Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 1415 on 7 October 2005 in H/G17.

Present:

Dr TJ Crawford (Chair)
Ms Karen Fritz, Health Sciences
Dr Harold Mytum, Archaeology
Dr Ros Temple, Language & Linguistic Science
Dr Richard Walsh, English
Mr Neil Barnes (YUSU)

In attendance:

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

05/70 Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed Dr Ros Temple from the Department of Language & Linguistic Science and Dr Harold Mytum from the Centre for Medieval Studies to the Committee. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Chris Fewster, Professor Geoff Hall and Ms Jennifer Winter (GSA).

05/71 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2005 were approved.

05/72 Matters arising

The Committee noted that a draft of M05/57 relating to marks to be carried forward after resit had been sent to UTC and forwarded to the Modular Review Working Party for consideration by the latter over the summer vacation period.
05/73 Terms of reference and timeline of business

- The Committee received a copy of the current Terms of Reference of the Committee, and a timeline of Committee business throughout the year and considered any necessary additions or alterations to either document. The Committee noted that workloads on both University Teaching Committee and the Standing Committee on Assessment were high. It recommended to University Teaching Committee that it should consider that when a member of UTC is appointed to the SCA (as required by the SCA’s terms of reference), an additional member of Teaching Committee should be appointed so that neither committee’s business was concentrated on a small number of members. It also recommended that the last sentence of the first paragraph of the Terms of Reference should be altered to read “The Chair is an ex-officio member of the Teaching Committee”, instead of “The Chair should be an active member of the Teaching Committee”.
- Some editing changes were made (updating of dates and re-numbering of the March section) to the Annual Timeline. (Appendix 1)

05/74 Committee Priorities in 2004/2005

The Committee received a copy of annual priorities for 2004/05 and a schedule of proposed priorities for the Committee in 2005/06. In considering the achievement of priorities in 2004/05 the Committee noted that

- under item v) a review had been conducted of the policy and processes for the treatment of students who fail to progress or complete their awards and that the Committee would be asked to consider the process, when formalised, during 2005/06 (see item ii of 2005/06 priorities);
- under item vii) data had been collated on the frequency with which masters degrees are awarded with distinction but that some queries on the data were still to be resolved;
- under item viii) the survey of comparator institutions’ policies on the award of aegrotat degrees, together with the Committee’s comments, had been passed to Special Cases Committee and to the UTC Review of Modularisation Working Party.

In relation to the priorities set for 2005/06 the Committee noted that Ms Karen Fritz would represent the SCA on the UTC Working Party on AP(E)L, which would be convened shortly. (Appendix 2)

05/75 Copies of documentation

- The Committee received copies of the latest editions of the University’s Ordinances and Regulations, Academic Misconduct Guidelines, Special Exam Arrangements, Students' Guide to University Closed Examinations, Invigilator Guidelines and Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures, and noted that the minor amendments needed to the Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures would be made during the Autumn term and a new version issued from January 2006. Changes to the Academic Misconduct Guidelines would be issued as an additional sheet once the SCA had completed its review of the summary of 2004/05 cases. In considering the Invigilator Guidelines it was requested that
some method be found of reducing noise made by the wooden stage in Central Hall during examinations and the Committee noted that carpeting of the area was under consideration.

05/76 Fees for undergraduate external examiners

The Committee considered proposed fees for undergraduate external examiners in 2005/06 and recommended to Policy and Resources Committee that they should be adopted for 2005/06. (Appendix 3)

05/77 Chair’s Oral Report

- The Committee received an oral report from the Chair, as follows:

  - a) Feedback on the results of the National Student Survey where the Committee noted that the TQI website had a large amount of data about the survey, that a high proportion of our students (77%) had responded, and that the University had done well in being placed 6th out of 101 institutions. The poorest score had been received in the “assessment and feedback” category and it was likely that the feedback element and timescales for doing so was the area where most work would be needed if the University was to improve its score for next year. The SCA would be happy to consider any recommendations arising from UTC’s consideration of the results.

  - b) The Committee noted that progress had been made in the updating of University calculator stocks for examinations with the Registrar making funds available. She had requested, however, that the Committee consider ways of addressing the loss of large numbers of calculators during examination periods.

  - c) Approval had been given for the nomination of advisers to internal examiners on the MSc Applied Forensic Psychology and the Assistant Registrar was asked to discover the nature of their input to the assessment process of the programme so the Committee could consider whether there was a need to report their nomination at all.

  - Arising from a recent case, the Committee considered representation for students being investigated for committing plagiarism on a distance education programme where it is not possible to arrange for an advocate to be present in the distant location. The Committee decided that the advice from the SCA Chair or other representative from the SCA, should ensure that in such cases the Chair of the investigating sub-committee should emphasise to the student(s) the advantages of making contact with the Students’ Union (YUSU or GSA) to arrange for representation in York. The information should also be included in the next revision of the Guide to Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures.

  - The Committee were advised of a conference to be held on campus on 2 November 2005 to discuss academic misconduct issues.

05/78 Academic Misconduct and Distance Learning Students (M05/61)

The Committee received a final report on the above, incorporating a response from the Educational Studies department’s MA in Teaching English to Young Learners, outlining procedures in place in departments to ensure that issues of academic misconduct are drawn to
the attention of students studying on distance learning programmes, and *recommended* that the report should be circulated to all departments so that the many good ideas within it could be shared widely. (Appendix 4)

**05/79 Calculators in distant examination centres**

- The Committee *received* copies of correspondence relating to difficulties created in the use of calculators in distant examination centres. The Committee *considered* possible amendments to existing policy arising from the issues raised in the correspondence and *recommended* that the procedure be adopted as well as noted in the Guide to Assessment. (Appendix 5)

**05/80 Security of Examination Papers (M05/37 (a), M*05/29 (a))**

The Committee *considered* whether revision is necessary to the Examinations Office instructions to departments about secure handling of examination papers in 2005/06, and *noted* that with the speed of technological changes it is difficult to ensure that departments are fully briefed and advised on the relevant security issues. The document was updated as shown in the Appendix and the Committee requested that the finalised version be circulated to departments and copied to the Estates Department and the Computing Service. (Appendix 6)

**05/81 Report on examination practices at other institutions**

The Committee *received* a short report from the Assistant Registrar (EGTO) on issues noted at an Examinations Good Practice Day organised by the Examinations Office. The Committee *recommended* the following changes to practice at York:

- a report on invigilation in the previous year to be prepared annually for the October meeting of the Committee, and for the November 2005 meeting in 2005/06;
- The Committee noted that the Library already holds previous examination papers, and *recommended* to UTC that the Library should be approached to contribute to the process whereby students have short-term access to a University calculator in the Library, to practice its use using the information held on the relevant web pages;
- The Examinations Office should investigate the purchase of three mobile phone detectors for use in examinations;
- A section should be added to the Guide for Invigilators to alert them to possible forms of misconduct (eg crib notes etched into plastic drink bottles, on hat bands and in spectacle cases) as the Examinations Office becomes aware of these.

(Appendix 7)

**05/82 Date of the next meeting**

The Committee *noted* the date of the next meeting as Friday 18 November 2005 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G19, Heslington Hall.
Rosemary Royds
Manager: Student Administration Services

RJR/ October 2005