Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 11 May 2007.

Present: Dr Chris Fewster (Chair) Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz, Health Sciences, Prof Geoff Hall, Psychology, Dr Harold Mytum Archaeology, Professor Colin Runciman, Computer Science, Professor John Sparrow Biology, Dr Richard Walsh English, Dr Anne Duhme-Klair Chemistry, Ms Amy Foxton YUSU Member 2006/07, Mr Oleg Lisagor GSA Member 2006/7

In attendance: Mrs Rosemary Goerisch Student Progress: SAS, Ms Sue Hardman, Academic Registrar, Mr Philip Simison, Graduate Schools Office

The Chair welcomed and introduced Dr Anne Duhme-Klair as a new member of the Committee, replacing Dr Ros Temple.

07/46 Apologies for absence

None were received, as all members were present.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

07/47 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2007.

07/48 Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2007

1. Analysis of academic misconduct cases (M05/20 c), M05/04 f), M*05/87, 07/27)

A comparison of two years results, and a matrix of 2005/6 results as requested, was provided thus enabling the Committee to determine and approve an action plan for dealing with any issues and concerns in this regard.

The Committee noted that: there was no striking contrast between the two years figures; misconduct by Chinese students appeared to be heavily concentrated in Electronics and to a lesser extent in Management and Mathematics and that the number of cases does not decline in later years of study.

The Committee requested that two matrices be provided in the future, one each for undergraduate and post-graduate students and that gender balance and mode of study be added. When the information becomes available then students’ disabilities should also be included.

The Committee requested that the Chair approach the departments of Electronics and Management
to discuss the briefing they provided for overseas students in respect of academic misconduct. (Action point CJF/RG)

The Committee also requested that all departments who had not reported a case of academic misconduct in the last two years be contacted and asked what their procedures are for dealing with academic misconduct and invite them to share best practice. (Action point CJF/RG)

2. Academic Misconduct Guidelines 07/28c

As the Committee’s remit has changed to include research students, a revised version of the Academic Misconduct Guidelines for Research Students was received. The Chair of SCA now advises on cases of academic misconduct relating to research students. Previously it was deputy chair of the Board for graduate Schools, who is now permitted to chair future hearings.

The Committee requested that the following changes be made:

3.1.1 ‘Inform the Graduate Schools Office’ should be changed to, ‘inform the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress; add that if the case is in the Chair’s department another member of the Committee will act in the Chair’s place

3.1.11 ‘Board’ should be changed to the full title of ‘Board for Graduate Schools

The Committee noted that it might not always be possible for the prescribed members of the investigating Committee to be available when required. To ensure that there is no delay in proceedings should this occur, it was agreed that an appropriate deputy would be approved by the Committee to act in the absence of the respective head of department/chair of the board.

3.1.5 and 3.2.3 The Committee recommended that the student also be advised that they are entitled to be accompanied by a member of the Student Union. The representative from the Graduate Students Association queried this stating that research students had very different needs to that of a taught student. It was agreed that he would discuss the issue with the GSA and report back to the Committee. (Action point – OL)

The procedure for investigating academic misconduct by research students will be updated and be presented at the next meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools. (Action point PS) Appendix 1

3. External Examiners Induction – Good Practice recommendations (06/110, 07/16)

The Committee received the results of a survey of similar institutions detailing their procedures for inducting new external examiners. The Committee agreed that an induction programme for academic colleagues familiar with sector norms was not necessary. It would, however, be appropriate to provide such an event for new external examiners employed outside the higher education sector. The Committee requested details of the number of external examiners currently in post and who were recruited from outside the HE sector to gain an impression of the scale of the issue.

Secretary’s Note: There are currently five non-academic external examiners employed by the University. One undergraduate in Health Sciences and four postgraduates in Archaeology

07/49 Oral report from the Chair:
i) The Chair **reported** that he had been in contact with the Department of Economics recently in regard to issues relating to a Macroeconomics 2 examination paper. The department is involving the student representatives in their investigation of the issues and are keeping the Chair informed.

ii) The Chair **reported** a recent incident in which a student’s mobile phone rang while he was in an exam. The phone was switched on and in his pocket in contravention of the instructions read out at the beginning of every exam. The senior invigilator had warned the student against a repetition of this behaviour but had taken no further action.

The Committee **agreed** that, in future, failure to comply with the instructions regarding mobile phones or other electronic devices capable of storing data should be regarded as academic misconduct.

It was also agreed that a small trial would be conducted in which each examination candidate would be provided with a clear plastic bag to hold items not needed for the exam e.g., purse/wallet, keys and mobile phones. Once all the items were in the bag it would be tied and placed under their chair. Tampering with the bag once the exam had started would also be considered an academic offence. Results of the trial will be presented at the next meeting of the Committee. (**Action point** RG)

**Secretary’s Note.** On Monday 14 May a student’s mobile phone was stolen from Central Hall while he was sitting his examination.

iii) The Committee was informed that two senior invigilators have been employed on a temporary contract for the Summer Term and that they are providing a very professional service for all concerned.

**07/50 Postgraduate External Examiners Reports 2005/6**

The Committee **received** a summary of postgraduate programme External Examiners reports for 2005/06 to identify any areas of policy or regulatory change that may be needed.

The Committee **noted** that the external examiner for Field Archaeology had complained that their appointment paperwork was late and asked that the reason for this be determined.

**Secretary’s note.** This external examiner was appointed in 2004/5 and the letter of appointment was delayed by a few weeks, for reasons that are unclear.

The Committee **noted** that the external examiner for Bioinformatics reported receiving ‘an excellent induction’ and asked that details of the induction be made available as a possible model of best practice.

**Secretary’s note.** The course leader meets with the new external examiner for a day prior to attending their first meeting of the Board of Examiners. The following are reviewed: course structure and aims; assessment processes; placement procedures; review of Board of Examiners meetings; meet relevant staff. A Course guide, assessment handbook and marking sheets are provided.

The Committee **noted** that external examiners are appointed to comment on process and quality assurance but their role and duties as a moderator appears to be unclear and this has led to differential practice. It was **agreed** that a framework should be constructed, clearly defining the role of moderator and the associated responsibilities. (**Action point** – annual priorities 2007/8)
07/51 Defining a point for Module Registration (SCA 04/37, UTC 04/138)

The Committee received a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress proposing the establishment of a defining point for registration on modules and noted that this action is designed to address issues arising from a change to the HESA reporting requirements for the University from 2007, where student numbers must be returned at the level of modules and not programmes of study; this has funding implications for the institution if too many students are recorded as failing to complete. The Committee considered the proposals, noting that flexibility in student selection of module choices would not be reduced and that funding implications for the institution were potentially very serious. The Committee recommended to University Teaching Committee the adoption of the proposals as outlined in the paper with the following alteration to deadlines:

From October 2007, undergraduate and postgraduate students’ module choices must be established and entered on their SITS record by the end of Week 4 of the Autumn and Spring terms. In the Summer term of each year the choices must be established and entered on the SITS record by the end of Week 3 to accommodate HESA reporting deadlines.

07/52 The Invigilation of Formal University Examinations (M06/104iv, 07/03)

The Committee received a paper from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress proposing a significant reduction in the use of academic staff as invigilators. The Committee noted that the driver for the proposal was not the saving of money but more efficient use of resources by proposing a significant reduction or removal of workload from academic staff; that the University can employ external invigilators for around £10.00 per hour; that there was evidence that a number of other HE institutions use professional invigilators rather than academic staff; that the proposal would also address the particular difficulties caused by escorted toilet visits during examinations where it is necessary to have a gender balance in invigilators that it is not possible to create under the current system. In addition, some University examinations were not accounted for in the paper (e.g. Health Sciences, HYMS, Biology) but should be part of the analysis, and that, as academic staff are not currently directly remunerated for invigilation that this proposal constituted a real outflow of funding. The Committee considered that the consistency provided by a team of professional invigilators would enhance the quality of the student experience in examinations, and recommended to University Teaching Committee that a request should be made for central funding to support the establishment of such a team, managed by the Examinations Office in Student Administrative Services. Additions should be made to the paper to help UTC in their consideration, by including an analysis of the comparable practice at other HE institutions, inclusion of the examination sessions conducted by departments and an analysis of departments who are currently paying for invigilators who are not academic staff to meet their commitments to the exercise. (Action point - RG)

07/53 Consultation Document on the Taught Postgraduate and Graduate Modularisation Review

Modularisation Review

The Committee received the Consultation Document on Taught Postgraduate and Graduate Modularisation Review and agreed to confine comments to the remit of the Committee. The Committee recommended the following additions and clarification of the proposals to University Teaching Committee, in particular in relation to governance and the role of Graduate School Boards:
a) to include timing of Boards, early exit procedures, submission of results, when progression should take place, when internal and external examiners must be present at meetings;

b) whether a mechanism for resolving classification borderlines should be developed as in the undergraduate proposals.

In relation to Question 9 of the paper, the Committee noted that further consideration of the timing of reassessment and progression decisions was needed; August is too late to conduct resits for the taught elements of postgraduate programmes and closes off an alternative route to Diploma achievement for students.

The Committee noted that it would be particularly interested to see the feedback from the consultation with departments on the question of reassessment and would be willing to consider and contribute further views following such feedback.

07/54 Committee Members Availability July-September

The Committee noted that they would be requested to provide details of their availability between July and September 2007 to the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress so appropriate support for committee business can be maintained over the vacation period.

07/55 Date of the next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 15 June 2007 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[May 2007]