1. Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
Dr. Philip Quinlan, Psychology
Dr. Keith Allen, Philosophy
Dr. Louise Jones, Biology
Mr. Thomas Ron, YUSU
Ms. Rasha Ibrahim, GSA

In Attendance: Prof. John Robinson, PVC Teaching, Learning & Students/Chair of UTC (for items 15-16/75 and 76)
Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Ass. Registrar: Student Progress
Mr. Pete Quinn, Director: Student Support Services
Mr. Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services
Ms. Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator
Ms. Gillian Wright, Assessment Team
Mr. Stephen Gow, Academic Integrity Coordinator (minutes)

Apologies: Prof. Tom Stoneham, Dean of York Graduate Research School
Prof. Stevi Jackson, Women’s Studies
Dr. Dominic Watt, Language and Linguistic Science
Dr. Patrick Gallimore, York Law School
Ms. Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Ms. Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement

15-16/75 Proposal for Revision of the Rules of Compensation
The PVC T, L & S/Chair of UTC was present for this item.

- The Chair of UTC reminded the committee about the background to the proposal, including a paper considered by SCA in Autumn (SCA.15-16/11) which concluded that no changes were necessary. However, when UTC had considered the paper (UTC. M15-16/38), they had decided to refer this issue back to the SCA for additional work.

1 Philip Quinlan is referred to as [PQ1]
2 Peter Quinn is referred to as [PQ2]
A considerable amount of work had been carried out by Registry staff to allow the modelling of various changes to the compensation threshold at progression as well as award, and the result was the current proposal. The modelling showed how student outcomes would have been altered, assuming that module marks remained the same.

The Chair of UTC reported that UTC had considered the paper at a meeting the previous day, and that votes had been taken which narrowly accepted the proposal to alter the compensation threshold to 10 for finalists and to leave the threshold unchanged for progression. SCA members were invited to comment on the proposal, to feed into the paper that would need to be taken to Senate.

SCA members raised concerns that the compensation change had no effect on significant numbers of students and also that it was only a minority of departments which were affected: was a change really necessary for the small numbers affected?

Serious misgivings were raised regarding the perception of lowering academic standards, and it was accepted that, for Senate, the paper needed further justification of how standards were being maintained.

Alternative ideas were considered, such as moving graduation or having awards conferred outside of ceremony as practised in other institutions. However it was highlighted that certain departments had raised concerns about the impact of these alternatives on the career prospects of their students.

The issue of whether progressing students would have pre-requisite knowledge for later modules was noted. Resits were considered a valuable learning experience rather than a lowering of academic standards.

The committee considered and clarified the reasoning behind the 10% compensation threshold, as opposed to 0%. The reason was to deter students from simply abandoning parts of their programme of study after 2/3rds of the final stage and seeking compensation to obtain their award.

It was decided that the Chairs of UTC and SCA would incorporate the views of the SCA into the report to Senate.

With the Chair of UTC present, it was a good opportunity to receive an oral report on the deferral of changes to the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.

UTC members had raised concerns about some of the language and tone of the proposed new policy, such as the use of the term resilience and the analogy of students as employees.

The decision to give a mark of 0 to students who did not show up for sits as if for the first time (rather than reverting to their previous, damaged, mark) was perceived to be too harsh.

The apparent changes in evidence required for claiming exceptional circumstances were also perceived as too harsh.

Due to the ‘significant disquiet’ amongst UTC members on the proposed changes, the Chair of UTC felt he had no choice but to defer the policy changes and return them to SCA for reconsideration.
SCA members discussed the UTC decision, particularly the evidential requirement. These issues were also discussed later in Any Other Business (15-16/86).

It was noted that further considerations for mitigating/exceptional circumstances may need to be made when faculties are fully introduced.

It was agreed the committee would need to carefully consider the implementation of the existing Mitigating Circumstances policy in 2016/17 and the plans for implementing the Exceptional Circumstances policy in 2017/18. However, the delay was an opportunity to put into place an implementation and training plan once the new policy was approved.

15-16/77 Minutes of previous meeting
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 15th April 2016.

15-16/78 Matters arising from the minutes

i. 15-16/48 Progression Policy for Research Degrees
As Prof Stevi Jackson was absent, the secretary was asked to follow up this action (discussion of impact of fieldwork on new progression policy for RSs).

[Action: SJ/SG]

ii. 15-16/53 Script Access session principles
This issue was carried forward.

iii. 15-16/64 Review of Academic Misconduct policy
This was approved by UTC on 12th May 2016.

iv. 15-16/66 Revision of the Accreditation of Prior Learning policy
v. Comments had been forwarded to ASO, for UTC consideration.

vi. 15-16/67 Annual Report on Degree Outcomes
The Chair had raised his concern at the lack of the deep analysis with the Chair of UTC who also voiced concerns. However, due to other commitments and budgetary constraints, no deep analysis would take place this year.

vii. 15-16/69 Parity between Online and Offline Submission of Assignments
Guidance will be included in the Guide to Assessment for 2016-7.

15-16/79 Oral Report from the Chair
The Committee received an oral update from the Chair as follows:

- Strike action is planned by the UCU on the 25th/26th May 2016. The Chair noted the need to consider the impact of the industrial action during the Common Assessment Period, especially
when staff may be on examination duty, needing to be available to answer queries from students during an exam. Following the strike action, there is due to be ongoing “action short of a strike”, in the form of a work to contract. All staff have already been told that they are expected to prioritise marking of assessments. There was a separate call from UCU for members to resign as external examiners, but it was, as yet, unclear how much impact this would have at York.

15-16/80 Report from Students
The representative from GSA reported changes to the structure of the GSA with the introduction of a full-time Welfare Officer to help share the duties of the President. It was reported that elections are currently underway.

The representative from YUSU reported that, as usual during the Common Assessment Period, the students’ union were dealing with common problems associated with the assessment period. It was noted that he had reported the upcoming industrial action to departmental reps.

15-16/81 Proposed changes to the Regulations
The Assistant Registrar: Student Progress reported the key change to the Regulations was to remove any reference to category 1 students and requested the committee to consider further amendments to Regulations 2, 3, 5 & 6, and the following amendments were noted:

• 5.2 (c) needs to revert to references to mitigating circumstances.
• 5.2 (h) the committee considered whether to distinguish between ‘candidates for awards’ and ‘candidates for progression’. It was decided to refer to ‘candidates for progression and award.’
• 5.7 Issues of personation/commission were considered and it was decided to clarify that it was an offence to commission an impersonator for an examination.

[Action: JW]

15-16/82 Support for students in preparation for resits
The Assistant Registrar reported plans to include explicit information on support for students in preparation for resits in the Guide to Assessment.

• The Chair queried whether this guidance would apply to students taking sits as for the first time in August, and it was agreed that it should.
• The name of the section in the Guide to Assessment was considered, as the title Support for Students in preparation for the August Assessment period may exclude students resitting assessments outside the August assessment period.
• The issue of repeat teaching was raised as a cause for concern however the committee was assured a change to the support would not affect academic staff in terms of re-teaching, in the vast majority of cases.
It was noted that there may be cases where students were unaware of their resits until close to the resit date and so would need support.

The use of the term “shortly following” in the Guide to Assessment was considered to be too vague and a more specific term was requested.

[ACTION: JW]

15-16/83 Summary of Postgraduate Taught External Examiners Reports

The committee considered the summary of Postgraduate Taught External Examiners reports, with reports and departmental response available on Google Drive. Several issues were noted:

- The committee decided that departments should be expected to respond to all external examiners’ comments, both positive and negative.
- It was noted that parts of the report were unclear and requested that it should noted explicitly where the external examiner considered standards were not met. Currently a tick box was used but it was ambiguous if the box was left blank.
- It was noted that if student skills and particularly language standards continued to be a problem with PGT students that the SCA would have to consider taking action.
- It was noted that the section on External Examiners in the Guide to Assessment needed revision.

[Action: JW/SK]

Members commented on a broken link in the coversheet for the report, and it was decided that the SCA secretary should address the issue of links to online committee papers in the coming academic year and take the SCA’s recommendations to Adrian Lee, AQ officer.

[ACTION: SG]

15-16/84 Updates on the online submission policy from the Controlled Assessment Working Group

The committee received the report from the Controlled Assessment Working Group. This led the committee to consider references to storing electronic/online assessments in the Guide to Assessment whether these needed to be made more robust.

- Section 13.2.3 (e) of the Guide to Assessment was considered. Currently the last file submitted electronically before the deadline is the file that is assessed. The committee considered whether this rule was too harsh in certain cases, e.g. a student mistakenly submits the wrong file, and whether files submitted after the deadline could be considered.
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- It was decided to not to change 13.2.3(e), as students were given opportunities to check the file they were submitting and also advised to submit in plenty of time before the deadline. Giving students the opportunity to submit work after the deadline may give students the opportunity to abuse the system. This should be a human consideration when provided with evidence of their mistake rather than a policy.

The Chair noted that a proposal on computer-based closed assessments had been submitted to SCA but was not on the agenda as it had been submitted too late for comment by parties which may be significantly affected by the proposal. The Chair raised a number of concerns in relation to the proposal:

- The University does not have the facilities to hold large-scale computer-based assessment, especially in the Common Assessment Period.
- If computer-based assessments are used, then the University must have specially trained invigilators who can specifically provide support for computer-based assessments.
- The Chair also noted that, if computer-based assessments are to be used more frequently at the University, then departments must seek permission from the SCA/Registry.

15-16/85 Review of Annual Priorities

The committee reviewed the annual priorities for 2015/16 and considered new priorities for the upcoming academic year.

A number of issues have been completed:

- Review of the Academic Misconduct Policy
- Support during the resit period and defining what was a reasonable expectation
- Review of the restructure of the exams board, as implemented in 2014/15.

A number of issues were now deemed to be business as usual for the committee:

- E-assignment project
- Review of closed papers ‘errors’

The following issues had been handed on to other bodies:

- Review of the 6 week rule: benchmarking and possible revision was handed over to the Student Partnership Group
Consideration of the impact of changes to the Disabled Students’ Allowance was considered by a group led by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

The following issues had been carried forward to 2016/17:

- Review of the mitigating circumstances policy
- Group work and peer marking
- Review of the student engagement and attendance policies
- Consideration of the impact of on students of Ramadan falling during the Summer common assessment period
- Required formative work

The Chair recommended priorities and asked for recommendations for priorities in 2016/17, and the following were noted:

- Review the use of electronic devices in closed assessments
- Review the regulations on repeat study and repeat on demand
- Consideration of the achievement of students with disabilities after the removal of the Disabled Students’ Allowance.

[Action: SK/JW]

15-16/86 Any other business: Concerns regarding UTC’s deferral of the changes to the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.

The Director of Student Support Services formally raised concerns of the resource implications of the UTC’s decision to defer the proposed changes to the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances. The proposed changes had been made in light of the strong demand from departments and students in response to 3000 mitigating circumstances claims (almost all approved) in the last academic year. Students and staff felt that the policy was being unfairly implemented in favour of a significant proportion of students who did not have truly mitigating circumstances. This included discussions of the language of doctors’ notes which indicated that they could not give evidence that students had medical mitigating circumstances, i.e. “the student reported that…”. The Chair of SCA noted that in spite of the deferral, a strong message needed to be sent out regarding mitigating circumstances and the Chair, Ass. Registrar, Director of Support Services and Chair of SCC would consider action for academic year 2016/17.

[Action: SK/JW/PQ2]

15-16/87 Thank you to the members of committee for work in 2015/16

The Chair thanked all members of committee for their hard work in 2015/16. A special thank you was noted for Prof. Stevi Jackson and Dr Dominic Watt for their work for the committee, as their terms had come to an end. Thomas Ron and Rasha Ibrahim were thanked for their work with the committee as the student representatives for 2015/16.
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**15-16/88 Date of next meeting**
To note the date of the next meeting as Friday 23rd September at 2pm in Room HG17- Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.