Teaching Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 2.15pm on 6 October in H/G17.

Present: Dr Chris J Fewster (Chair) Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz Health Sciences, Dr Harold Mytum Archaeology, Professor Colin Runciman Computer Science, Professor John Sparrow Biology, Dr Ros Temple Language & Linguistic Science, Dr Richard Walsh English & Related Literature, Ms Amy Foxton Y USU Member 2006/07, Mr Oleg Lisagor, GSA Member 2006/07

Apologies: Professor Geoff Hall, Psychology

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

06/76 Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed new members including, Colin Runciman, John Sparrow, Amy Foxton, Oleg Lisagor and Rosemary Goerisch. There were no apologies for absence. The Committee noted that Professor Hall was on research leave until January 2007 but remained contactable by e-mail.

06/77 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2006 (previously circulated) were approved.

06/78 Matters arising

a) Arising from M06/62 i), ii), and v), the Committee received drafts of new Report and Appointment forms for external examiners of Foundation Degree programmes. The Committee noted that section a) of the Report form gave details of the defining characteristics of these degrees. Section e) requests examiners’ comments on the work-based learning element of the programme. The Committee noted that clarification would be needed to ensure common understanding of the term “equivalent to at least 20 credits per level of study” in relation to work-based learning, and agreed that UTC should be asked to supply this in time for consideration at the November meeting. (ACTION:RG)

The Committee recommended that section g) of the Appointment form should be amended to read “….expertise relevant to this level of qualification…” and also that guidance for departments on the comments they must make on this information should be sought from UTC, to be included at the set-up point of each programme. The Committee approved the new forms, revised as shown in Appendix 1, and also noted that relevant guidance relating to Foundation Degrees had been included when updating the Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures for 2006/07. (ACTION:UTC) (Appendix 1)

(b) Variation of assessment for a cohort (SCA M06/21(e), M06/39, M06/59 (b); UTC M06/83)
The Committee received a copy of a paper on “Approval of Modifications to Existing Taught Programmes of Study”. The Chair reported that the situation relating to such changes had previously been unclear but that it had been agreed that the SCA would deal with changes affecting individual students and UTC would handle changes relating to cohorts of students. The Committee noted that the UTC proforma did not include sufficient detail about when or how students will be consulted (see p.11) and recommended to the Academic Support office that this should be addressed. (ACTION:RG/JJ)

(c) Reading time in formal examinations (M06/60 (c))

The Committee noted that responses from departments on its proposals required further clarification and that a final report on the issue would be available for consideration at the November meeting. (ACTION:RG)

06/79 Oral report from the Chair

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

(a) that meetings had taken place over the summer to develop amended degree classification procedures that align with the proposals of the Modularisation Review Group. The paper– Single System for Classification of Undergraduate Degrees: Consultation document – would be considered later in the meeting. (b) that consultation with members of the Modularisation Review Group, Academic Support Office, SCC and SCA had been held to clarify the Committee’s scheme for dealing with preventing the carrying forward of failing averages and issues of strategic failure (see Treatment of resit marks SCA M06/25, 06/38, 06/60)

(c) that a meeting had taken place with the Chair and Secretary of Special Cases Committee to clarify the guidance developed by the SCA on the application of academic misconduct penalties (M06/43 refers). It was agreed that the guidelines need to be re-written so as to avoid further misunderstanding (Chris, is this true? I thought the meeting had sorted everything out to Wendy’s satisfaction?) (ACTION:RG/CF)

(d) that three members of the Committee had met to consider the updating of the current Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures booklet (M06/68 refers). The Committee noted that the changes required were considerable but that the aim was to complete the alterations over the coming year. (ACTION:RG/RR)

06/80 Timeline and Terms of Reference

The Committee received a copy of the current Terms of Reference of the Committee, and a timeline of routine Committee business scheduled for each meeting throughout the year. The Committee considered any necessary additions or alterations to either document. The Committee noted that a recent reorganisation of the Academic Registry has indicated that the remit of the Committee would be extended to include responsibility for assessment and progression of all students from foundation degrees to students on research degrees. The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools should be an ex-officio member of the Committee in future, and that statistical reporting and monitoring considered by the SCA should also be considered by the Board for
Graduate Schools and feedback received before any final report to Senate.

The Committee **recommended** to University Teaching Committee that its Terms of Reference be revised in accordance with changes outlined in Appendix 1, to take account of its new responsibilities. It also recommended that the Terms of Reference of University Teaching Committee, the Board of Graduate Schools and the Special Cases Committee be reviewed in association with the suggested alterations to the Standing Committee on Assessment’s Terms of Reference.

The Committee **considered** the proposed Annual Timeline and **noted** that an additional item had been included to request committee members to provide details of their availability over the summer vacation period at the June meeting so that effective consultation could take place on issues that arise in the vacation period. The Committee **approved** the annual timeline as outlined in Appendix 2. **(ACTION:RG)** (Appendix 2)

**06/81 Committee Priorities in 2006/7**

The Committee **received** a copy of the annual priorities for 2005/6 and a schedule of proposed priorities for 2006/7 and **agreed** that current point (iv) regarding treatment of students who fail to progress should be deferred until the Modularisation Review process was complete and therefore should move to item c). The Committee **noted** that the final version of the QAA’s Code of Practice on the assessment of students had not yet been issued and that the proposed review of regulation 5.2 (point (x)) was much needed and that it might additionally require a review of other regulations relating to postgraduate and research programmes or students, in order to be comprehensive. **(Appendix 3)**

**06/82 Copies of documentation**

The Committee **received** copies of the latest editions of the University’s Ordinances and Regulations and Academic Misconduct Guidelines, and **noted** that the 2006/07 Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures was currently in print; that copies of guidance on Special Exam Arrangements, Students’ Guide to University Closed Examinations and Invigilator Guidelines would be updated at appropriate points during the year and distributed to the Committee as the revised versions become available. **(ACTION:RG)**

**06/83 Fees for undergraduate external examiners**

The Committee **agreed** proposed fees for undergraduate external examiners in 2006/7.

**06/84 Fees for resit examinations**

The Committee **agreed** proposed fees for resit examinations for 2006/7 and 2007/8.

**06/85 Security of Examination Papers**

The Committee **noted** that the Computing Service’s Systems Security Advisor had reviewed the current guidelines to departments relating to the security of examination papers and that no amendment was required. The Examinations Office would be circulating the guidance to departments in time for the 2006/07 examinations sessions. **(ACTION: Examinations Office)**

**06/86 Consultation on Modularisation Review proposals**
The Committee received a copy of “Discussion paper regarding the Review of Modularisation” and a tabled paper of draft proposals “Single System for Classification of Undergraduate Degrees: Consultation document” for advance comment. The Committee noted that their comments on the draft consultation document would be incorporated in the final paper to be considered at the October 2006 meeting of University Teaching Committee.

The Committee considered assessment-related issues arising from both papers:

a) Classification Consultation paper

The Committee requested that the document be reviewed to ensure that account is taken of the requirements of Integrated Masters programmes in making recommendations and noted that external accreditation requirements may raise issues for these procedures. In addition, some members, who perceived difficulties in implementing these proposals in respect of their programmes, expressed concern.

1: Principles. Uneasiness was expressed about placing too much weight on claims of stability. The Committee recommended that it was important to ensure that no ‘peak-type’ criteria should be permitted to be re-introduced in implementing the proposals.

2: Credit-weighted average. Little support was expressed for the proposal to permit the use of Year 1 results in borderline cases. Equity issues were raised (in particular the advantage to students following subjects they had already studied previously and the disadvantage to those where the subject was completely new) and the view was expressed that it would not be acceptable to appeal to the most unreliable set of data at the point where it mattered most. It was agreed that the sector norm is the zero-rating of level one modules.

3: Borderline cases. The Committee preferred that “borderline cases should be defined as those with an average of up to 2 points below the threshold” and did not support an average of up to 3. There was a request for consideration that second order rules might be left to departments to devise. It was suggested that guidelines should be developed to include specific guidance to examiners about factors that may be taken into account, those that must be taken into account and those that must not be taken into account (for example, does the student have half of the final year credits in the higher class?).

Representatives from Humanities departments in particular, as well as other members of the Committee, felt that Example 1 in this section was most likely to find support from their colleagues.

There were no comments on items 4, 5 or 6.

7. Within-programme heterogeneity. The Committee noted that the wording in this section was unclear and the point that this should be addressed through programme design should be emphasized more strongly.

There were no comments on item 8.

9. Mitigation. The Committee noted that they believed it would be hard to find a justifiable case where Special Cases Committee could make a useful judgement and that this recommendation should be amended to remove the role outlined for that committee.
10. **1/9th rule.** Concern was expressed at the generosity of the proposed discounting of 40 credits compared to current guidelines, although there was a general understanding of the reasons for the proposal.

There were no comments on items 11 or 12.

b) **Modularisation Review Consultation paper**

The Committee received the discussion paper but noted the lack of time remaining to them to consider the issues. Members were requested to send their comments by e-mail to rag501@york.ac.uk or sca@york.ac.uk by 20 October 2006. Members asked the Chair and Secretary to note the following points in relation to the paper:

- departments need to be given freedom to amend the ‘cliff edge’, using academic judgment
- There were concerns about whether the independent study project should be compulsory for all students in all combinations. if retained, would there be an acknowledgement that it may not take an identical format in all departments or all subject areas.
- Clarification and tighter regulation of ISP of aims was needed.

A response on behalf of the Committee was prepared by the Chair and Secretary as outlined in Appendix 4. *(Appendix 4)*

**06/87 Dictionaries in formal examinations (M06/60(a))**

The Committee received an analysis of e-mail consultation with members of the SCA and University Teaching Committee on proposed changes to the use of dictionaries in examinations and agreed to defer consideration of this item to the November 2006 meeting.

**06/88 Application of academic misconduct penalties (M06/60)**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item to the November 2006 meeting.

**06/89 Guidance on academic misconduct issues**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item to the November 2006 meeting.

**06/90 Date of the next meeting**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 17 November 2006 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

**Rosemary Goerisch**  
**Assistant Registrar: Student Progress**

---

RAG/[October, 2006]