Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 9 November 2012 at 2.15 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)  
Graeme Osborn, YUSU Representative  
Prof. Victoria Gould, Mathematics  
Taha Rajab, Academic Officer, GSA  
Mr. John Bone, Economics  
Dr. Dominic Watt, Linguistics  
Sandra Pauletto, Theatre Film and Television  
Dr. Geoff Cubitt, History  
Prof. Peter O’Brien, Chemistry

In Attendance: Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Assistant Registrar: Student Progress  
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader: Learning Enhancement  
Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar  
Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator

Apologies: Dr. Oliver Craig, Language and Linguistics

12-13/17 Minutes  
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2012

12-13/18 Matters arising from the minutes

i. M12-13/4- Report from Students  
The Committee noted that Steve King has discussed the downtime of the print service with IT Services and continues to discuss options with Heidi Fraser-Krause regarding appropriate times for such essential updates.

12-13/19 Chair’s Oral Report  
The Committee noted the Chair’s report that there was no substantial business not already on the agenda.

12-13/20 Report from Students  
The Committee noted that the student members had nothing to report.

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The Committee considered a report on the outcomes of academic misconduct cases concerning undergraduates in the 2011-12 academic year. The report indicated a slight decrease in the overall number of cases reported in the 2011-12 academic year over previous years, and an increase in the number of formal warnings issued as opposed to penalties being applied. It also reported that the only multiplier used in UG cases was one, so little use was being made of the flexibility of the current Academic Misconduct system. The Committee noted that it is not clear whether this was the result of the small percentages of individual pieces of work which were affected, or indicative of an increased hesitance to apply penalties at all. It further noted that the current policy on Academic Misconduct was under review by the Academic Misconduct Working Party.

Mitigating Circumstances Working Party
The Committee received a final report on the work of the Mitigating Circumstances working party, and noted that the policy created by the Working Party had been operational throughout the 2011-12 academic year with relative success. It noted that there continue to be some issues with long term disabilities and prolonged low-grade problems. The secretary agreed to discuss the problem of such long-term issues with the Pro Vice Chancellor for Students in order to determine if any specific solutions might be considered.

(Action: JW)

Clarification of the Role of Board of Studies in the Mitigating Circumstances Process
The Committee considered a proposed change to the wording of section 26.1.iii of the Guide to Assessment regarding the role of Boards of Studies in the Mitigating Circumstances policy. The Committee noted that the current wording was not sufficiently clear about the relative roles of the Mitigating Circumstances Committee and the Board of Studies in the approval of Mitigating Circumstances. The Committee recommended the following alteration:

“The Board of Studies delegates the authority to accept or reject Mitigating Circumstances claims to the Mitigating Circumstances Committee (MCC) for the programme. The Board of Studies will receive an anonymised report on all decisions made and will confirm these decisions at their meetings. Once a decision has been confirmed, it can be overturned only by appeal to the University’s Special Cases Committee.”
12-13/24  **Interim Report from the Academic Misconduct Working Party**

The Committee *considered* an interim report from the Academic Misconduct Working Party putting forward a potential structure for academic misconduct investigations and penalties. The Committee noted that the current process is out of line with the sector and has been seen to be overly complicated. It also noted that the proposed solution appears to balance the need for deterrence with that of education. The proposed solution would contain academic misconduct penalties to the module level, making it easier for students to anticipate and understand the effect that a penalty is likely to have on their overall degree classification.

The Committee expressed some mild concern over the potential unwillingness of Academic staff to sit on ‘Standing Academic Misconduct Panels’, and the added level of bureaucracy that such panels might cause, but agreed that the consistency that such panels might result in was to be encouraged.

The Committee agreed that the overall framework was broadly in line with the principles of assessment, and the Working Party were asked to continue with a mandate to continue with their current line of work.

*(Action: Academic Misconduct WP)*

12-13/25  **Royal Academy of Engineering Summer Soiree**

The Committee *noted* the scheduling of the Royal Academy of Engineering Summer Soiree during Week 10 of Summer Term. Notification of this event went to all Heads of Departments, but it appears that many Chairs of Boards of Examiners have not been informed. This must be done as soon as possible, as some board dates will need to be changed in order to accommodate this prestigious event. The secretary of the Committee agreed to liaise with the Director of External Relations in order to ensure that the relevant members of departments are informed.

*(Action: JW)*

12-13/26  **Allowance of Rest Breaks as standard allowable individual arrangement**

The Committee *agreed* that in spite of the large number of requests for rest breaks during closed examinations, they wanted to approve or reject all such requests at a full meeting of the committee. This decision was made in light of the difficulty of invigilating such breaks, and without prejudice as to whether individual requests would be approved. In principle, the committee agreed that such breaks would be appropriate where a student had complex or compound disabilities where 25% extra time had already been allowed,
and a further or more serious disability meant that the extra time alone would not provide adequate time to level the playing field.

12-13/27 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 11 January 2013 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17- The Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.