Minutes of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 25 February 2011 at 2.15 pm in H/G09, Heslington Hall

Present:

The Revd Dr David Efird (Chair), Philosophy
Dr Geoff Cubitt, History
Dr David Halliday, Electronics
Dr Linda Perriton, Management
Ben Humphrys, YUSU representative
Isha Arora, GSA representative

In attendance:

Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader, Learning Enhancement (in part)
Kathryn Lucas, Secretary Special Cases Committee
Ellie Reynolds, Office Manager: Registry Services
Rosemary Royds, Manager: Registry Services
Elizabeth Stead, Registry Services

Apologies:

Dr Victoria Gould, Mathematics
Dr Adrian Lee, Centre for Life Long Learning
Dr Jim Watt, English

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

10-11/45 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2011 were approved subject to a correction of the non-attendance of Cecilia Lowe who was present at the meeting.

10-11/46 Matters arising from the minutes

(a) Confirmation of exit awards by the External Examiner

Further to M10-11/37 (c) the Committee noted that University Teaching Committee approved the proposal that the external examiner could confirm an award of a qualification that was an automatic consequence of failure (i.e. an exit award) without the need to be physically present
at the Board of Examiners.

(b) **Templates for the classification of combined degrees**

Further to M10-11/40 the Committee considered the completed templates required for review (all joint programmes with Philosophy). (SCA.10/11-27)

Following discussion it was decided that the templates and criteria were as clear as possible prior to the advent of the classification procedures under the new modular scheme and that the templates received from English/Philosophy were, therefore, satisfactory. It was noted that several completed templates were still outstanding.

*(Secretary’s note: The Philosophy department to be reminded to forward the outstanding templates)*

(c) **Review of the use of stickers in open assignments**

Further to M10-11/10 the Committee considered and agreed that the current policy of applying stickers to the assessments of students with relevant disabilities remained appropriate in the light of the recent comment by an external examiner. This decision would be reported to University Teaching Committee. (SCA.10/11-28)

(d) **Amendment to Rule of Assessment, Progression and Award D14**

Further to M10-11/41 the Committee considered a proposed footnote to Section D14 (iv) of the Rules for Assessment, Progression and Award for Category 2 students (SCA.10/11-29) and recommended its adoption to University Teaching Committee from October 2011.

*(Action: Secretary)*

(e) **Chair’s Oral report**

Further to M10-11/38 the Committee considered a proposal arising from the Assessment Policies and Procedures Forum, held on 1 December 2010. It was decided that a review of the policy for late submission of assessments should take place and that staff and student representatives would be consulted. (SCA.10/11-30, 10/11-38)

*(Action: Chair)*

*(Secretary’s note: Feedback to be forward to Secretary by Chair to collate by 16th May 2011)*

10-11/47 **Chair’s Oral Report**

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair which highlighted:
a) Meeting with Chairs of Boards of Examiners
   A forthcoming meeting would take place on Wednesday 2 March 2011 to discuss relevant issues.

b) Approval of changes assessment dates
   The Chair of University Teaching Committee approved a modification of the assessment dates for the period 22, 25, 29 April and 2 May 2011 for some assessments in Language and Linguistic Science due to bank and public holidays.

c) PGT external examiners’ report summary: The PGT external examiners’ report summary for 2009/10 was deferred to the April 2011 meeting, and the Committee decided that the committee timeline for next year should be revised to reschedule this in 2011/12. Action: Secretary

d) Rescaling of marks. The Committee considered a tabled paper on the rescaling of marks. It was decided to recommend to University Teaching Committee that the current guidance on the rescaling of marks should apply not only to programmes for Category 1 students, i.e. students on the old modular scheme, but also to programmes for Category 2 students, i.e. students on the new modular scheme, as well. Action: Secretary

10-11/48 Student Representatives’ Oral Reports
   The Committee’s GSA Student Representative reported that they were promoting the University’s support services to postgraduate students.

   The YUSU Representative reported that he had received information that some Departments were not observing the six-week feedback deadline. He was collating further information on this and would report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

10-11/49 Feedback from Teaching Committee meeting of 13 December 2010
   The Committee noted comments that arose from SCA reports received by UTC and other decisions made by UTC regarding assessment issues and considered the resulting actions (UTC.10/11-53).
   It was noted that in response to:

1) UTC.10-11/82 Amendment to assessment rule 4.7.4: Reassessment – failure to submit assessment or attend an examination
   University Teaching Committee decided that the failure to submit an assessment or attend an examination would be treated in the same way as an academic failure.

2) UTC.10-11/74
   a) Review of External Examiners
      University Teaching Committee approved the Committee’s proposals for
improving the University’s system of external examining which included: regular meetings with Chairs of Boards of Examiners to consider improvements in methods of working with external and internal examiners to help understand assessment processes, an explanation of roles when considering borderline classification decisions; briefings on assessment rules, the reporting of associations with departments, the inclusion of experience on nomination forms, the provision of on-line and printed induction materials, and encouraging attendance of Chairs of Boards of Examiners at induction sessions.

Action: SCA/Registry Services

b) Clarification of the Reassessment of Regulations D17-D25 and E1-E5
University Teaching Committee approved the Committee’s recommendations for clarification of reassessment opportunities which would be included in the Guide to Assessment Standards, Marking and Feedback for 2011/12.  
Action: Secretary

c) Clarification of the Rule of Assessment D15
University Teaching Committee approved the Committee’s recommendation for clarification for students who fail Stage 4 of an Integrated Masters programme with immediate effect.  
Action: Secretary

d) Academic Misconduct
University Teaching Committee approved the Committee’s recommendation to amended 9.1 of the Academic Misconduct Policies, Guidelines and Procedures with immediate effect.  
Action: Secretary

e) Undergraduate degree classification 2009/10 ‘shallow analyses.
The Committee noted that Planning Office had been informed of University Teaching Committee’s request to separate MPhys and BSc students in degree classification data. (SCA.10/11-31)

10-11/50 Guidance on proof-reading students’ assessed work
The Committee considered the revised guidance (SCA.10/11-32) on the proof-reading of students’ assessed work (SCA.09/10-182). The Project Leader for Learning Enhancement reported that the initial guidance had been revised to include advice on what constitutes inappropriate assistance from a proof-reader. During discussions, it was acknowledged that the guidance provided helpful advice but should not be circulated as a stand-alone
document and should be included in current documents for staff and students. It was agreed that further levels of bureaucracy would be prevented by absorbing the guidance into current procedures. It was also acknowledged that the guidance did not provide students with formal instructions to pass onto the proof-reader. The Committee agreed that any further revisions to formulate a policy would be inappropriate at the current time and that the introduction of electronic submissions may require further consideration on the role of proof-readers at some point. The requirement to submit proof-read copies of assessments was also discussed. In the light of the high volume of paperwork markers would receive it was decided that students should not submit the proof read copy but be prepared to retrieve it should the need arise. Therefore, the Committee decided to recommend to University Teaching Committee that:

a) The sections covering definitions and advice for students should be included in the Academic Integrity Tutorial.

b) The definitions and advice for departments should be included in the Guide to Assessment Standards, Marking and Feedback.

c) The acknowledgement form should be included on the assessment cover sheet and include a sentence that highlighted the need to keep the proof read annotated copy secure and available if required.

It was agreed that the actions above and how they would be integrated into existing systems, should be presented clearly to University Teaching Committee by the Project Leader for Learning Enhancement to prevent this item requiring further revisions.

Action: CL

11/51 The use of plagiarism detection software packages (SafeAssign® and Turnitin®)

The Committee considered proposed actions (SCA.10/11-33) to establish good practice in relation to plagiarism detection activity by staff. It was noted that recent cases had come to light (in the USA) concerning student objections to external companies holding their work on on-line databases such as Safe Assign and Turnitin. This had implications for copyright and the protection of personal data if the submission was carried out by someone other than the author, i.e. academic staff marking the work. During discussion, it was agreed that the proposal (Recommendation 1) to amend the University Regulation 5.7 should be reconsidered and avoided if possible. Such detail concerning plagiarism software and student consent to submission to it was better placed in other documents, such as the Data Protection Statement and/or the Academic Integrity Tutorial in order to make the detail as clear as possible. It was noted that the author had spoken with the University’s Records Manager concerning the updating of the Data Protection Statement (Recommendation 2),

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but the Committee also requested that discussion of the issues above took place with the University’s legal advisor, together with a clarification on the issue of ownership of work on collaborative research projects. It was agreed that the Project Leader for Learning Enhancement would provide revisions at the next meeting.

**Action:** CL

The Committee **recommended for approval** to Teaching Committee the remainder of the proposals in principle pending sight of the revisions noted above at the next meeting:

**Recommendation 3**
In order to ensure that students understand the use of SafeAssign and Turnitin fully, further information would be included in the Academic Integrity Tutorial which would link to the Academic Integrity website and the Turnitin student access site.

**Action:** CL

**Recommendation 4**
In order to ensure appropriate use of SafeAssign and Turnitin by staff, information related to ethical practice would be included in the Learning and Teaching section of the Staff Home webpage, in the Guide to Assessment Standards, Marking and Feedback and in the relevant Yorkshare guides.

**Action:** CL, Secretary

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**10-11/52 Proposal for addressing issues related to marking to the full range**
The Committee **considered** proposals to establish good practice relating to the use of the full range of marks. (SCA.10/11-34) along with a list of six Departments where not using the full range of marks had been noted as an issue by an external examiner. To address this issue, it was agreed that these six Departments would be encouraged to take advice from the Project Leader for Learning Enhancement on how they can better use the full mark range and they would be asked to provide a statement to the Committee of how they have decided to take the matter forward.

**Action:** Chair

**10-11/53 Appeals and Complaints summary report**
The Committee **considered** the annual report on student appeals and formal complaints (SCA.10/11-35) and considered the elements of information that should be presented to the Committee in future years and the format that information should take.

It was **noted** that some of the information concerned non-assessment issues, and so it was thought more beneficial for other committees to consider. During
discussion the Committee decided that:

a) The Committee should not receive the report in future.
b) The Academic Registrar should decide who should consider the report
c) The Academic Registrar should make relevant committees aware of possible issues arising from the report
d) The Academic Registrar should decide the content and format of the report for the future

Action: KD

CATEGORY II Business

10-11/54 Date of the next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 29 April 2011 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.