



Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 16 November 2007 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Present: Dr Chris Fewster (Chair), Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz, Health Sciences, Professor Colin Runciman, Computer Science, Dr David Efird, Philosophy and BfGS, Dr Simon Eveson, Mathematics, Ms Grace Fletcher-Hall, YUSU Member 2007/08, Ms Carylan Lobo, GSA Member 2007/8

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

07/101 Welcome to new members and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed Dr Simon Eveson from the department of Mathematics and Ms Carylan Lobo, a GSA representative.

Apologies were received from Dr Anne Duhme-Klair and Dr Amanda Rees.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

07/102 Minutes

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2007.

07/103 Matters arising from the minutes:

a) 07/85b Academic Misconduct (M07/48, 07/64)

The Forum on the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has noted the Committee's suggestion that a good practice guide in educating students about academic misconduct would be useful.

b) 06/106 Access to exam papers

The Committee **received** a report from Dr Geoff Oxford (Biology) on the progress of an approved pilot study which allowed Biology students supervised access to their examination papers. Approval was required as this practice contravenes *The Guide to Assessment* section 12.4.2.

Dr Oxford reported that the trial had, on the whole, been successful. The Committee **approved** an extension to the trial for this academic year.

The Committee **noted** that this form of feedback was one of many options available and that not all departments would be able to provide supervised access owing to resource or workload constraints. The Committee therefore **requested** a revision of section 12.4.2 that would permit departments to offer supervised access to examination scripts but not making it obligatory for them to do so. **Action Point** : RG and CF

07/104 Terms of Reference (M07/86iv)

The Committee **received** draft Terms of Reference in the style now used by UTC. Changes to the Terms of Reference include: student representation; the exclusion of higher doctorates; the monitoring of academic misconduct reports and collation of annual statistical reports; and monitoring of recommendations from Boards of Studies for students to take exams as if for the first time, where the original sit was missed or failed on medical grounds documented by a GP or consultant doctor. **Action Point**: RG and LB

07/105 Oral report from the Chair

a) The Chair **reported** that updated versions of the Guide to Assessment and the Academic Misconduct Policies, Guidelines and Procedures and its associated Briefing Sheet had been circulated and were now being used. Sample letters to be used by departments in cases of academic misconduct were now on the Examinations Office website. He thanked Rosemary Royds for her assistance in this matter.

b) It was also **reported** that a briefing for Chairs of Boards of Examiners and administrative staff would be held on 26 November. Changes to the academic misconduct procedures would be discussed at the meeting.

c) The QAA Institutional Audit was to take place in the week commencing 3 December 2007 . Both the Chair and Dr Efird would be meeting the Audit team as part of the process.

d) Further to M07/86, the Chair **reported** that research into technological means of verifying a students' identity in University examinations was continuing. The working party had seen two demonstrations involving vein recognition and finger print data recently. Views of Liberty , an independent civil liberties group, have been sought and received. A report of the group's finding thus far would be discussed with relevant PVC's in February.

07/106 Pilot Study in the Recording of Research Students Oral Examinations

(SCA M07/15, 07/90), (BfGS M05/66b, 05/82, 05/83iii), (Senate M05/71, 06/4)

Members **considered** a revised procedure taking account of the discussion at the Committee's previous meeting. Changes included: the requirement for departments to keep a diary of forthcoming oral examinations to ensure that the equipment is available and a procedure for appointing an internal observer in the event that a proposed External Examiner refuses to be recorded and no suitable alternative examiner can be found. The Committee was strongly of the view that recording should be normative and that the use of an observer should be reserved for exceptional cases. The Chair **noted** that, based on the results of the pilot study, an internal observer would only be needed once or twice a year.

The Committee requested that the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress should perform a sound check as soon as the recording is received in Student Administrative Services, to ensure that the recording has been successful. If it has not been then the department will be informed immediately.

The Assistant Registrar: Student Progress reported that the pilot study was still being conducted, and that 21 recordings had been made, all of which had been recorded successfully. No practical problems had arisen with any of the recordings and no External Examiner or student had refused to be recorded.

The Committee agreed to **recommend** to Senate at its January 2008 meeting that the University adopt the policy of audio recording all oral examinations of research students. **Action Point** : CF & RG

07/107 Conduct of oral examinations for MPhil, PhD and EngD

The Committee **considered** proposed guidelines on the conduct of examinations for MPhil, PhD and EngD students. The guidelines had been requested by the BfGS and have been approved by them.

The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate to also include guidelines for MA/MSc by Research programmes. It was **noted** that these programmes have different criteria to those of the aforementioned students and that separate guidelines should be produced. The Committee **approved** the production of separate guidelines for the conduct of oral examinations for MA/MSc by Research programmes. **Action Point** : PS

07/108 Annual Report on Invigilation

The Committee **received** the annual report on invigilation in formal examinations for 2006/07 and thanked Lynn Burnell for her efforts in producing the report.

An innovation during 2006/07 was the recruitment of two professional Senior Invigilators, who had ensured adherence to policies, procedures and regulations, leading to immediate improvements in the continuity and integrity of the processes provided for students. This had also released academic staff to focus on other duties (e.g., marking) instead of invigilation. The Committee unreservedly supported the continuing use of professional Senior Invigilators.

The Senior Invigilators have noted an increase in the number of times clarification has been requested from paper setters during examinations. The Committee **decided** that a record of such requests in the first 15 minutes of an examination should be made. Results should be collated as part of the next annual report on invigilation. **Action Point**: LB to include in the exam incident sheet

In her report, the Examinations Officer noted the increasing difficulty of scheduling student examinations in view of the continuing increase of student numbers. This problem was compounded by a range of unusual examination durations, including: one hour five minutes, one hour fifteen minutes and two hours forty five minutes. The committee agreed to **recommend** to UTC the Examinations Officer's suggestion that examination lengths should be standardised to the following possibilities: one hour; one hour and thirty minutes; two hours; two hours and thirty minutes; three hours. Departments unable to comply with these exam lengths would have the option to arrange and invigilate their own examination sessions. **Action Point:** RG

The Examinations Officer also reported that, in some examinations, large numbers of students were leaving well before the designated finish time, creating problems for invigilators and disruption for other students. The Committee **agreed** that departments should be made aware of such cases, and that where large numbers of students leave early the Senior Invigilator should make a note on the exams incident sheet. The Examinations Office will notify departments and also collate the results for inclusion in next year's annual report. **Action point :** LB

The number of students visiting the toilet during examinations has risen considerably: in one exam session more than 25% of candidates had done so, again creating disturbance for other students and increased pressure on invigilators. The Committee **decided** that students should be allowed into the Central Hall Foyer in time to use the toilet before being admitted to the exam hall, and will keep the issue under review. **Action Point :** LB

07/109 Undergraduate External Examiner Reports for 2006/7

The Committee **received** a summary of the undergraduate External Examiners' reports for 2006/7. It was **noted** that reports were generally positive. The issues raised included: the conduct of Boards of Examiners for joint programmes; penalties for the late submissions of assessments; the need for external examiners to see all first class work; the incorporation of North American exam marks; and the brevity of some external examiners reports. The last item is addressed in M07/113; others will be taken forward later in the year.

07/110 Research student completion rates 2004-2007

The Committee is responsible for monitoring student attainment on all programmes and **received** statistical data on research student submission and completion rates. As the data was incomplete the Committee **decided** to review the results again in May 2008 when more outcomes would be known. **Action Point :** PS

07/111 Research Student appeals and complaints

The Committee **received** a report on appeals and complaints by research students 2006/7 but deferred consideration until the Academic Registrar's Annual Report on all appeals and complaints is available.

07/112 Annual Programme Review Process

The Committee **received** a report from University Teaching Committee on the outcomes of the 2005/6 Annual Programme Review Process detailing issues for consideration by the SCA. Issues include:

- (a) The need to clarify guidance on anonymous marking in the Guide to Assessment to make it

clear that anonymity does not extend to the return of marked work. The Committee had asked ASO for further details on the background to this issue.

(b) Raising awareness in departments of the role of the external examiner in regard to marking. This issue was dealt with later in the meeting (M07/114).

(c) The provision of an induction programme for external examiners. This issue had been raised with [Cecilia Lowe](#), Project Leader Learning Enhancement, who had agreed to review the proposal.

(d) Encouraging external examiners to produce more detailed reports. This issue was dealt with later in the meeting (M07/113).

(e) An identified means of resolving differences between internal markers. This is one of the Committee's annual priorities.

These results will be **reported** to UTC.

07/113 Improving the effectiveness of external examiners reports

UTC in its Annual Review process referred the issue of insufficiently detailed external examiners reports to the Committee. The Chair proposed two changes to the external examiner's annual report form with the aim of improving the level of detail returned to the University. Firstly, that the introductory text should be changed to:

External examiners are invited to comment freely and fully on the programmes for which they are responsible, supporting their remarks with appropriate evidence where relevant and providing sufficient detail to aid departments in reviewing and enhancing their programmes. Note that reports are shared with student representatives and that individual students should not be identified. In particular, views are sought on the following:

Secondly, that a further text box should be added for general remarks not covered elsewhere in the report, examples of good practice and issues to be drawn to the attention of the department or University. The Committee **approved** these changes. **Action Point** : LB

07/114 The powers of External Examiners to change marks

The UTC Annual Programme Review process has revealed that there is a lack of clarity about the use of External Examiners as markers. The Chair asked the Committee to **consider** two proposals. First, that External Examiners for taught programmes should not act as markers under any circumstances. The Committee **agreed** to recommend this proposal to UTC. The second proposal was 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. **Action Point**: RG

07/115 Revision of University Regulations

(Annual Priority, M07/85, 07/66) A report was **received** from the small group convened to discuss the

revision of Regulation 2. It had become apparent that Regulation 2 could not easily be modified in isolation. The group therefore proposed that the review should also include Regulations 3, 4, 5 and 6, and an outline framework in which this could be achieved. In view of the need for regulatory reform in the Modularisation Review process, the Chair proposed that the Chairs of UTC, BfGS and SCC should be consulted, together with the Modularisation Review Implementation Group, regarding the appropriateness of a major review at this time and on the suitability of the proposed framework. If it is considered inappropriate then a minimal review of Regulations 2 and 5 will be attempted. This was **agreed**. **Action Point** : RG

07/116 Dictionaries at non-campus venues – an Additional item

The current policy regarding dictionaries at on-campus examination venues is that there will be an English dictionary available for students to consult upon request. The Committee **considered** a proposal that at off-campus locations students should be permitted to bring their own monolingual English dictionaries, which would be thoroughly inspected by invigilators. The proposal was **approved** with the proviso that, where practical, the usual on-campus procedures would apply (i.e., the exam centre would make available a single copy of the Concise Oxford English Dictionary); and that staff at each centre be trained in the procedure for vetting dictionaries and why the procedure is necessary. **Action Point** : LB

07/117 Approval of exam dates and locations for Health Economics for Health Care Professionals 2007/8 – an additional item

The Committee **considered** requests from the department of Health Sciences to approve dates for the examinations for four modules and the approval of 19 non-campus venues. The Committee approved the requests noting that M07/116 would apply to these exams.

07/118 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 18 January 2008 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[November 2007]