Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 8 February 2013 at 2.15 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)  
Graeme Osborn, YUSU Academic Officer  
Prof. Victoria Gould, Mathematics  
Dr. Geoff Cubitt, History  
John Bone, Economics  
Dr. Dominic Watt, Language and Linguistic Science  
Prof. Peter O’Brien, Chemistry

In Attendance: Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services  
Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Ass. Registrar: Student Progress  
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader: Learning Enhancement  
Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar

Apologies: Daria Pawlowska, Distance Learning Students’ Rep, GSA  
Dr. Sandra Pauletto, Theatre Film and Television  
Dr. Oliver Craig, Archaeology  
Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator

12-13/61 Minutes  
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2013.

12-13/62 Matters arising from the minutes

i. M12-13/54- Combined Analysis of Academic Misconduct Reports 2007-2012  
The Committee noted that a meeting had taken place between the secretary to the Committee and the Academic Support Office to discuss the outcomes of the analysis of Academic Misconduct outcomes from 2007 to 2012. Adrian Lee of the ASO agreed to consider ways in which departments could be supported in preventing collusion, and to include more information on collusion in the Academic Integrity Tutorial. They also agreed that it would be useful for the ASO to review recent cases of academic misconduct to determine the kinds of cases we are encountering in more detail.

The Secretary will review the form letters used and compile questions for review of those affected by cases before the next meeting.
ii. **12-13/56 Summary of External Examiners Reports for Undergraduate Programmes 2011-2012**

The Chair and the PVC Teaching, Learning and Information discussed the idea of External Examiners ‘self-coding’ reports to indicate the seriousness of their concerns, but agreed that this is not appropriate at the moment, but that we may return to this idea at a later date. The Chair still plans to discuss issues of over-generous grading with departments where this was mentioned in Examiner’s reports, but has not yet done so.

(Outstanding Action: Chair)

iii. **12-13/57 Request for Clarification of the Guide to Assessment re: ISMs in Integrated Masters**

Edits to the guide have been approved and are now on the Guide website. The Maths department have yet to be contacted regarding their wishes regarding the potential compensation and reassessment of their 40 credit ISM.

(Outstanding Action: JW)

12-13/63 **Chair’s Oral Report**

The Chair reported the following developments:

i. The consultation period on the structure and schedule of the academic year ends on the 20th of March. The Chair reminded the committee that no presumptions were being made about the outcome of the consultation, and so all submissions would be welcome.

ii. The consideration of the impact of Modularisation on the potential degree results in Philosophy and some other departments remained ongoing, but the Chair is hopeful that a satisfactory resolution could be reached.

iii. Some secure papers from the 2010-2011 Academic Year were mistakenly released to the library and consequently included in the online repository. All departments have been informed of this breach, and affected papers are to be rewritten. The exams office confirmed that the process had now been changed so that departments, rather than the exams office submit copies of papers to the library, which should decrease the potential for the repeat of this problem. The Exams Office apologized for the error.

12-13/64 **Report from Students**

The Students’ Union reported the following:

i. Nouse is continuing to pursue the issue of the potential impact of modularization on degree results in Philosophy. The Academic Officer has reassured the paper that the issue is being considered by the administration

ii. Nouse is also pursuing a story regarding the distribution of closed examinations over the day in the CAP. The chair confirmed that
this story had been brought to his attention and that of the examinations office, and that they had attempted to correct misrepresentations of the facts.

The Graduate Students’ Association had nothing to report, but as results from the Week 1 CAP are beginning to be released, more issues may be raised prior to the next meeting.

12-13/65 External Examiners Reports on PGT Programmes 2011-2012

The Committee considered a summary of the External Examiners Reports on PGT programmes for the 2011-2012 academic year. The Committee agreed that several of the reports required a University-level response; particularly that of Prof. Jane Frecknall-Hughes who examined the MSc in Accounting and Financial Management who claimed that the programme had not met all of the required standards. This report will be brought to the attention of the PVC Teaching, Learning & Information.

(Action: JW)

The Committee noted that several themes had emerged in the reports, including the following:

- Concern regarding the reduction of powers of the boards to consider borderline cases
- Clustering of marks near borders
- Concern regarding the rule which excludes students with failed modules from achieving merits/distinctions
- Confusion regarding the role of the external examiner and their attendance at final boards
- Inconsistencies between feedback and marks in some programmes
- Lack of clarity in the system for moderation where first and second markers differed

The Committee agreed that a memo should be sent to departments highlighting these issues and proposing remedies. This memo should reassure departments that the structure of board meetings is currently under consideration by the SCA, but that there is no intention of returning to a system wherein boards have discretion to moderate at the final boards beyond the algorithmic system currently in place. It should further indicate that it is good practice to use the full range of marks and provide feedback in line with a recognised marking scheme. Finally, it should recommend that departments determine and document a system for moderating where markers differ, and make clear both to markers and to students, what degree of difference between first and second marks will trigger such a moderation in the department’s written statement of assessment. This system should be brought to the attention of external examiners.

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Consultation on the Academic Year

The Committee considered the consultation on the structure and schedule of the academic year, and determined that there were no particular concerns with regards to assessment which required a response from the SCA. Concerns were raised that students might be quite tired at the end of twelve weeks of teaching and could potentially use a week’s rest prior to the CAP in option 2B, but the committee agreed that this should be raised by the Chair and Secretary in the course of the work of the working party.

Anonymity in current online feedback mechanisms

The Committee agreed that the functionality to allow supervisors to access previously marked work from their students in the online feedback system in e:vision should be deactivated in order to ensure anonymity. The committee agreed that the potential for markers to cross-reference work with student identities outweighed the advantages in feedback to students, but encouraged departments to continue to suggest that students bring copies of marked work to discuss with supervisors, which will allow the feedback but reduce the risk of the breaking of anonymity.

The Committee agreed that a system for allowing supervisors to access past work from their students would be a valuable addition to the e:assignment solution, if it could be done in such a way as not to endanger anonymity.

Responses to Departmental Questionnaire on Assessment and Feedback

The Committee considered the issues raised on the Departmental Questionnaire on Assessment and Feedback and agreed on appropriate actions for those which UTC had assigned to the SCA. The committee’s responses are as follows:

i. Late Penalties Policy: The Committee has considered this issue in the past, but does not feel that a change to the centrally set lateness penalty is appropriate at this time.

ii. Procedures for reviewing marks prior to degree classification: The Committee is reviewing these procedures at the moment, and aim to have a recommendation for a process which is more appropriate given the constraints of NMS in time for the 2013-14 academic year.

iii. Clarity needed in interpreting the Guide: The Committee agreed that there was a risk of overcrowding the Guide if specific examples were given too often. The Committee further agreed that copies of
the student guide would be a useful tool for all staff, and that all staff and external examiners should receive a copy in 2013-14. John Bone is to clarify the meaning of this request with Economics, Politics and Philosophy in order to formulate a more specific response.

(Action: John Bone)

iv. Moderation: The Committee agreed that when work was moderated, feedback to the first marker(s) was a critical part of the process

v. Reports for BoE do not have the format required: The Committee is aware of the shortcomings of board reports, and the Chair is looking into additional reports to supplement (rather than replace) the current paperwork.

vi. Would like consideration of whether more resit chances should be allowed: The Committee does not feel that this would be appropriate, and that the NMS allows the appropriate number of resit opportunities

vii. External Examiners concerns about diminished roles: The Chair is currently drafting a proposal to allow appropriate input from external examiners in the light of NMS. The moderation of students at borders is not being considered.

viii. Asked to revisit NMS reassessment and compensation rules for PT UG: The Committee agreed that this is an issue, and that it would welcome proposals for the early setting of resits for students ending the first half of a stage, so long as they did not create an undue advantage over other students

ix. Chairs of BoS also acting as CBoE; isn’t this prohibited?: The Committee agrees that this is inappropriate for QA purposes. The Chair will talk to Biology about finding a better solution.

(Action: Steve King)

tax. Maths suggestion that they had ‘little choice’ but to run resits in Sum10: PGT resits can be run at any time, but can only be organized by the Exams Office during a CAP. Secretary to discuss support for resits with the Maths department

(Action: JW)

xi. NMS rules ‘serious implications for number of first class degrees’: This issue is already being investigated by the Chairs of SCA and Teaching Committee

xii. Concerns about the Mit Circs Policy: This concern lacks detail. The secretary will investigate and see if anything can be done to ease concerns.

(Action: JW)

xiii. Still need to do more to use the full mark range in light of NMS rules: This issue is already being investigated by the Chairs of SCA and Teaching Committee

xiv. Query re: external overview of modules taken by different programmes with different BoEs. Desire for a single PGT exam
The committee agrees that guidance would be helpful in running boards to allow sufficient oversight. The chair is drafting a revised change in procedure, but the Committee agrees that detailed specification for the CBoE and CBoS to determine what can and cannot be done by Chairs action is appropriate.

12-13/69 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 26 April 2013 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17- The Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.