STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 27 October 2017 at 2.00pm in HG17, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:
- Dr Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
- Dr Louise Jones, Biology
- Dr Patrick Gallimore, York Law School
- Dr Francesco Bravo, Economics
- Dr Keith Allen, Philosophy
- Dr Anita Savage Grainge, SPSW
- Professor Helen Smith, English
- Charlotte Chamberlain, GSA
- Julian Porch, YUSU

In attendance:
- Valerie Cotter, Dep. Academic Registrar/Dir. Student Service
- Stephen Gow (Secretary), Academic Integrity Coordinator
- Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement
- Dr Jen Wotherspoon, Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
- Claire Shanks, Disability Adviser
- Gillian Wright, Assessment Manager

Apologies:
- Dr Danijela Trenkic, Education
- Dr John Stringer, Music
- Professor Mike Bentley, Chair of Special Cases Committee
- Robert Simpson, Special Cases Manager

17-18/17 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members of the Committee and noted that UTC had approved Dr Anita Savage Grainge (SPSW) and Danijela Trenkic (Education) as members of the Committee and approved the Terms and References, which have been added to the SCA webpage.

17-18/18 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee noted minor changes to the minutes but approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 22 September 2017.

17-18/19 Matters arising from the minutes of 30 June 2017:
• **16-17/39: Planning the impact of Ramadan in the CAP** – YUSU, GSA and Islamic Society to prepare for this in coordination with Examinations Office. The Religious Observance Form 2017/18 is now available at [https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/taking-an-exam/#tab-4](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/taking-an-exam/#tab-4) [ONGOING]

• **16-17/89: Shallow Analysis of Degree Outcomes** – Chairs of Boards of Examiners Forum took place on 24th October, Dan Cashdan gave a presentation on the Management Information Gateway [CLOSED]

• **16-17/92: Proposals for amendments to the Guide to Assessment** – Updated version and briefing note have now been published at [https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/examinations/guide/](https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/examinations/guide/) [CLOSED]

• **16-17/94: Proposal: Repeat Study for UG students failing to progress from Stage 1** – After further consultation with academic departments, a report was presented to the VC, and he approved the proposal by Chair’s Action, for 17-18 and 18-19 cohorts. This has now been reported to Senate. Specific regulation on the resubmission of previous work has been added to the Guide. [CLOSED]

• **16-17/95: Review of Exceptional Circumstances Policy** – The review of the policy is being planned and will be considered by SCA at November meeting. [ACTION: SK/JW/MB]

• **16-17/106: Report – Issues reported during Exams during Summer CAP 2016/17** – The Chair and Jo Fletcher, Examinations Manager, have modified the presentation of the report detailing issues reported during the resit Cap and this has been considered by SCA (m.17-18/22)[CLOSED]

17-18/20 Chair’s Oral Report

The Chair noted that Senate had ratified the Vice Chancellor’s approval by Chair’s Action of the proposal for Repeat Study to be permitted for 17-18 and 18-19 cohorts. Specific regulation on the resubmission of previous work has been added to the Guide. The Chair reported back on the Chairs of Boards of Examiners’ Forum which had taken place on Tuesday 24th October, 2017; it is hoped that there will be one Forum per term. In the Forum the Chairs of Boards received a presentation on using the Management Information Gateway and also discussed advice that should be given to incoming Chairs of Boards. It is hope that guidance for new Chairs of Boards can be developed. The Forum also considered departmental practices in relation to the use of External Examiners. It is proposed that University-wide principles of guidance for External Examiners be developed.
The Chair noted the report on *Understanding Degree Algorithms* - which summarises the findings of a joint Universities UK-GuildHE project looking at the configuration of degree algorithms. It was noted that the report is of interest to the Committee as it details the findings of a survey responded to by 70% of UKHE institutions on important sector issues, such as grade inflation, consideration of including 1st year work in degree classifications and the use of Grade Point Averages (GPA). It was noted that the sector has moved away from using GPAs.


**17-18/21  Report from Students**

**YUSU**: The YUSU representative noted that Academic Integrity Week will be taking place in Week 7 of the Autumn term. Every year YUSU and GSA support and advise students involved in academic misconduct cases and have identified common pitfalls that may help students to avoid misconduct, which has a negative impact on their academic performance, confidence and well-being. This week will concentrate on a different theme each day to highlight the support and resources available to students. The Chair noted that this event should be endorsed by SCA and suggested a memo should be drafted and sent to all departments to raise awareness of the initiative and request departmental support with the initiative.

ACTION: SK/SG

The YUSU representative also noted that students in the Department of Music had proposed using External Examiners for the final projects as the Internal Examiners were not deemed specialists in the wide variety of styles that students use for their final projects. It was noted that these projects must be internally examined, however External Examiners must also be used to judge the quality of the assessment. It was suggested YUSU discuss the matter with the department.

ACTION: YUSU

**GSA**: The GSA representative also noted they will be promoting Academic Integrity Week and noted they have been highlighting the Religious Observance form to students.

**17-18/22  Consideration of National Student Survey (NSS) Assessment and Feedback Data**
The Committee considered a summary of the National Student Survey data relating to assessment and feedback. It was noted that there were changes to the questions relating to assessment and feedback. It was also noted that a number of student unions had boycotted the survey resulting in 12 institutions, including 8 of the 24 Russell Group members, failing to meet the institutional threshold for reporting and therefore not being present in the general rankings. Looking forward, the NSS ‘Teaching’, ‘Assessment and Feedback’ and ‘Academic Support’ dimensions will now be taken into account for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). York’s overall score for the ‘Assessment and Feedback’ dimension had increased for the third year – up by 1.17 points to 76.17% Satisfaction - with a 13 place increase in ranking to 24th, moving the university into the first quartile for this dimension. Nine subjects/departments have moved up at least one quartile. It was noted that the improved performance is within a tight field of candidates.

Analysis of open comments indicated students appreciate an appropriate amount of formative assessment and feedback and in some cases there are very positive comments about constructive and timely feedback. Critical comments related to the limited choice and challenge of assessments. Respondents also perceived that poorly planned, unclear or inconsistent assessments resulted in contradictory or poor quality feedback. In order to further analyse the data on a departmental level it was asked that Committee members are given access to the UTC Report on the NSS.

[ACTION: SG]

The report suggested next steps for the institution to respond to the results. It was noted that the York Pedagogy Enhancement plans will help to catalyse and sustain improvement in terms of Assessment and Feedback. In response to this next step, multiple members of the Committee raised concerns about attaching the response to NSS data to the York Pedagogy as there were concerns that staff and students were not widely aware of the Pedagogy. In response to this concern, it was noted that the Pedagogy is only in the early stages of roll-out and that once the PGT roll-out has concluded in January, the impact of the initiative will become more apparent to staff and students. Further comments on the Pedagogy relating to assessment, highlighted concerns about students on Joint programmes and also concerns that skills which students developed throughout a course, such as communication skills, were expected to be assessed through explicit assessments.
17-18/23 Report on Exam paper errors during the resit period 2017

The Committee noted that there were overall 14 errors in the Resit assessment period, with no printing errors. The Chair noted that paper setters were available to deal with all of the errors reported and he will send a memo to all departments commending them for this improvement. The Committee agreed to the change in the presentation of the report which included showing mean errors per paper. It was agreed that a memo should be written to departments to commend them for the improvement of paper setter availability.

[ACTION: SK]

17-18/24 Proposal to change the pieces of ID required for examinations

The Committee approved a proposal from Examinations Office that students who fail to present their student ID in examinations should only have to present their student ID card to the department and sign their signature. Currently students who fail to provide their student ID in an examination have to give a sample of their signature in the exam. They then have one working day to take 2 pieces of ID to their departmental office before been deemed not to have attended the exam and not having their script marked. This proposal is in response to Departmental feedback stating that they know their own students so the second piece of ID is redundant.

17-18/25 Proposal on changing the time that late students are admitted into an exam venue

The Committee considered a proposal to change the current guidance on latecomers in exams which stipulates that students are allowed to enter an exam up to half an hour after the exam has started. During the summer CAP 2017 there were several students who arrived at a venue on time but then refused to enter the venue until the half hour was nearly up in order to continue revising. Furthermore, there was an increasing numbers of late students, causing disruption to other students and extra work for invigilators. It was noted that while this matter is similar in principle to the issue of late submission of assignments (in that students have the choice to turn up late / submit assignments late), the disruption to other students of entering the examination late made it distinct. The proposal suggested that the time students are allowed to enter the exam be reduced to 15 mins. After discussion, the Committee agreed that two cut off times would be more appropriate to minimise disruption (especially in large venues) while allowing for students with a genuine reason for being later (such as transport delays), with late students being able to enter exam rooms after 15mins and 30mins,
having been briefed outside. It was also noted that it should be reiterated that students should aim to arrive 15mins before the start of the exam. It was noted that the Examinations Office would widely disseminate this information to students and invigilators.

[ACTION: JW]

17-18/26 For discussion: QAA report on Commissioning
The Committee discussed the latest QAA report, Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education (Oct 2017), discussing a number of recommendations made by the QAA to combat this threat to academic integrity. In particular it was noted that the report recommended academic misconduct panels for complex cases and a departmental specialist for standard cases. It was discussed whether the current StAMP process could be reconsidered in light of this recommendation and the time and resource currently dedicated to this process. It was queried whether an individual specialist could determine whether a case was complex as it was often only during the discussion of a case within a panel that the complexities became clear. In response to the issue of detecting contract cheating, if a student was to use a contract cheating service and produce work of significantly higher quality, this would only become apparent at the exam board, which would be too late. Therefore, contract cheating needs to be detected earlier which can be time-consuming and complex. It was noted that if an activity is difficult to detect then it should be punished heavily and it was queried whether the punishment for the use of these services is severe enough. GSA noted the issue of cultural difference for international students who may not realise the problem with using these services or who may need extra support, for example from CELT. A full report on the University’s response to this QAA report will be drafted and be submitted for consideration by UTC and SCA at a later date.

[ACTION: SG]

17-18/27 Tableau Workbook showing York Undergraduate Degree Classifications, 2016/17
Shortly before the meeting, committee members were given access to a Tableau workbook that shows high-level monitoring of degree classifications for students completing their degree programme in the academic year 2016/7. It was noted that the data are now aligned to sector data. Committee members were asked to respond by Friday 3rd November with feedback on the presentation of the workbook and whether they approved its release to departments, so the data can be considered in APR meetings where possible.

[ACTION: ALL MEMBERS]
CATEGORY II

17-18/27 Chair’s Actions

- **Language and Linguistic Science**: Permitted adjustment of assessment structure due to programme changes, for a part-time student, arising from case considered by SCC.

- **Mathematics**: Approval for Chinese MSc students currently on LoA to resit exams out of residence in exam centres in Beijing and Shanghai.

17-18/28 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would be on Friday 24 November 2017 at 2pm in room H/G17, Heslington Hall.