Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 10 October 2008 at 2.15 pm in Room D130 Derwent College.

Present: Dr David Efird (Chair,) Philosophy; Dr Simon Eveson, Mathematics; Dr Amanda Rees, Sociology; Dr Anne Duhme-Klair, Chemistry; Dr Pat Ansell, BiGS and Health Sciences; Mr John Brown, Social Policy and Social Work; Charlie Leyland, YUSU member 2008/9

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

08/62 Welcome to new members and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed Dr Pat Ansell from Health Sciences, John Brown from Social Policy and Social Work and Dr Linda Perriton from the York School of Management. Apologies were received from Professor Colin Runciman, Dr Linda Perriton, Ms Carylan Lobo, and Ms Aseel Takshe.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

08/63 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2008.

08/64 Matters arising from the minutes:

i. 08/42 iv Meeting with Health Sciences

A meeting was held on 2 July with representatives from Health Sciences, to discuss ways of reducing the number of student appeals. A number of options were agreed and the results will be monitored in due course.

ii. 08/42, v, 4 External Examiners’ reports

Chairs of Boards of Examiners must now seek permission to hold a Board of Examiners meeting if external examiners are not able to attend.

iii. 08/44 Online plagiarism module
Departments had been informed that the module would be introduced in October 2008 and Teaching Committee had been asked to consider what support could be made available to Departments for implementation.

iv.08/45 Audio recording of research students' oral examinations

As agreed the grounds for appeal have not been included in the policy

v. Matters arising from UTC 23 June 2008

(c) Members requested that a review of the type and range of penalties Departments have adopted for 2008/9 for failing to meet assessment deadlines is conducted. It was agreed that this could be done using Departments' Statements of Assessment. A report will be submitted in due course.

Action point : RG

08/65 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair reported that:

i. Implementation of assessment rules governing modules taken outside the home Department.

The Chair reported that implementation of these assessment rules has created problems for the Centre for Medieval Studies and the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies and that he has made suitable arrangements to enable these centres to comply with the rules.

ii. Postgraduate programme modularisation

Members are invited to comment on the current proposals, for the modularisation of taught postgraduate programmes, particularly in regard to assessment.

iii. Undergraduate programme modularisation

The Chair of Teaching Committee has requested that the SCA develop a student guide to the assessment rules relating to modularisation, including examples of how those rules work. This is to be completed by the end of the autumn term. The Chair agreed to produce the guide and will circulate to members for comment.

Action point: DE

08/66 Timeline
The Committee received and approved a proposed timeline of routine Committee business scheduled for each meeting throughout the year.

08/67 Committee Priorities in 2008/9

The Committee received a copy of the Committee’s annual priorities for 2007/8 and a schedule of proposed priorities for the Committee in 2008/9. It was agreed that item number eight, the development of a policy on amendments to programme results lists, should be deleted from the schedule and be undertaken by the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress. The Committee decided to determine the need for a policy to assist students observing Ramadan during the University’s formal assessment period and if it is necessary, a policy will be developed. This will become item eight.

Action point: RG

08/68 Academic Misconduct Annual Report 2007/8

The Committee received the annual report on undergraduate and taught postgraduate cases of academic misconduct and their outcomes, occurring in the previous academic year. The Committee noted:

- a 16% decline in the number of postgraduate cases
- an 11% increase in undergraduate cases
- a decline of almost 75% in cheating in examinations, attributed to the removal of individual student dictionaries in formal University examinations
- 21 formal warnings were issued, a positive indication that the new system, introduced in October 2007, for dealing with minor cases of academic misconduct is working effectively
- In the past three years the following have not submitted one case of academic misconduct: History of Art, Medieval Studies and Women’s Studies. They will be contacted and invited to share best practice

Action point: RG

Secretary’s note: the appropriate Graduate Chairs have been contacted and invited to respond.

The Committee noted an increase in the number of collusion cases during 2007/8 and decided to recommend the introduction of a Collusion Awareness tutorial to Teaching Committee. The Student Union representative also agreed to include the issue of collusion in the Student Union’s Plagiarism Roadshow which will be held shortly.

The Committee also requested that a list of new ways of cheating in examinations be included in the Guidelines for Invigilators.

Action point: RG

08/69 Recording of Research Students’ Oral Examinations

The Committee received an oral report from Student Administrative Services on progress with implementation of the audio recording of research students’ oral examinations. The Committee noted that:
- The policy is now on the Graduate Schools website
- an information statement for external examiners is also on the website, and can be used by Departments when approaching possible examiners or examiners appointed prior to the introduction of the policy
- an information statement for students is also on the website and will be given to students when they submit their soft bound thesis
- letters of appointment for external examiners have been amended to refer to the policy
- memory cards are being sent to internal examiners with the soft bound thesis. If the thesis was submitted prior to the introduction of the policy, Departments will be sent a memory card upon request

The Chair reported that he had received two requests for the appointment of internal observers because two external examiners had refused to be recorded. It was agreed that a list of objections to being recorded would be kept and reviewed periodically.

**Action point: RG**

**08/70 Review of the draft Guide to Marking**

The Committee was invited to consider a draft of a Guide to Marking prepared by Cecilia Lowe.

Members noted that the Guide would impact variously on the Departments represented on SCA. For some Departments, the Guide would require a significant increase in double blind marking, but for others, it would allow for a significant decrease in double blind marking. Because double blind marking is resource intensive, the Guide would have a significant impact on staff workloads. It was therefore recommended that an impact survey be done to assess the workload implications of the Guide. It was suggested that this survey take into account the introduction of the Feedback Policy, which itself may have workload implications, in order to gain a holistic picture of the workload implications for University policies on assessment and feedback. In conjunction with this impact survey, it was also suggested that, just as Departments were surveyed on their feedback practices, Departments should be surveyed on their assessment practices. From this data, the Guide might be explicitly informed by actual Department assessment practices and their rationales.

It was also noted that presentations are a valuable tool in developing transferable skills and are enjoyed by many students. The introduction of double marking of these assessments could lead to a reduction in this means of assessment being used. It is difficult to have two examiners present for all sessions and videoing for future examining is not viable.

The Committee noted that there were two omissions from the guidelines: a) moderation and its benefits (particularly that it enables feedback to be provided in a timelier manner than double blind marking); b) how Departments use graduate teaching assistants and the important role they play in first year assessments.

**08/71 Reconsideration of the award of “Starred Firsts”**

The Committee considered an extract from the minutes of the Senate meeting on 08 July 2008 and noted that this issue will now be determined by the Vice Chancellor in due course.
CATEGORY II BUSINESS

08/72 Copies of documentation

The Committee received copies of the latest editions of:

- University’s Ordinances and Regulations
- Guide to Assessment 2008/09
- Academic Misconduct Guidelines
- Checklist for Committee members and SAS members undertaking Chair’s Actions

08/73 Security of Examination Papers

The Committee noted the response from the Computing Service’s Systems Security Advisor to the request about whether revision is necessary to the Examinations Office instructions to Departments about secure handling of examination papers in 2008/9.

08/74 Date of the next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 21 November 2008 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Rosemary Goerisch
Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[October 2008]