STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 10 February 2017 at 2.00pm in HG17, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present: Dr Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
Dr Philip Quinlan, Psychology
Dr Keith Allen, Philosophy
Dr Patrick Gallimore, York Law School
Dr John Stringer, Music
Dr Francesco Bravo, Economics
Ms Rasha Ibrahim, GSA
Ms Tamaki Laycock, YUSU

In Attendance: Dr Zoe Devlin (substituting for Academic Registrar)
Mr Stephen Gow, Academic Integrity Coordinator (Secretary)
Ms Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement
Ms Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Manager
Ms Claire Shanks, Disability Support Advisor

Apologies: Ms Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Dr Louise Jones, Biology
Mr Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services
Dr Jen Wotherspoon, Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
Ms Gillian Wright, Assessment Manager
Professor Mike Bentley, Chair: Special Cases Committee
Dr Helen Smith, English
Professor Tom Stoneham, Dean of York Graduate Research School

16-17/49 Welcome

16-17/50 Minutes of previous meeting
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 2 December 2016.

16-17/51 Matters arising from the minutes of 2 December 2016:
i. **16-17/38 - Report – Exam scheduling review 2016**: Chair reported that this paper has been considered by UTC which unanimously agreed to reopen the issue of extending the CAP to reduce pressure on timetabling and marking. It was noted that as there are no longer external conferences during Easter, this will reduce the negative impact of extending the CAP.

ii. **16-17/39 - Planning the impact of Ramadan on the Common Assessment Period (CAP) in 2016/17 and 2017/18**: It was noted that the deadline for the Notification of Examinations and Religious Observance form had been extended due to problems with departmental communications to students. The new deadline has now passed and the Exams Office will update the committee on this matter going forward. GSA is to produce guidance for staff and students to help raise awareness of and provide support for students observing Ramadan during the Summer CAP.

   [Action: GSA to update on this matter]

iii. **16-17/40 - Proposal of guidance concerning the relationship between assessment and attendance, formative work and participation**: The Committee considered the revised text for the Guide to Assessment, along with Appendix Q. In considering this matter the Committee raised the issue of the balance of assignment types in departments, noting that in some case departments have too many forms of assessment whereas others do not have enough diversity of assessment. The Committee queried the term ‘participation skills’ and sought clarification on the use of the term or for this to be rephrased. It was highlighted that students in the Law School are assessed on the demonstration of a positive contribution to the learning which helps to establish the relationship between engagement, attendance and participation. The introduction of Lecture Capture was also raised as having a potential impact on attendance. It was also mentioned that the Psychology Department had trialled a formative assessment where students only get to see the answers after they complete the assessment; while in theory a good approach, it had not been effective in practice. The Committee also discussed whether a small percentage of an assessment might be permitted to be linked to attendance and/or formative work, but decided that the proposed firm line should be maintained.

   The Committee agreed to recommended the paper to UTC for consideration.

   [Action: SK]

16-17/52 **Oral Report from the Chair**: All matters to be discussed were included on the agenda.

16-17/53 **Report from Students**
The Students’ Union reported they are currently working on a *Keep your cool campaign* to raise awareness of wellbeing during exams. It was highlighted that this is an opportunity to collaborate with the University’s *Wellbeing campaign*. YUSU is also working on providing clear guidance on finding examination venues.

The Graduate Students’ Association reported that they were aware of a number of cases where appeals to Special Cases Committee (SCC) had exceeded the 90-day limit. Kathryn Lucas noted that the SCC is aware of these issues and is addressing them.

### 16-17/54 Oral report on perceived effect of DSA funding withdrawal on students with disabilities
Claire Shanks (Disability Support Advisor) provided an oral report on this matter. As this is the first year of the DSA withdrawal, the full effects are hard to gauge, and the impact of this on assessments is minimal at this stage. DSAs have funded exam support workers in the past and this is now the responsibility of the University. The estimated cost for exam support workers in 2016/17 will be approximately £3.5k. The University is shortly to undertake a tendering process for bands 1 and 2 support (including exam support workers) and this will be for 1 tender made up of 3 lots, i.e. potentially a different NMH provider per faculty. The *Inclusive teaching and learning in higher education as a route to excellence* report by the Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group has recently been published. The shift away from supporting individual learners via DSAs means that HE providers must develop a more strategic and flexible approach to delivering inclusive practice, accepting that there will be the need for individual arrangements, e.g. British Sign Language Interpreters. It was noted that the University of Leeds has produced a series of guides to support inclusive teaching practice. The University of York is currently working on the development of an Inclusive Learning and Teaching Policy and resources for teaching staff with the aim of introducing these next academic year. It was noted by the Committee that having any new policy in place by the new academic year would be a challenge as it would have to be considered by UTC and Senate. The Chair requested that the Committee be kept informed of the progress with the policy.

### 16-17/55 CGP Grade Conversion tables resubmission and response
The Chair reported on communications with the Centre for Global Programmes (CGP) about the formulation of the Grade Conversion Tables. It was noted that they use transcripts from existing agreements and websites from new institutions to formulate the tables. In 2015, CGP reviewed their Grade Conversion Tables process and introduced institutional tables rather
than national tables, with the exception of European universities. The Committee queried CGP’s process of determining grades, particularly higher grade bands where only one grade conversion would be a possible for a First class grade. The Chair will have further discussion with CGP regarding this matter.

[Action: SK]

The Committee approved the resubmitted Peking University Grade Conversion table.

[Action: SG]

16-17/56 Report on Academic Misconduct by Postgraduate Students 2015-16
The Committee considered the report and noted that overall there was a fall in the number of misconduct cases in 2015/16 and also noted that the figures included no UK students. It was also noted that Chinese students are overrepresented in the figures in comparison to the cohort size. Further analysis shows that the students involved in misconduct cases were more likely to have failed or left with lower exit awards than the rest of the population, although the sample is small. This indicates the need for further support for International students. The Committee considered why Management has so few cases considering the number of International students. It was reported that a now-departed member of academic staff, who had been central to the drafting of the Policy, had ensured that TYMS programmes took advantage of the idea of probationary modules to allow for skills development, and that assignments were scaffolded to reduce the chances of misconduct. The Committee advised that it was necessary to identify best practice in departments and to broadcast this between departments. The Chair also highlighted the reported instances of misconduct by PG Research Students, noting that such misconduct was apparently covered both in the Academic Misconduct Policy and in the Research Integrity Policy. This matter will be raised with the York Graduate Research School Board, and the Chair will update the Committee on progress.

[Action: SK]

16-17/57 Review of the rules for closed exams re i) smart watches; ii) frequency of bathroom breaks
The Committee considered the report proposing more stringent and clear guidelines in the Guide to Assessment relating to the use of smart watches and the frequency of bathroom breaks. The Committee approved the proposal that students should be required to remove watches and place them on the desk during exams as recommended in the Guidance for Students. The Committee also approved the proposal that candidates are not permitted to bring smart watches in to formal examinations.
The Committee also considered the high percentage of bathroom breaks taken by Economics students. The Committee acknowledged that in addition to being a burden on invigilators and disruptive to students, there was a rumour that there had been cheating in this exam however this had not been confirmed in any way. It was considered that the large number of 3hr exams in the Economics Department could be related to the number of bathroom breaks, and it was agreed the department should consider reviewing their assessment methods, particularly the use of 3 hour examinations.

[Action: FB to discuss with Economics]

The Committee agreed no further action was required in relation to the frequency of bathroom breaks however considered the clarity of guidance for bathroom breaks on medical grounds and agreed this should be made clearer.

[Action: CS to discuss with the Exams Office]

16-17/58 Update from the “assessment of group work” sub-group

The Committee considered the update on improving guidance for staff and students regarding group work and recommended the approval of the development of University guidance and resources, raising staff awareness of external resources available to support group work and the value of collaborative work. The Committee expressed concern about the fairness of peer reviewing and criticism of other students and agreed clear guidance on these forms of assessment needs to be developed. It was noted that the ASKe Assessment of groupwork booklet produced by Oxford Brookes University is an excellent resources and should be recommended to departments. It was queried whose remit it was to provide guidance on Group work – if it is the Learning Enhancement’s role then further provision would be needed meet the demand. It was suggested that the assessment of group work was a theme which could align with inclusive learning to help increase provision for this issue.

The Committee requested that the Guide to Assessment is produced as a printable PDF and also for the online version to have hyperlinks and split into more manageable sections.

[Action: SG]

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1 ASKe’s Assessment of groupwork is available at [https://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/groupwork-assessment/](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/groupwork-assessment/).
The Committee approved the Learning Enhancement team to check the cost of printing multiple copies of the ASKe Assessment of groupwork booklet for distribution to departments.

[Action: CL]

16-17/59 Report – Summary of Issues reported in CAP
The Chair introduced the report noting the difference between queries and errors, and highlighted the ideal situation in which there would be no errors or queries. Overall there were 16 errors out of 307 papers, with 3 errors unresolved because the setter could not be contacted. It was noted that the report is formulated based upon invigilators’ reports and, as a result, they may not present the entire picture of the errors and queries. The Committee queried whether the Exams Office could receive more information from Departments to provide further depth in the report. The Committee also queried how errors are communicated to multiple exams rooms and also within large cohorts of students sitting different exams.

The Chair has raised the issue of the availability of paper setters with the Chair of UTC and highlighted that a paper setters or an appointed alternative must be available for the examination, otherwise the matter should be raised as a matter in their Performance Review. It was not known whether there was reference to the Teaching Expectations policy when Exams Office notified a Department about an unresolved error.

[Action: SK to contact HoDs where paper setters had been uncontactable, in the light of information from Exams Office]

It was agreed that in future this report should be anonymised to avoid ‘naming and shaming’ paper setters for issues in their exam paper.

[Action: SG]

The Committee requested clearer presentation of the figures in the report.

[Action: SG to report to exams office]

16-17/60 Review of assessment issues raised via Annual Programme Reviews
The Chair introduced the report, noting that APRs are no longer considered by UTC, but by Faculty Learning and Teaching groups and Academic Support Office (ASO), who in turn send summary reports to UTC. The Committee considered the ASO summary report and a table of specific issues, noting the following points.
2.12 The Chair agreed to follow up with Anne Haversham regarding exceptional circumstances, relating to the availability of GP appointments and Open Door appointments as these had been raised as areas of concern.

[Action: SK]

2.19 The Committee queried E-assessment submission, with specific questions regarding Turnitin Grademark and why the University does not have a license.

2.25 The Committee noted the praise for the Department of Psychology’s assessment strategy and ethos. This included the department’s use of table marking.

2.29 The Committee noted the distinction between Kaplan International College London and the International Pathway College.

Any other business:

The Research Student Administration Team have proposed that SCA members authorise documents via an online process. The Committee requested further information on how this will work in practice.

Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Friday 21 April 2017 at 2pm in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

Chair’s Action Approvals:

The Committee received notification that the Chair, acting on behalf of the Committee had approved the following:

- Language and Linguistic Science: Approval for candidates who are using PC for closed exams to have MS Word’s grammar and spell-check facilities turned off in certain papers, as they are being assessed on spelling and grammar.

Physics: Approval of special arrangements for two students returning from LoA into Year 2 of UG Physics, having taken sits/resits while out of residence. There will have been significant changes to these programmes due to York Pedagogy, and they need to take an additional 5+5 credits to meet accreditation requirements.