



Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 9 October 2009 at 2.15 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr David Efird (Chair), Philosophy, Dr Anne Duhme-Klair, Chemistry, Dr Pat Ansell, BfGS and Health Sciences, Dr Linda Perriton, Management, Mr John Brown, Social Policy and Social Work, Dr Jim Watt, English and Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies, Dr David Halliday, Electronic, Charlie Leyland, SU representative

In attendance: Mrs Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar, Ms Rosemary Royds, Student Administrative Services, Mrs Rosemary Goersch, Student Progress: SAS, Mr Philip Simison, Student Progress: SAS, Ms Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader Learning Enhancement

09-10/83 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Amanda Rees, Sociology and Ms Wendy Shaw SCC and Student Services.

The Chair welcomed Mrs Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar, Dr Jim Watt, English and Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies, and Dr David Halliday, Electronics.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

09-10/84

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2009.

09-10/85 Matters arising from the minutes

- i. Undergraduate *viva voce* examinations

The Chair reported that on 18 May 2009 UTC approved the Committee's proposals regarding the use of *viva voce* examinations in taught programmes. Biology and Chemistry were unable to implement the policy until 2011 and so guidance for the interim period was provided for them. This guidance was approved by the Chair of UTC.

- ii. 09/69 Modularisation Issues

It was **agreed** that non-attendance at an examination be referred to the Chair and the Academic Registrar to consider introducing a disciplinary procedure to deter non-attendance. Their proposals will be considered at a future meeting. **Action:** Chair/Kate Dodd

- iii.
UTC Minutes and matters arising:
1. Illegible exam scripts UTC approved the Committee's proposals but requested some minor amendments. It was agreed that transcription could be undertaken by transcribers who were approved by the SCA and that the cost of transcription to the student would be the same per hour as that paid to assistant invigilators.

2. New modular scheme - Resitting failed assessments in term time

UTC requested that the Committee review the possibility of resitting an assessment with a mark of less than 30 during term time. Members requested the process was monitored to ensure students were treated equitably.

The Committee **approved** the proposals and **decided** to recommend them to UTC.

3. Transferring academic misconduct penalties to future programmes

Members requested that section 10.5 of the Guide to Assessment be reworded for greater clarity.
Action: Wendy Shaw

09-10/86 Chair's Oral Report

The Chair reported that:

- 1 There will be an External Examiners Induction on 24 March 2010

- 2 Consultation with Chairs

An induction for new Chairs of Boards of Examiners took place on 7 October. Termly forum meetings will also be held for Chairs to keep them informed, review changes and discuss current issues

- 3 There will be more consultation with student representatives this year.

09-10/87 Timeline

The Committee received a timeline of routine Committee business scheduled for each meeting throughout the year, including an extraordinary meeting scheduled for December to consider consultation on the Mitigating Circumstances Working Party's proposals. No additions or alterations to the timeline were considered necessary.

09-10/88 Committee Priorities in 2009/10

The Committee received a copy of the Committee's proposed annual priorities for 2009/10. The Chair also noted that a new *Guide to Assessment* was being compiled this year and that there would be a number of presentations to staff to during the spring and summer terms to update them on the assessment regulations for the new modular scheme.

09-10/89 Academic Misconduct Annual Report 2008/9

The Committee received an annual report on undergraduate and taught postgraduate cases of academic misconduct. It was noted that for undergraduate students the percentage of plagiarism cases had declined and that only one case was attributed to a level-one student. However, the percentage of collusion cases had increased significantly. The Academic Misconduct Working Party will be asked to review the current definition of collusion and provide a clearer guidance to improve students understanding of the issue.

The Committee **noted** that the results for taught postgraduate students was less positive and that, despite the introduction of the Academic Integrity Tutorial, the number of plagiarism cases has increased. It was also noted that 90% of all reported cases were committed by overseas students. The Committee **decided** to **recommend** the following to UTC:

- 1 That guidance in Mandarin by provided for Chinese speaking students prior to their arrival at York
- 2 A review of the on-line Academic Integrity Tutorial be conducted to determine how the tutorial can better meet postgraduate and international students' needs.
- 3 To consider in that review the needs of students studying on-line programmes.

Members also decided that these issues should be raised in the Chair of Boards of Examiners Forum and that the GSA should highlight these results and issues to current students. **Action** : RG/Chair
Action : GSA

09-10/90 Review of undergraduate External Examiners reports for 2008/9

The Committee received a review of undergraduate External Examiners reports for 2008/9 to ascertain the need to review/change any assessment policies and/or procedures.

Members **noted** that the issue of external examiners not seeing all types of assessment and self-plagiarism will be addressed at the Chair of Board of Examiners Forum; the marking and feedback issues were referred to the Learning Enhancement team; the new modular scheme will address the classification issues; the misconduct rules being too complicated will be reviewed by the Misconduct Working Party; the clarifying of the role of the external examiner will be addressed at the External Examiners induction on 24 March 2010.

09-10/91 The different ways degree classifications are determined for

students on combined programmes of study (M09/71)

The Committee received, from relevant departments, details of the process for awarding degrees for students on combined programmes.

The Chair reported that UTC requested that the Committee review the process for determining the degree classification of students on combined degree programmes. He noted that the current process is inequitable and in contravention of the University's principles of assessment.

Members agreed that the current process was unacceptable and should not continue until 2013 when the new modular scheme rules will apply fully. Members decided that it would be appropriate to form a small working party to further review the situation and recommend more options. The Chair will discuss the issue further with the Chair of UTC. **Action:** Chair

09-10/92 Results from UTC Annual Programme Review

The Committee **received** a request from UTC to review three specific issues raised by departments in relation to assessment policy and procedures.

Firstly, students from the department of Computer Science noted that the Roger Kirk Centre was felt to be a better venue than Central Hall for sitting closed examinations. The Committee **considered** the statement and **noted** that: though RKC is flat whereas Central Hall is tiered, it does have pillars and is fan shaped, which restricts viewing for invigilators and hampers the systematic collection of exam scripts; there are no adequate facilities in close proximity for students with special needs; the venue provides catering services for staff and students in that area of the campus; it also provides the University with a substantial income.

Members **agreed** that: the structural and design limitations of the building, the lack of facilities for students with special needs and the loss of facilities and income do not justify permanently changing the University's closed examinations from Central Hall to the RKC.

Secondly, TFTV suggested changes to the 0.5% threshold for invoking an academic misconduct investigation. Members **agreed** to refer the issue to the Academic Misconduct Working Party.

Thirdly, the department of Physics requested that the Committee revisit the policy on standardising examination durations. The Chair **reported** that he had spoken the Chair of Board of Studies for Physics about the issue and that it was not possible to change the Physics assessment structure at this time.

The Committee **agreed** that there would be no change to the standard examination times. It was also **agreed** that the department of Physics could have an exemption to this policy but they must do all that can be done to minimise the disruption that odd examination durations cause for all concerned.

09-10/93 Feedback to students on progressional examinations

The Committee received a request to review Section 12.4.4 of Guide to Assessment in regard to progressional examinations. This section refers to closed exam scripts that contribute to the final award. Members approved the proposal that progressional examination scripts should be made available to students if departments could facilitate the process. The also asked that the matter be referred to the

Chairs of Boards of Examiners Forum for comment.

09-10/94 Defining conflict of interest in the appointment of External Examiners

The Committee **received** proposals regarding conflict of interest in the appointment of external examiners.

- 1 The SCA was asked to consider the appointment of an external examiner who had had close involvement with the department prior to the proposed appointment. There are currently no regulations that prevent the appointment but after discussion with the department it was decided that the proposal would be withdrawn. Members **agreed** that previous involvement should be considered before an appointment was approved and that a question asking about previous involvement with staff in the department should be added to the proposal form. Members could then establish the definition of 'close involvement' as they reviewed and recorded relevant proposals. It was also **agreed** that the proposed addition to section 7.5.2 of the *Guide to Assessment* in this regard and should state 'three years' and not 'five years'. **Action:** Update the GtoA/EE appointment form

- 2 The SCA was also consulted about appointing an external examiner to examine the doctoral thesis of a student he had supervised on a masters course at another institution. Again, there is no regulation to prevent this appointment. Members **approved** the proposal that anyone who had acted as a candidate's supervisor during a previous degree programme should not be appointed as an external examiner for the candidate. **Action :** Update GtoA

09-10/95 Assessment of MA/MSc programmes by research

The Committee **received** a request from the Board for Graduate Schools to review mechanisms departments have in place, other than a viva, for verifying the work a student has submitted is their own.

Members **approved** the mechanisms departments had in place.

09-10/96 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting as Friday **20 November** 2009 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[October 2009]