Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 1415 on 10 March 2006 in H/G17.

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

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Barnes (YUSU); Ms J Winter (GSA); Assistant Registrar (GSO), Mr P Simison.

In attendance:

Academic Registrar, Ms S Hardman
Assistant Registrar (UGO), Ms R Royds

06/19 Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2006 (previously circulated)

06/20 Matters arising from the minutes:

- a) from M05/80; M06/03(a) on Security of Examination Papers, the Committee received a draft of instructions on encryption of Word documents prepared by Amanda Bacon from the Computing Service. The Committee offered its thanks to Ms Bacon for providing particularly clear and concise instructions. The Committee considered whether the instructions are clear enough to stand alone or if a training session should be offered and agreed that no training session need be offered. Departments should also be advised to keep passwords generated for the process securely, and to ensure that more than one member of staff has access to them. The instructions will be posted on the Computing Services web pages and linked from the Examinations Office web pages. (Appendix 1)
b) from SCA M05/97, the Committee received a copy of Senate M06/6 following consideration of the Committee’s shallow analysis of degree classifications and A-level entry points. The Committee considered actions arising from the Senate minute and decided that the Assistant Registrar should send a memo to departments to address the information in the final paragraph, and that a meeting should be arranged between the Chairs of University Teaching Committee and the SCA to consider how to devise a programme of deeper analysis of the degree classification statistics for the departments of Computer Science, Mathematics and History of Art. Consultation would take place with the Assistant Registrar in the Planning Office to consider whether additional support would be needed in the analysis. The Committee noted that the production of such information might be resource-intensive because the necessary data is not freely available from the HESA S. (Appendix 2)

06/21 Oral report from the Chair

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair, including:

- That the consultation by e-mail on the wording of the section of the Guide relating to the use of dictionaries in examinations had been satisfactorily concluded, that the entry would be updated in the 2006/07 Guide and that the revised advice had now been circulated to departments together with some examples of good practice;
- That a briefing session on application of the academic misconduct policies and procedures had been held for new Committee members, conducted by the Chair and Dr Terry Crawford. The information disseminated had also helped the members to focus on areas where the guidelines given, or the procedures themselves, might need revision when the Committee reviews and reissues the current booklet;
- That UTC had not yet considered the recommendations made in the November meeting of the Committee but that these would be considered in the UTC meeting to be held on 13 March 2006;
- That preparations are in train with POD for members of the Committee to offer a briefing session for Examinations Officers and Chairs of Boards of Examiners in September or early October;
- That a complaint had been received from a student undertaking a module as an elective, about the moving of an examination session from the published Week 10 of the Summer Term to Week One of that term. There had been no consultation with the students before the examination was moved, nor had approval to do so been requested from the Committee. It was noted that this could be considered a variation of the contract with the students and, as it took place after the module had begun, all affected students should have been consulted on the change. The Committee recommended that the department should be advised of the required conditions and asked to ensure that the situation did not recur; that section 8 of the Guide to Assessment should be amended to make clear that once set, the assessment regime for modules should not be altered without the permission of the participating students and the Committee; that a draft of a statement for departments should be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, to include the points that changes should not be made to conditions outlined in module descriptions...
once the module is in progress, although changes before students have made their module choices may be acceptable. The latter will require the approval of the Committee for a variation;

- That meetings were being held to formulate contingency plans to deal with the outcomes from the AUT action, but that until circumstances required otherwise, the University would conduct business as usual.

06/22 Assessment of Visiting Students

- The Committee received a draft of a revision to section 1.6 of the Guide to Assessment to address the issue of resitting of failed modules as outlined in Appendix 3 and noted that visiting students’ home institutions should be asked to assess the structure and requirements of York’s programmes of study (eg arrangements for the gaining of credit) before their students undertake their placement at York. It is important that they establish in advance that any results gained while at York can be effectively incorporated into their own programmes of study without requiring extraordinary arrangements from York’s Boards of Studies in order to do so. The Committee recommended that the statement should be circulated to departments accepting visiting students and that the International Office should be asked to ensure that it was shared with distant institutions. (Appendix 3)

06/23 Award of Masters degrees in Humanities & Social Science departments (M06/04 [d])

- The Committee considered issues arising from responses to a survey of changes implemented in Humanities and Social Science departments since the implementation of the postgraduate mark scale in 2002/03, and a draft response to University Teaching Committee. The Committee noted that a survey had been undertaken of twelve departments in the Humanities and Social Sciences, that seven of the departments could potentially face the difficulty identified by the external examiner but that five of them had indicated a willingness to adopt the proposed alteration to their regulations. The Centre for Medieval Studies and Social Policy and Social Work had not commented on the suitability of the proposed solution and the Chair or the Assistant Registrar should approach these departments again to request a response. The Committee recommended to UTC that all twelve departments should be requested to alter their Masters regulations so that, as a minimum requirement for passing such a programme, students must pass the taught component on average as well as passing the dissertation, as this will address the concerns the Committee had been asked to consider. The departments, however, should propose the most appropriate procedures for their particular award to deal with failure and resubmission.

06/24 Appointment of internal examiners (M06/08)

The Committee noted that the appointment of internal examiners for the following departments have been approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting: Archaeology, Biology, Chemistry, Centre for Lifelong Learning, Economics and Related Studies, Electronics, English and Related Literature, Environment, Health Sciences, History of...
Art, HYMS, Language and Linguistic Science, Management Studies, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics, Politics, Psychology, Social Policy and Social Work and Sociology. (Secretary’s note: the listings are available for inspection in the Examinations Office). The Committee noted that listings of internal examiners were almost complete and that the final outstanding returns should be pursued and resolved as soon as possible.

06/25 Resitting at Postgraduate Level

The Committee received a recommendation for an amendment to section 10.2 of the Guide to Assessment to ensure that students on taught postgraduate and graduate programmes are dealt with in the same way as undergraduate students. The Committee noted that section 10.2 is already a gloss on regulation 5 and that the proposed amendment was a short-term measure to harmonise procedures, although a re-drafting of regulation 5 would be necessary in the longer term. The Committee considered that section 10.2.1 (iii) should detail the names of the appropriate committees, that section 10.2.2 should be amended and that no alterations should be made to section 10.2.3. With these changes, the proposed revision as outlined in Appendix 4 should be circulated to Committee members for final approval and also sent to Dr Crawford for comment.

(Appendix 4)

06/26 Recommendations of the Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum Project

(UOT M06/09)

The Committee received a request from University Teaching Committee for consideration of recommendations in item 6 of the above report and noted that the Chair and Secretary would meet with the author of the report to UTC, Wendelin Romer, to clarify the specific recommendations in item 6 of the report. With reference to item 11, the Committee noted that it might be necessary for the University to review its dyslexia provision, considering whether it is still appropriate in the light of developments in relevant research and whether we are over-compensating or under-compensating our students. (Appendix 5)

06/27 Date of the next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting: Friday 12 May 2006 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Royds
Manager, Student Administration Services

RJR/ March 2006