Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 1415 on 20 January 2006 in H/G19.

Present:

Dr Chris Fewster, Mathematics (Chair)
Ms Karen Fritz, Health Sciences
Professor Geoff Hall, Psychology
Dr Harold Mytum, Archaeology
Dr Ros Temple, Language & Linguistic Science
Dr Richard Walsh, English
Mr Oleg Lisagor (GSA)

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Barnes (YUSU).

In attendance:

Academic Registrar, Ms S Hardman
Assistant Registrar (GSO), Mr P Simison
Assistant Registrar (UGO), Ms R Royds

06/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2005 (previously circulated)

06/03 Matters arising

- From M05/80 on Security of Examination Papers, the Committee noted that its request that the Examinations Office should offer departments a training or information session on encrypting documents was awaiting a response from the appropriate staff in the Computing Service.
- From M05/95 (b) with regard to the treatment of mitigating circumstances, the Committee noted that it would helpful in responding to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and others if the University were able to formulate a clear policy on the issue
06/04 Oral report from the Chair

- The Committee received an oral report from the Chair:
  - a) Feedback from a meeting with the Chair of Teaching Committee who is the University representative for academic misconduct issues (SCA M05/21 (a) refers). The meeting briefly examined the current processes, and how policies and procedures are formulated, implemented and reviewed. The establishment of a database to track the progress of misconduct cases was suggested and the Committee considered the difficulty of funding, maintaining and ensuring the security of such a database. It noted that it was particularly important for students that cases were resolved quickly, but that this was difficult to ensure, although the use of the new tracking form may help investigating sub-committees to progress cases more swiftly. The Committee agreed that it should review this issue at a future meeting once investigating sub-committees had made more use of the tracking form.
  - b) The Committee noted that the report of the Fitness to Practise Working Party is awaiting legal clarification of some issues but that, once finalised, the Committee should examine whether any changes are required to the academic misconduct policies and guidelines in consequence.
  - c) Proposals for revised procedures for the handling of academic misconduct cases were discussed (Dr Mytum, Dr Temple and Dr Walsh agreed to work with the Chair to deal with cases; a briefing session to be arranged by the Assistant Registrar: UGO), and the possibility of establishing a regular weekly time at which the Examinations and Graduate Schools Offices would present documentation for Chair’s Action. It was noted that the Assistant Registrar: UGO would circulate members with a schedule of possible dates and times for discussion.
  - d) The Chair reported on an issue raised by a Humanities MA external examiner following a department’s revision of regulations for the award of Masters degrees arising from the establishment of the postgraduate mark scale. The external examiner had raised concerns in his report to the University and on the TQI website about whether students could gain the award on average marks, in spite of failing all taught elements of the programme. The Committee noted that although the possibility was there, none of the students on the programme had been awarded unsound degrees. A survey of changes implemented in Humanities and Social Science departments was being undertaken and the Committee noted that it would be advised of the outcome and any further consideration of the issue that might be required in due course.
- The Chair drew the Committee’s attention to the usefulness of the new Chair’s Action Checklist that had been prepared by the Examinations Office and advised that a similar document to support work in departments would be drafted for the Committee’s consideration.
- The Committee noted that the web address for the final report of the Academic Misconduct conference on 2 November 2005 (SCA M05/58 (b), M05/77(e) and M05/95 (a) refer) is available at http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/sso/academicmisconduct.htm
- The recent examination session had highlighted the difficulty of implementing the current...
guidelines – particularly section 9.3 c) of the Guide – in relation to the use of dictionaries. The type of dictionary specified is difficult to obtain so there are necessarily many exceptions, and the wording of the guidance is confusing. The Chair advised that proposed revisions to the guidelines would be circulated to the Committee for approval, and the revised version circulated to departments together with some examples of good practice in dealing with dictionaries in examinations. (Appendix 1)

06/05 Fees for resit examinations

- The Committee received a reminder of fees of £55.00 agreed for resit examinations for 2005/6, and noted that the increase in fees agreed in 2003/04 had not been included in the paper-based version of the 2005/06 Guide to Assessment, although it was correct in the electronic version and in letters sent to individual students from the Examinations Office.

06/06 Copies of Documentation

The Committee received a copy of the latest edition of the Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures, issued from January 2006, as previously advised (M05/75 refers).

06/07 Annual Priorities of committees

The Committee received a copy of the annual priorities for 2005/6 of the Board for Graduate Schools, University Teaching Committee and Special Cases Committee. The Committee noted that it would be helpful to be kept informed of progress in relation to item 3 of Special Cases Committee’s priorities (“to consider the way in which academic misconduct cases are heard including those arising from taught postgraduate courses”), and that the GSA would be likely to have useful input to any consideration of the issue. The Committee also noted that when the Board for Graduate Schools finalises the procedure on academic misconduct by research students (item c) it would be useful to receive details for consideration alongside the undergraduate and taught postgraduate guidelines. (Appendix 2)

06/08 Appointment of internal examiners

The Committee received an example of the proposed internal examiners for the department of Philosophy to illustrate the new procedures approved by the Committee, noted that some returns from departments had still required clarification and considered improvements to the process for dissemination of the information. It agreed that it was acceptable to hold the full list of internal examiners only in the Examinations Office (rather than, for example, being published on the web) but that the process might be improved by asking Departmental Examinations Officers to prepare the final listing, and by pasting the criteria for appointment into the spreadsheet listing staff names instead of including it on the back of the submission form.

(Secretary’s note: the full set of 2005/6 listings is available for inspection in the Examinations Office)

06/09 Approval of Overseas Examination Centres

york.ac.uk/.../Mins Jan 2006.htm
The Committee received details of a variation to arrangements for the conduct of distant examinations approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting, and approval of additional examination centres together with a summary document of all centres currently operating for the Health Economics for Health Care Professionals programme. (Appendix 3)

06/10 Feedback from University Teaching Committee

The Committee received a response from the meeting of University Teaching Committee on 7 November 2005 to the recommendations made by the SCA’s October 2005 meeting (UTC M05/162) and noted that additions had been made to section 7.5.3 (j) of the Guide in response to UTC M05/182: Postgraduate Annual Programme Review (APR) Reports for 2003/04. (Appendix 4)

06/11 Date of the next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 10 March 2006 at 14.15 pm and that the venues for future meetings of the Committee had been altered to ensure that they took place in rooms with access to a hearing loop. The meeting on 10 March will take place in Room H/G15, Heslington Hall, and the meetings of 12th May and 16th June 2006 will take place in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Royds
Manager, Student Administration Services

RJR/ January 2006