STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 15th April 2016 at 2.00pm in HG17, Heslington Hall.

1. Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)
Dr. Philip Quinlan, Psychology
Prof. Stevi Jackson, Women’s Studies
Dr. Dominic Watt, Language and Linguistic Science
Dr. Patrick Gallimore, York Law School
Mr. Thomas Ron, YUSU
Ms. Rasha Ibrahim, GSA

In Attendance: Prof. Mike Bentley, Chair of Special Cases Committee (for item 15-16/68)
Mr. Pete Quinn, Director: Student Support Services
Mr. Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services
Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Ass. Registrar: Student Progress
Ms. Cecilia Lowe, Head of Learning Enhancement
Ms. Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator
Mr. Stephen Gow, Academic Integrity Coordinator (minutes)
Ms. Gillian Wright, Assessment Team (minutes)

Apologies: Prof. Tom Stoneham, Dean of York Graduate Research School
Dr. Keith Allen, Philosophy
Dr. Louise Jones, Biology
Ms. Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar

15-16/63 Minutes of previous meeting
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held Friday 5 February 2016, with the minor amendments of 15-16/45vii to clarify that Stage 1 modules should be probationary, unless departments elected to opt out and apply the full process.

[Action: JW]

15-16/64 Matters arising from the minutes

i. 15-16/23 Required formatives
The committee decided to carry this matter forward to the next meeting

[Action: SK]

ii. 15-16/37 Summary of UG and PGT Academic Misconduct from 2014/15
The Chair reported that he had met with Richard Common in TYMS to discuss how the School had managed to keep the number of misconduct cases low. It seemed that the main reasons are the close work with CELT, on academic skills as well as English language, the use of probationary modules, and the fact that Linda Perriton (primary author of the policy) had led on the School’s implementation of integrity training.

iii. 15-16/38 Appointing External Examiners for Research Degrees
The Chair reported that this guidance has been produced and circulated.

iv. 15-16/48 Progression Policy for Research Degrees
It was reported that the issue of fieldwork and progression timings has been discussed informally but no formal action has been taken yet. CWS would discuss the issue of fieldwork and progression requirements with RSAT.

[action: SJ]

v. 15-16/49 Extensions as a Reasonable Adjustment for Students with Disabilities
The Chair reported that the policy is now in place however the guidance has yet to be produced. The Chair reported that the PVC (T, L and S) was interested in this area, from the Appeals and Complaints angle.

[action: SK]

vi. 15-16/50 Summary of Paper Queries in January CAP
It was reported that the revision of the report was in progress, in which the module codes would be checked for accuracy.

[action: JW]

vii. 15-16/52 Themes emerging from the External Examiners Reports on UG programmes
The Chair reported that the exam timetable has been raised with the PVC. It was reported that the length of the exam period is currently under review and alternatives are being considered for the exam timetable. It was noted that none of the alternatives is ideal and that Timetable modelling has been carried out to establish a more effective schedule.

[action: ]

viii. 15-16/53 Script Access session principles
Action carried forward.

[action: SK]

15-16/65 Chair’s Oral Report
It was reported that there had been progress with the Compensation Review (15-16/20) with Gillian Wright and Matt Hanson producing an Excel model of the effect of different compensation levels. The Chair reported that he will be reviewing the data with the PVC and checking these with Maths and Physics who have until end of w/c 18th April to provide
feedback. It was reported that consideration of the report might need to be outside normal business, in order to allow a recommendation to UTC/Senate.  

[Action: SK] It was also reported that the Student Partnership Agreement is intended to be in place for 2017/18 academic year, and that in order for this to be possible it was noted that a major consultation must take place and that the plan was for this to take place in the autumn term.

15-16/66 Report from Students
The representative from GSA had no issues to report.

The representative from YUSU reported the Love York Awards nominations (open to PG & UG) were now open online and urged the member of the committee to take part.

15-16/67 Review of the Academic Misconduct Policy
The committee considered a revised version of the Policy, Guidelines and Procedures regarding Academic Misconduct, proposed for implementation 2016/7. It was reported that the review of the Academic Misconduct Policy had concluded the policy was fair despite initial inconsistencies. The committee considered and agreed on the following significant changes to the policy for the attention of UTC:

- the removal of one of the two tables of all offences and penalties
- all 1st year modules to be made probationary by default
- the right to appeal (6.1) should be open to all students, not just those accused of serious cases.

The committee considered a number of individual points related to the revision of the policy and a number of issues were amended in situ. The following notable points were considered:

- Suitability for international students of the use of legal language was considered, such as ‘on the balance of probabilities’ and ‘beyond reasonable doubt’. It was agreed that rewording of sections of the policy would be undertaken.  [Action: JW/RI/PG/SK]
- It was agreed that departments can look back at previous work (beyond the current assessment period) to assist in determining appropriate feedback or pedagogic advice, but that previous work cannot be retrospectively referred to a StAMP for investigation or punishment.
- It was decided that references to fabrication should be removed from 3.4.1/3.4.2 as this offence could not be committed unintentionally.
- It was considered whether the policy should explicitly forbid students from conferring about the investigation in cases of collusion; however this was considered to be unrealistic. It was agreed that the letters sent to students regarding collusion will include guidance not to confer with others students involved in the case.
It was agreed that the *Academic Integrity Tutorial* should be explicitly mentioned in section 7.1.1.

**It was agreed that cross-referencing to paragraph numbers would improve the clarity of the flowchart in Appendix 1.**

**The definition and use of the term StAMP in the policy was considered. It was decided that StAMP refers to the faculty-based group of academic staff with representatives from each department, whereas it is a StAMP Investigative Panel which considers each individual case.**

**It was agreed the appendices should be made available in a larger format as the current flow charts are too small.**

**It was agreed that the panel should have the right to hold a hearing even after viewing written evidence.**

It was also agreed that SCA members could send any further minor corrections by email. Once the revisions have been made, the *Policy, Guidelines and Procedures regarding Academic Misconduct* for implementation 2016/7 can be recommended to UTC.

**[ACTION: JW]**

15-16/68 Proposed Policy on Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Assessment

[The Chair of Special Cases Committee attended for this item.]

A revised version of the *Mitigating Circumstances Policy* (now entitled *Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment*) was considered by the Committee. A draft had been circulated to departments and the policy had been considered by SCC. Some of the feedback had concerned the recent pressure on the Open Door Team due to recent focus on mental health issues and considerations of fitness to study. The Director of Student Support Services advised the committee that this policy was not the correct place to try to improve the performance of external and internal support structures. It was noted that some departments reported the new policy too harsh, however the majority of departments are satisfied with the changes. The treatment of sits ‘as if for the first time’ were also reported as a key issue for consideration.

It was noted that significant changes to the policy included the name change from *Mitigating* to *Exceptional Circumstances*. It was also noted that the policy’s focus on *Exceptional Circumstances* must be explicitly highlighted in the roll-out, so that staff and students are aware of the change in emphasis from any circumstance which adversely affects a student’s performance to a focus on building resilience by dealing only with circumstances which are truly exceptional, ie beyond the normal challenges of academic life.

The Chair of the SCC reported that the SCC had discussed an early version of the policy and given detailed feedback on the latest draft.

The committee considered a number of individual points related to the revised policy and a number of issues were amended *in situ*. The most significant discussion was consideration of
sits ‘as if for the first time’, and the committee decided that students who had opted for a sit ‘as if for the first time’ and who did not show up for the exam, would be given a zero for the exam, rather than retaining their first-attempt mark.

The following notable points were also considered:

- It was decided to clarify that a range of support services is available to students to highlight that there are other services in addition to the Open Door Team.
- The definition of close bereavement was considered and, while minor changes to the wording were made in situ, it was decided not to carry-out a significant revision of section B.
- The committee discussed the ability of ECA (Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment) Committee members to use judgement calls regarding the exceptional circumstances: e.g. considering closeness of relationships. ECA Committee members would need to be encouraged to make such judgements, and to reject claims where appropriate.
- It was noted that the SCC will be reviewing the policy on extensions in their next meeting, which will not impact on this version of the policy.
- The membership of ECA was considered (D.ii). It was noted that 3 years was not a long time for staff to acquire and then utilise the specialist knowledge necessary for membership of the committee. Therefore it was agreed that the 3 year membership of ECA should be renewable.
- It was also agreed that the quorum for an ECA should be the Chair plus one member of the committee, rather than the current 3 members, in the interest of expediency.
- Clarification of the term aegrotat was considered and it was decided a definition should be presented in the policy.
- The loss of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) was mentioned, and the committee noted that a Working Group was looking into this.
- The committee noted that a move to Faculty ECAs had been included in the consultation draft and discussed with the Deans, but it was agreed that it was too soon to introduce this for 2016-7. The issue might be revisited for 2017-8.

The committee agreed to recommend the Policy on ECA to UTC, highlighting the significant change of a zero for not showing up for sits ‘as if for the first time’. It was also recommended that the implementation and importance of the policy are highlighted, particularly the focus on Exceptional Circumstance in addition to provision for training supervisors on the new policy and the loss of DSA.

(Action: SK/JW)

15-16/69 Revision of the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy
The committee considered a revised ‘Recognition of Prior Learning Policy’ to replace the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy following institutional consultations.
The committee considered the proportions of awards eligible for credit transfer/RPL and it was decided that an increase to 30 credits would be acceptable for awards of at least 120 credits.

The committee felt that the policy appropriately balanced departmental autonomy and University-wide consistency.

The committee agreed that the policy placed sufficient responsibility on the applicant/students to provide evidence for their APL applications.

The committee considered whether a postgraduate student who had previously taken a module at undergraduate level could re-do that module on their PG course [C.39]. It was agreed, with advice from the SCC Administrator, that such repeat study was not acceptable. However, it was felt that allowing such a student to audit the module (not for credit) when it had been RPL’d would not give a significant advantage. The committee decided the double-counting of credit [C.42] was acceptable.

The committee considered the issue of charging fees for Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning which require a portfolio of evidence [C.50], and decided that, while it was reasonable to charge, this was an application rather than an assessment issue, and so outside the remit of SCA.

The committee agreed to recommend to UTC the approval of a revised Recognition of Prior Learning Policy to replace the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy.

[Action: SK]

15-16/70 Annual Report on Degree Outcomes
The committee considered the report on UG, and PGT degree outcomes for 2014/5 academic year, as well as PGR submission rates. The Chair noted concern over the proposed lack of deep analysis in 2016. As there were no further comments, the Chair advised that any comments on this could be sent via email prior to the report being considered by UTC.

[Action: SK]

15-16/71 Summary of PGT External Examiner Reports
The consideration of a summary of external examiners reports on taught postgraduate programmes in 2014/5 was carried forward to the next meeting.

[Action: JW/SG]

15-16/72 Parity between Online and Offline Submission of Assignments
The committee considered a proposal from the Student Union on Parity between Online and Offline Submission of Assignments. It was noted that this was really YUSU’s recommendations for revisions of the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback. The proposal suggested that assessment deadlines should not be a on a Friday and/or after 4pm. It was decided that while currently the Guide to Assessment recommends that assessment deadlines are not set on a Friday [section 4.7.1], this should be tightened and made a requirement. It was noted that the 4pm deadline was already in place. The accurate record of submissions was considered and it was decided that an accurate record should be
kept, including time of submission. The costs incurred by assignment submission were considered and the committee decided to recommend this to the Student Partnership Agreement committee. The Guide would need updating for 2016/7 to reflect this tightening of procedure.

[Action: TR/JW]

15-16/73 Grade conversion tables
The committee considered a number of Grade conversion tables submitted by the Centre for Global Programmes for new exchange partners, and approved the tables with the exception of the table for the Universidad de las Americas Puebla, Mexico. This contained an error, and will be re-submitted at a later date. (No students are going on exchange there for 2016-7.)

15-16/74 Date of the next meeting
To note the date of the next meeting as Friday 13 May at 2pm in Room HG17- Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.
Reserved Business

CATEGORY II

15-16/75 Individual Examination Arrangements
The Committee received notification of all individual examination arrangements approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

15-16/76 Appointment of External Examiners
The Committee received notification of appointment of external examiners approved of behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

15-16/77 Results Lists
The Committee received notification of recommendations for the award of degrees approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.