STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 8 March 2019 at 2.00pm in HG/09, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:  
Dr Mike Bentley  Physics (Chair)
Dr Francesco Bravo  Economics
Dr Danijela Trenkic  Education
Dr Daniel Baker  Psychology
Charlotte Chamberlain  GSA
James Hare  YUSU

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

Apologies:  
Dr John Stringer  Music
Dr Anita Savage Grainge  Health Sciences
Prof Helen Smith  English
Dr Patrick Gallimore  York Law School
Dr Louise Jones  Biology
Simon van der Borgh  TFTV
Prof Tom Stoneham  Dean of Graduate Research School

Visitors:  
Sally O'Connor  Academic Support Office
Richard Walker  ASO - PDLT Team leader

18-19/64  Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

18-19/65  Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 30 November 2018 with a correction: 18-19/59 typo - fully - this has been amended.
Matters arising from the minutes of 1 February 2019:

- **17-18/10 Update on the Assessments and Retention Projects**
  The briefing pack/session for incoming Chairs of Boards of Examiners has not yet been organised, but Chairs of the Board of Examiners have been invited to the External Examiners Induction event on 20 March, 2019. [OPEN] [ACTION: MB/SG]

- **17-18/80 Proposal for Standard Sticker Scheme for certified disabilities**
  The Committee considered the Disability Advisor’s draft as part of the meeting. [CLOSED]

- **18-19/33 Chair’s Oral Report - new QAA Code**
  The Head of the Learning Enhancement Team will determine if the University is compliant with the new QAA Code. [OPEN] [ACTION: CL]

- **18-19/35 Annual Report - Undergraduate External Examiners 2017-18**
  c) Transparency and Clarity in moderation/second marker processes: the Chair discussed i) whether the marking policy is clear to students and ii) the devolution to departments to decide when student work needs second marking. The Chairs of Board of Examiners said that no further guidance is necessary. The Chair will report this result to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups. [OPEN] [ACTION: MB]

  d) Providing examiners with cohort-level reports on historical mark distributions: The Deputy Registrar will work with a consultant next week to determine if such a report is possible and present the results at the next meeting. [OPEN] [ACTION: JW]

  e) Chair to discuss IT support for IPC with the Head of the college. [OPEN] [ACTION: MB]

- **18-19/48 Chair’s Oral Report - digital assessment**
  The Committee heard a report on this issue from Richard Walker, head of the Programme Design and Learning Technology team, during this meeting. [CLOSED]

- **18-19/49 Report from Students - Grammarly**
  This issue has been included in the Academic Misconduct review. [CLOSED]

- **18-19/50 Introduction to Stepped Marking**
The working group reported that they are compiling information for the Guide to Assessment and examples of best practice. A report will be presented at the July SCA meeting. [OPEN]  
[ACTION: DT/SvdB]

- **18-19/52 Report of the first year review of the Repeat Study Policy**
The Chair submitted a report to UTC which presented the data and anecdotal evidence currently held. Approximately one-third of students who accepted the option of repeat study are currently not engaging with their courses and are set to fail in June. One-third of students are engaged but still not likely to progress in June, and one-third have improved and will likely progress in June. The Chair recommended that the UTC run the policy as is for the 2019/20 academic year and wait for a final review of the data after the June results are in. [CLOSED]  
[ACTION: MB/JW]

- **18-19/54 Mitigation of Academic Misconduct Penalties**
The Chair reported that the policy is in effect. The SCC have added it to the appeals form, and StAMP training in the policy is planned for 21 March. [CLOSED]

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

- **18-19/59 Proposal for First-class degree with distinction**
The Chair recommended that UTC implement the new criteria for all students entering their second year of study. [CLOSED]

18-19/67  **Chair's Oral Report**
The Chair reported that Helen Smith has stepped down as a member of SCA, leaving two vacancies in the Arts and Humanities faculty. The Committee thanks Prof Smith for her contributions to the committee during her tenure.

The Chair noted that the ECA policy review and the Academic Misconduct review are still being checked for compliance to OiA requirements. Reports on both reviews will be presented at the May meeting.  
[ACTION: MB/JW/SG]

18-19/68  **Report from Students**
GSA: students are concerned with staff compliance to the 20-day feedback rule. Some assessments are not being returned within the time allotted, and some are not returned before the next assessment is due.
YUSU: also reports issues with staff compliance to the 20-day feedback rule, and the quality of the feedback students receive. Some feedback has been inaccurate and unproductive, prompting one department involved to initiate a review. The representative worried about students being caught in the “crossfire” between staff and the university.

The Chair will forward these concerns to UTC and will discuss the issue with the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students.

[ACTION: MB]

18-19/69 Digital Assessments Briefing Paper (Richard Walker)
The Committee considered a report by Richard Walker about department requests for digital assessment. Project approval has been granted for a consultant to analyse the University’s current digital capacity and make recommendations for the future which will consider regulations about accessible web content. Currently the project is focused on closed assessments, rather than online submission of other forms of assessment.

One option is for students to bring their own devices to closed assessments and download software that freezes all programmes for the duration of the assessment. The Committee noted this might discourage Widening Participation students because it makes it obvious who does not have their own devices. Other concerns are the possible breakdown of the software or device during the assessment, possible breaches of anonymity, and managing department expectations once they are included in the information-gathering stage of the project. It was noted that in closed digital assessments currently run at the university, there have been no failures of the exams. The Committee agreed that Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups would be good fora for gathering information on future subject specific requirements and needs. Richard Walker will work with the Chair to prepare questions for them.

[ACTION: MB/RW]

18-19/70 Review of Assessment Issues arising from Annual Programme Reviews
The Committee considered the following issues arising from the annual programme review.

- Centre for Women’s Studies: Finding external examiners after unexpected resignations - in such extreme circumstances (in this particular case, strike action), the Committee decided that departments could a) recall former external examiners and/or b) broaden their definition of ‘colleagues’ to involve a wider range of departments within the university. This is to be considered part of the current process, rather than a replacement of it.

- Maths: More contextual Information at Module Examination Boards - SCA is exploring providing examiners with cohort-level reports on historical mark distributions: The Deputy Registrar will work with a consultant next week to determine if such a report is possible and present the results at the next meeting.
• History: ECA and combined exam boards - the Committee decided that this issue has been raised in the past and the department advised to follow the policy. No evidence has been provided to SCA to indicate that this policy is not effective, so the department was again advised to follow the policy - the ECA for a combined programme sits in the department of the programme lead.

• Natural Sciences: Exam arrangements - in January 2019, a number of students had six exams in six days. Afterward, the department requested a review of timetabling. The Deputy Registrar explained that the timetabling for Natural Sciences students was affected by requests from other departments for particular dates/times for their exams, but still followed the policy laid out in the Guide to Assessment (5.4 p.24). The Chair will report back to the UTC on this issue.

[ACTION: MB]

18-19/71 Report of the Psychology Common Assessment Strategy
The Committee considered a presentation by Dr Daniel Baker on Psychology’s Common Assessment Strategy. This presentation has been devised to explain the rationale for the assessment approach in the department to students but proved to be a highly useful exercise in reflecting on the department’s assessment approach. Concerns had been raised by students about the prevalence of MCQs (multiple choice questions) in the degree. The presentation clearly outlines how marks are calculated over all three years of an undergraduate degree, and demonstrates how assessment design and marking practices align with programme learning outcomes. As a way of spreading best practice, this strategy will be shared with the Disability Advisor to consider in the inclusive marking project, and the Chair will share it with Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups.

[ACTION: MB/DB/CS]

18-19/72 PGT Academic Misconduct Statistics Review
The Committee considered a report on the 2017-18 academic misconduct cases for PGT students. All types of offences took place, and the whole range of penalties were applied in response. Overseas students were over-represented, as they were in UG cases. There were a disproportionate number of cheating cases dismissed, which has been addressed by a change in policy. The numbers of reported cases in the Education department are very high: the Deputy Registrar discussed this with the Chair of Board of Studies for the department, who considered it a case of over-reporting. The Committee was also asked to note it is worth noting that 26/83 suspected cases (27%) related to students who had attended a pre-sessional or IPC course with York. This included 11/40 cases where there was found to be a case to answer. Further guidance on discerning and reporting academic misconduct will take place within the departments.

18-19/73 Sticker Scheme
The Committee considered a report by the Disability Advisor on possible wording for the Guide to Assessment regarding the sticker scheme for students with specific learning disabilities. This included changing its name to ‘flagged marking’ to incorporate the needs of students with other types of disabilities. The Committee suggested that the wording should
specifically state that markers can comment on spelling and grammar in feedback even though it did not affect the marking, and it should qualify statements about typed feedback by saying that feedback should be typed ‘where practicable’. The Committee also suggested that the parts of the report which address spelling and grammar sticklers be incorporated into current guidance from the next academic year, and the other parts folded into the inclusive marking project. The Chair, the Head of the Learning Enhancement Team, and the Disability Advisor will determine how the report will be divided. They will present a report at the next meeting.

[ACTION:CS/CL]

CATEGORY II

18-19/74    Date of the next meeting
The next meeting will be on Friday 3 May 2019 at 2pm in Room HG/17, Heslington Hall.