STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2016 at 2.00pm in HG19, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present: Dr Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
Dr Philip Quinlan, Psychology
Dr Keith Allen, Philosophy
Dr Patrick Gallimore, York Law School
Dr John Stringer, Music
Dr Louise Jones, Biology
Dr Helen Smith, English
Dr Francesco Bravo, Economics
Ms Rasha Ibrahim, GSA
Ms Tamaki Laycock, YUSU

In Attendance: Mr Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services
Dr Zoe Devlin, Acting Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
Mr Stephen Gow, Academic Integrity Coordinator (Secretary)
Ms Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement
Ms Claire Shanks, Disability Support Advisor
Mr Jamie Holliday, Operations Manager (SCA.16-17/17)
Mr Walter Van Opstal, Business Development Manager (SCA.16-17/18)

Apologies: Professor Tom Stoneham, Dean of York Graduate Research School
Professor Mike Bentley, Chair: Special Cases Committee
Ms Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Ms Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Manager
Ms Gillian Wright, Assessment Manager

16-17/32 Welcome
The Chair welcomed members of the committee and congratulated Rasha Ibrahim, GSA representative on a successful Viva.

16-17/33 Minutes of previous meeting
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28 October 2016.
16-17/34  Matters arising from the minutes of 28 October 2016:

i.  **15-16/83 Response to PGT External Examiner reports** – The action for the Secretary to establish an online repository for Committee papers was carried forward to the next meeting.

   [Action: SG]

ii. **16-17/6 Terms of reference** – The Chair had recommended to UTC that Claire Shanks be in attendance at SCA, and this had been approved.

iii. **16-17/6 Terms of reference** – The SCA Website had been updated, including the latest Terms of Reference and Committee members.

iv. **16-17/18 Oral Report from the Chair** – on the agenda for this meeting.

v. **16-17/20 Re: CAP exam errors** – Summary of the issues reported during exams’ (by department, by type, etc), rather than just the raw logs from invigilators, this will be carried out for the reports in subsequent CAPs.

   [Action: ZD]

vi. **16-17/20 Re: CAP exam errors** – Memos to HoDs and departments detailing issues around CAP errors. The Chair reported that he would consult the Chair of UTC on the details of the memo and would send this as soon as possible.

   [Action: SK]

vii. **16-17/21 Annual Report – Undergraduate Academic Misconduct** – Further consultation on second offences and students with disabilities in relation to academic misconduct. Further to this matter it was noted that there has been a misconduct case involving a student with a developmental disability, strengthening the need to address this issue. It was reported that a draft proposal was in process and would be considered at a subsequent meeting.

   [Action: ZD]

viii. **16-17/21 Annual Report – Undergraduate Academic Misconduct**: The Chair will raise the publishing of the annual academic misconduct figures with Chair of UTC for approval.
ix. 16-17/22 Annual Report – Undergraduate External Examiners: The Chair had reported SCA’s views on UG External Examiners to UTC.

x. 16-17/23 Shallow Analysis – Degree results – Student representative committee members could not access the workbook due to the use of YUSU/GSA email usernames, the Secretary liaised with the Planning Office and this issue has been resolved.

xi. 16-17/26 Discussion paper – informal resolution of queries prior to the appeal process – The Chair will write a memo to all departments detailing the OIA’s recommendation and asking departments to consider what support they offer to students.

[Action: SK]

xii. 16-17/27 Any other business: The Chair raised the issue of electronic publication of theses with the Chair of YGRS, and reported an exception mechanism is in place to embargo theses.

16-17/35 Oral Report from the Chair
The Committee received a short oral update from the Chair, in which he said that all issues for consideration of the Committee were on the agenda.

16-17/36 Report from Students
The Students’ Union reported that the Department Representatives had met with the VC and PVC Teaching, Learning and Students. They had not discussed any issues explicitly relating to assessment however had discussed accommodation, the Teaching Excellence Framework and National Student Survey.

The Graduate Students’ Association reported that they were concerned about support for students with appeals during the Christmas break as the University will be closed for an extended period. It was reported that this has been discussed in a SCA meeting in 2015/16 however this was queried by the committee. The Chair asked for the consultation of previous minutes and correspondence to confirm what had been agreed in the previous year.

[Action: ZD/GSA]
The Committee expressed a number of concerns regarding the implications of the projects which are listed below with the corresponding response from Jamie Holliday:

- Students are mentioned as stakeholders but it is not made explicit whether they have been or will be consulted on the projects.
  - Student stakeholders had been consulted in the form of analysing NSS data and will be further consulted in the future, however currently the reports are concentrating on behind the scenes operations rather than student facing services.

- How will the projects manage to improve institutional performance in the NSS and cost saving at the same time?
  - Streamlining resources will help to save money and improving efficiency in timetabling will have a positive impact on NSS.

- The projects did not seem to have taken into account data collected and reports produced for previous projects related to a similar area (e-assignment). The previous report highlighted the need for appropriate investment in systems however funding was not forthcoming.
  - The projects will take into account previous reports and put together a business case for investment. It was noted that the assessment and exam support project has a significantly wider remit than the previous report on e-assignment.

- The needs of people with non-standard examination arrangements, such as students with disabilities, were not explicitly addressed in the project reports.
  - Non-standard examination arrangements will be addressed in the projects.
The Committee recommended that the project plan should explicitly include consideration of the projects by YUSU and GSA, and the Planning Office should be informed of this recommendation.

[Action: SG]

The Committee nominated Philip Quinlan to represent the Committee on the Exams and Assessment Support working group

[Action: PQ]

The Committee nominated Steve King to represent the Committee on the Student Retention working group

[Action: SK]

16-17/38 Report – Exam scheduling review 2016

Walter Van Opstal (Business Development Manager, Space Management) provided a detailed summary of the review, including the background context of the project and a detailed overview of the recommendations for consideration of the Committee.

The Committee’s consideration of the review was preceded by a preface from the Director of Registry Services. It was noted that the exam timetable has been in danger of exceeding capacity in recent years due to constraints of time rather than space. The Registry endorsed the moving of resources in recommendation seven.

The Committee considered the seven recommendations in the report:

1. The Committee supported the recommendation that a universal set of key performance indicators (KPI) in relation to exam scheduling should be developed and communicated to stakeholders. It was queried whether KPIs already existed for this purpose, the Chair requested that the existence of KPIs be checked.

   [Action: CL]

2. The Committee supported the recommendation that there should be an effort to seek to rationalise the scheduling complexity of taught programmes, particularly with regard to the number of module combinations available to joint honours students. The Committee considered the complexity of module combinations and it was noted that while the York Pedagogy may have an impact on this in the medium to
long term, it is not likely to have a significant impact across all departments in the short term. It was noted that optionality and joint-programmes had an impact on both the general and examination timetable. Concerns were raised that responding to NSS and preparing for TEF in addition to timetabling constrictions may constrain optionality and choice. The Committee recommended optionality within constraints; providing a balance between the practicalities of exam/general timetabling and providing students with the value of choice.

3. The Committee did not support the recommendation to reduce the number of evening exams by holding some exams on Sundays, particularly during the Spring Common Assessment Period. The Committee non-unanimously agreed to recommend that UTC reconsider extending the CAPs.

   [Action: SK]

4. The Committee supported the recommendation that alternative venues should be considered, to consolidate exam activity. The Committee recommended that University sporting venues should be considered and any other alternative venues that would reduce the need for split examination sites. It was noted that assessment needs should be prioritised over other University activities during the CAP.

5. The Committee supported the recommendation to implement improvements in the user-friendliness of the Timetabling Gateway and/or to build exam timetabling requirements into the Space Systems Project taking place through 2017.

6. The Committee supported the recommendation for further business analysis to identify and evaluate a new exam scheduling system.

7. The Committee supported the recommendation that expertise and knowledge from within Timetabling Services should be used to support the exam scheduling process.

In addition to the recommendations proposed in the review, the following issues were discussed:

   a) There was support for the consideration of more flexibility in the timetabling of examinations by the use of a different combination of time blocks. For example currently there is a 3 hour block in the morning, a 3 hour block in the afternoon and a 1.5 hour block in the evening. By swapping the shorter evening block with one of the 3 hour blocks on some days, students in
departments which have a majority of 1.5 hour exams would be less likely to have evening exams scheduled.

b) The Students Union representative recommended better information on the locations of examination rooms to avoid students arriving late or going to the wrong location. Furthermore, safety concerns were raised by students about the impact of having more examinations in the evening when students have to leave their exams in the dark.

It was agreed that the Chair should discuss with the Chair of UTC what should be the next steps with the implementation of the review’s recommendations.

[Action SK]


As the Islamic month of Ramadan will overlap with the Common Assessment Period (CAP) in the academic year 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the GSA representative recommended measures to help the University support students observing Ramadan during this period.

The GSA representative began by withdrawing recommendations 4 and 5 relating to the avoidance of exams scheduled on Saturday 27th May and Saturday 3rd June, recognising that pressure on the timetables made this infeasible.

The Committee considered the report and agreed that Examinations Office should evaluate the number of students who will be observing Ramadan in order to accommodate religious observance during the CAP to the best of their ability. The Committee agreed to the following recommendations in section 8 of the report:

1. hold the longest examinations in the morning where possible;

2. move exams with no affected students to later in the day, to give space in the morning or early afternoon for exams with students who are more likely to be affected;

3. give students who have notified the Examinations Office that they are observing Ramadan a choice of morning or afternoon examination times;
6. where a timetable adjustment is not possible, students who have notified the Examinations Office that they are observing Ramadan may sit an exam earlier or later in the day, with the University providing a chaperone until other students have sat the exam or the until the student has taken the exam. The Chair requested the confirmation of the regulations concerning chaperoning of students with alternative arrangements during exams;  

[Action: ZD/JI]

8. It was agreed that, as a last resort, students might be offered the chance to sit their exams as if for the first time in the August resit week.

The Committee rejected recommendation 7 for the signing of confidentiality agreements.

The Committee requested confirmation that the Notification of Examinations and Religious Observance form had been sent to all students by Exams Office and asked that YUSU/GSA should raise awareness of the need to fill out the form before the deadline 27th January deadline.  

[Action: YUSU/GSA/SG]

The Committee agreed to the recommendation for the production and distribution of guidance to students and staff on Ramadan during the CAP.  

[Action: GSA/YUSU/Exams Office]

16-17/40  Report – Proposed guidance concerning the relationship between assessment and attendance, formative work and participation

The Committee considered the paper clarifying the University’s position regarding formative learning, student responsibility and developing autonomous learners. The paper recommended the formalisation of guidance for assessment practice relating to the relationship between student engagement (attendance, the submission of formative work and participation) and summative assessment and marks. It was acknowledged that the proposed Appendix Q for the Guide to Assessment was only at a draft stage and this would be finalised taking into account the following feedback from the Committee:

- It was queried whether attendance and formative work should be considered the same issue.
- It was suggested that further guidance on how to structure assessment appropriately should be included.
It was suggested that the guidance include the need to assess positive engagement in learning and not just independent learning. This should highlight cooperation, peer learning and group work.

The Committee requested the proposed revision of 14.4 in the Guide to Assessment to be considered at the next meeting, once the final version of Appendix Q was complete.

[Action: CL/KA]

16-17/41 Summary – 2016 PTES Assessment and Feedback results
The Committee considered a report SCA-related aspects of PTES. There was a query on the aggregate average of the score of 79% for the category of Assessment and Feedback as it did not seem to be correct. It was requested that this figure be checked, but no further actions were required.

[Action: CL]

16-17/42 CGP Grade Conversion Tables
The Committee considered proposed Grade Conversion Tables for 8 institutions sent by the Centre for Global Programmes. The Committee approved 5 of the conversion tables, but the following queries were raised:

2. Universidad de las Americas Puebla, Mexico – Why is there a significant jump between 69 (9.9) and 85 (10)?
4. Peking University – Why is the equivalent of 3.7 GPA graded 72 and not 74?
8. Tokyo Institute of Technology – Why is there a large jump between 65 (A) and 85 (A+)?

The Committee requested further information from CGP on the process and rationale of producing these Grade Conversion Tables.

[Action: SG]

16-17/43 Any other business:

i. An oral report on the progress of the report on reviewing rules for closed exams re: i) smart watches; ii) frequency of bathroom breaks. This should be produced for the February meeting.

[Action: PG]

ii. The Assistant Registrar: Student Progress reported that there would be some movement of teams within Registry. The Exams and Graduation teams, along with the Director of Registry and Assistant Registrar: Student Progress, would move from the Student Admin Building to the
ground floor of Grimston House on 9 December; the Data Process and Quality team would follow. The Student Systems team would also move to Grimston House from Home Farm. The Assessment team and Research Student Admin Team would remain in the Student Administration Building and SCA sign-off would continue to take place there. From the start of January, the Student Admin Building would no longer offer a reception service so SCA members should access the building via the fire exit at the north (Market Square) side of the building.

16-17/44 Date of the next meeting
The date of the next meeting was noted as Friday 10th February 2017 at 2pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.