STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday at 21st September, 2018 2.00pm in HG17, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present: Prof Mike Bentley Physics (Chair)
Dr Louise Jones Biology
Dr Patrick Gallimore York Law School
Dr John Stringer Music
Dr Danijela Trenkic Education
Dr Keith Allen Philosophy
Robert Simpson Special Cases Manager
Charlotte Chamberlain GSA
James Hare YUSU

In attendance: Dr Martin Cockett Chair of Special Cases Committee
Valerie Cotter Dep. Academic Registrar / Dir. Student services
Cecilia Lowe Head of Learning Enhancement
Stephen Gow (Secretary) Academic Integrity Coordinator

Apologies: Professor Helen Smith English
Anita Savage Grainge Health Sciences
Claire Shanks Disability Adviser
Dr Jen Wotherspoon Assistant Registrar: Student Progress
Dr Francesco Bravo Economics

18-19/1 Welcome

As this was the Chair’s first meeting, he welcomed the Committee and each member provided a short introduction. The Chair welcomed James Hare as YUSU’s Academic Officer and Charlotte Chamberlain GSA’s Vice President for Academic affairs. It was noted that three members of the Committee whose term of service had ended had been asked to attend the first meeting of the year.

18-19/2 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 6th July 2018.
Matters arising from the minutes of 6th July 2018 meeting:

- **17-18/10: Update on Assessments and Retention Project action points**
  a. University-wide guidance on sending samples of assessments to External Examiners will be discussed with Chairs of Boards of Examiners. [ONGOING]
  [ACTION: MB/SG]

- **17-18/52c: Assessment issues raised by APRs: awarding marks as incentives for formative work** – a poll of CBoEs has been carried out but further consideration of the matter is required. [ONGOING]
  [ACTION: SG/MB]

- **17-18/52d: Assessment issues raised by APRs: University’s position on marking and moderation for external examiners** – Economics provided an update on their review of the processes for marking and moderation in response to external examiner’s comments. [CLOSED]

- **17-18/80: Proposal for standard sticker scheme for certified disabilities** - The committee recommended that the student body should be consulted on this issue before it is finalised. Carried over to 2018/19. [ONGOING]
  [ACTION: SG/LF]

- **17-18/80: Proposal for standard sticker scheme for certified disabilities** - Better information in the Guide to Assessment concerning what ‘stickers’ are for and how they should be used appropriately will be devised after the student body has been consulted. [ONGOING]
  [ACTION: CL/SG/CS]

- **17-18/95: Review of the extra-time allowance in open examinations** - The wording of the late submission receipt is under review by the Programme Design and Learning Technology Team (PDLTT formerly ELDT), once a wording has been devised it will be considered by SCA. [ONGOING]
  [ACTION: SG/PDLTT]

- **17-18/99 Review of departmental criteria for UG 1st Class with Distinction degrees** - The relevant departments have been informed of the recommendations of the review considered by SCA in July 2018. Although the matter had been closed, the Committee agreed to the Chair’s proposal to keep the matter as a priority for 2018/19. [CLOSED]

- **17-18/100 Assessment Rules for Masters degrees with partner institutions** - Minor amendments were required to these rules, waiting for confirmation the changes have been made. [ONGOING]
18-19/4 Chair’s Oral Report
The Chair outlined his aspirations for the role and is looking forward to working with the members of the Committee.

18-19/5 Report from Students
YUSU: The Committee was asked to note that YUSU student representative elections had commenced. In Week 6 of autumn term YUSU will be running a Study Smart Week in order to encourage active engagement in studies and raise awareness for student well-being and the causes of academic misconduct and support available to students. This is in coordination with GSA and the Academic Integrity Coordinator.

GSA: The Committee was asked to note that GSA student representative elections had commenced.

18-19/6 Terms of Reference
The Committee is reviewed the 2017-18 Terms of Reference and considered the following amendments:

1. Terms of Reference 8 - Human Resources and Academic Quality recommended an amendment regarding to the appointment of External Examiners - the Committee agreed to the recommendation.

2. Membership - The Committee agreed to the Chair’s proposal to increase SCA membership from 8 to 9 members - in addition to the Chair. By adding one member the Committee will have three members per faculty plus the Chair to ensure a balanced representation.

3. New and continuing members - Dr Keith Allen was thanked for his service to the Committee. Dr Louise Jones and Dr Patrick Gallimore were thanked for agreeing to continue their service for 1 year and 3 years respectively. The Chair recommended Dr Daniel Baker (Psychology) and Simon van der Borgh (TFTV) to join the Committee. The Committee agreed to these recommendations and they have been recommended for approval to UTC.

4. Term of Service - The term of service have been extended from from 31st July - 1st September, as members are still expected to carry-out signing duties in summer.

[ACTION: SG]

SCA members advisory role for faculties
In the course of the discussion, a query was raised regarding the role of members of the Committee in advising departments on assessment matters. It was noted that members of the Committee are not representatives for their Faculties or departmental contacts, as is the case with UTC. It was agreed that the Chair will consider the role of members in advising departments on assessment matters and report back at a later meeting.
18-19/7  Annual cycle of business

The Committee confirmed the Standing Committee on Assessment 2018-19 Annual Programme of Business. The agreed 2018-19 Programme of Business will be circulated to relevant departments and posted on the Standing Committee on Assessment webpage:

http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/sub-committees/sca/#tab-6

18-19/8  Priority areas for action for the 2018/19 academic year

The Committee considered the priority of the items in terms of timing through the year with members to agree the allocation of responsibility for each item. The schedule of business for 2018/19 will be drafted and considered in the October meeting.

A. Review of the implementation of the *Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment* policy.

**Remit** - The *Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment (ECA)* policy has been in place from 2016/17 when it replaced the *Mitigating Circumstances Policy (MCP)* in use since 2010. A review of the implementation of the *Mitigating Circumstances Policy* showed disparity in the seriousness of circumstances required to get adjustments, as well as a hesitancy to reject any claim that comes with supporting evidence, regardless of the relative strength or weakness of the evidence itself. The revised *ECA* policy was an attempt to clarify the principles underlying the allowances for exceptional circumstances at the University of York, and to standardise implementation across departments. It is therefore a key purpose of the review of *ECA* policy to consider whether the aims of the introduction of the policy have been achieved and if any lessons are to be learned from its implementation. It was also noted that non-exceptional circumstances and individual arrangements should also be taken into account, as one of the key purposes of introducing the policy was to differentiate between these and exceptional circumstances affecting assessment.

The Committee considered the data necessary for the review, which included:

1. Applications for ECA claims
2. Outcomes of ECA claims
3. Applications and outcomes by stage and department
4. Types of circumstances (where data is available)
5. Experiences of staff and students
6. YUSU and GSA support data

The Chair of SCC raised a number of key issues to investigate in the review, specifically the issue of evidencing and the submission of claims at the appropriate time. In terms of evidencing, it was noted that in some cases students were going to the GP or Open Door Team in order to gain evidence for a claim rather than to receive help or support.
This highlights the difficulties at the intersection of ECA process with longer-term mental health issues. This should be considered in the review.

It was noted that data was collected for the review of the MCP in the process of developing the ECA and this data would prove useful in the review of the current policy and should be located.

[ACTION: SG]

It was also noted that YUSU has carried out a survey of students regarding exceptional circumstances and produced a summary report for the consideration of the Student Life Committee. The Chair requested that the report be shared with the Committee and the sections pertaining to assessment be considered in the course of the review.

[ACTION: YUSU/SG]

It was noted that the review could include benchmarking of the university’s approach to mitigating/exceptional circumstances against similar institutions.

[ACTION: VC/MB]

Date: March 2019

Members: Mike Bentley, Rober Simpson/Kathryn Lucas, Martin Cockett (SCC), YUSU, GSA, Cecilia Lowe, Valerie Cotter, Jen Wotherspoon and Louise Jones

B. Review of Academic Misconduct: Policy, guidelines and procedures for all programmes of study.

Remit - The Academic Misconduct Policy, Guidelines and Procedures has been in place from September 2014 when it replaced the previous policy. The previous policy was replaced as it used a complicated point system and the process was not considered consistent or transparent and withheld punishment until the end of the programme. It is the remit of the review to ensure the aims of the new policy implementation have been met, exploring the following matters:

1. Academic misconduct on low credit assessments - The review will consider whether a full StAMP is necessary for academic misconduct on low credit assessments.
2. Commissioning of assessments - Cases of contract cheating (commissioning) will be be investigated and the policy reviewed to check it is aligned with the recent QAA guidance.
3. Disability affecting academic misconduct - Guidance by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) have highlighted concerns that the university’s policy may not be in line with sector approaches to academic misconduct and disability. Penalties and offences could be reviewed in relation to disability.
4. Consistency of decision making. The Role of SCA member on StAMPS will be reviewed and other ways to help ensure consistency.
5. StAMP Training - The training provided to StAMP members will be considered.
6. **Feedback to departments and markers** - It was noted that the new policy had centralised the academic misconduct process and that departments may have lost oversight of academic misconduct. How departments and individual markers are informed of the outcomes (whether upheld or not) of cases should be considered.

The following data and input will be needed

a. Quantity of cases
b. Types of offence
c. Outcomes
d. Cases and outcomes by department, stage and programme where available
e. Number of appeals
f. Feedback from StAMP members
g. Input from Disability Services
h. Consideration of YUSU and GSA support data

**Date:** March 2019

**Members:** Patrick Gallimore, Stephen Gow, Mike Bentley, Jen Wotherspoon, YUSU, GSA, Tom Alloway and John Stringer.

C. **Alignment of various policies on examinations: invigilation guidance, student guidance and Guide to Assessment (inc. Academic Misconduct and Exceptional Circumstances)** - Jo Fletcher (Examinations Office) will review this matter and report back to the Committee.

    [ACTION: JF]

D. **Further developing staff and student guidance regarding the assessment of group work** - This matter carried over from 2017/18, the Committee had approved changes to the Guide to Assessment in 2017/18 and although further guidance may be need in the future, it was agreed that this was a teaching and learning matter rather than an assessment issue. If issues regarding the assessment of group work arise, SCA can be consulted for guidance. The item has therefore been removed from the annual priorities.

E. **Multiple module / composite ISMs – defining the rules** - The Chair will discuss this matter with Assistant Registrar for Academic Progress and make a proposal to the Committee.

    [ACTION: JW]

F. **Defining first-class with distinction criteria and ensuring clarity on ‘weighted marks’**
This matter had been considered by SCA in 2017/18 however the Chair wishes to consider the matter further in 2018/19. It was noted that there was a lack of consistency in the criteria with some departments utilising criteria for distinction which are not recommended by the Guide to Assessment. It was suggested that the Guide to Assessment criteria be reviewed in conjunction with data on distinctions awarded by department.

Date: May 2018

Members: Mike Bentley, Cecilia Lowe and John Stringer.

G. Monitor Repeat Study Policy and consider application to Foundation year students - The Repeat Study Policy was introduced in 2017/18 and further amendments were approved by Senate at the end of the 2017/18. SCA should monitor the implementation of the policy and also consider whether the policy should apply to Foundation year students.

Date: October 2018

Members: TBC

H. Develop policy on dealing with errors on exam papers - The process of dealing with exam errors will be examined and proposals for how to address the problem will be considered by the Committee.

Date: January 2018

Members: Mike Bentley

I. Keep under review the issue of degree-classification data being available at module boards - This matter had been considered by SCA in 2017/18 however the Chair wishes to keep this matter under review in 2018/19.

Date: May 2018

Members: Mike Bentley, Danijela Trenkic

18-19/9 Date of the next meeting
The next meeting will be on Friday 26 October 2018 at 2pm in room H/G17, Heslington Hall.