Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 1415 on 18 November 2005 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
Ms Jennifer Winter (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

05/92 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2005 were approved

05/94 Matters arising

From M05/80 on Security of Examination Papers, the Committee requested that the Examinations Office should offer departments a training or information session on encrypting documents at which some methods of doing so could be demonstrated and where questions could be answered.

05/95 Oral report from the Chair

- The Committee received an oral report from the Chair, including:
- a) a report back from the one-day conference on “Academic Misconduct: The Cultural
Context” held on 2 November 2005, from which a full, final report will be compiled and circulated to participants and others. The Committee was advised that a decision has been taken that York will join a consortium of 15 other universities, co-ordinated by Imperial College, to hire a company to develop a computer-based learning package that will help students to engage actively with academic misconduct issues. The University will have free use of the final product and will have input to the product development. In addition, it was noted that the Chemistry department has received project money to develop a pilot detection system for use with the VLE.

- (b) A query had been raised with the Chair about how Boards of Examiners/Studies should deal with a student’s marks when the first and second markers were unable to agree on the extent to which additional marks should be awarded to compensate for mitigating circumstances. The Chair had advised that normal marking processes should be followed without taking any account of the mitigating circumstances, and that it was the responsibility of the Board of Examiners, including the external examiner(s), to consider the nature of the mitigating evidence and to make recommendations to the Board of Studies. In response to this advice, the Chair had then been queried as to how mitigating circumstances should be allowed for in the case of a student on a combined programme where the Combined Board of Examiners recommended degree classifications based on signals from the single-subject Boards; there was concern that mitigating circumstances might not be allowed for at all, or that a student could be compensated twice — by both single-subject and combined Boards. The Committee agreed that departments would welcome guidance from the SCA on the issue and that the process should begin with a survey of current practices of single-subject and combined Boards, conducted by the Examinations Office through inspection of Written Statements and/or correspondence.

- c) the Committee was asked how the University should determine penalties for academic misconduct when students are undertaking the same module but aiming for different awards (e.g. PG Cert vs MA or BSc vs MPhys)? In considering the application of penalties under the University’s academic misconduct guidelines (which relate to the proportion of the affected module’s contribution to the final award) the designation of a higher award will change the proportion on which the penalty is based. Students registered for different awards, and committing equivalent amounts of academic misconduct in the same module(s), would receive different penalties and thereby need to achieve different levels of compensatory performance in other modules. Furthermore, a student facing an academic misconduct penalty could change their intended award to reduce the proportion of work to be penalised, and thus affect the amount of compensatory work needed to complete the award. The Committee agreed that in applying penalties in such cases, the investigating sub-committee and Board must recommend two (or more) levels of penalty to be applied, depending on the award that is finally made to the student (e.g. Postgraduate Certificate or Masters). When the penalty is ultimately applied the penalty points must reflect the proportional contribution of the module(s) to the final award. The Committee noted that such a decision strengthens the need for departments to provide guidance to students at an early stage in their programmes, and particularly those studying at postgraduate level.

- d) the Chair thanked the Committee members for their feedback and correspondence on
the Burgess Report and advised that University Teaching Committee had considered this feedback and an institutional-level response had been made.

05/96 Analysis of academic misconduct cases (M05/20 c), M05/04 f), M*05/87)

- The Committee **received** an analysis of academic misconduct cases completed to date, as at 1 November 2005, considered under the procedures introduced in October 2004.
- The Committee **noted** that the report was based on incomplete data but that a final report would be presented to the Committee once all the cases were complete for the academic year, that some cases may have involved the same student more than once and that this will have involved ‘counting’ the student twice; that students from the Far East are over-represented in the analysis; that there is a worrying amount of cases of collusion; and that the data will be more useful once comparison is possible over more than one year. The Committee further **noted** that it would need to look for repeated high numbers of cases in individual departments that might indicate a need for more aggressive awareness training for students, as well as any departments apparently under-represented in the listings which might indicate that cases were not being identified and/or investigated.

(Appendix 1)

05/97 Statistical analysis of classification of degrees I (M04/16, M04/96)

The Committee **received** a shallow analysis of data concerning degree classifications for York department for the cohorts of students graduating in Summer of 2005 and the two previous years, and corresponding A-level intake tariffs for October 2002 and A-level point scores for the two previous years. Two further sheets of analyses were tabled at the meeting containing

- last year’s (M04/96) 3-year scatter diagram with the one point for History of Art added;
- the percentage of ‘good’ degrees in Summer 2005 vs. A-level tariff for the October 2002 entry for individual York departments.

The Committee was pleased to receive the very helpful analysis and **noted** that although the A-level tariff was not directly comparable with A-level point scores the same general picture is emerging; that the proportion of good degrees awarded could be higher without compromising the University’s profile, although there would be a danger if the proportion were lowered; that attention could be drawn to the profile of one of our comparators, Imperial College, where the percentage of ‘good’ degrees is low given the high entry tariff, a result that mirrors York’s experience for Mathematics and Computer Science programmes. The Committee also **noted** that we are not out of line with our comparator institutions.

The Committee asked that the two tabled scatter plots should be incorporated into the amended report (final version as shown in Appendix 2) and that, following approval of the minutes, the report should be forwarded to Senate with a copy to University Teaching Committee.

(Appendix 2)
05/98 Annual Report on Invigilation (M05/81 a))

The Committee received an annual report on invigilation in formal examinations at York for academic year 2004/05.

(Appendix 3)

The Committee considered issues arising from the report and recommended to University Teaching Committee that

- mobile phone detectors should be introduced as soon as possible to assist in the invigilation process;
- the Examinations Office should provide guidance for invigilators on expectations when accompanying students to the lavatory;
- student or graduate teaching assistants provided by departments to act as invigilators are expected to be fully trained in invigilation requirements and that departments should be asked to ensure that they are;
- that invigilation desks should be placed at the top of Central Hall auditorium as well as on the stage;
- that departments should be advised that the time during which students are undertaking the examination should not include a period during which they are only permitted to read the paper ("reading time"). If departments are unable to carry out this requirement they must provide additional invigilators to cover the reading time.
- that UTC should be asked to consider the benefits to the institution of the appointment of a small group of individuals who could act as Senior Invigilator in all University examinations.

05/99 Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 20 January 2006 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G19, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Royds
Manager: Student Administration Services

RJR/ November 2005