the first-class and failure categories. Guidance for departments on how to use the full range of marks in the first class and fail categories will be presented at the Committee's next meeting by the Project Leader, Learning Enhancement Team.

- iib An external examiner recommended that the University review its policy on not penalising students with dyslexia for errors in spelling and grammar. Disability Services have confirmed that the current policy is appropriate and will confirm this in a paper to be considered at the Committee's next meeting.
- iii. UTC October 2010 minutes
The Committee considered issues raised by Teaching Committee at its 18 October 2010 meeting.
 - One external examiner questioned the level of remuneration paid for the amount of work he was required to undertake. Teaching Committee requested that the issue be discussed with the Planning Office to ensure the University's fee was in line with other institutions.

The issue was discussed with the Director of Planning who stated that this data was not held by his office but could be obtained if necessary. The Examinations Office confirmed that a review of fees paid to external examiners by comparator institutions was undertaken by the Examinations Office two years ago; and the fees paid by the University are in line with these institutions.

As the level of fee paid to external examiners is in line with those of other institutions, the Committee **decided** that the department should be contacted to ascertain the amount of work this external examiner is being asked to undertake. Action: RG

10-11/23 Chair's Oral Report

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

- a. Academic misconduct briefing on 10 November 2010
The Chair reported that the briefing had been well attended and those present had found the briefing very useful
- b. Forum on changes to the Guide to Assessment 10 November 2010
The Chair reported that those present at the Forum approved of the new format of the Guide to Assessment and that they would appreciate the inclusion of an index in the next version.
- c. Review of the examinations process
The Chair reported that the Examinations Office is conducting a

review of the University's formal examination processes to ensure that there are robust processes and sufficient resources available to support the Common Assessment Period.

- d. **Assessment Policy and Procedure Forum 1 December 2011**
This event is a new initiative where all who would like to give feedback on the University's policies and procedures on assessment may do so. It will be led by Ben Humphrys, the SCA Chair, and the Secretary. Staff and students, particularly Chairs of Boards of Examiners and of Studies, associated administrators, and course representatives will be invited to attend. The feedback will be considered in future meetings of the Committee and action taken where appropriate.

10-11/24 Student Representatives' Oral Reports

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Committee's YUSU representative.

- i. A forum on assessment feedback will be held on 1 December 2010.
- ii. Week 8 will be Academic Skills Week. There will be a range of workshops including, how to be an independent learner and the importance of the academic integrity tutorial.
- iii. It was reported that not all students are aware that there is a penalty for the late submission of assessed work. The Committee requested that: this be raised in the next edition of the 'Briefing Sheet'; YUSU raise the issue with Course representatives to ensure they are informed and can then inform their students; that departments be contacted to establish how the penalties are being applied; that a notice is put on York Extra advising everyone of the policy. Action RG, YUSU

The Committee received an oral report from the GSA

- a. There will be a forum for postgraduate students on 1 December 2010.
- b. The GSA has appointed five new principal officers.

10-11/25 Statistical analysis of classification of degrees I

The Committee **considered** a statistical analysis of classification of degrees for the cohort of students graduating in summer 2010, information on York graduation statistics and on the York entry tariff for that cohort (shallow analysis). A comparative position for degree classifications will be provided in the 'deep' analysis to be considerate at the

Committee's April meeting.

The Committee **noted** that the average percentage of good degrees awarded rose in 2009/10 by 1.1% to 74.6%. There is a wide variation in the percentage of good degrees across York departments and ranges from 98% in Music to 44% in Health Sciences. The three year average across all departments is 74%.

The Committee also **noted** that for the 2009/10 cohort the tariff data has been calculated from individual qualification records; this is the first time that the tariff has been calculated this way. There has been an overall drop in the average entry tariff from 377 in 2008/9 to 352 in 2009/10. The three year average is 369. Further investigation is necessary to establish whether the drop in tariff reflects the changed source of data or if other variables are contributing to the decline.

It was further **noted** that the variation in percentage of good degrees awarded across departments persists and will be the subject of more detailed analysis by the working party tasked by Senate to explore the issue.

The Committee **decided** that it would be appropriate for postgraduate taught completion rates to be included in the deep analysis to be received at the April meeting.

10-11/26 Annual report on invigilation

The Committee **received** an annual report on invigilation in formal examinations at York for academic year 2009/10 and **considered** appropriate actions to address issues raised in the report.

The Committee **noted** that changes that had been implemented during 2009/10 and considered the issues experienced throughout the preceding year raised by the senior invigilators employed by the Examinations Office.

Firstly, addressing examination paper errors is taking an inordinate amount of senior invigilators' time to address. Whilst they are doing this they are not fulfilling their role as a senior invigilator; the delay in resolving issues with departments concerned is adding to students' stress as they wait for a response and resolution. The Committee **recommended** to Teaching Committee that, if the paper setter is not present the senior invigilator should spend no more than ten minutes trying to resolve the query/error. During that time they will telephone

the listed departmental examination contact or, if they are not available, the departmental administrator, or if they are not available the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners.

If a response is not received within ten minutes, the senior invigilator will record the query/possible error raised about the exam. Students will be handed a slip advising them to annotate on their script how they have dealt with the error/query. This will be taken into account when the script is marked. After the examination the information will be recorded by the Exams Office and the report will be forwarded to the relevant department. **Action** Examinations Office

Secondly, invigilators and students have complained about the disruption caused by large numbers of students requesting to go to the toilet during an examination. While invigilators are escorting students to the toilet they are not invigilating an exam. For some students going to the toilet is seen as the norm rather than an exception. The workload is becoming unsustainable and the disruption it causes is unacceptable to those who chose not to go to the toilet.

Confining the process to permit only one student to leave the venue at a time eases the workload. This arrangement was trialled during the August resit period and worked well. The Committee **recommended** to Teaching Committee that only one student be escorted to the toilet at any one time in any examination session.

10-11/27 Combined degrees template

The Committee **considered** the appropriateness of the completed templates submitted thus far detailing responses from Combined Executive Committees regarding criteria that determine degree classification. The Committee **noted** that though the templates presented the criteria in a more readable format they did not make the process for applying them any clearer.

The Committee **noted** the poor response rate and requested that Chairs of Combined Executives were sent a reminder of the deadline for submission of the completed templates.

Secretary's note: all relevant Chairs have been contacted. The Chair of Teaching Committee has since decided that only those Combined Boards of Studies that have been criticised by an external examiner need submit a completed template.

10-11/28 Review of rule of assessment D15

The Committee **considered** a proposed amendment to the Rules of Assessment, Progression and Award for Category 2 students in the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback section D15).

Rule of assessment D15 does not state what should happen when an integrated masters student does not successfully meet the stage 4 criteria, including after possible reassessment. The inference is that if they fail to meet the stage 4 criteria they will be considered for a Bachelor's degree on the basis of their results in stages 1-3.

The Committee **recommended** to Teaching Committee that the following clarification be added to rule of assessment D15:

Where a student has not met the above criteria for the award of an integrated masters, students will be eligible for the award of a Bachelors degree on the basis of their results in stages 1-3.

10-11/29 Special Cases Committee hearings – a tabled paper

The Committee considered a proposal to change the procedure for cases of academic misconduct where the final penalty is greater than 5 for taught students, or for research students where a penalty is recommended or if the student has a previous record of academic misconduct, or if the recommendation is for termination of enrolment or failure of the award without an opportunity for resit.

The current policy requires Special Cases Committee to conduct a full hearing in all cases. In the majority of cases the hearing results in no changes being made to the penalty. This causes undue stress for the student and an added workload for staff.

The Committee **recommended** to Teaching Committee that in the cases identified above, students should be offered the opportunity to appeal the decision but an automatic hearing will no longer be required.

10-11/30 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting is Friday 14 January 2011 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall and that this is a change of date.

