Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 3 May 2019 at 2.00pm in HG/17, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:
- Prof Mike Bentley  Physics (Chair)
- Dr Louise Jones  Biology
- Dr Francesco Bravo  Economics
- Dr Danijela Trenkic  Education
- Dr Anita Savage Grainge  Health Sciences
- Simon van der Borgh  TFTV
- Dr Patrick Gallimore  York Law School
- Charlotte Chamberlain  GSA
- James Hare  YUSU

In attendance:
- Valerie Cotter  Dep Academic Registrar/Dir Student Service
- Dr Jen Wotherspoon  Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
- Cecilia Lowe  Head of Learning Enhancement
- Dr Martin Cockett  Chair of Special Cases Committee
- Claire Shanks  Disability Adviser
- Stephen Gow (Secretary)  Academic Integrity Coordinator
- Dr Angela Ranson  Academic Support Coordinator

Apologies:
- Dr John Stringer  Music
- Dr Daniel Baker  Psychology
- Robert Simpson  Special Cases Manager
- Prof Tom Stoneham  Dean of Graduate Research School

Visitors:
- Dr Wayne Campbell  Academic Registrar
- Jeremy Bennett  Business Intelligence Unit
- Karen Payne  Business Intelligence Unit

18-19/77 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially our new Academic Registrar, Dr Wayne Campbell.

18-19/78 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 8 March 2019.

18-19/79 Matters arising from the minutes of 8 March 2019:

- 18-19/54 Mitigation of Academic Misconduct Penalties
  
  The Chair noted that the proposed StAMP training has taken place, and a proposal for clarifying the StAMP’s role in cases which may involve mitigating circumstances will be considered later in the meeting. [CLOSED]
18-19/71 Report of the Psychology Common Assessment Strategy
The Chair noted that he has not yet disseminated the information about Psychology’s Common Assessment Strategy, but intends to in the near future. [OPEN]
[ACTION: MB]

18-19/33 Chair’s Oral Report - Quality Assurance
The Head of the Learning Enhancement Team will prepare this report with assistance from the Chair and Secretary. A report will be delivered at the July meeting. [OPEN]
[ACTION: CL/MB/SG]

18-19/35 Annual Report - Undergraduate External Examiners
The Assistant Registrar will discuss providing historical reports on cohort level mark distributions with the consultants and determine costs. IT Support for IPC will also be addressed. [OPEN]
[ACTION: JW]

18-19/50 Introduction to Stepped Marking: Report for Guide to Assessment
The working group reported that they will meet to compile information about stepped marking for the Guide to Assessment, including examples of best practice. A report will be presented at the July SCA meeting. [OPEN]
[ACTION: DT/SvdB/CL/AR]

18-19/57 Report considering responses to exam errors
The Assistant Registrar will meet with the Secretary and the Examinations Manager to discuss potential solutions to the problem with LaTeX. [OPEN]
[ACTION: JW/SG]

18-19/68 Report from Students re: 20-day feedback
The Chair has forwarded the students’ concerns to UTC. [CLOSED]

18-19/80 Chair’s Oral Report
The Chair reported that he will present the new criteria for first class with distinction at Senate on Tuesday 7 May. The Chair also noted that the committee has nearly completed its list of priorities for the year; the Secretary is still working on a review of independent study modules, which will be presented at the July meeting.
[ACTION: SG]

18-19/81 Report from Students
YUSU: The representative reported issues with assessment deadlines being at the same window as exams. He is currently working on this issue with departments. He is also working on a standard policy for past papers, exemplars etc for the Guide to Assessment, which will go to FLTGs at the end of May.

Because this is James Hare’s last SCA meeting, the Chair thanked him for his contributions on behalf of the Committee.
GSA: The representative reported that there is a project taking place regarding the standard lengths of time provided to PGR students for corrections following their viva. York currently has different options than other Russell group universities.

The GSA is also looking at a project for appeals and complaints whereby a staff member (either departmental or central) could be nominated to be the key point of contact for the student.

18-19/82   UG/PGT degree outcomes report 2017-8
The Committee considered a report on institutional results and recent trends. There was discussion as to whether the slight decrease of 0.1% and the slight overall downward trend since 2013 (82%-80.5%) represents the maintenance or falling of standards. It was noted that in comparison to the sector and in light of the OFS’s concerns regarding grade inflation, SCA’s view is that the plateauing should be interpreted as the maintenance of standards, however this would need to be looked at in more detail, including taking into account entry tariff in order to draw any conclusion. It was noted that there is a danger of mixed messages regarding grade inflation and losing ground with competitors. SCA reiterated its view that external scrutiny of our standards (from external examiners) should be the key process through which standards are checked, and there is evidence from departmental response to external examiners comments that is is effective. It was also noted that integrated masters programmes are included at UG level, not PG. The shift to the modular scheme may be another factor that affected numbers after 2013. It was noted that it would be useful to have demographic information about the students themselves included in the report to encourage university compliance with QAA regulations. It was requested that the distribution of First and Upper Second class degrees by department be included in the analysis.

Concerns were raised regarding the rise in the number of PGT students leaving without an award.

18-19/83   Degree outcome analysis report 2018-9
The Committee considered the analysis and agreed that the format and analytical model are very useful. The Committee requested further information on the ‘Other’ school type: this is a HESA category, not university-based, but further investigation will take place. It was noted that in terms of BME students, although there are no differences between non-BME and BME students in the 5-year model, there was a significant different in the 1-year model and the Chair of SCA would raise this matter with UTC.

18-19/84   Process for Mitigating Circumstances in Academic Misconduct
The Committee approved the creation of an advisory group to assist in cases where mitigating circumstances might affect the penalty for academic misconduct. A memo will be sent to departments explaining the process.

[ACTION: SG/MB]

18-19/85   Academic Misconduct Policy - Five Year Review
The Committee considered findings from the review and recommended for UTC approval the recommendations and the principles of the proposed policy changes, with the amendments listed in Appendix A. The committee thanked all involved in the preparation of these documents for this complex review. It was agreed that the additional policy items and areas for clarification would
need to be finalised at the July 2019 SCA meeting, along with the final policy wording for the whole policy.

[ACTION: SG/AR]

18-19/86 Annual Report - Postgraduate External Examiners (ASO)
This Committee considered the issues for University quality and standards in the report provided and agreed the following actions.

- The Guide to Assessment should clarify that each department must have a clear policy on what process will be followed when the first and second markers do not agree on the marks for significant pieces of coursework, such as ISMs.

[ACTION: SG]

- Marking, moderation and monitoring practices should be clearly communicated to students. The Chair will include that recommendation in a briefing note to the Chairs of Board of Examiners.

[ACTION: MB]

- An issue was raised about the expectations of external examiners in relation to moderation of work. A briefing is being planned for Chairs of Board of Examiners, and guidance on this will be included.

[ACTION: MB]

18-19/87 Exceptional Circumstances Review
The Committee recommended UTC approval of the policy and the associated guidance, with the amendments and suggestions listed in Appendix B. The Confirmation of Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Assessment form will be amended and presented to the Committee for the July meeting, following consultation with Unity Health.

The Academic Registrar asked that the minutes record a commendation on the work that has been done.

[ACTION: JW]

18-19/88 Repeat Study - Guidance for Departments
The Deputy Director of Student Services reported that guidance is being developed to help students and departments decide whether repeat study is a viable option. The Committee approved the suggested process, and it was decided that the Chair, Deputy Director of Student Services and the Director of Student Services will work to complete and disseminate the guidance documents.

[ACTION: JW/VC/MB]

18-19/89 Sticker Scheme (re-consideration)
The Committee considered and approved the revised wording of Section 4.3.4 Spelling/Grammar Stickers in the Guide to Assessment, Marking and Feedback, this includes reference to flagged
marking where a student may have an impairment which can affect their written communication, for example, a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, autism or prelingual deafness.

18-19/90     Grade Conversion Table for Seoul National University
The Committee considered and approved the grade conversion table for Seoul National University, and decided that further such grade conversion tables could be approved by Chair’s action.
APPENDIX A

SCA Academic Misconduct Policy Five Year Review

- P1: Initial stage of academic misconduct cases - approved without amendment
- P2: Students provided with opportunity for early admissions and expressions of remorse - approved without amendment
- P3: Special panel to consider special mitigating circumstances - approved without amendment
- P4: Academic Judgement - in the new section of the policy (1.3.2 in the second of the two-part procedure), remove ‘and so will be open to appeal’.
- P5: Evidence for case and decision provided to students - approved without amendment
- P6: Departmental process for dealing with academic misconduct in low-credit assessment -
  - Include the requirement that departments maintain a log, to ensure that second and subsequent offenses are sent to StAMP
  - Appendix Two letter ‘e)’: replace ‘in accordance with’ with ‘guided by’
  - Clarify that a right to appeal in this context means a right to a StAMP.
  - Change all use of ‘low stakes’ to ‘low credit’
  - Clarify in all student guidance that second and subsequent offences will have greater consequences
- P7: Clarification of legitimate and illegitimate software usage - approved without amendment
- P8: Clarification of probationary modules - approved without amendment
- P9: Representation and support for students in hearings - include ‘The student must notify the Chair in advance if he/she intends to bring a representative from outside the university’.

AC1-6: all approved. The Committee noted the value of clarifying the role of the SCA member in StAMPs
  - Flowcharts will be amended to include the central (advisory) group

T1-7: all approved, with the request for further consideration of the proposal for an annual review of academic misconduct cases, to clarify who will be responsible for them.
  - The Committee agreed that rigorous StAMP training must be provided following this review
APPENDIX B
Amendments to the Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Guidance documents

1. The Committee agreed to suggest that the ODT website include advice to students that issues of mental health which last more than 12 months should be dealt through Disability Services, not Exceptional Circumstances claims. ECA panels themselves should also direct students to Disability Services when necessary.

2. Changes to Policy
   a. Section 23.2 page four: rephrase ‘not normally’ to improve clarity
   b. Section 23.2 page five: rephrase the section referring to ‘close bereavement’ to reflect that the evidence must show that the death had an impact on the student, not just that the person who died was close to the student.
   c. Section 23.2 page five: where it says ‘the University’s team’, it should say ‘the University’s Open Door Team’
   d. Section 23.2 page five: remove reference to Unity Health’s online consultation service, which is no longer active
   e. Section 23.2 page six: point ii should clarify that if claims are incomplete, the department will prompt the student for the necessary documents before any decision to reject the claim is made
   f. Section 23.2 page six: the YUSU representative requested that the requirements for medical evidence be made more flexible in cases where the claim is based on being the victim of serious crime.
   g. Section 23.5 page twelve: replace ‘termly’ with ‘every two to four weeks’, to reflect actual practice
   h. Section 23.5 page thirteen: bold text seems to conflict with Section 23.3 page seven, which states that the evidence must be submitted within three weeks after the assessment deadline. Replace ‘must be rescinded’ with ‘may be rescinded’.
   i. Section 23:5 page thirteen: replace ‘not normally acceptable’ with ‘not necessarily acceptable’.
   j. Section 23.6 part v: The YUSU representative requested a provision for letting students know what stage the claim is in, especially if the case takes longer than it usually does

3. Changes to Guidance
   a. Remove ‘I’m sorry this isn’t the outcome you will have been hoping for’ from all email templates
   b. Ensure contacts for GSA and YUSU are offered on all email templates
   c. Double check that the wording of the Guidance is consistent with the changes to the Exceptional Circumstances policy
   d. Check for consistency with the fitness to study policy
   e. Student Guidance (page 9): complete process for students with an SSP
4. Changes to the Form
   a. The title must make it clear who is meant to fill it out
   b. Change ‘Confirmation of Exceptional Circumstances’ to ‘Information Relating to Exceptional Circumstances’ (Note: that will require a change in the Student Guidance as well)
   c. Make it clear in the guidance on the back of the form that the student has to inform the medical professional if the claim is late or retrospective.
   d. Unity Health should look it over before it’s approved, and clarify how fast they can do them