STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 5 October 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

In Attendance: Dr. Jennifer Winter, Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader: Learning Enhancement
Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar
John Bone, Economics
Oliver Craig, Archaeology
Dominic Watt, Linguistics

Apologies: Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator
Dr. Geoff Cubitt, History
Prof. Peter O’Brien, Chemistry

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

2012-13/1 The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2012

2012-13/2 Matters arising from the minutes

i. M11-12/82
The Committee noted the change to the PGT progression requirements to allow the reassessment of up to 40 credits of failed material so long as the student had not failed more than 60 credits.

ii. M11-12/87
The Committee noted that new transcript format including original and resit marks will be implemented by January graduation 2013.

2012-13/3 Chair’s Oral Report
The Committee received an oral report from the Chair including the following:

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i. A UTC working group on the academic year has been convened to consider alternatives to the current academic year to solve the problem of summer term engagement

ii. A further WP was convened on visiting students: revised guidance in the Guide of how to deal with visiting students

iii. The chair has produced a student guide to the postgraduate modular rules which has been distributed to Chairs of Boards of Examiners and Chairs of Boards of Studies, as well as being included on the Guide webpage

iv. A longstanding project that UTC had on e-assignment has been funded and so an implementation group has been formed. The project will include online submission, distribution and entry of marks and feedback. Pilots are planned for Easter, with full implementation by October 2013. This is expected to tie into attendance monitoring and SITS.

v. The chair and secretary have met with SITS team regarding the format of award board reports, ensuring that they fit for purpose and state the appropriate information

2012-13/4 Report from students:

i. The Students’ Union reported that masters students were unhappy that printing system taken down the date before dissertations were due. The Committee acknowledged that this was unacceptable, though it was difficult to find a time where no one would be affected for upgrades. The chair agreed to speak to IT Services about finding a more appropriate time for future years.

   (Action: SK)

ii. The Graduate Students Association expressed concern over the over-standardisation of progression resulting from modularisation. The academic officer expressed the opinion that modularisation killed departmental identity. For example, he requested that the University return to the language of ‘dissertation’ or ‘project’, rather than the standard ‘ISM’.

   iii. The GSA representative also expressed a desire for another formal progression point for PhD students which would follow 6 months of taught modules with assessment, for example, training on data analysis. He also expressed the view that all PhD students should be engaging in taught courses regardless of year. Though the Committee acknowledged the movement towards taught material from funding bodies, it also expressed an uncertainty about whether there was a specific problem we were looking to solve, which might have a more light-touch solution. The GSA representative is to talk to the Researcher Development Team and Departments to determine what is currently available and if there is a need for more taught material.

   (Action: TR)

iv. The GSA representative also expressed concern about the 6
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week gap for PGTs between when they submit their assignments and when they submit ISMs, suggesting that there was little or no supervision for some students. The Committee considered that this might be a particular concern with regards to the UKBA attendance monitoring, but also noted that many departments do have supervision appointments, though these may be optional rather than required.

v. The Committee also noted the GSA’s concern that the working party on individual arrangement did not have student representation, and agreed to ensure that this was not repeated.

2012-13/5  Terms of Reference
The Committee approved the proposed terms of reference proposed for 2012-13 and agreed to recommend them to University Teaching Committee.

2012-13/6  Timeline
The Committee received a timeline of routine Committee business scheduled for each meeting throughout the year and agreed to it in principle. The Committee noted that though the list was an appropriate representation of the business as usual, there was no explicit reference to the more interesting projects that the committee might consider. Steve King and Cecilia Lowe agreed to get timelines on the strategic assessment projects ongoing this year to include in the committee’s business.

(Action: SK, CL)

2012-13/7  Committee Priorities in 2011/12
The Committee approved the proposed annual priorities for 2012-13 and added a consideration of the mitigating circumstances policy as regards long term problems and administrative issues between departments where a student is taking a module outside of their home department.

2012-13/8  Progression criteria for integrated masters programmes
The Committee considered a proposal for the review of the progression criteria for integrated masters programmes as regards reassessment and the possibilities for progression when reassessments are required. The Committee noted that currently progression requires that average of 55 be achieved with no recourse to reassessment. After reviewing the preferred solutions of the affected departments, however, it became clear that there was no clear consensus on what would be appropriate, and that there was no pressing need for change. In light of this, the Committee decided that no change was necessary.
2012-13/9  Proposal for changes to the procedures for individual arrangements in examinations
The Committee considered a proposal for streamlining the process of individual arrangements in examinations, as well as the rationalisation of the arrangements available. It was agreed that the table of available adjustments was appropriate, with the consolidation of enlarged scripts and enlarged additional material into ‘enlarged exam materials’. The table will therefore be included on the exams office website, and put into practice immediately.

2012-13/10  Any Other Business:

Vicky Gould asked for clarification on the status of compensation and reassessment in UG ISMs. Boards of Studies had been asked whether or not they wanted such modules to be compensatable/reassessable, at the same time in which the new procedures on marginal fails for Integrated Master’s ISMs were being discussed.

The Maths Board of Studies agreed that for Bachelor’s students, ISMs should be compensatable/reassessable, but did not give a decision for Integrated Master’s Students, given that the procedure for marginal fails was being considered elsewhere (although they believed they had been asked to give a decision). Confusion was also caused by the fact that the 2011/12 edition of the Guide stated clearly on page 44 (10.6) that reassessment was allowed.

A further point was that given the Mathematics ISMs are 40 credits for both Bachelors and Integrated Master’s students, it is not clear that any justification has been given for failures to be dealt with radically differently in each case.

She also noted that the progression requirements for the new modular scheme had resulted in a Mathematics student with an uncapped second year stage average of 49 failing to progress. She believes that the ‘Cliff Edge’ of 30 for non-compensatable failure has a disproportionately adverse effect on students taking programmes with a significant number of 10 credit modules.
CATEGORY II BUSINESS
There is no category II business

2012-13/11 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 9 November 2012 at 2.15 pm in Room HG17- The Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.