STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 30 June 2017 at 2.00pm in HG09, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

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

In Attendance: Dr Jen Wotherspoon, Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
Mr Stephen Gow, Academic Integrity Coordinator (Secretary)
Mr. Robert Simpson, Special Cases Manager
Ms Claire Shanks, Disability Support Adviser
Ms Charlotte Chamberlain, GSA President Elect

Apologies: Professor Tom Stoneham, Dean of York Graduate Research School
Ms Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement
Dr Helen Smith, English
Ms Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
Dr Zoe Devlin, Acting Director: Registry Services
Ms Gillian Wright, Assessment Manager
Professor Mike Bentley, Chair: Special Cases Committee

16-17/101 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members of the Committee to the final meeting of the 2016/17 academic year and thanked members, attendees and especially student representatives for their hard work. HE also congratulated the incoming GSA President, Charlotte Chamberlain, and noted that he looked forward to her contributions to the Committee’s work in the coming year.

16-17/102 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 19th May 2017.
Matters arising from the minutes of 19 May 2017:

- **16-17/39 – Planning the impact of Ramadan during CAP:** GSA representative reported that the University’s approach to Ramadan during the CAP had been a success however was requested to seek further evidence to ensure that this is the case. The Committee was asked to note that Ramadan will again fall in the CAP in 2017/18. Furthermore, unlike in 2016/17, the feast of Eid will also occur during the CAP, on either 15th/16th June. It was suggested that arrangements may need to be made.

  [Action: GSA/SG]

- **16-17/89 – Shallow analysis of degree results:** The Chair noted that the shallow analysis has been considered by UTC and that training will be provided for Chairs of Boards of Examiners on accessing data on degree outcomes.

  [Action: SK]

- **16-17/90 – Inclusive Learning & Teaching Policy:** Claire Shanks will be emailing all those who have commented on the policy and consulting on a further draft.

  [Action: CS]

- **16-17/94 – Proposal for Repeat Study for UG students:** This policy has been redrafted to include feedback from UTC and SCA, and the new draft has been considered by SCC and UTC, the latter of which recommended the policy to Senate.

- **16-17/95 – Review of the Exceptional Circumstances Policy:** It was confirmed that the policy will be reviewed in Autumn 2017.

Chair’s Oral Report

The Chair noted that the 4 week feedback rule, which had been previously considered by the Committee, has been approved by UTC. The proposal had been revised so that feedback must be provided within 20 working days, to facilitate implementation. The proposal for the extension of the January CAP was not approved by UTC. The Chair also noted that the University was considering applications for the position of Chair of SCA for 2017-2020, and the deadline for submissions was at midnight (30th June, 2017).

Report from Students

GSA: The GSA representative noted that the GSA elections had successfully elected candidates to the necessary positions and that the incoming President, Charlotte Chamberlain, was in attendance at the meeting. It was also noted that there was still a number of special cases which had exceeded the 90-day period for consideration. The Special Cases Manager noted that they were doing their best to respond to these cases.
YUSU: The YUSU representative noted that there had been a recent meeting of departmental representatives and several issues had been raised which should be brought to the attention of the Committee:

- Physics – students were concerned about the volume of exams for 3rd and 4th year. Also, there had been complaints about noise outside the examination venue.
- Economics – Students had complained about having afternoon exams followed by morning exams.
- Sports Hall as an exam venue – There had been comments about the logistical issues of having exams in the venue, such as long queues and seeing people playing sport.
- TFTV – Problems had been reported with submission of files to the VLE that had related to the deletion of files. It was noted that this issue would be addressed via the online submission group.

[Action: SG/CL]

It was noted that if multiple students have a similar complaint that they could submit a Group Appeal, SCC will follow up with YUSU on this matter.

[Action: RS/YUSU]

16-17/106 Report – Issues reported during Exams during Summer CAP 2016/17

The Committee was asked to consider the report and whether any action should be taken. In introducing the paper, the Chair noted that there seemed to be some inconsistency in the report, noting that the division of errors and queries was not consistent. This resulted in some errors being reported as queries. It was also noted that all errors were reported by department, and this was queried by the Committee. It was noted that printing errors and venues not being informed of corrections to papers were matters which departments are not responsible for, although they may have occurred in a particular department’s exams. It was also noted that while it should be a goal to eliminate errors from the examination process, it was not the intention to stop students from raising queries in the exams. It was further noted that for the second year in a row, an error had been attributed to a Law exam erroneously. The Chair suggested that he work with the Examinations Office to address these issues in future reports. The Chair commended the Department of Economics for driving down the number of errors in their exams.

[Action: SK/JW]

16-17/107 Space Systems Improvement Project: Timetabling gateway replacement

The Committee noted that the Space Management will replace the existing platform for publishing staff and student timetables with a new system, MyTimetable. The cloud-based system provided by Eveoh (https://eveoh.nl/) is mobile friendly and will provide better functionality. The roll-out will commence Sept. 2017 and will replace the existing system for incoming students in the new academic year (17/18). The timetables of existing students and staff will be migrated during the 17/18 Autumn term.
16-17/108  Grade conversion table - HSE St Petersburg

The Committee approved the proposed Grade conversion table for use in 2017/18.

16-17/109  Update on the Student Retention Project

The Committee considered an update report on the student retention project. The Chair noted that this project is a few weeks behind the Exams and Assessment project (16-17/110 below), with detailed proposals not yet quite ready for departmental consultation.

The Committee discussed in detail the proposal (pg. 2, section 2: Ease of accessing services) that each department should “nominate a single member of support staff to act as the department’s contact for student’s welfare concerns.” The Committee discussed why this should be a member of support staff rather than academic staff. It was noted that it is easier to have one member of staff fully trained in welfare matters. It was further noted that the Dept. of Chemistry, which has a high retention rate, has a support staff member in place and this system serves well to identify student welfare issues. It was noted, particularly in relation to academic matters, that academic staff may be more suitably informed to advise students. It was also noted that in terms of welfare, students may feel more comfortable contacting a member of support staff with welfare concerns, which they could otherwise take to their supervisor. It was suggested that there could be two nominated contacts, one from support staff and one from academic staff to act as a department’s contact for welfare.

[Action: SG to report back to Jamie Holliday]

16-17/110  Update on the Exams & Assessments Project

The Committee considered the proposals for consultation from the Exams and Assessment project. The Chair introduced the progress of the project, noting that the Committee was asked to consider the first four proposals as they relate to specific assessment policy and then to consider the remaining 27 proposals which were mostly implementation issues and would not require substantial changes to policy.

1. **Reports showing draft degree results using unconfirmed assessment results to be made available prior to ratification boards:** The Committee were strongly in favour of the proposal and approved it for consultation however the following points were discussed and should be taken into account:

   - It was noted that is possible to produce this data as it has been modelled in the past by the Examinations Office.

   - It is acknowledged that some departments are already generating their own data prior to ratification, therefore it may be more efficient and accurate to produce this data centrally.
• Biology used to have this data prior to ratification boards however stopped generating it a couple of years ago and have not missed it. It was useful to look at cohort data and inform the ratification process and check confidence in module marks.

• The main concern is that departments could inappropriately use any degree classification data available prior to ratification. This poses the danger of inverting the process of ratification.

• It was queried whether the data would be available for identifiable individual students or anonymised cohorts.

2 Create University wide guidance on sampling of assessments made available to external examiners: The Committee acknowledged the differences in departmental use of external examiners and agreed that University wide guidance on the sampling of assessments should be based on qualitative principles rather than quantitative absolutes, e.g. specifying the exact number of samples to be sent to the external examiners.

3 Optimization of the workflow of Student Support Plan approval: The Committee approved the proposal to go to consultation however it was stressed that the main concern for the Committee is the departmental involvement in the handling of standard adjustments. The proposal states that departments need only notify the Exams Office of any issues with standard adjustment on an opt-out basis. The concern is that departments who opt-out may start to overlook standard adjustments and may result in recommendations from the Disability Office which compromise the academic standards and/or learning outcomes of the module/programme. This issue should be taken account in the consultation and may be mitigated by having clear principles for standard and non-standard adjustments as the latter will need to be signed off by departmental boards of studies.

4 Departments set deadlines for setting assessments in advance of the start of the term in which they will be used: The Committee agreed in principle for the proposal to go to consultation however noted that any deadlines need to be specific and clear. The following issues were discussed in detail:

• Members acknowledged the difficulty of setting papers so far in advance, particularly where assessments may be developed based on cohort and content covered in the course, for example a politics module in which students have discussed current events (e.g. an essay analysing the causes of Brexit).

• Members acknowledged the difficulty for admin staff to chase certain academic staff for examination papers and that having a set, centrally enforced deadline may make this process easier.
• It was acknowledged that staff who submit assessment papers late to administrators will still need to be chased up however if they miss the deadline, this could be taken into account in their performance review.

• It was queried whether assessments proposed for January CAP would need to be submitted before the start of autumn term. It was suggested that deadlines for assessment papers to be submitted would need to be clearly defined and take into account the differences between terms.

The following proposals were also discussed:

17. Proposed reminder to all departments that SITS information on disabilities must be up to date in advance of open assessments: It was noted that this proposal may not be consistent with policy and any consultation must take into account any changes to the adjustment process, particularly as the standard and non-standard adjustments and stickering system are under review.

19. Proposal to move Exceptional Circumstance Committees and Academic Misconduct Administration from departmental to faculty level: It was noted that there is currently no resource at Faculty level for this, however in principle the proposal may help to gain better consistency in the administration and dealings with misconduct cases through Standing Academic Misconduct panels. Special Cases may also benefit from the changes.

[Action: SG to report back to Jamie Holliday]

16-17/111 Academic Misconduct Policy Update 2017/18

The Assistant Registrar for Student progress introduced the Academic Misconduct Policy update from 2017/18. The Committee was asked to note the minor changes in the wording of policy and consider and approve the following significant changes:

• Clarifying that offences other than plagiarism and collusion must be dealt with by a full StAMP, even in a probationary module;
• Stipulating that a third offence of plagiarism or collusion in a probationary module will be dealt with as a first offence under the full policy;
• Changing the second offence recommendation so that exclusion can be recommended after two ‘failing’ marks, without the fails needing to be ‘outright’;
• Addition of sections relating to reporting and detection of commissioning as considered and approved by SCA (16-17/41) and UTC (16-17/81)

The Committee noted the following:

• Concern that disability was not mentioned in the policy and a concern that the policy was inflexible for students with disabilities. It was noted that Helen Shay has
comments to be taken into consideration on this matter and that rewording of the policy would be considered to address this query.

[Action: JW/CS]

- The Chair noted the need to cross-check policies to ensure that they aligned.

- Concern was raised about the definition of cheating as there have been cases considered were no evidence of cheating had been found however students had breached examination guidelines. It was suggested the definition of cheating be reviewed and the *Guide to Assessment* be fully aligned with Invigilator guidance and student guidance on examinations.

[Action: JW/SG]

- Concern was raised that changes which had been suggested in a review of the policy earlier in the year had not been fully taken into account, such as the addition of a glossary to the policy. It was asked that the member of Committee confirm details of the specific issues via email.

[Action: PQ/JW]

- The SCC representative noted that the guidance in 7.1.1 Induction and handbook entries (pg.27) and departmental adherence to these guidelines should be reviewed to align guidance with practice.

[Action: RS/JW]

16-17/112 Guide to Assessment – Guidance on peer marking of summative assessment

The Committee was asked to consider and approve the proposed addition of guidance on Peer marking of summative assessment to the Guide to Assessment. The committee rejected the proposal for peer marking of summative assessment after a full discussion, noting the following concerns and considerations:

- Members were in favour of formative peer marking
- Can students be expected to have the expertise to provide summative assessment of others students’ work?
- Summative peer marking is unpopular with students
- Summative peer marking would be complicated in student appeal cases especially with no central grievance procedure proposed
- There is a high risk of bias
- There is no pedagogic advantage for having peers mark summative work.

Situations in which summative peer marking would have advantages were also considered:

- Group projects in which members of the group provide summative marks for contribution to a project.
- Performances or presentations in which students form the audience.
The Committee **agreed** that the proposed appendix should be redrafted as guidance on peer marking for formative assessment to be included in the Guide to Assessment 2017/18.

[Action: CL]

16-17/113  
**Further changes to the Guide to Assessment for 2017/18**

The Committee was asked to consider and approve the proposed additions to the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2017/18.

1. The Committee **noted** the summary of additions approved in 2016/17:

   a) **Attendance, Formative Work and Participation:** Addition of new appendix Q and redrafted version of Assessment and student engagement: attendance, formative work and participation.

   b) **Marks from Student Exchange Programmes** – addition to clarify pass with distinction/pass/fail for students of exchange programmes.

   c) **Materials and resources permitted in examination** – Smart Watches have been added to the appendix however it was suggested that this be expanded to include all Bluetooth devices.

   d) **Proofreading guidance and IPC** – Appendix P

2. The Committee **approved** the proposed additions:

   a) **Assessment of Visiting Students** – 4.13 (f) & U2.3.6

   b) **Addition of careers staff under the definition of teaching staff** - 17.1.2

   c) **Addition of definition of GTA and amendment of PGWT** - Appendix B: Glossary

3. The Committee **approved** the removal of:

   a) **References to Old Modular Scheme, Category 1 and Category 2 students** – As there are no longer any Category 1 students at the University, all reference to Category 1 and Category 2 students and the old modular scheme have been removed. (P. 163)

4. The Chair also **noted** that there may be further changes to the **Guide to Assessment** as there was proposal to disband Combined Boards of Study (with some exceptions), which is to be considered by Senate. It was also **noted** that the proposal for Repeat Study would also be considered by Senate and would require changes to the **Guide to Assessment**.

   [Action: SG/CL]

16-17/114  
**Proposal for staggered penalties for the late submission of electronic assignments**

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the History of Art, History and English for staggered penalties to be applied across the board for any assessment that is submitted electronically:
This proposal was due to a number of students submitting work seconds or minutes after the deadline, leading to a penalty of 10 marks. The current approach of zero-tolerance for late submissions meant that students were disproportionately penalised on 72 hour assessments used in the Humanities. The issue of late submission is also mitigated given that it is not possible to predict how long it could take to upload work electronically. The authors of the proposal had discussed this matter with the E-Learning Development Team.

The Committee noted that in certain cases, such as a 72 hour exam, staggered penalties may be appropriate, however it was also noted that this change may complicate issues for administrators and also may lead to more student appeals. It was suggested that one gradation, such as 5 marks for 1 hour may be appropriate. The proposal was not approved at the meeting as there was not enough agreement on the proposal. Therefore the matter will be carried over for consideration in 2017/18.

[Action: SK to discuss with Hanna Vorholt / Richard Walker]

16-17/114 Update from the ‘Assessment of group work’ sub-group

The Committee noted the update from the ‘Assessment of group work’ and was agreed the sub-group would continue their work in 2017/18, including the consideration of summative peer-marking of group work.

16-17/116 Review SCA priorities for 2017/18

The Committee considered potential priorities for the upcoming academic year, the following were proposed:

- Penalties for the late submission of electronic assignments
- Definition of cheating in the academic misconduct policy
- Alignment of invigilation guidance, student guidance and Guide to Assessment for examinations
- Use of Graduate Teaching Assistants (formerly PGWTs) for summative marking
- Exceptional Circumstances review
- Review of sticker scheme highlighting certified disabilities

16-17/117 Chair’s Thank you

The Chair thanked all the members of the Committee for their work in 2016/17, particularly for their recent work in signing-off examination outcomes. The Chair especially thanked
Philip Quinlan for his contribution to the Committee over 4 years, and he also thanked the student representatives for their contributions to the Committee.

**16-17/118 Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be Friday 22nd September at 2pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall.

**CATEGORY II**

Note: approval of Category II business will be assumed unless a member indicates that they wish to bring forward an item to Category I business.

**16-17/119 Chair’s action approvals:**

- Adjustment to assessment of LoA student returners as consequence of Physics department new programme.
- Oral Language Modification for Examination
- Adjustments to the marking scale for two Economics students returning from LOA on Macroeconomics 3
- Permission to mark script for Education student who forgot ID for examination
- 'Exceptional personal circumstances' for Philosophy student with specific IT issues resulting in submission of wrong documents for assessment.