University Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 5 December 2014 at 2.00 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
Dr. Philip Quinlan, Psychology
Dr. Geoff Cubitt, History
Mr. John Bone, Economics
Dr. Oliver Craig, Archaeology
George Offer, YUSU

In Attendance: Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Ass. Registrar: Student Progress
Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator
Pete Quinn, Director: Student Support Services

Apologies: Dr. Dominic Watt, Language and Linguistic Science
Dr. Sandra Pauletto, Theatre Film and Television
Prof. Stevi Jackson, Women’s Studies
Jelena Horvatic, GSA
Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services
Gillian Wright, Assessment Manager
Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement

14-15/33 Minutes
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2014.

14-15/34 Matters arising from the minutes

i. 14-15/9 Preliminary Review of Awards and Progression
The Students’ Union reported that they had consulted on the issue of withholding student marks until degree classifications were released, but that students had no strong feelings either way. They did express, however, that there should be consistency between departments as to whether or not results were released. The chair agreed to raise the issue with the PVC for Teaching,
ii. 14-15/22 Component and Module Marks
The Chair reported that he had spoken to the Philosophy department about the proposal that had been approved by Chair’s action over the summer to allow a variable weighting of components based on student achievement in components, and indicated to them that a more robust solution should be sought to their concerns regarding the regression to the mean of their module marks.

iii. 14-15/23 Provisional Progression
The Committee noted that the recommendations on provisional progression had been sent to UTC for approval [note: this has since been approved].

iv. 14-15/25 Movement of Results Release into Week 11
The Committee noted that the recommendations on provisional progression had been sent to UTC for approval [note: this has since been approved and departments have been informed that ratified results are now due at Registry Services by the end of Monday, Week 11].

v. 14-15/26 Proposal of alternate conversion table for Mathematics students studying abroad in the USA
The Chair and Secretary met with Study Abroad to discuss the principles of grade conversions, and agreed that the SCA could consider differing tables for different institutions, but that we would need reassurances that the host institutions agreed with our proposed tables. The Committee expressed some concern that a departure from the one-table-per-country standard could result in too great a fragmentation of the tables, but agreed that it might be necessary to reflect the use of the full scale in the quantitative subjects.

The Chair also reported that the Centre for Global Programmes agreed with the chair and secretary about the advantages of additional year exchange programmes over replacement year programmes, in that they reduced the risk to students, and made grade conversion unnecessary. The Students’ Union supported this view.

vi. 14-15/7 Annual Priorities – Oral Reports
The Committee representatives for each priority area reported the following developments:
- E-Assignment (report from Steve King):
  A report based on feedback from the summer term pilot of an anonymous submission workflow was to be submitted to UTC in
November. The pilot is continuing with the support of the VLE team.

- Review of Mitigating Circumstances Policy: A new Fitness to Study procedure has been implemented, and operations managers have been brought in to consider the extent to which the mitigating circumstances policy is being used and action is being taken to raise student awareness of the existence and nature of the policy. The equivalent of a full-time member of the Open Door Team staff is being employed writing letters to evidence claims. The committee noted that the standard that should be being implemented is that which would be applied in an employment situation.

- Collaborative Learning and Assessment:
  A report was submitted by email that both staff and student webpages were under development. The Leader of Learning Enhancement suggested that it might be an appropriate project for an intern, and the committee agreed that that might be an interesting idea to pursue.

- Roll out of the new Academic Misconduct Policy (Jen Wotherspoon):
  An induction for StAMP members was held on 3 December, and some linguistic issues were raised which should be tightened in the next draft of the policy for 2015-16.

- Reviewing Departmental Written Statements of Assessment: (Philip Quinlan and Gillian Wright):
  Work continues on this review.

14-15/35 Chair’s Oral Report
The Chair reported the following developments:

  i. UCU Industrial Action
UCU has agreed to suspend the action short of a strike until 15 January, 2015. In exchange, the University has agreed not to make any pay deductions for any member of staff who had participated in the action to date. Only one assessment was affected by the action, but a substitute internal examiner was found for the PhD in question.

14-15/36 Report from Students
The Students’ Union had nothing to report.

14-15/37 Report on degree attainment and entry profiles, undergraduates 2012/13
The Committee considered a relative analysis of the entry tariffs and award marks for the 2012/13 cohort. The Committee noted that the data did nothing to indicate causality in the relationships between the two sets of data. In the development of this report for future years, the Committee noted that it was interested in considering the relationships between degree attainment and the following:

- Protected characteristics (particularly declared disability status)
• GCSE results
• Different degrees within a department
• The offer (rather than the entry tariff, which can be inflated by students taking large numbers of pre-HE qualifications)

14-15/38 Mitigation claimed but not used
The Committee rejected a proposal that transcripts be changed to indicate that a student had had mitigation accepted for an assessment where the student decided not to take a ‘sit as if for the first time’ when it was offered. The Committee decided that where a student makes a choice not to have an indication of the mitigation on the transcript.

14-15/39 Required Formative Assessment
The Committee considered the formulation of a policy on required formative assessment to encourage student engagement in non-summative work. The Committee agreed that departments could set required formative assessment, the results of which could be used in the formulation of references, and ultimately could result in a student’s registration being terminated without needing to result in a progression failure, so long as it was clear from the programme and module documentation released to students that the work was an academic requirement to qualify as ‘academically satisfactory’.

The committee agreed that this should be clarified in the Guide, including the requirement that students be notified of potential consequences.

14-15/40 Conversion Tables for Germany
The Committee approved a change to the conversion table for exchanges to Germany. The change was the result of a typo and a missing grade in the tables which were advertised at the beginning of the year, and as such, the newly approved tables would apply immediately, and for all students who were abroad during 2013/14.

14-15/41 Student Support Plans
The Committee approved a proposal by the Director of Student Support Services that Student Support Plans, written by Disability Services in consultation with departments and the student, replace Assessments of Need as the primary form of evidence used to support the adjustment of assessments for students with disabilities. The support plans will be informed by appropriate professional evidence, and where appropriate, will quote that evidence. The SCA will not generally need to see the original documentation, but may ask to do so where there is a lack of clarity about the
appropriateness of an adjustment.

The Committee further agreed that complex adjustments would, from this point forward, be approved by two members of the committee via email or other electronic means, rather than having to wait for a full meeting of the committee, in order allow the student to know what adjustments would be made as quickly as possible whilst retaining committee oversight.

14-15/42 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 6 February 2015 at 2.00 pm in Room HG17- The Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.